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The Theme of Alienation in Matthew Arnold

By

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## Summary

Alienation, or estrangement, is a concept of considerable antiquity. It has always been coterminous with the problem of faith. Indeed, it has been argued that the sole function of religion is to prevent that alienation. Yet the metaphysical origins of the concept have been veiled in the course of time by the progressive secularisation of Western thought, especially after Feuerbach and Marx. However, this study of the phenomenon of alienation considers it in connection with the problem of faith, for it was through the loss of faith in the Bible and God that man's history as well as culture was secularised. The basis of Arnold's argument is the belief that man's entire life, if not history, depends on his concept of God, and that from this concept there develops an immense system of institutions, roles, and values.

Societies in order to continue in time have to transmit their institutions as well as roles and values from one generation to the next. The new generation is initiated into the meanings of the culture by means of family, school, church, and state, and learns to participate in its established tasks and to accept the roles as well as the identities that make up its social structure, but the process is not easy. Every now and then it faces difficulties such as that of the first half of the nineteenth century. To this effect Arnold writes:

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; it is no longer dangerous to affirm that this want of correspondence exists; people are even beginning to be shy of denying it. To remove this want of correspondence is beginning to be the settled endeavour of most persons of good sense. Dissolvents of the old European system of dominant ideas and facts we must all be, all of us who have any power of working; what we have to study is that we may not be acrid dissolvents of it.

("Heinrich Heine," CPW., III, PP.109-10)

Alienation, here, is not held to be inherent in man's being in the world, but rather in his being in a particular historical epoch which asserts itself with special force whenever a particular social and cultural integration fails to satisfy the people in a given society. It appears when a particular generation faces structures (religious or secular) whose permanent features are indifferent to that generation's desires and aspirations. This brings the argument to the beginning of the process, all concepts originate and are rooted in the subjective consciousness of human beings. This subjective consciousness, according to Arnold, consists of instincts. To this effect Arnold writes:

Human life and human society arise out of the constant endeavour of these instincts to satisfy and develop themselves. We may briefly sum them up, these needs or instincts, as being, first and foremost, a general instinct of expansion and another of concentration, then, as being instincts following diverse great lines, which may be conveniently designated as the lines of conduct, of intellect and knowledge, of beauty, of social life and manners. Some lines are more in view and more in honour at one time, some at another. Some men and some nations are more eminent on one line, some on another. But the final aim, of making our own and of harmoniously combining the powers to be reached on each and all of these great lines, is the ideal of human life. And our race is for ever recalled to this aim, and held fast to it, by the instinct of self-preservation in humanity.

("A Speech at Eton," CPW., IX, PP.26-7)

The interaction between the human instincts, of expansion and concentration, and the social institutions, religious and social,

discloses a mechanism of causation that asserts itself with the relentless force of natural law. The discrepancy between them is bound to be intensely felt by men of sensibility, - poets. The masses feel it as well, but what appears at one level as the disintegration of traditional ways of life is reflected at<sup>a</sup>/different level in the dichotomy of facts and values. Since intellectuals as a group form a stratum of society in which material tension is immediately experienced in theoretical terms, their role in developing concepts which reflect the time-spirit is crucial. And the poets are more crucial. Why? Because, of the various modes of manifestation through which the human spirit pours its force, theirs is the most adequate. And most importantly is their role in imparting a corresponding state of feelings and attitudes to their readers. For this reason Arnold never tackled a problem without discussing the appropriate poetic method of handling it.

Arnold aspired to see a society in which man's faculties are developed to a totality and whose conflicting elements are held in harmonious balance. His solution envisaged a recovery of the lost harmony between man's Hellenic power and Hebraic one in the spheres of culture. He made it his line of endeavour and life's career.

The argument in this thesis falls into two parts: a theoretical and a practical one. The first part, Matthew Arnold's Poetic Theory, is arranged<sup>according</sup>/to the following scheme:

Chapter One, "The Nature of Poetry and Its Function," attempts to show the unity and continuity of Arnold's critical attitudes by exploring the interconnections among his concerns as they develop in response to the need of his own career and his growing perception of the cultural impasse in the first half of the nineteenth century.

Chapter Two, "The Poetic Process," shows that Arnold's poetic process is conscious, voluntary, purposive, and rational.

Chapter Three, "Varieties of Poetic Vision," shows that Arnold rejects, in part, the Romantic personality as well as the Romantic theory of poetry as inadequate to cope with social, religious, and philosophical problems of a progressive, sceptical, and scientific age. It shows as well his own conception of the appropriate poetic vision and the kind of poetry that ought to be written in that age.

Chapter Four, "On Poets," shows that though Arnold sees the being of the poet as ondoyant et divers: balancing and indeterminate, the plaything of cross motives and shifting impulses, swayed by a thousand subtle influences, physiological and pathological, he insists that poets should write primarily about the external world rather than their own subjective experience.

Part two, Matthew Arnold's Poetic Practice, shows how Arnold in his poetry and prose writings alike, interprets the phenomenon of alienation through a number of its manifestations. Three forces especially contribute to the alienation which Arnold's characters experience: the breakdown of faith, the rise of the city and its chaotic atmosphere, and finally the growth of knowledge and consciousness of the masses without a corresponding change of the institutions that govern their life. What Arnold did was to interpret his society by applying ideas to the existing social and religious institutions. He even went as far as to give a plan to poets to follow in their interpretation of their situation: "On God, on Nature, and on human life." Each is dealt with in a chapter or two as the argument requires. Thus this part is arranged to the following scheme:

Chapter five, "Prologue: The Idea of God and Its Relation to the Phenomenon of Alienation," shows Arnold's diagnosis of the Time-Spirit and the role of historical perspective in the task of ordinary man's past and present experiences. In this chapter Arnold comes to the conclusion that in the light of the historical development of man's spiritual life and the changes wrought on man's consciousness by the advance of science, religion must be recast to meet the changing needs of man:

"Leave then the Cross as ye have left carved gods,  
But guard the fire within."

Chapter six, "On God Continued," shows Arnold's attempts to deal with modern religious problems from a naturalistic point of view whose basis is the distrust of anthropomorphic conceptions of God's nature.

Chapter seven, "On Nature," tries to clarify the paradoxes in Arnold's concept of nature. It shows that Arnold is attempting (1) to clear away the anthropomorphic tendencies of thought that had filtered down from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as well as (2) the mystical glorification of nature in the early nineteenth century poets, and (3) to recommend a modern concept of animism.

Chapter eight, "On Human Life: (A) General Life." In this chapter I have tried to reinterpret Arnold's thought by placing his idea of human life in its social context, beginning with his views of the family and ending with his ideas of good government and the role of the state. I argue that Arnold's thought in these matters advanced gradually and pragmatically, rather than by sudden leaps or mutations as some of his critics have maintained.

Chapter nine, "On Human Life: (B) The Emotions." This chapter discusses Arnold's examination of the impact of the loss of faith on his fellow-men, in particular its desiccating effect on their emotional life.



In conclusion the "Epilogue" takes "Dover Beach" and "Obermann Once More" as charting the main itinerary of Arnold's thought. My principal argument in the dissertation is that Arnold is not preoccupied with his own personal dilemma but takes as his chief subject the difficulties of his fellow-men in understanding the age they live in, and then undertakes the further task of proposing a method of reintegration.

### Acknowledgement

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## Introduction

In this work, I have tried to interpret and to examine Arnold's interpretation of the phenomenon of alienation by attempting to answer the following questions. Can we point to something called alienation in Arnold's poetry? If so, how can we reconcile this with his insistence on the poet's need for sympathy and the role of poetry as the complete magister vitae? Can all this be represented as a single two-stage account of the process of artistic creation: immersion in experience, followed by withdrawal and disinterested contemplation of it? Is Arnold unable to share in the experience of his society, or having experienced it does he reject what he finds? Is the poetry written about this rejection or <sup>about</sup> failure of engagement? Is the phenomenon of alienation typical of all poets and men of sensibility, or symptomatic of a more widespread failure of integration in Victorian Britain as a whole, or an inevitable part of the human condition? In addition to these questions, there are other questions pertaining to the controversy over Arnold's reputation as poet-critic. Was Arnold a powerful and poetic spokesman, sensitive to the changes wrought upon society by the new ideas, or was he a second-rate poet and a self-contradictory critic with his face turned to the past?

To find a clear framework for displaying the full meaning of these questions and suggesting the answers to them, I found it necessary to start with Arnold's poetic theory. What we still lack is a view of the unity and continuity of Arnold's critical attitudes: to show a real correspondence between his theory and poems, and to show that the theory gives an adequate account of the poems. In other words, part one is concerned with the following question: how far does Arnold's theory of

poetry square with his poetic practice? This part is arranged according to the following scheme:

Chapter one: "The Nature of Poetry and Its Function", attempts to show the unity and continuity of Arnold's critical attitudes by showing the interconnections among Arnold's concerns, as they develop in response to the needs of his own career and his growing perception of the cultural impasse in the first half of the nineteenth-century. In other words, the study shows that it is a theory of commitment and not of escape. His poetry has an immense task to perform which ultimately determines all the element of his poetic. His poetry is pragmatic in a sense that it has a serious purpose.

Chapter two, "The Poetic Process", shows that Arnold's poetic process is conscious, voluntary, purposive, and rational. There is effort as well as sacrifice involved in it; it is racking and painful. It involves a thorough knowledge of 'theology, philosophy, history, art, and science.' This concept regards literature as verbal discourse, not merely as verbal artifact.

Chapter three: Varieties of Poetic Vision. The question which is presented in this chapter might be phrased as follows: How does the poet relate himself to the external world; how does he perceive the world objectively and partake of experience and yet retain his own integrity and individuality? The study shows that Arnold rejects, in part, the Romantic personality as well as the Romantic theory of poetry as inadequate to cope with social, religious, and philosophical problems of a progressive, sceptical, and scientific age; it will show as well his own conception of the appropriate poetic vision and the kind of poetry that ought to be written in that age.

Chapter four, On Poets, shows that though Arnold sees the being of the poet as ondoyant et divers : balancing and indeterminate, the plaything of cross motives and shifting impulses, swayed by a thousand subtle influences, physiological and pathological, he insists that poets should write primarily about the external world rather than their own personal experience.

Alienation defined. The meanings of the term "alienation" are legion, and as this term has become more fashionable, it has become synonymous with whatever the writer believes to be the central evils of modern society. In practice, the term has become an increasingly rhetorical and at times entirely emotive concept, often synonymous merely with the feeling that something is wrong somewhere, and that we have lost something important. Most usages of the term share the assumption that some relationship or connection that once existed, that is 'natural,' desirable, or good, has been lost. The term, however, remained ambiguous and became increasingly devoid of any specific meaning. This state gave rise to many attempts on the part of various sociologists, psychologists, and philosophers to seek for operational definitions of the concept, so that it might be subjected to the usual processes of measurement, comparison, and verification.<sup>1</sup>

Alienation is not, however, a uniquely modern phenomenon. In every era and society, at least a few exceptional individuals have spurned their societies. But what is peculiar about the phenomenon in modern time is that it affects not only those at the top of <sup>the</sup> intellectual ladder but those at the bottom of it too - the masses. In other words, while alienation in the past was chosen by the top minority as a response to society, now it is imposed upon the masses as a result of overwhelming cultural change. Increasingly, the vocabulary of social commentary is dominated by terms that characterise the sense of growing distance between men and their former objects of affection: alienation, estrangement,

dissaffection, anomie, withdrawal, disengagement, separation, apathy, non-involvement, indifference, and neutralism -- all of these terms point to a sense of loss, a growing gap between men and their social world.

The studies amounted to two main traditions: psychological and social, in addition to a third attempt to hyphenate these two traditions: psycho-social, or socio-psychological. Kenneth Keniston, in his comment on the psychological approach to alienation, says:

A purely psychological account of alienation implies that its only causes lie in individual life and 'personal' pathology. Once we discover psychodynamics and distortions of development that 'prevent' a youth from committing himself to his adulthood and his society, we have discovered all we need to know. Alienated youths themselves often unwittingly support this view by their readiness to discuss their childhoods, their intense interest in their own psychology, and their articulate insight into the personal origins of their beliefs ... (Being) exposed and over exposed to psychological thinking, they often tend to interpret their own behavior as 'merely' a reaction to an unfortunate past. 2

The other tradition sees alienation in the economic conditions of capitalistic societies.<sup>3</sup> This tradition views alienation as a reaction to the stresses, inconsistencies, or injustices in the individual's social order: the alienated man is seen as the unconscious victim of his society; his alienation is imposed upon him by the unjust economic system, by politicians who ignore his interest, or by employers who exploit his labour:

The role of individual personality and personal pathology is largely ignored, except as a system of social problems: the focus is on the 'big picture.' In practice, however, a sociological approach to alienation can lead to very different evaluations of it. Those who start from opposition to our social order naturally sympathise with its victims and detractors. Those who are favourably impressed with our society's stability, capacity for growth and change, and its high degree of organization, view alienation as an inevitable and minor growing pain of a society whose benefits we should daily count. But in either case, the experience and life of the individual are of interest primarily as they reflect society.

(K.Keniston, The Uncommitted, pp.6-7).

So far there is no comprehensive study on the cultural<sup>4</sup> aspect of the phenomenon, that is, as a crisis in man's spiritual life produced by the totality of conditions in modern mass society and man's self-consciousness. That is the aspect that concerns Arnold.

Arnold, in his essay on Heine, gives what could be accepted as the essence of the phenomenon:

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 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 .... To remove this want of correspondence is beginning to be the settled endeavour of most persons of good sense. Dissolvents of the old European system of dominant ideas and facts we must all be (CPW., III, pp. 159-60).

Again he write:

In an epoch of dissolution and transformation, such as that on which we are now entered, habits, ties, and associations are inevitably broken up, the action of individuals becomes more distinct, the shortcomings, errors, heats, disputes, which necessarily attend individual action, are brought into greater prominence ("Preface to Essays in Criticism," CPW; III, p. 288).

However, says Arnold in "On the Modern Element in Literature," "The predominance of thought, of reflection, in modern epochs is not without its penalties; in the unsound, in the over-tasked, in the over-sensitive, it has produced the most painful, the most lamentable results; it has

produced a state of feeling unknown to less enlightened but perhaps healthier epochs - the feeling of depression, the feeling of ennui. Depression and ennui; these are the characteristics stamped on how many of the representative works of modern times" (CPW., I, p. 32).

Alienation, in these lines, can be understood as a state of awareness of this want of correspondence: it is a mode of experience that involves mind as well as feeling. In other words, the term designates a state which is simultaneously both cognitive and affective in character. It involves an awareness of the situation and a feeling of estrangement from it. The very awareness of it is in a sense alienation. This dialectics between the self and other provides the clue to the understanding of alienation in all its aspects and all its forms. "A particular thinker or group or age," says Daya Krishna, "might focus attention on one aspect or form to the exclusion of others. But the others are always there potentially, either as recessive or subordinate, ready to arise into focal awareness once the previous form of alienation has been tackled to a certain extent. The history of humanity may be written in terms of the forms of alienation that have dominated successive civilizations and cultures."<sup>5</sup>

Thinkers are apt to be the first to feel the change and respond to it. They would feel alienated especially when they step beyond/<sup>the</sup> intellectual framework and cultural structure of their age. Their sense of alienation is bound to be acute when they feel powerless to achieve the role they have determined to be rightfully theirs in a specific situation. Arnold, in his analysis of this situation, says:

Therefore, when we speak of ourselves as divided into Barbarians, Philistines, and Populace, we must be understood always to imply that within each of these classes there are a certain number of aliens, if we may so call them, - persons who are mainly led, not by their class spirit, but by a general humane spirit, by the love of human perfection;



and that this number is capable of being diminished or augmented. I mean, the number of those who will succeed in developing this happy instinct will be greater or smaller, in proportion both to the forces of the original instinct within them, and to the hindrance or encouragement which it meets with from without. (Culture and Anarchy, CWP., v, p.146).

What matters here, is whether the poet is speaking only about his own dilemma or about the predicament of his society. This could be found out by studying the poet's mode of alienation: alloplastic or autoplactic. Alloplastic alienation is expressed primarily as attempts to effect a change: to remove this want of correspondence, to dissolve the old system of dominant ideas and facts. The other mode, autoplactic alienation, is expressed through the attempts of self-transformation. All indications show that Arnold's sense of alienation belongs to the alloplastic mode.

From Arnold's lines one feels that alienation is conterminous with awareness as well as <sup>with living in</sup> modern times: it is a price for such awareness <sup>and such an existence</sup>.

Hence, alienation could be defined as: a general syndrome made up of a number of different objective conditions and subjective feeling - a situation which emerges from certain awareness in the context of historical changes. Keniston, in his study of The Uncommitted, says that each type of alienation should be subjected to at least four questions:

- 1 - Focus: Alienated from what?
- 2 - Replacement: What replaces that situation?
- 3 - Mode: How is the alienation manifested?
- 4 - Agent: What is the agent of the alienation?

These questions, however, are still vague, for one could be alienated from almost anything. Arnold, who studied this phenomenon, offers a plan to poets to follow in their interpretation of their situation:

"On God, on Nature, and on human life."

The line is Wordsworth's though the original is "On man, on Nature and on human life." Arnold changes the order:<sup>6</sup> this is not out of carelessness but it has its logical justification which I shall try to elucidate in the following pages.

Alienation, as one has shown here, is a state of consciousness: the relation of "I-Other" constitutes the very essence of it. But the Other, it should be remembered, is not all of one piece or of one level. It includes what, in general, may be called The Absolute Other, or God in popular language; Nature, and Man himself. These constitute the only three possible levels of consciousness.

To begin with the first level of consciousness, Man's entire life, if not history, depends on his concept of God. From this concept there develops an immense system of institutions, established facts, accredited dogmas, customs, rules etc. In all religions, the possibility of man's estrangement from the Divine Order is fundamental; indeed, perhaps the central function of religion is to prevent this estrangement of man from God. What brings about or prevents this estrangement is man's idea of God. This is the topic that will be discussed in chapters five and six in part two of this work.

If God, for instance, is conceived as a Transcendent Other, Nature would appear as indifferent and make men feel lost in the empty spaces of the vast universe. Man will see his life on Earth as a short time spent in a physical world with inscrutable void on the other side, - a life without inherent meaning or purposes, a time unconsciously felt to involve a Fall an exile from purpose, warmth, and meaning. Central to this outlook is a sense of existential outcastness, of thrownness into a

world not made for man and indifferent to his fate: this view involves the death of God. But, psychologically speaking, it is not easy to accept the death of God and of all the structures premised on his existence without a feeling of deprivation. Freud, in his comment on this situation, says that "most educated people do not believe in God, but they fear Him."<sup>7</sup> The alternative is that though God exists yet he is indifferent to man's fate: the conclusion is the same (see Arnold's *Mycerinus*).

If God is conceived as Immanent, Nature would seem alive. In this case, man would try to make an effective relationship with it. To a certain extent this is made possible by the fact that Nature and the universe are governed by a very strict law that governs their motions, and that even the so-called inanimate nature is not entirely inanimate, as motion is its inherent property. It can always give rise to the semblance of something which moves. In this vision the subjective and the objective become identical; and that the whole is contained in the part. A modern exponent of this trend, Reich, writes:

Man cannot feel or phantasy anything which does not actually exist in one form or another. For human perceptions are nothing but a function of objective natural processes within the organism . . . .  
The most general functioning principle is contained in the smallest, special functioning principle. 8

This seems to be a pseudo-scientific version of Blake's assertion that the innocent can see a world in a grain of sand and a heaven in a wild flower. This starts from the assumption that phenomena, including persons, are not discrete entities, complete and comprehensible in themselves but are parts of larger wholes. As Arthur Koestler postulates in his The Ghost (London, 1967) , all phenomena can be arranged in a hierarchy of holons (e.g. electrons, atoms, molecules, cells, organs, organisms, etc.) each of which can be regarded both as

entity in itself and as part of a larger, more complex controlling super-entity. This is the topic to be discussed in chapter seven - "On Nature."

On the other hand, when the Absolute Other, - God - is conceived as transcendent, the whole range of relationships between one person and another can be developed within that context too. Thus throughout chapters eight and nine: "General Life" and "The Emotions", I work from the assumption that the purpose of any society should be the greatest possible fulfilment of its individual members: fulfilment usually requires the greatest possible integration of all powers of man. Fulfilment and integration are ideals against which failures of human developments can be judged. The goal of integration entails, according to Arnold, the balanced development and harmonious cooperation of all man's powers: 'the power of conduct, the power of intellect and knowledge, the power of beauty and the power of social life and manners.' To this effect Arnold writes in Culture and Anarchy that:

What we want is a fuller harmonious development of our humanity, a free play of thought upon routine notions, spontaneity of consciousness, sweetness and light, and these are just what culture generates and fosters.

(CPW, V, p. 191)

My argument will therefore be that nineteenth century English society, by encouraging one side of man, i.e. the religious and puritan side, has systematically split man's life into parts and made wholeness hard to attain. This, however, needs some clarification.

The main thesis of this argument starts by the assumption that the relationship between man and God is dialectical. Once man projects himself in a certain concept of God, the concept starts to work back again through the mediation of various social institutions, notably the family. If it happened that the concept is transcendental, the mediation

would be through the authoritarian family, the authoritarian school and the religious institutions and finally the state. Within this concept, work would be conceived as a duty. This in itself detracts from the natural enjoyment of work as an activity for character fulfilment.

This formulation of the relationship between the character of the individual, the structure of the family, and the structure of society could be seen in the now everyday fact that a particular authoritarian mode of behaviour on the part of the parents tends to produce a particular submissive, inhibited, one-dimensional kind of character in their children. The essence of this relationship is the suppression of spontaneous feelings by the oppressive and repressive use of power by the father. This type of family only occurs in societies whose concept of God is Transcendental. It is also one of the techniques devised by such societies to produce a submissive population incapable of rebelling against its oppressive rulers.

This sort of environment, in addition to the religious reflection of man upon his nature and destiny, would make man self-conscious and impair, or at least modify, his capacity for direct animal, childlike enjoyment of living. By becoming conscious and, furthermore, conscious of his capacity to be conscious, man begins to treat himself as an object and to regard his urge to fuse with the beyond as a threat to his capacity to be conscious. Of this situation Reich says: "In thinking about his own being and functioning, man turned involuntarily against himself; not in a destructive fashion, but in a manner which may well have been the point of origin of his armoring" (op.cit., p. 532).

The concept of the term, alienation, implies that something desirable, natural, or normal has been lost, that is, a positive relationship has ceased to exist. But one needs to specify what

replaces the lost relationship. Entering into a positive relationship of feeling with the other, who is conceived on the pattern of person, is an attempt to overcome alienation through the sentiment of love. "In this world from which Faith has retreated there is only one resource suggested -- 'Ah, love, let us be true / To one another!' "<sup>9</sup> For without love there would be no justice and similar ideas like the common good. This is the topic to be discussed in chapter nine of this work, "The Emotions".

In conclusion the "Epilogue" takes "Dover Beach" and "Obermann Once More" as charting the main lines of Arnold's thought. My principal argument in the dissertation is that Arnold is not pre-occupied with his own personal dilemma but takes as his chief subject the difficulties of his fellowmen in understanding the age they live in, and then undertakes the further task of proposing a method of reintegration.

## Notes

- 1 - Leo Srole, "Social Integration and Certain Corollaries," American Sociological Review (December, 1956). Gwynn Nettler, "A Measure of Alienation," American Sociological Review (December, 1957). Melvin Seeman, "On the Meaning of Alienation," American Sociological Review (December, 1959). Dwight Dean, "Meaning and Measurement of Alienation," American Sociological Review (December, 1961). Erich Fromm, The Sane Society (New York: Routledge, 1956). Karen Horney, Our Inner Conflicts (New York: Norton, 1945). ——— "Alienation and the Search for Identity," The American Journal of Psychoanalysis (November, 1961). Burt Kaplan, The Inner World of Mental Illness (New York: Harper and Row, 1964).
- 2 - Kenneth Keniston, The Uncommitted (New York: Dell, 1965). P. 6.
- 3 - Writings on alienation from this perspective generally start from Karl Marx's Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844. Among the most noteworthy of such writings are Erich Fromm, The Sane Society, Erich Kahler, The Tower and the Abyss (New York: Braziller, 1957), and Fritz Pappenheim, The Alienation of Modern Man (New York: Monthly Review, 1959). The trajectory from the works of the young Marx to those of the older Marx and the varying interpretation of Marxist thought are discussed by Daniel Bell in "Two Roads from Marx: The Themes of Alienation and Exploitation in Socialist Thought," pp. 335-368, in Bell, The End of Ideology (Glencoe: Free Press, 1960). See also Fromm, Marx's Concept of Man (New York: Ungar, 1961). Lewis Feuer, "What is Alienation? The Career of a Concept," New Politics (1961). Frank Lucente, "Alienation in Hegel and Marx," View Point (1964).
- 4 - The literature on Alienation as a cultural phenomenon is relatively sparse compared to writings on other varieties of alienation. See, however, Francis J. Rigney and L. Douglas Smith, The Real Bohemia (New York: Basic Books, 1961); Lawrence Lipton, The Holy Barbarians (New York: Messner, 1959); Norman Mailer, "The White Negro," pp. 337-359 in Advertisements for Myself (New York: Putnam, 1959); Gene Feldman and Max Gartenberg (eds.) The Beat Generation and the Angry Young Man (New York: Citadel, 1959); Julien Benda, The Betrayal of the Intellectuals (Boston: Beacon, 1955); George B. De Huszar (ed.), The Intellectuals (Glencoe: Free Press, 1960); and Robert E. Jones, The Alienated Hero in Modern French Drama (Athens: University of Georgia, 1962).
- 5 - Daya Krishna, "Alienation, Positive and Negative," Diogenes 72 (Winter, 1970), 43.  
the prospectus      the Preface to the
- 6 - From "The Recluse" in Excursion. It is interesting to note that Arnold changed the wording of the line too.
- 7 - Theoder Reik, From Thirty Years with Freud, tr. R. Winston (New York and Toronto: Farrar & Rinehart, 1940), p. 111.
- 8 - Mary Boyd Higgins, Wilhelm Reich: Selected Writings (New York: Farrar, 1960), p. 218, p. 292.
- 9 - P. Drew, "Matthew Arnold and the Passage of Time," in Major Victorian Poets (ed.) Isobel Armstrong (London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1969), p. 202.

PART I

MATTHEW ARNOLD'S POETIC THEORY



## CHAPTER I

### The Nature of Poetry and its Function

The object of this chapter is to show that, almost from the beginning of his poetic career, Arnold did not think of himself as writing a poem only for its autonomous aesthetic value, but as a reformer in poetical matters. In an undated letter [probably 1849] to Mrs Forster, Arnold says that "At Oxford particularly many complain that the subjects treated do not interest them. But as I feel rather as a reformer in Poetical matters, I am glad of this opposition. If I have health and opportunity to go on, I will shake the present methods until they go down".<sup>1</sup>

What this chapter will try to show may be schematised as follows:-

1. In Arnold's poetics, a poem is characterised by its instrumentality as a means of persuasion.
2. The poet is not only a seer but also a maker/<sup>an</sup> active craftsman.
3. The paramount cause of poetry is, as in Aristotle, a formal cause, determined primarily by the human action and qualities.
4. It is at the same time, as in neo-classic poetic, a final cause, the effect intended upon the audience.
5. The process of poetic organisation is not a spontaneous association of images, words, situations, and emotions, all amazingly interwoven, without effort, through the unconscious activity. Poetic composition, in Arnold's poetic, however inspired, requires invention, judgement, often trial and rejection, and long contemplation.

In other words, Arnold writes with a purpose. This can be inferred from the following questions which Arnold himself asks in "Literature and Science": "Have humane letters, then, have poetry and eloquence, the power here attributed to them of engaging the emotions, and do they

exercise it? And if they have it and exercise it, how do they exercise it, so as to exert an influence upon man's sense for conduct, his sense for beauty? Finally, even if they both can and do exert an influence upon the senses in question, how are they to relate to them the results, - the modern results, - of natural science? All these questions may be asked." <sup>2</sup>

Arnold, in his critical practice, takes these questions as guide-posts. Of the function of poetry, he writes to Clough, as early as March 1, 1849, that "there are two offices of Poetry - one to add to one's store of thoughts and feelings - another to compose and elevate the mind by a sustained tone, numerous allusion, and grand style."<sup>3</sup> Again, Arnold speaks of the effect, especially that of the ancient writers, upon the readers:

A steadying and composing effect upon their judgement, not of literary works only, but of men and events in general. They [Poets] are like persons who have had a very weighty and impressive experience: they are more truly than others under the empire of facts, and more independent of the language current among those with whom they live. They wish neither to applaud nor to revile their age; they wish to know what it is, what it can give them, and whether this is what they want. What they want, they know very well; they want to educe and cultivate what is best and noblest in themselves; they know, too, that this is no easy task ("Preface 1853", CPW, I, p. 13).

The key words, here, are "to educe" and "to cultivate". To educe means to bring out, develop, from latent or potential existence. This shows that poetry enlightens by bringing out something from within the best self. While to cultivate means, in the context of Arnold's thinking, making known the best that is known and thought in the world.

From the previous quotations, one can say that poetry, according to Arnold, exercises its power on two faculties: the cognitive faculty of man and the affective one. But before going any further, a brief survey of

Arnold's modern situation, as he saw it, is necessary. For Arnold's concern has always been to analyse his situation and to explore the kind of poetry that should be written in that situation. The study indicates that Arnold is keenly aware of the philosophical, political, sociological, and economic condition of his age and how these helped to bring about and reinforce man's sense of alienation.

Arnold, in his analysis of his situation, writes:

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; it is no longer dangerous to affirm that this want of correspondence exists; people are even beginning to be shy of denying it. To remove this want of correspondence is beginning to be the settled endeavour of most persons of good sense. Dissolvents of the old European system of dominant ideas and facts we must all be, all of us who have any power of working; what we have to study is that we may not be acrid dissolvents of it ("Heinrich Heine", CPW, III, pp. 109-10).

At the same time, the entire edifice of the Victorian Society threatens to collapse under the weight of contradiction, complication, and paradox (Laissez-fairism and socialism, racism and anti-racism, segregationism and desegregationism, militarism and pacificism, imperialism and anti-imperialism, Marxism and evolutionary socialism etc.). Arnold, in his poetic analysis of the situation, writes in "Dover Beach":

And we are here as on a darkling plain  
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,  
Where ignorant armies clash by night. 4

Under these contradictions light seemed to thicken, or, to use Shakespear's words:       ..... Light thickens, and the crow

Makes wing to the rooky wood;  
Good things of day begin to droop and drowse,  
While night's black agents to their preys do rouse.

(Macbeth, Act III, sc. iii. 11.50-53)

The black agents of the Victorian age were the ministers of doubt and discouragement. Of a situation similar to that, Shelley says, "At the approach of such a period, poetry ever addresses itself to those faculties which are the last to be destroyed, and its voice is heard, like the footsteps of Astraea, departing from the world."<sup>5</sup>

To this effect Arnold says "the calm, the cheerfulness, the disinterested objectivity have disappeared; the dialogue of the mind with itself has commenced; modern problems have presented themselves; we hear already the doubts, we witness the discouragement, of Hamlet and of Faust" ("Preface, 1853", CPN, I, p. 1). This statement be it noted, is presented as an objective diagnosis of the central intellectual characteristic of Arnold's age, not an essentially emotional approach to life. For with his vision of contemporary man as a Faust or a Hamlet exhibiting the dialogue of the mind with itself, Arnold foresaw the crisis of modern civilisation while it was in germ. He envisaged the emergence of the split man or what is commonly called dissociation of sensibility.

Arnold, in his prose writings, gives his analysis of the phenomenon of alienation as both cognitive and affective. Of the cognitive aspect he writes, in a letter to Clough [February 1853], that "There is a power of truth in your letter ... congestion of the brain is what we suffer from" (CL., p. 130). In his poetry he gives the affective aspect of the phenomenon. Professor Drew has rightly termed it as constricted situation - "a limited, measured effect deliberately chosen to represent a constricted situation. Constricted is I think the right word to express the quality of the poet's unease."<sup>6</sup> The problem was too obvious for many thinkers. George Sand, for example, distinguished between the early Romanticism of Werther, which involved simply the conflict of the individual against the world, and the more complex modern attitude of Rene and Obermann, which involved the individual against himself. Arnold's analysis shows both types and adds the tormenting awareness of the situation: for him man is aware that he is

Wandering between two worlds, one dead,  
The other powerless to be born,  
With nowhere yet to rest (his) head.

(Poems, pp. 288-89)

The reason behind this situation is that the social institutions, the established system, were based on certain facts and now science had shown that they were not true. Goethe, commenting on a situation like that toward the end of Wilhelm Meister's Travels, says that "In the study of the sciences, particularly those that deal with nature, it is as necessary as it is difficult to inquire whether that which has been handed down to us from the past, and regarded as valid by our ancestors, is really to be relied on to such a degree that we may continue to build upon it safely in the future."<sup>7</sup>

Of the importance of poetry, in this situation, Arnold writes:

But now, says Professor Huxley, conceptions of the universe fatal to the notions held by our forefathers have been forced upon us by physical science. Grant to him that they are thus fatal, that the new conceptions must and will soon become current everywhere, and that every one will finally perceive them to be fatal to the beliefs of our forefathers. The need of humane letters, as they are truly called, because they serve the paramount desire in men that good should be ever present to them, - the need of humane letters, to establish a relation between the new conceptions, and our instinct for beauty, our instinct for conduct, is only more visible ("Literature and Science", CPW, X, p. 66).

The test of any poet in the nineteenth century, for Arnold, is his perception of this problem, and his fruitful response to it. He himself responded to it by analysing it. Knowing this, he was able to **claim in** 1869 that his poetry, if not obviously pragmatic, nevertheless embodied one of the main currents of Victorian thought:

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.<sup>8</sup>

Arnold saw in his age an intellectual and moral anarchy because of the contradiction between science and theology. This crisis can only be ended by a mighty constructive and synthetic effort. He preached that this can be achieved through culture. It is precisely this attempt which makes it possible to regard him a central literary figure of his century - of the century whose special problem was the reconciling of negation with affirmation, science with religion, the head with the heart, the past with the present, order with progress. Of the central problem of the age Arnold says: "Undoubtedly a period of transition in religious belief,

such as the period in which we are now living, presents many grave difficulties. Undoubtedly the reliance on miracles is not lost without some danger; but the thing to consider is that it must be lost, and that the danger must be met, and, as it can be, counteracted" ("A Comment on Christmas", CPW, X, p. 233).

It is the poet's responsibility to assist the process of reconciliation between these two realms of thought. His function, at this stage, is to prepare the soil because knowledge and truth, in the full sense of the words, are not attainable by the great mass of the human race at all:

The great mass of the human race have to be softened and humanised through their heart and imagination, before any soil can be found in them where knowledge may strike living roots. Until the softening and humanising process is very far advanced, intellectual demonstrations are uninforming for them; and, if they impede the working of influences which advance this softening and humanising process, they are even noxious; they retard their development, they impair the culture of the world. All the great teachers, divine and human, who have ever appeared, have united in proclaiming this ("The Bishop and the Philosopher", CPW, III, p. 44).

This process needs a collective effort of all intellectuals. For it is not an easy task:

It is one of the hardest tasks in the world to make new intellectual ideas harmonise truly with the religious life, to place them in their right light for that life. The moments in which such a change is accomplished are epochs in religious history; the men through whose instrumentality it is accomplished are great religious reformers. The greatness of these men does not consist in their having these new ideas, in their originating them. The ideas are in the world; they come originally from the sphere of pure thought; they are put into circulation by the spirit of the time. The greatness of a religious reformer consists in his reconciling them with the religious life, in his starting this life upon a fresh period in company with them. No such religious reformer for the present age has yet shown himself ("Dr Stanley's Lectures on the Jewish Church", CPW, III, p. 69).

The poet, in Arnold's poetics, is asked to be fully aware of his task in the modern time: to interpret human life afresh, and to supply a new spiritual basis to it. To this effect Arnold writes:

Dante's task was to set forth the lesson of the world from the point of view of medieval Catholicism; the basis of spiritual life was given, Dante had not to make this anew. Shakespeare's task was to set forth the spectacle of the world when man's spirit re-awoke to the possession of the world at the Renaissance. The spectacle of human life, left to bear its own significance and tell its own story, but shown in all its fullness, variety, and power, is at that moment the great matter; but if we are to press deeper, the basis of spiritual life is still at that time the traditional religion, reformed or unreformed, of Christendom, and Shakespeare has not to supply a new basis. But when Goethe came, Europe had lost her basis of spiritual life; she had to find it again; Goethe's task was, - the inevitable task for the modern poet henceforth is, - as it was for the Greek poet in the days of Pericles, not to preach a sublime sermon on a given text like Dante, not to exhibit all the Kingdoms of human life and the glory of them like Shakespeare, but to interpret human life afresh, and to supply a new spiritual basis to it ("On the Study of Celtic Literature", CPW, III, p. 381).

But even more, the value of any poet or literature of an earlier age is the extent to which they could help the man of the nineteenth century live in the modern world. To this effect he asks: "And what past literature will naturally be most interesting to such an age as our own? Evidently, the literatures which have most successfully solved for their ages the problem which occupies ours: the literatures which in their day and for their own nation have adequately comprehended, have adequately represented, the spectacle before them" ("On the Modern Element in Literature", CPW, I, p. 21). So the literature of ancient Greece is an object of indestructible interest and it is for the present age a mighty agent of intellectual deliverance. It is so because it was a great, an adequate literature co-existing with a highly developed,



distinctively modern epoch.

Arnold, given the conclusion of his modern situation, was convinced that the decline of belief in the old popular Christianity was inevitable and that as a result poetry would have to play a greater rôle by becoming a complete magister vitae, that is, "by including ... religion with poetry, instead of existing as poetry only" (CL, p. 124). One might add science too, for in Literature and Dogma, Arnold quotes with approval Goethe's saying: "He who has art and science has also religion" (CPW, VI, p. 177). Obviously this is no holiday art for art's sake, but a mighty influence, serious in its aims, although pleasurable in its means. Arnold believed that poetry would raise humanity to its full powers. For this task, a new type of poetry is required: "The language, style and general proceedings of a poetry which has such an immense task to perform, must be very plain direct and severe and it must not lose itself in parts and episodes and ornamental work, but must press forwards to the whole" (CL, p. 124). For "without poetry," says Arnold, "our science will appear incomplete; and most of what now passes with us for religion and philosophy will be replaced by poetry ... our religion, parading evidences such as those on which the popular mind relies now; our philosophy, pluming itself on its reasonings about causation and finite and infinite being, what are they but the shadows and dreams and false shows of knowledge? The day will come when we shall wonder at ourselves for having trusted to them, for having taken them seriously; and the more we perceive this, the more we shall prize 'the breadth and finer spirit of knowledge' offered to us by poetry" (The Study of Poetry", CPW, IX, pp. 161-2).

The future of poetry is immense, because in poetry, where it is worthy of its high destinies, our race, as time goes on, will find an even surer and surer stay. There is not a creed which is not shaken, not an accredited dogma which is not shown to be questionable, not a received tradition which does not threaten to dissolve. Our religion has materialised itself in the fact, in the supposed fact; it has attached its emotion to the fact, and now the fact is failing it. But for poetry the idea is everything; the rest is a world of illusion, of divine illusion. Poetry attaches its emotion to the idea; the idea is the fact. The strongest part of our religion today is its unconscious poetry ("The Study of Poetry", CPW, IX, p. 161).

Professor Wimsatt, in his comment on these lines, says that "poetry, as Matthew Arnold believed, 'attaches the emotion to the idea; the idea is the fact.' The objective critic, however, must admit that it is not easy to explain how this is done, how poetry makes ideas thick and complicated enough to hold on the emotion".<sup>9</sup> This chapter attempts, among some other topics, to explain how this is done.

## I

### The Cognitive Function of Poetry

When Goethe's death was told, we said:  
Sunk, then, is Europe's sagest head.  
Physician of the iron age,  
Goethe has done his pilgrimage.  
He took the suffering human race,  
He read each wound, each weakness clear;  
And struck his finger on the place,  
And said: Thou ailest here, and here!  
He looked on Europe's dying hour  
Of fitful dream and feverish power;  
His eye plunged down the weltering strife,  
The turmoil of expiring life -  
He said: The end is everywhere,  
Art still has truth, take refuge there!  
And he was happy, if to know  
Causes of things, and far below  
His feet to see the lurid flow  
Of terror, and insane distress,  
And headlong fate, be happiness.  
("Memorial Verses", Poems, pp. 227-28).

Poetry derives this power from the fact that "All people want to know life, above all the life which surrounds them and concerns them; and we

come to the novel and to the stage-play to help us to what we want"

(CPW, X, p. 135). The life man asks about is life in its concrete forms, -  
It is that  
life as man lives it. / the sort of life / Chaucer speaks about in "The Knight's  
Tale":

What is this world? What asketh men to have?  
Now with his love, now in his colde grave  
Allone, with-outen any company. ( 1919-21).

And that of Arnold in his poem "Rugby Chapel":

What is the course of the life  
Of mortal men on the earth?  
Most men eddy about  
Here and there - eat and drink,  
Chatter and love and hate,  
Gather and squander, are raised  
Aloft, one hurled in the dust,  
Striving blindly, achieving  
Nothing; and then they die (Poems, p. 447)

Arnold's lines might recall to the reader's mind Kant's concept of  
Abderitism. However, the task of poetry is to interpret it:

I mean, not a power of [says Arnold] drawing out in black and white an explanation of the mystery of the universe, but the power of so dealing with things as to awaken in us a wonderfully full, new, and intimate sense of them, and of our relations with them. When this sense is awakened in us, as to objects without us, we feel ourselves to be in contact with the essential nature of those objects, to be no longer bewildered and oppressed by them, but to have their secret, and to be in harmony with them; and this feeling calms and satisfies us as no other can... The interpretations of science do not give us this intimate sense of objects as the interpretations of poetry give it; they appeal to a limited faculty, and not to the whole man. It is not Linnaeus or Cavendish or Cuvier who gives us the true sense of animals, or water, or plants, who seizes their secret for us, who makes us participate in their life; it is Shakespeare ... Wordsworth ... and Keats ("Maurice de Guérin", CPW, III, pp. 12-13).

Of the scientific interpretation and its implication in the nineteenth century, Professor Drew writes:

It is not hard to see how the geologist and the biologist destroyed the idea of special creation, or the way in which theories of evolution called in question the validity of ethical systems. But nothing seems to have offered such obvious ground for pessimism as the laws of thermodynamics, which have become so notorious in another context. For the obvious implication of the first law is that in every mechanical process, and indeed in every form of activity a certain amount of the energy involved will be converted into heat, which is the least defined form of energy. The second law, if generally true, describes a Universe in which energy once dissipated in the form of heat cannot be recovered except at the cost of an even greater quantity of energy of some higher kind. It seems to follow that the whole process of the Universe is one of gradual degeneration from an earlier state when all matter was charged with potentially useful energy has been converted to heat, everything is the same temperature, and no life or identifiable motion exists. Whether we call this a condition of maximum entropy, or the heat-death of the Universe, or a state of total randomness is not of any importance. The point is that if we have this view of the world we must see it as a clock that is running down, indeed we may think of the gradual increase in entropy as itself a kind of measurement of time ("The Passage of Time", p. 202).

The implication of such an interpretation for the prospects of humanity are not encouraging. Humanity, in fact, is doomed in advance. But how is poetry to relate these results, the modern results, of natural science to man's life and yet remain a source of joy? Arnold does not say much directly in this connection. He just says that:

Following our instinct for intellect and knowledge, we acquire pieces of knowledge; and presently, in the generality of men, there arises the desire to relate these pieces of knowledge to our sense for conduct, to our sense for beauty, - and there is weariness and dissatisfaction if the desire is balked. Now in this desire lies, I think, the strength of that hold which letters have upon us (p. 62) ... we shall find that this art, and poetry, and eloquence, have in fact not only the power of refreshing and delighting us, they have also the power, - such is the strength and worth, in essentials, of their authors' criticism of life, - they have a fortifying, and elevating, and quickening, and suggestive power, capable of wonderfully helping us to relate the results of modern science to our need for conduct, our need for beauty ("Literature and Science", CPW, X, pp. 62, 68).

Arnold, more than once, quotes these lines as examples of poetry that give joy:

"The fates have bestowed an enduring soul upon men."

(Iliad, XXIV, 49)

"In la sua volontade e nostra pace."  
(In His will is our peace.)

(Dante's Paradiso III, 85)

"... Men must endure  
Their going hence, even as their coming hither;  
Ripeness is all."

(King Lear, V, ii, 9-11)

One can say that the common denominator in these quotation is the word endure. It points to an effort and struggle that man should exert to maintain his hope unbroken. The word ripeness, of the last quotation, does not ignore the fact that the whole process of the Universe is one of gradual degeneration. But it gives an animating sense by directing the attention to an earlier state of incompleteness as opposed to another state of perfection. Had Shakespeare said decay instead of ripeness the meaning would not have changed, but there would be a complete difference in the spirit each communicates. Perhaps the difference could be sensed if one contrasts Shakespeare's lines with these lines of Shelley:

Worlds on worlds are rolling over  
From creation to decay,  
Like the bubbles on a river  
Sparkling, bursting, borne away.

Arnold realises that scientific knowledge answers the how and not the what and why of things. This is one of his main ideas in Literature and Dogma. Literature does not answer the what and why of things too. But, as Epifanio San Juan puts it, "actually, when man

engages in the quest for the 'what' and of 'why' of things, he is searching not for the objective validity of knowledge but, rather, for an emotional assurance of the practicality of concepts that he wants to entertain. Pure cognition therefore, has little or no direct bearing upon what man should do or what he should feel." <sup>10</sup> In other words, Arnold, in the context of his thought, distinguishes, like Wittgenstein in this century, two distinct kinds of knowledge: that which can be said or demonstrated, and that which can be revealed or shown. This latter revelational knowledge is that of art and poetry. It is verifiable by experience. The first belongs to science.

Life, as an experience, and as Arnold conceives it, is embodied in human action. So he puts it down in the Preface (1853) that the eternal objects of poetry, among all nations, and at all times, "are actions; human actions; possessing an inherent interest in themselves, and which are to be communicated in an interesting manner by the art of the poet" (CPW, I, p. 3). The interesting manner is the dramatic form "that exhibits, above all, the actions of man as strictly determined by his thoughts and his feelings; it exhibits, therefore, what may be always accessible, always intelligible, always interesting" ("On the Modern Element in Literature", CPW, I, p. 34). The interesting manner includes, among many other things, the poetic language, but poetic language, as <sup>C.</sup> Davy has rightly observed, and particularly of images is not to "illustrate ideas but to embody an otherwise indefinable experience." <sup>11</sup> In addition to that, actions, in themselves, embody ideas, concepts, and beliefs.

Every representation, therefore, which is consistently drawn, says Arnold, "may be supposed to be interesting, in as much as it gratifies this natural interest in knowledge of all kinds" (CPW, I, p. 2). " 'we all naturally take pleasure,' says Aristotle, 'in any imitation or representation

whatever: this is the basis of our love of poetry; and we take pleasure in them,' he adds, 'because all knowledge is naturally agreeable to us; not to the philosopher only, but to mankind at large' " (ibid., pp. 1-2). Poetry, in this sense, awakens and enlarges the mind by rendering it the receptacle of a thousand unapprehended combinations of thought. The reward is an increased ability to sense transcendent reality behind all individual perceptions, to synthesize the fragmentary objects of everyday consciousness. Arnold, to this effect, says that "To arrive at a full and right conception of things, to know one's self and the world, - which is knowledge; then to act firmly and manfully on that knowledge, - which is virtue; this is the native, the indestructible impulse of the spirit of man" ("Ecce, Convertimur ad Gentes", CPW, IX, pp. 4-5).

The question that comes to one's mind is: what sort of knowledge does Arnold mean? It is not the function of poetry to furnish the reader with any kind of knowledge whether it is philosophical, historical, or sociological. To this effect Arnold says that literature "does not principally show itself in discovering new ideas, that is rather the business of the philosopher. 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" ("The Function of Criticism", CPW, III, pp. 260-61). The idea of synthesis implies that, as part of the nature of poetry, there is no exclusion of opposites, there are also no negatives. In literature, as Susanne Langer puts it, "the words 'no', 'never', 'not' etc., occur freely; but what they deny is thereby created. In poetry there is no

negation, but only contrast." <sup>12</sup> This is true especially if one considers for instance, Dylan Thomas's "Refusal to Mourn the Death, by Fire, of a Child in London", or the last stanza of Swinburne's "The Garden of Proserpine", in which almost every line is a denial.

Concerning the knowledge that poetry may give, Cleanth Brooks writes that "The peculiar kind of knowledge that literature gives us is concrete - not a generalisation about facts but a special kind of focusing upon facts themselves - not the remedy for a problem but the special presentation of the problem itself." <sup>13</sup> Brooks argues that literature is not generalisations of concrete problems - not remedies designed to solve these problems but rather diagnoses in which the problems are defined and realised for what they are. In other words, its function is setting down something perceived. To the same effect Robert Frost, in a letter to John Barlett, writes that "it is our business to give to people the thing that will make them say 'Oh yes I know what you mean.' It is never to tell them something they don't know, but something they knew and hadn't thought of saying. It must be something they recognise." <sup>14</sup> Brooks and Robert Frost explain exactly what Arnold meant by saying that the:

story on which the drama was founded stood, before he [spectator] entered the theatre, traced in its bare outlines upon the spectator's mind; it stood in his memory, as a group of statuary faintly seen, at the end of a long and dark vista: then came the poet, embodying outlines, developing situations, not a word wasted, not a sentiment capriciously thrown in: stroke upon stroke, the drama proceeded: the light deepened upon the group, more and more it revealed itself to the riveted gaze of the spectator: until at last, when the final words were spoken, it stood before him in broad sunlight, a model of immortal beauty ("Preface to Poems (1853)", CPW, I, p. 6).



The Affective function of Poetry

And Wordsworth! - Ah, pale ghosts, rejoice!  
For never has such soothing voice  
Been to your shadowy world conveyed,  
Since erst, at morn, some wandering shade  
Heard the clear song of Orpheus come  
Through Hades, and the mournful gloom.

... ..

He too upon a wintry clime  
Had fallen - on this iron time  
Of doubts, disputes, distractions, fears.  
He found us when the age had bound  
Our souls in its benumbing round;  
He spoke, and loosed our heart in tears.  
He laid us as we lay at birth  
On the cool flowery lap of earth,  
Smiles broke from us and we had ease;  
The hills were round us, and the breeze  
Went o'er the sun-lit fields again;  
Our foreheads felt the wind and rain.  
Our youth returned.

("Memorial Verses", Poems, pp. 228-29)

Of the affective aspect of the function of poetry, Arnold writes that "the right function of poetry is to animate, to console, to rejoice - in one word, to strengthen". ("A Deptford Poet", CPW, VIII, p. i). He had long believed that if consolation and joy were the products of religion, they were also the products of poetry. He quoted Hesiod's divination 'the Muses were born that they might be a forgetfulness of evils, and a truce from cares.' In addition to consolation, the best poetry offers joy. To this effect he quoted the dictum of Schiller in his Preface that 'All art ... is dedicated to Joy, and there is no higher and no more serious problem, than how to make men happy.' Arnold's poetry, in fact does not offer joy in the sense it is generally understood. It offers joy by telling the truth. 'The mind naturally loves truth,' Johnson says, and Arnold gives pleasure because he tells the truth:

A poetical work, therefore, is not justified when it has been shown to be an accurate, and therefore interesting representation; it has to be shown also that it is a representation from which men can derive enjoyment... It is demanded, not only that it shall interest, but also that it shall inspire and rejoice the reader; that it shall convey a charm, and infuse delight... It is not enough that the poet should add to the knowledge of men, it is required of him also that he should add to their happiness ("Preface to Poems" - CPW, I, p. 2)  
1853.

This is possible, in Arnold's view, by presenting the things that "appeal to the great primary human affections: to those elementary feelings which subsist permanently in the race, and which are independent of time" (ibid., p. 4). The universal object of poetry, then, is an action that has greatness or significance and which appeals to man's common and basic nature, that is, the affective side of man's nature. That is why he turned with such ferocity on men like W. Clifford, who threatened to discredit all traditional modes of feeling in the name of science. But it sounds like a paradox when Arnold, speaking of the dramatic situation, says that "the more tragic the situation, the deeper becomes the enjoyment; and the situation is more tragic in proportion as it becomes more terrible" (ibid., p. 2). No doubt, but Arnold does not really make his position clear. Perhaps the closest interpretation of this idea can be found in Shelley's essay "A Defence of Poetry":

The great secret of morals is love; or a going out of our own nature, and an identification of ourselves with the beautiful which exists in thought, action, or person, not our own. A man, to be greatly good, must imagine intensely and comprehensively; he must put himself in the place of another and of many others; the pains and pleasures of his species must become his own ("English Critical Essays", Op. Cit., p. 112).

One is inclined to accept Shelley's words as an adequate interpretation of Arnold's view about the dramatic situation for the following reasons:

1. Arnold's concept of dramatic poetry as the type of poetry in which the poet has to go out of himself and to create;

2. Arnold believes that the audience is to enter into what the poet creates;
3. He believes that the misery "of the present age is not the intensity of men's suffering - but in their incapacity to suffer, enjoy, feel at all, wholly and profoundly - in their having their susceptibility eternally agacée by a continual dance of ever-changing objects, and not having the power to attach it upon one, to expend it on that one, to absorb it in that one: in their being ever learning and never coming to the knowledge of the truth: in their having a presentiment of all things, a possession of a feeling, at the next moment the commencement of an imagination, at the next the commencement of a thought and the eternal tumult of the world mingling, breaking in upon, hurrying away all. Deep suffering is the consciousness of oneself - no less than deep enjoyment.<sup>15</sup> The dream of the present age is Divorce from oneself."

The process can be schematised like that: the spectator finds himself really taken through the tragic situation or tragic experience as if it were his own. And then he is taken out of it, and into regenerative release and restored life. This, anyhow, depends on the artistic genius of the poet in achieving the necessary disengagement of the spectator's feelings in the right moment and at the right stage in the development of action. Moreover, pity and terror have mnemonic values which the drama cannot dispense with, because of its rapid course of action. Who would remember the significance of Hamlet or King Lear without its anguish?

The moment of disengagement is accompanied by a deep sense of relief and purification. It is a two-stage process: agitation then assuagement: the enjoyment springs from the sense that the spectator gets when he feels that he has prevailed over the anarchy of his inner life: "[to] succeed in banishing from his mind all feelings of contradiction, and irritation, and impatience; in order to delight himself with the contemplation of some noble action of a heroic time" ("Preface to Poems <sup>1853,</sup>" / p. 14).

The ultimate relief comes when the poet brings the tragic situation to a state of rest or denouement. This cannot take place as long as the reader is left in a state of tension. Only enlightenment, a clear comprehension of what is involved in the situation, an understanding of cause and effect, a judgement on what he has read or witnessed, and an induced state of mind that places it above the riot of passion - can effect this necessary reconciliation. Arnold, in the preface to the original edition of Merope, declares that the state of feeling which it is the highest aim of tragedy to produce resides in a sentiment of sublime acquiescence in the course of fate, and in the dispensation of human life. This might sound like a torpid fatalism. But it is worthy of notice that in the context of Greek tradition, Fate - Necessity or Destiny - is nothing but the Natural Law.

There is another function which, one thinks, is central in Arnold's line of endeavour and goes back to the origin of the drama itself. According to Arnold, Poetry is the celebration of human significance. The idea of celebration points to the sources of drama which were a sort of ceremonies. These were often such as to generate a great collective sentiment and ~~of~~ attitude by means of excitement, in which individuals lost their sense of separateness and felt themselves at one with the whole community. This function is of great value to someone like Arnold who longed to see "Europe as being, for intellectual and spiritual purposes, one great confederation, bound to a joint action and working to a common result; and whose members have, for their proper outfit, a knowledge of Greek, Roman, and Eastern antiquity, and of one another" (CPW, III, p. 284). The special usefulness of poetry to perform this function stems from its power to unify human sensibilities

without founding this power on the supposed fact.

Arnold hints at another function for poetry - a psychological one. In one of his letters to Clough, he writes that "in Sophocles what is valuable is not so much his contributions to psychology and the anatomy of sentiment, as the grand moral effects produced by style". (CL, p. 101). This raises the question whether harmony and rhythm, which Aristotle mentions in his argument in the Poetics, constitute a second source of poetical pleasure; Arnold thought they did and made of them, as form or style, the source of delight peculiar to poetry. At any rate, the Aristotelian theory does not deny the psychological function of poetry. To this effect Professor Trilling writes that this function "is suggested by Freud's theory of the traumatic neurosis - which might be called the mithridatic function, by which tragedy is used as the homeopathic administration of pain to inure ourselves to the greater pain which life will force upon us. There is in the cathartic theory of tragedy, as it is usually understood, a conception of tragedy's function which is too negative and which inadequately suggests the sense of active mastery which tragedy can give".<sup>16</sup>

Poetry, in short, gives strong impressions, habits, methods of thinking, and ruling ideas. For, as Arnold puts it in a letter to William Steward, "a single line of poetry, working in the mind, may produce more thoughts and lead to more light, which is what man wants, than the fullest acquaintance with the processes of digestion". (Letters, II, p. 84). But these thoughts and habits would not bind man strongly so as to act upon them unless he makes them his own. Here comes the role of emotions. Here, too, one may recall Aristotle's view that moral education consists in the attaching of feeling to its proper object.<sup>17</sup> The great instrument of attaching the feelings to the proper objects is undoubtedly

poetry. It acts upon man's powers whether it is ethical or aesthetic. So, one finds that the Preface<sup>to Poems</sup> (1853) is not exclusively written to be a moralistic approach to poetry. It is written with the intention of balancing moral, aesthetic and intellectual elements - all are equal in importance.

\* \* \*

Poetry, in Arnold's view, should have a more immediate appreciable effect "not only upon the young and enthusiastic to whom the future belongs, but upon formed and important personages to whom the present belongs, and who are actually moving society" ("Joubert", CPW, III, p. 193). This shows how Arnold firmly believed that literature made things happen, that it could change people. And because it changes them, it is, if one thinks about it, not unlike religion. For, as Arnold puts it, "All roads... lead to Rome; and one finds in like manner that all questions raise the question of religion... Questions of good government, social harmony, education, civilisation, come forth and ask to be considered; and very soon it appears that we cannot possibly treat them without returning to treat of religion" ("Irish Catholicism", CPW, VIII, p. 321). "The question, how to live, is itself a moral idea; and it is the question which most interests every man, and with which, in some way or other, he is perpetually occupied. A large sense is of course to be given to the term moral. Whatever bears upon the question 'how to live', comes under it". ("Wordsworth", CPW, IX, p. 45).

Therefore, a poetry of revolt against moral ideas is a poetry of revolt against life; a poetry of indifference towards moral ideas is a poetry of indifference towards life: "we [says Arnold] find attraction, at times, even in a poetry of revolt against [morals]; in a poetry which

might take for its motto Omar Kheyam's words: 'Let us make up in the tavern for the time which we have wasted in the mosque.' Or we find attractions in a poetry indifferent to them; in a poetry where the contents may be what they will, but where the form is studied and exquisite" (ibid., p. 46). Modern Poetry "can only subsist by its contents - by becoming a complete magister vitae as the poetry of the ancients did: by including as their did, religion with poetry" (CL, p. 124). It is important, therefore, to hold fast to this: that poetry is at bottom a criticism of life; that the greatness of a poet lies in his powerful and beautiful application of ideas to life, - to the question : How to live?

In his Essay, "Maurice de Guérin", Arnold gives an illuminating account of the poetic method of applying ideas to life:

Poetry interprets in two ways; it interprets by expressing with magical felicity the physiognomy and movement of the outward world [i.e., Naturalistic interpretation], and it interprets by expressing, with inspired conviction, the ideas and laws of the inward world of man's moral and spiritual nature [i.e. moral interpretation]. In other words, poetry is interpretative both by having natural magic in it, and by having moral profundity. In both ways it illuminates man; it gives him a satisfying sense of reality; it reconciles him with himself and with the universe (CPW, III, p. 33).

Poetry is the interpretress of the natural world, as well as of the moral world. Great poets unite in themselves the faculty of both kinds of interpretation: the naturalistic and the moral. "But it is observable," says Arnold, "that in the poets who unite both kinds, the latter [the moral] usually ends by making itself the master" (ibid., p. 33). Empedocles on Etna, in one sense, shows Arnold's argument about the impossibility of balanced, harmonious coexistence of these two faculties; one faculty could live only in the absence or with the extinction of the other. They could be kept in balance but with immense effort. Again,

one hears echoes of his trouble as a man, a trouble which he religiously suppressed as a poet:

But how to find the energy and power to bring all those self-seeking tendencies of the flesh, those multitudinous, swarming, eager, and incessant impulses, into obedience to the central tendency? Mere commanding and forbidding is of no avail, and only irritates opposition in the desires it tries to control. It even enlarges their power, because it makes us feel our impotence; and the confusion caused by their ungoverned working is increased by our being filled with a deepened sense of disharmony, remorse, and dismay. (St. Paul and Protestantism, CPW, VI, p. 32).

In Arnold's poetry, from the beginning, the balance seems to lean towards the moral mode of interpretation. It ended up by taking over his whole activities as exemplified in his religious writings. Here, as Arnold puts it, everything, take it at what point in its existence you will, carries within itself the fatal law of its own ulterior development. In Shakespeare the two kinds seem wonderfully to balance one another; but even in him the balance leans; his expression tends to become too little sensuous and simple, too much intellectualised. The same thing may be said of Lucretius and Wordsworth. In Shelley, says Arnold, there is not a balance of the two gifts, nor even a co-existence of them, but there is a passionate straining after them both. In Keats and Guérin the faculty of naturalistic interpretation is overpoweringly predominant. While in Dante the religious sense overbalances the thinking vision. Neither of these on its own is enough. "The present" Arnold says, "has to make its own poetry, and not even Sophocles [whose thinking power overbalances the religious sense] and his compeers, any more than Dante and Shakespeare, are enough for it" (CPW, III, p. 231).

Now, the naturalistic mode of interpretation draws its substance from this material world - Nature, itself, and from its commonest and most universally enjoyed elements, sun, air, earth, water, plants. It treats the



world according to the demands of the senses; it takes the world by its outward sensible side; its expressions correspond with the essential reality of things. "This faculty", Arnold says, "always has for its basis a peculiar temperament, an extraordinary delicacy of organisation and susceptibility to impressions; in exercising it the poet is in a great degree passive; he aspires to be a sort of human Aeolian harp, catching <sup>and</sup>/rendering every rustle of Nature" (CPW, III, p. 30).

The moral mode of interpretation treats the world, according to the demands of the heart and imagination, by its inward, symbolical side. It admits the whole world, rough and smooth, painful and pleasure-giving, all alike, but all is transformed by the power of a spiritual emotion, all is brought under a law of supersensual love that has its seat in the soul.

To sum up: what one has been trying to show in this chapter is that Arnold's theory of poetry is, as he puts it in the "Preface" (1853)<sup>CPW</sup>, Pragmatic. He uses this term, himself, to describe poetry with a serious purpose and immense task to perform. In the next chapter, - "The Poetic Process", I shall try to give a clear framework for displaying the full meaning of Arnold's pragmatic theory of poetry.

#### NOTES

- 1 Unpublished Letters of Matthew Arnold, ed. Arnold Whitridge (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1923), pp. 15-17.
- 2 The Complete Prose Works of Matthew Arnold, ed. R.H. Super (Ann Arbor; University of Michigan Press, 1960-77), X, p. 67. For Arnold's prose works reference will be made to this edition. It will be referred to as CPW, Vol.
- 3 The Letters of Matthew Arnold to Arthur Hugh Clough, ed. H.F. Lowry, (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1932), p. 100. It will be referred to as CL.

- 4 The Poems of Matthew Arnold, ed. Kenneth Allott (London: Longmans, 1965), p. 243. All quotations from Arnold's poetry are from this edition, it will be referred to as Poems.
- 5 P. B. Shelley, "A Defence of Poetry (1821)", in English Critical Essays, ed. E.D. Jones (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 119.
- 6 P. Drew, "Matthew Arnold and the Passage of Time", (Op. Cit.), pp. 217-18.
- 7 Goethe, Wilhelm Meister's Travels, trans. and ed. Edward Bell (London, 1882, p. 419). This passage is not included in the edition which Carlyle translated.
- 8 Letters of Matthew Arnold, 1848-1888, ed. G.W.E. Russell, 2 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1895), II, p. 9. It will be referred to as Letters.
- 9 W.K. Wimsatt, The Verbal Icon (London: Methuen, 1970), pp. 34-35.
- 10 Epifanio S. Juan, "Matthew Arnold and the Poetics of Belief", Harvard Theological Review, 57 (April, 1964), 98.
- 11 Quoted by E. Leach, Lévi-Straus (London: Fontana, 1973), p. 16.
- 12 Susanne K. Langer, Feeling and Form (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973), pp. 242-43.
- 13 C. Brooks, A Shaping Joy, (London: Methuen, 1971), p. 5.
- 14 James Scully (ed.), Modern Poets on Modern Poetry, (London: Fontana/Collins, 1977), pp. 50-51.
- 15 Yale Manuscript, Quoted by R.H. Super, The Time-Spirit of Matthew Arnold, (Ann Arbor: the University of Michigan Press, 1970), p. 16.
- 16 L. Trilling, The Liberal Imagination (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970), p. 67.
- 17 Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, trans., Frank H. Peters (London, 1881, Bk. 2, Sect. 3).

## CHAPTER II

### The Poetic Process

But tasks in hours of insight willed  
Can be through hours of gloom fulfilled.

Arnold's "Morality" (5-6)

So then always that knowledge is worthiest...  
which considereth the simple forms or differences  
of things, which are few in number, and the  
degrees and coordinations whereof make all this  
variety.

Francis Bacon

A poem, settling to its form,  
Finds there no jailor, but a norm  
Of conduct, and a fitting sphere  
Which stops it wandering everywhere.

C. Day-Lewis "The Room"

## I

In the Preface (1853) Arnold uses the telling phrase pragmatic poetry, that is, poetry that is more than mere amusement and whose existence "is important in the sense that it has implications beyond itself and beyond the action of the poem, and that it can affect the world. As Arnold put it in a letter to Clough, 'Modern poetry can only subsist by its contents: by becoming a complete magister vitae...' " <sup>1</sup> On this, as the ground-idea, he formed his theory of the proper subjects, language, effects, and value of poetry.

But whatever Arnold may think as a critic, he is operating as a poet too, in so far as he is constructing constitutive parts and assembling them into a whole; in those operations does the poetic process consist. The poetic process is a convenient frame to answer some of the questions that are involved in any poetic theory: Is it rational, conscious, and voluntary, or is it not? It is possible within the frame of poetic process to answer these questions and all further questions of why and how, of personality, talent and genius.

In this chapter one will point to various specific ways in which Arnold's poetic theory could be seen as different from the Romantic tradition. One will examine some of his opinions of the state of poetry in his own time, and something of that conscious reaction against his contemporaries and against the earlier Romantic poets who were such a powerful influence on Tennyson and his followers.

If it is a process, it ought to have a definite beginning. Where does it begin? It would be better to answer this question by contrast. Housman, in his little handbook, gives an account of his poetic process

as follows:

Having drunk a pint of beer at luncheon-- beer is a sedative to the brain, and my afternoons are the least intellectual portion of my life-- I would go out for a walk of two or three hours. As I went along, thinking of nothing in particular, only looking at things around me and following the progress of the seasons, there would flow into my mind, with sudden and unaccountable emotion, sometimes a line or two of verse, sometimes a whole stanza at once. <sup>2</sup>

This view disclaims personal responsibility. Poetry, here, is emotion recollected in tranquillity - a process of which Wordsworth says:

Nor is it I who play the part  
But a shy spirit in my heart,  
That comes and goes-- will sometimes leap  
From hiding places ten years deep. <sup>3</sup>

The experience of poetic inspiration, here, is said to differ from normal ideation, says Abrams "in possessing some or all of these four characteristics:

(a) The composition is sudden, effortless, and unanticipated. The poem or passage springs to completion all at once, without the prior intention of the poet, and without that process of considering, rejecting, and selecting alternatives which ordinarily intervenes between the intention and achievement. (b) The composition is involuntary and automatic; it comes and goes at its own pleasure, independently of the will of the poet. (c) In the course of composition, the poet feels intense excitement, usually described as a state of elation and rapture, but occasionally said to be racking and painful in its initial stages, though followed by a sense of blissful relief and quiescence. (d) The completed work is as unfamiliar and surprising to the poet as though it had been written by someone else (ibid., p. 189).

Arnold's poetic process begins with an idea. To this effect he writes in a letter to Clough that the fault of modern English poets like Keats and

Browning is that "they will not be patient neither understand that they must begin with an Idea of the world in order not to be prevailed over by the world's multitudinousness ..." (CL, p. 97). Professor Culler, in his comment on these lines, says that Arnold "was unconsciously reiterating the doctrine of the Egotistical Sublime. For what is an Idea of the world but one's own subjectivity."<sup>4</sup> This interpretation is at variance with Arnold's stance as a critic. In many places he reiterates that:

[The Romantic] poetry had about it ... something premature ... And this prematurity comes from its having proceeded without having its proper data, without sufficient materials to work with. In other words, the English poetry of the first quarter of this century, with plenty of Energy, plenty of creative force, did not know enough. 5

(The Function of Criticism," CPW, III, 263).

In addition to that, Arnold, all the time, contrasts 'the self' with the world: "the aim of culture," says Arnold, "is to know ourselves and the world." ("Science and Poetry", CPW, X, p. 56). Again "A poet ... ought to know life and the world before dealing with them in poetry" ("The Function of Criticism", CPW, III, p. 261). So, contrary to what Culler alleges, it is not only the self but the world too that Matthew Arnold insists that the poet must know.

In the context of Arnold's thinking there are two categories of ideas: moral and intellectual. "Moral ideas leaven and humanise the multitude: new intellectual ideas filter slowly down to them from the thinking few" ("The Bishop and the Philosopher", CPW, III, p. 44). "Between the two conditions there is all the difference which there is between the being in love, and the following, with delighted comprehension, a reasoning of Plato" ("Spinoza and the Bible", CPW, III, p. 178). The poet must acquaint himself with these ideas for, says Arnold, "whoever seriously occupies himself with literature will soon perceive its vital connection with other agencies". ("Preface to Mixed Essays", CPW, VIII, p. 370). Again, Arnold writes in "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time" that "This creative power

works with elements, with materials; what if it has not those materials, those elements, ready for its use? In that case it must surely wait till they are ready... the elements which the creative power works are ideas; the best ideas, on every matter which literature touches, current at the time" ("The Function of Criticism at the Present Time", CPW, III, p. 260).

The modern poet's problem, as far as creation is concerned, is that these ideas are too many as well as contradictory if compared with previous ages. Arnold felt that problem for, as early as 1847, he says that in the 17th century it was a smaller harvest than now, and sooner to be reaped: and therefore to its reaper was left time to stow it more finally and curiously. Still more was this the case in the ancient world. The poet's matter, experience of the world, and his own, increases with every century. <sup>6</sup>

One's argument so far may be summed up as follows: Arnold's poetic process is conscious, voluntary, purposive, and rational. There is effort as well as sacrifice involved in it; it is racking and painful. Its order can be said to be: penetration, incubation, illumination and finally verification. The remaining pages of this chapter will discuss Arnold's concept of the literary idea: the cornerstone of his poetic process. In the context of his thinking the Idea resolves itself into two categories that have an ethical bearings: an idea of the self [or human nature] and an idea of the world [a concept of history]. Arnold discusses them under what he usually calls the Concept of Content.

## II

### The Concept of Content

#### i. Arnold's Idea of the Self

A study of Arnold's idea of the self finds its justification, here in this chapter, in the fact that theories of the self and theories of art tend to be integrally related and to turn upon similar analogues, explicit or submerged. It is an additional advantage that in tracing the implications of this topic one comes to understand some of the special qualities of Arnold's poetry.

To put the matter schematically: for the representative nineteenth-century critic the possible theories of the self may be divided into two main groups which, according to C.D. Broad, may be called respectively centre and non-centre. By a centre theory Broad means: "a theory which ascribes the unity of the mind to the fact that there is a certain particular existent - a centre - which stands in a common asymmetrical relation to all mental events which would be said to be states of a certain mind, and does not stand in this relation to any mental events which would not be said to be states of this mind. By a non-centre theory I (says Broad) mean one which denies the existence of any such particular centre, and ascribes the unity of the mind to the facts that certain mental events are directly inter-related in certain characteristic ways, and that other mental events are not related to these in the particular way in which these are related to each other." <sup>7</sup>

David Hume may be taken as a typical example of the non-centre theory. According to Hume:



All the perceptions of the human mind resolve themselves into two distinct kinds... Impressions and Ideas. The difference betwixt these consists in the degrees of force and liveliness with which they strike upon the mind, and make their way into our thought or consciousness. These perceptions, which enter with most force and violence, we may name 'impressions'; and under this name I apprehend all our sensations, passions and emotions, as they make their first appearance in the soul. By 'ideas' I mean the faint images of these in thinking and reasoning.<sup>8</sup>

Ideas, according to Hume, are the reflection of impressions, and the rule holds without any exception that "every simple idea has a simple impression, which resembles it: and every simple impression a correspondent idea". (ibid., p. 3).

Hume's theory has dangerous implications. Reason is conceived to be the handmaid of the senses, not the arbiter of man's destiny; its function is to provide man with justifications for what he instinctively wishes to do, while the will is no less enslaved to elements in man's nature which he does not control and for which he cannot be held responsible. If man is not ultimately responsible for what he thinks or what he does, if his nature is formed not by him but for him, free will, it is clear, is a delusion. The implication of this view on art is greater, for the perceiving mind is a reflection of the external world; the inventive process consisted in a reassembling of ideas which are literally images, or replicas of sensations; and the resulting art work is itself comparable to a mirror presenting a selected and ordered image of life.

The criterion of the truth of an idea would be, according to Hume's theory, the possibility of tracing it back to, or comparing it with the impression or impressions from which it originated. Applying such a criterion to the idea of a unitary self, Hume says that there is not such an idea for "... from what impression would this idea be derived? ... If any impression gives rise to the idea of self, that impression must continue

invariably the same, through the whole course of our lives; since self is supposed to exist after that manner. But there is no impression constant and invariable. Pain and pleasure, grief and joy, passions and sensations succeed each other, and never all exist at the same time. It cannot therefore, be from any of these impressions, or from any other, that the idea of self is derived; and consequently there is no such idea" (ibid., pp. 251-252).

This chapter will show that though the idea of the self which is explored and partially defined in Arnold's poetry reflects the various interests of his contemporaries, he ends up by being entirely original: he arrives at his idea of the self by accepting the more valuable aspects of the Romantic insight, but balancing them with the precepts of classical humanism. He has understood the value of Romantic self-consciousness but rejects their Egoistic exploration of the self.

As early as 1844, Arnold has rejected the idea of non-central self. His sonnet "Written in Butler's Sermons" rejects such an idea and asserts the existence of the central self:

Affections, Instincts, Principles, and Powers,  
Impulse and Reason, Freedom and Control -  
So men, unravelling God's harmonious whole,  
Rend in a thousand shreds this life of ours.  
Vain labour! Deep and broad, where none may see,  
Spring the foundations of that shadowy throne  
Where man's one nature, queen-like, sits alone,  
Centred in a majestic unity;  
And rays her powers, like sister-islands seen  
Linking their coral arms under the sea,  
Or clustered peaks with plunging gulfs between  
Spanned by aerial arches all of gold,  
Where'er the chariot wheels of life are rolled  
In cloudy circles to eternity.

(Poems, pp. 51-52)

The poem shows Arnold's impatience with the attempt of the eighteenth century to analyse human nature. He

is particularly concerned here with Butler's first three sermons, contained in the volume of Fifteen Sermons, entitled collectively Upon Human Nature. All man's principles and passions, instincts, impulses, affections were, according to Butler's almost Newtonian system of moral philosophy, given to him by God for his own good and for the good of society, provided they were used at the discretion of man's dominating principle, which is his conscience, not his self-love as Hobbes would have had it. This view, say Tinker and Lowry, "of the presiding conscience may, curiously enough, be the germ of Arnold's more poetic 'one nature', which sits queen-like on her shadowy throne, 'Centred in a majestic unity.'" <sup>9</sup>

Arnold's method of juxtaposing in a number of poems apprehensions which modify and amplify each other, brings to one's mind his sonnet "Written in Emerson's Essays". This sonnet has reference to the first and second series of Emerson's Essays published in Britain in 1841 and 1844 respectively with prefaces by Carlyle. Both Emerson and Butler dealt with the problem of the 'self' but from diametrically opposed points of view, the former asserting the mystery and unity of the human soul, the latter chopping it up into Affections, Instincts, Principles, and Powers. The sonnet, in itself, is a problem to the readers.

Professor Culler, in his comment on the poem, says "Today the main irony of the poem is that readers are quite divided as to whether Arnold is championing Emerson's Transcendental view of man or whether he finds it so palpably at variance with the truth that it constitutes a bitter mockery. In view of Arnold's later praise of Emerson as one of the great 'voices' of his youth, it is probably the former, but the sonnet is an ambiguous production. The reason for this is that the world which refuses to heed the 'voice oracular' of Emerson and which passes by with 'a smile of wistful incredulity', gains by this smile a strategic advantage over the angry young

man who exclaims, 'O monstrous, dead, unprofitable world!'" (Imaginative Reason, p. 48-49).

Though the two terms, - "central" and "non-central", carry their own value judgement, the choice is not an easy one. The problem is that with the central self there comes the desire to place the source of ultimate value within the individual. To describe the underlying similarities of German Idealist philosophy, expressionistic aesthetics, and visionary poetry is to trace various manifestations of the central theory as well as of the Romantic self-consciousness. This has its terrifying side: along with the release and even apotheosis of the individual came his alienation; the will to celebrate the self, to make it an object of intense awareness, freed men to new forms of joy and to a widened range of suffering.

This trend could be traced in Descartes' attempt to originate all epistemology and ontology from within an intellectual intuition of the self as thought. Stated very briefly, Descartes' philosophical revolution consisted in calling in question the reality of the external world and directing man's quest for a basic framework of meaning, certitude, and value, inwards to the resources of his own subjectivity rather than outwards to a divinely formed external world immediately given in sensible experience. To this effect Patrick Masterson writes:

Descartes inaugurated the reign of the principle of immanentism which has dominated the evolution of modern philosophy. This principle repudiates the traditional epistemological position according to which being enjoys primacy vis-à-vis thought in such a manner that it is the self-revelation or epiphany of being itself which grounds thought as consciousness of being. Instead, in virtue of a programme of radical doubt, the principle of immanentism involutes the direction of consciousness and prescribes that it takes as its only and absolute starting point the luminous presence of the thinking subject to himself - a subject defined as identical with his own thought. Hence the only access which there is to being is through the cogito's excogitation of himself. Thought assumes primacy vis-à-vis being which henceforth is grounded in the self-sufficiency and luminous presence of the thinking self to himself. This presence of the thinking self to himself

becomes the first principle and ultimate foundation from which all validity, certitude and value must in some way be derived. 10

What is of particular interest, says Masterson, is the fact that it also provided a philosophical framework in which the modern problematic of atheism and alienation could be formulated. In addition to the theological plane, the central theory of the self has dangerous consequences on the social plane. It tends to regard all the marked distinctions of human character as innate and in the main indelible. It ignores the fact that by far the greater part of those differences, whether between individuals, races, or sexes, are produced by differences in circumstances. John Stuart Mill finds in this tendency "the chief hindrances to the rational treatment of great social questions, and one of the greatest stumbling blocks to human improvement."<sup>11</sup>

Perhaps an exposition of the background of the sonnet may throw some light on Arnold's stance. The point is that in Arnold's day, as <sup>an</sup> undergraduate at Oxford, Butler's Sermons was used as a required text at Balliol along with the Ethics of Aristotle, whereas Emerson's Essays was neglected. Arnold, like many of his fellow undergraduates, thought that the required text ought to be omitted and the omitted text required. His dissatisfaction on this issue was such that even thirty years after the event he took the subject up again through the lectures he delivered on "Bishop Butler and the Zeit-Geist" in Edinburgh.

The fact remains that the ambiguity of the sonnet has enriched it. All alternative meanings have a direct bearing on Arnold's analysis of the phenomenon of alienation - not only does the / <sup>sonnet contain</sup> an implicit criticism of thinking aloud in poetry, but even the language is that of a Carlylean enthusiast chiding this world. A language that Arnold dissociates

himself from by using quotation marks around the speech:

'O monstrous, dead, unprofitable world,  
That thou canst hear, and hearing hold thy way!  
A voice oracular hath pealed to-day,  
To-day a hero's banner is unfurled;  
Hast thou no lip for welcome?'

(Poems, pp. 52-53)

This may be an oblique criticism of Carlyle who is associated with Emerson's essays since he himself wrote their prefaces. The language, indeed, is reminiscent of Carlyle. This reading is plausible for in one of his letters Arnold says that time taught him "the precious truth that everything turns upon one's exercising the power of persuasion, of charm; that without this all fury, energy, reasoning power, acquirement, are thrown away and only render their owner more miserable. Even in one's ridicule one must preserve a sweetness and good-humour" (October 29, 1863). Second, the fact that the world refuses to heed the "voice oracular" of the seer and passes by with "a smile of wistful incredulity" has for that reason alone as much to do with the alienation of the seer as the necessity of his existing in the midst of a hostile society.

However, in the context of Arnold's search for authority in human affairs, his search for a central organising thesis for life that takes the central self as its nucleus leaves no doubt as to where Arnold stands. The idea is constant with Arnold for it appears in "Religious Isolation" (1848), "Human Life" (1849), "The Second Best" (1849-52), "The Youth of Man" (1852); and as late as 1869, Arnold published an epigram in the midst of St Paul and Protestantism to the same effect:

Below the surface-stream, shallow and light,  
Of what we say we feel - below the stream,  
As light, of what we think we feel - there flows  
With noiseless current strong, obscure and deep,  
The central stream of what we feel indeed.  
(CPW, VI, p. 51).

A study of all these poems will show that Arnold's theory of the self accords with the centre theory that holds a certain particular existent, a kind of monad or supposed simple being, or a pure ego, to be the centre.

Arnold contrasts this central self or real self with another he calls the apparent self or momentary self:

Ah, what pitfalls are in that word 'Nature!'... Do you mean that we are to give full swing to our inclinations... the constitution of things turns out to be somewhat against it... the free development... of our 'apparent' self has to undergo a profound modification from the law of our higher 'real' self, the law of righteousness.

(Poems, pp. 53-54)

It is experience which reveals that man does not only have a momentary self, l'homme/moyen sensuel dominated by the wishes of the flesh and of current thoughts; man has also a total or best self which is realised through the unified exercise of his powers of conduct, of knowledge, of beauty, of social life and manners, through the mutual interdependence of the Hellenic and Hebraic tendencies in man.

The doctrine of the two selves in man is central to Arnold's ethico-aesthetic criticism. It unifies his line of endeavour in general. The clearest statement of this central doctrine is made in the preface to the Last Essays on Church and Religion:

It will generally be admitted that all experience as to conduct brings us at last to the fact of two selves, or instincts, or forces, - name them how we will, and however we may suppose them to have arisen, - contending for the mastery in man: one, a movement of first impulse and more involuntary, leading us to gratify any inclination that may solicit us, and called generally a movement of man's ordinary or passing self, of sense, appetite, desire; the other, a movement of reflection and more voluntary, leading us to submit inclination to some rule, and called generally a movement of man's higher or enduring self, of reason, spirit, will. The thing is described in different words by different notions and men relating their experience of it, but as to the thing itself they all, or all the most serious and important among them, agree.

This however, creates what might be called duplication of consciousness that causes an internal confrontation between socialised, humanised best self and non-socialised apparent self. Here comes Arnold's ideas of the dialogue of the mind with itself , and the divorce from the self and all aspects of feelings that accompany the phenomenon of alienation.

"The Buried Life", the poem that explores these abstract ideas, begins as an account of the search of the best self. Love is held, but this is rare, to be a possible means of restoring the consciousness to its deeper self:

When a beloved hand is laid in ours.

... ..

When our world-deafened ear  
Is by the tones of a loved voice caressed -  
A bolt is shot back somewhere in our breast,  
And a lost pulse of feeling stirs again.  
The eye sinks inward, and the heart lies plain,  
And what we mean, we say, and what we would, we know.  
A man becomes aware of his life's flow,  
And hears its winding murmur; and he sees  
The meadows where it glides, the sun, the breeze.

... ..

An air of coolness plays upon his face,  
And an unwonted calm pervades his breast.  
And then he thinks he knows  
The hills where his life rose,  
And the sea where it goes.

(Poems, p. 275)

Professor Allott, in his comment on the poem, says that "when self-knowledge is momentarily achieved the buried stream becomes an ordinary river" (Poems, p. 275). In one's view the movement lies in the opposite direction, that is, self-knowledge is achieved in the process of sublimation of the ordinary self. But the line "And then he thinks he knows" sheds some doubt. The conclusion one comes to is that Arnold suggests,



like Kierkegaard, that truth is equal to belief. However, this is rare because life with its manifold claims exerts a ~~pressure~~ pressure as well as distraction on man's nature. This tendency towards fragmentation is counteracted, however rarely, by man's soul:

Yet still, from time to time, vague and forlorn,  
From the soul's subterranean depth upborne  
As from an infinitely distant land,  
Come airs, and floating echoes, and convey  
A melancholy into all our day.

(Ibid., p. 274)

Arnold then, explains the law of man's nature by a fable: Fate foresaw that man would be subject to frivolous distractions, and in order to protect his genuine self from his caprice, placed his true life deep and indiscernible within him.

Ah! well for us, if even we,  
Even for a moment, can get free  
Our heart, and have our lips unchained;  
For that which seals them has been deep-ordained!  
Fate, which foresaw  
How frivolous a baby man would be -  
By what distractions he would be possessed,  
How he would pour himself in every strife,  
And well-nigh change his own identity -  
That it might keep from his capricious play  
His genuine self, and force him to obey  
Even in his own despite his being's law,  
Bade through the deep recesses of our breast  
The unregarded river of our life  
Pursue with indiscernible flow its way;  
And that we should not see  
The buried stream, and seem to be  
Eddying at large in blind uncertainty,  
Though driving on with it eternally.

(Poems, pp. 272-73)

Professor Allott says that the poem is written between 1849-52. But it is likely to be later than that for the imagery echoes Maurice de Guérin's Essay on The Centaur in which an old Centaur on his mountain

relates to Melampus, a human questioner, the life of his youth. That piece Arnold quotes in his essay on "Maurice de Guérin" (1863):

Seekest thou to know the gods... and from what source men, animals, and the elements of the universal fire have their origin? But the aged Ocean, the father of all things, keeps locked within his own breast these secrets; and the nymphs, who stand around, sing as they weave their eternal dance before him, to cover any sound which might escape from his lips half-opened by slumber. The mortals, dear to the gods for their virtue, have received from their hands lyres to give delight to man, or the seeds of new plants to make him rich; but from their inexorable lips, nothing! (CPW, III, p. 35).

In the same way Arnold portrays man as having a

Longing to inquire  
Into the mystery of this heart which beats  
So wild, so deep in us - to know  
Whence our lives come and whence they go.  
And many a man in his own breast then delves,  
But deep enough, alas! none ever mines.

(Poems, p. 274)

The poem thus presents an image of the individual psyche, alienated from the stream of its buried life, but possibly able to get a glimpse of it momentarily under the influence of love.

The poem suggests two methods of reaching the best self: the first is that of the Scholar-Gipsy i.e., one aim in life:

And we have been on many thousand lines,  
And we have shown, on each, spirit and power;  
But hardly have we, for one little hour,  
Been on our own line.

(Poems, p. 274)

The other way is the Romantic way: "But deep enough, alas none ever mine." It is by cutting oneself off from every contaminating influence. Arnold's Empedocles on Etna shows the consequences of this way.

Arnold's extraordinary sensitivity to the implications of change in his own time underlies his lifelong search for what is permanent in the human nature and the human heart. The point is that what is fundamental must be the essence of our true nature, and we can use an understanding of that nature to improve ourselves. What one observes in these examples is that differential growth of these powers seems to determine the shape of culture, society, and subsequently the movement of history.

Since the self is a system of delicately poised powers the thing needed here is to bring them into an equipoise. Poetry, according to Arnold's poetics, satisfies this demand. Through the poetic experience an individual attains equilibrium. When impulses are harmonised, they work together and make us realise the full complexity of our situation. In this realisation lies the individual's process of illumination. To this effect Arnold writes in Culture and Anarchy that:

What we want is a fuller harmonious development of our humanity, a free play of thought upon our routine notions, spontaneity of consciousness, sweetness and light; and these are just what culture generates and fosters.

(CPW., V, p. 191 )

Harmony comes when these powers are related to one another on one hand and the individual in society on the other. The first has to do with intelligence and the latter in social manner and conduct. To begin with the first, these powers are related in diverse ways:

With one such way of relating them I [Arnold] am particularly concerned now. Following our instinct for intellect and knowledge we acquire pieces of knowledge; and presently, in the generality of men, there arises the desire to relate these pieces of knowledge to our sense for conduct, to our sense for beauty, - and there is weariness and dissatisfaction if the desire is baulked. Now in this desire lies, I think, the strength of that hold which letters have upon us (CPW, X, p. 62).

On the level of conduct, Arnold argues that "Human progress consists in a continual increase in the number of those who, ceasing to live by the animal life alone and to feel the pleasures of senses only, come to participate in the intellectual life also, and to find enjoyment in the things of the mind. Rhetoric, brilliant writing, gives them pleasure, still more, when it is employed in commendation of a view of life is on the whole theirs, and of men and causes with which they are naturally in sympathy " (CPW, VIII, p. 169). Poetry accomplishes this task by exercising his power on the fundamentals of man's self: "This desire in men that good should be for ever present to them" (CPW, X, p. 63). On man's "sentiment of the ideal life, which is none other than man's normal life as we shall some day know it " (CPW, VIII, p. 219) .

The essence of normal life, in Arnold's thinking, is nothing but a sense of order, a law of good taste, a measure for man's words and actions. All these are in the power of man to achieve for "man alone has an impulse leading him to set up some other law to control the bent of his nature" (CPW, III, p. 235-36). All these on the whole can be translated or expressed in terms of social manners of which Arnold writes:

Unless we have cultivated it (social intercourse and manners) we are incomplete. The impulse for cultivating it is not, indeed, a moral impulse. It is by no means identical with the moral impulse to help our neighbour and to do him good. Yet in many ways it works to a like end. It brings men together, makes them feel the need of one another, be considerate of one another, understand one another. But, above all things, it is a promoter of equality. It is by the humanity of their manners that men are made equal (CPW, VIII, pp. 288-89).

In conclusion one can say that the spirit that underlies this vision is that of hope. Indeed it offers a glimmer of hope for improvement and renovation. The hope lies in the fact that there is in man an inclination toward the good.

ii. Arnold's Idea of the World

This section will examine Arnold's concept of the "Idea of the world". From the allusion to Goethe's theory of spiral progress in a letter of 1848 to the penultimate entry from Karl Marx in the Note Book for 1888, Arnold reveals an interest in the nature of historic process. The names of Hume, Herder, Hegel, Michelet, Renan, Reusl, recur in the lists of reading in his notebooks. Thucydides, Burke, and Niebuhr are referred to as types of the scientific historian.

The phenomenon of time, periodicity in history, the doctrines of development and progress, the relation of the individual to his age, in addition to other issues, absorbed Arnold and his contemporaries: Is man like Sisyphus pushing the stone that always comes rolling back? Is he like Tantalus reaching for the water he can never catch? Is he, again, like Ixion following and fleeing from himself? All these questions busied Arnold. In his poem, "A Summer Night", he writes:

For most men in a brazen prison live,  
Where, in the sun's hot eye,  
With heads bent o'er their toil, they languidly  
Their lives to some unmeaning taskwork give,  
Dreaming of nought beyond their prison-wall.  
And as year after year,  
Fresh products of their barren labour fall  
From their tired hands, and rest  
Never yet comes more near,  
Gloom settles slowly over their breast;  
And while they try to stem  
The waves of mournful thought by which they are pressed,  
Death in their prison reaches them,  
Unfreed, having seen nothing, still unblest.

(Poems, p. 269)

The alternative view is that man is progressing on long way that will lead to Truth:

And long the way appears, which seemed so short  
To the less practised eye of sanguine youth;  
And high the mountain-tops, in cloudy air,  
The mountain-tops where is the throne of Truth.

(Poems, p. 504)

Arnold's intellectual and spiritual journey lies between these two poles: from utter pessimism to heavily qualified optimism. In this journey one can identify three concepts of history as well as three concepts of the Zeitgeist: (a) chaotic, or to use Kant's term Abderite, (b) cyclical, and (c) progressive.

(a) To begin with the chaotic concept, Arnold's poetry is, in fact, replete with images that show no concrete shape of history. Man is seen in perpetual commotion. Many expressions of Arnold approach such conceptions of the whirl, wasteful, and undirected motion:

... 'tis the gradual furnace of the world,  
In whose hot air our spirits are upcurled  
Until they crumble, or else grow like steel -  
Which kills in us the bloom, the youth, the spring -  
Which leaves the fierce necessity to feel,  
But takes away the power - this can avail,  
By drying up our joy in everything,  
To make our former pleasures all seem stale.

(Tristram and Iseult, ll. 119-26)

Again he writes in "Dover Beach", about his apprehension of the human condition as one of pointless random collision:

And we are here as on a darkling plain  
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,  
Where ignorant armies clash by night.

Arnold usually uses the word eddying to express aimless, pointless motion.

What is the course of the life  
Of mortal men on the earth?  
Most men eddy about  
Here and there.

("Rugby Chapel", ll. 58-61)

Again, in the sonnet "To the Duke of Wellington" probably written while Arnold, says David DeLaura, "was still an undergraduate, he speaks of 'the fretful foam/ Of vehement actions without scope or term,/ Call'd history.' This vision of life as confused and without a goal strikingly similar to Huxley's youthful despair, anticipates the image of the night battle in 'Dover Beach.'" <sup>12</sup>

(b) His father's admiration for the cyclical view of history affected Arnold's vision as a poet and a critic too. Arnold's belief in historical recurrence made it possible for him to use figures and events from past history as analogous to modern experience: a procedure that suggested to Pater the parallel between Antonine Rome and Victorian England for his Marius the Epicurean. <sup>13</sup>

Arnold began to see history as phases of a cultural cycle, the alternation of periods of expansion and periods of concentration, periods of Hebraism and periods of Hellenism, periods of poetry and periods of criticism, time when God is within the world, and times when he inexplicably disappears. But the fact remains that this concept has a pessimistic element. "Seen through the eyes of the Germans, history is a holocaust. For Schelling, it is a tragic spectacle performed on the mournful stage of the world. Hegel's Absolute Spirit has travelled in stages from China to Germany, embodying itself temporarily in one world-historical state after another, nourishing itself on one national genius after another. Once a nation had passed its zenith, the Spirit moved on to the next in order, leaving the now soulless people to drag itself on through years of uncreative mullity, busied with politics and perhaps war, with a senile repetition of itself, until it finally died in the body, having long since been dead in spirit." <sup>14</sup>

Arnold, in Friendship's Garland, seems to reiterate the same concept:

"As often as I consider how history is a series of waves, coming gradually to a head and then breaking, and that, as the successive waves come up, one nation is seen at the top of the wave, and then another of the next, I ask myself, counting all the waves which have come up with England at the top of them: When the great wave which is now mounting has come up, will she be at the top of it?" (CPW, V, pp. 30-31).

It is Arnold's deep sense of commitment that gave him that feeling of apprehension. In a letter to his sister, Fan, Arnold says:

I have a conviction that there is a real, an almost imminent danger of England losing immeasurably in all ways... for want of what I must still call ideas, for want of perceiving how the world is going and must go, and preparing herself accordingly. This conviction haunts me, and at times even overwhelms me with depression; I would rather not live to see the change come to pass, for we shall all deteriorate under it. While there is time I will do all I can, and in every way, to prevent its coming to pass... I know that it is only by facing in every direction that one can win the day... (Letters, I, pp. 309-10).

In the cycle theory of history, man's life is governed by necessity:

... this vale, this earth, whereon we dream,  
Is on all sides o'ershadow'd by the high  
Uno'erleap'd Mountains of Necessity,  
Sparing us narrower margin than we deem.

("To a Republican Friend", p. 103)

Because of this necessity,

We shall renew the battle in the plain  
Tomorrow; red with blood will Xanthus be;  
Hector and Ajax will be there again,  
Helen will come upon the wall to see.

("Palladium"; 13-16)

Thus man is doomed to suffer in that he is a creature imprisoned in time, his bondage to a principle of flux and recurrence allows no possibility of salvation.



Arnold's poem, Empedocles on Etna, may be used to illustrate the  
view of history, <sup>as a cycle</sup> / <sup>endlessly</sup> / <sup>and</sup> / <sup>repeating themselves</sup> / <sup>of processes</sup> <sup>endlessly</sup> <sup>come</sup>  
to maturity, and passing away without hope:

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 discerned.  
And we shall struggle awhile, gasp and rebel -  
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.

(Poems, pp. 190-91)

But this concept of history could yield an optimistic interpretation too: just by putting the emphasis on the idea of renovation. Arnold believed in that idea: To this effect he writes that renovation is what "makes faith and hope to be among the primal virtues, because they keep alive in us confidence in our ideal when events might otherwise shake it. Faith and hope would not be virtues if the exercise of them is easy. It is because the exercise of them is hard that they became virtues, and that they are a beauty and a merit (then he quotes from Wordsworth's poem "To B.R. Haydon" lines 9-14]:

And oh, when nature sinks, as oft she may,  
Through long-lived pressure of obscure distress,  
Still to be strenuous for the bright reward,  
And in the soul admit of no decay,  
Brook no continuance of weak-mindedness,  
Great is the glory, for the strife is hard."

("Report of Public Lectures", CPW, X,  
pp. 254-55)

In the light of this view, Arnold gives an animating interpretation of

the Greek myth of Adonis as an example to be followed:

Symbolically treated, as the thoughtful man might treat it, as the Greek mysteries undoubtedly treated it, this story was capable of a noble and touching application, and could lead the soul to elevating and consoling thoughts. Adonis was the sun in his summer and in his winter course, in his time of triumph and his time of defeat; but in his time of triumph still moving towards his defeat, in his time of defeat still returning towards his triumph. Thus he became an emblem of the power of life and the bloom of beauty, the power of human life and the bloom of human beauty, hastening inevitably to diminution and decay, yet in that very decay finding 'Hope, and renovation without end'".

("Pagan and Mediaeval Sentiment", CPW, III,  
p. 222)

(c) Arnold was also aware of the works of the French philosophers of perfectibility who were writing histories of progressive happiness and humanity. Saint-Simon, for instance, writes in one of his early brochures: "The imagination of the poets placed the Golden Age in the cradle of mankind, in the ignorance and brutality of early times. The Golden Age of the human species is not behind us, it is before us." <sup>15</sup> Arnold knows the dangers that are involved in this theory. For "In Turgot and Condorcet and the early Saint-Simon the conclusion is inescapable that the history of mankind since primitive times had in fact demonstrated the gradual flowering of rational, abstract capacities at the expense of imaginative and passionate nature" (Manuel, p. 104). Arnold would not tolerate that: "I cannot conceal from myself the objection... that the service of reason is freezing to feeling... and feeling and the religious mood are eternally the deepest being of man, the ground of all joy and greatness for him" (Yale MS, in Poems, p. 149).

Arnold, as early as 1848, cautions against this concept of history.

Yet, when I muse on what life is, I seem  
Rather to patience prompted, than that proud  
Prospect of hope which France proclaims so loud.

He, does not however, forget to express his genuine concern for the 'armies of homeless and unfed'; but he still believes that "Socialistic and communistic schemes have generally, however, a fatal defect; they are content with too low and material a standard of well-being. That instinct of perfection, which is the master-power in humanity, always rebels at this, and frustrates the work" ("Equality," CPW, VIII, pp. 289-90).

Arnold's suspicions seemed to be confirmed by the later progress of the revolution. On 24 May 1848 Arnold, answering Clough's account of the deteriorating affair in France, writes: "What you say about France is just about the impression I get from the accounts of things there - it must be disheartening to the believers in progress" (CL, p. 80).

In the 1860's, Arnold began to believe for valid reasons that the life of mankind was destined to undergo transformation or evolution. To this effect he writes to Mrs Forster in November 1863 that "I think in this concluding half of the century the English spirit is destined to undergo a great transformation; or rather, perhaps I should say, to perform a great evolution... I shall do what I can for this movement in literature; freer perhaps in that sphere than I could be in any other" (p. 207).

Arnold's emphasis on the word evolution, here, is very significant. For though semantically it is equivalent to the word transformation or development, there is a difference between them: the word evolution directs the thoughts rather to the source: development to the goal, of the process. Perhaps this sentiment, of not breaking the link with the sources and tradition, that prompted Arnold to adopt the theory of history as a "progress en ligne spirale" (CL, 80).

In this concept, history returns at different levels to the same place, so that, though the same ideas, cultures and epochs of history are repeated, yet there is some sort of progress:

Haply, the river of Time...  
May acquire, if not the calm  
Of its early mountainous shore,  
Yet a solemn peace of its own.

("Future", Poems, p. 266)

"The Future" is one of Arnold's most straightforward expositions of the problem of Time and history. The River path can be identified with the past, the present, and the future. More frequently, however, it denotes the life of the individual, and then the three stages are childhood, maturity, and old age.

Now, the question is: how does Arnold use his idea of history in his works, poetry and prose? Most believers in the cyclical theory of history, like Arnold, assume that certain clusters of national traits tend to reappear at regular intervals throughout the course of history. It would, in the light of the fact that when two phenomena had been frequently seen together one could be inferred from the other, be possible to draw certain conclusions about a nation's life and movement. This is possible by studying past civilisations and the characteristics that accompanied their rise and fall.

This type of logic, certainly, must have been behind Arnold's use of history. In his lecture "On the Modern Element in Literature" Arnold begins by distinguishing exterior and inward characteristics that distinguish modern epochs:

To begin with what is exterior. One of the most characteristic outward features of a modern age, of an age of advanced civilisation, is the banishment of the ensigns of war and bloodshed from the intercourse of civil life. Crime still exists, and wars are still carried on; but within the limits of civil life a circle has been found within which man can move securely, and develop the arts of peace uninterruptedly.  
(CPW, I, p. 23)

Of the inward characteristics Arnold says:  
An important inward characteristic, again, is the growth of a tolerant spirit; that spirit which is the offspring of an enlarged knowledge; a spirit patient of diversities of habits and opinions. Other characteristics are the multiplications of the conveniences of life, the formation of taste, the capacity for refined pursuits. And this leads us to the supreme characteristic of all; the intellectual maturity of man himself; the tendency to observe facts with a critical spirit; the search for their law, not to wander among them at random; to judge by the rule of reason, not by the impulse of prejudice or caprice (ibid., pp. 23-24)... But the predominance of thought, of reflection, in modern epochs is not without its penalties; in the unsound, in the over-tasked, in the over-sensitive, it has produced the most painful, the most lamentable results; it has produced a state of feeling unknown to less enlightened but perhaps healthier epochs -- the feeling of depression, the feeling of ennui. Depression and ennui; these are the characteristics stamped on how many of the representative works of modern times (ibid., p. 32).

Arnold's method is clear. He conducts an inductive study of past civilisations and takes cross-sections on the cultural plane. A modern poet needs, then, "a significant; a highly-developed, a culminating epoch, on the one hand, - a comprehensive, a commensurate, an adequate literature, on the other, - these will naturally be the objects of deepest interest to our modern age" (ibid., p. 22). Arnold's studies gave him two epochs in history that might help modern poets to interpret their age: Greek civilisation in the age of Pericles and Roman civilisation. Roman civilisation, says Arnold, was on the whole the greatest... on record, but the literature of the Romans was inadequate, that is, the poets of the age did not enter into possession of the general ideas which were the law of the vast multitude of facts which constitute the copious and complex present, that "immense moving confused spectacle which, while it perpetually excites our curiosity, perpetually baffles our comprehension."

This, then, is what distinguishes certain epochs in the history of the human race, and our own amongst the number;- on the one hand, the presence of a significant spectacle to contemplate; on the other hand, the desire to find the true point of view from which to contemplate this spectacle. He who has found that point of view, he who adequately comprehends this spectacle, has risen to the comprehension of his age: he who communicates that point to his age, he who interprets to it that spectacle, is one of his age's intellectual deliverers (CPW, I, p. 20).

Arnold takes Lucretius as his first example. He admits that he is modern, but asks 'How can a man adequately interpret the activity of his age when he is not in sympathy with it?' Arnold's own case must come to the mind of every reader when he reaches these words, indeed throughout his discussion of Lucretius:

He bids them [his disciples] to leave the business of the world, and to apply themselves 'naturam cognoscere rerum - to learn the nature of things;' but there is no cheerfulness for him either in the world from which he comes, or in the solitude to which he goes. With stern effort, with gloomy despair, he seems to rivet his eyes on the elementary reality, the naked framework of the world, because the world in its fulness and movement is too exciting a spectacle for his discomposed brain. He seems to feel the spectacle of it at once terrifying and alluring; and to deliver himself from it he has to keep perpetually repeating his formula of disenchantment and annihilation. (CPW, I, p. 33)

In the same vein he dismisses Virgil: 'Over the whole Aeneid there rests an ineffable melancholy: not a rigid, a moody gloom, like the melancholy of Lucretius; no, a sweet, a touching sadness, but still a sadness; a melancholy which is at once a source of charm in the poem, and a testimony to its incompleteness.' Horace is similarly described as 'exquisite,' but not 'interpretative and fortifying,' 'without faith, without enthusiasm, without energy.'

The object of the lecture is thus attained, to demonstrate, by showing the deficiencies of the Romans and the Elizabethans, the absolute, the enduring interest of Greek literature, and above all, of Greek

poetry. This is a position which few people would feel inclined to deny. Dissatisfaction does not begin until one asks precisely about the reasons behind this conclusion, and realises how much has been left to be inferred.

Lucretius (99-55 B.C.) was a contemporary of Julius Caesar: a period of 'expansion' and order. The frontiers of the Empire were the Rhine and Danube in Europe, the Euphrates in Asia, and the desert in North Africa. As an epoch of expansion it must have attracted Arnold's attention: to study the exterior and inward characteristics that have accompanied its rise. He goes to the literature of the age, to the chief poet of the period, - Lucretius. But he finds that Lucretius had cut himself from his age and busied himself with an alien current of thought that belonged to the third century B.C. A period whose feature, in the Hellenistic world, is subjection as well as disorder. In philosophy, it includes the foundation of the Epicurean [Lucretius was the only eminent disciple of Epicurus] and Stoic schools, and also of Scepticism as a definitely formulated doctrine. It was a period of confusion. Menander, who belongs to this age, says:

So many cases I have known  
Of men who, though not naturally rogues,  
Became so, through misfortune, by constraint.  
(Frag. 604)

This sums up the moral character of the third century B.C. C.F. Angus, in Cambridge Ancient History, writes: "Metaphysics sink into the background, and ethics, now individual, become of the first importance. Philosophy is no longer the pillar of fire going before a few intrepid seekers after truth: it is rather an ambulance following in the wake of the struggle for existence and picking up the weak and wounded" (Vol. VII, p. 231).

Thus Arnold has arrived at the conclusion that Roman civilisation is of little value because the literature of the period does not interpret it. Greek literature can help modern poets to interpret their age:

The main element of the modern spirit's life is neither the senses and understanding, nor the heart and imagination; it is the imaginative reason. And there is a century in Greek life, - the century preceding the Peloponnesian war, from about the year 530 to the year 430 B.C., - in which poetry made, it seems to me, the noblest, the most successful effort she has ever made as the priestess of the imaginative reason, of the element by which the modern spirit, if it would live right, has chiefly to live. ("Pagan and Mediaeval Sentiment", CPW, III, p. 230).

It was possible in that age, as in few others, to be both intelligent and happy, and happy through intelligence. Thus one finds that the main line in Arnold's writings is the inculcation of intelligence.

"I would tell you," says Arnold to his sister K, "... of Ernest Renan, between whose line of endeavour and my own I imagine there is considerable resemblance, that you might have a look at some of his books if you liked. The difference is, perhaps, that he tends to inculcate morality, in a high sense of the word, upon the French nation as what they most want, while I tend to inculcate intelligence, also in a high sense of the word, upon the English nation as what they most want; but with respect both to morality and intelligence, I think we are singularly at one in our ideas, and also with respect both to the progress and the established religion of the present day". (Letters, I, p. 111).

Through intelligence the Greeks were able to reconcile old morality with the new freedom:



It was not that the old religious beliefs of Greece, to which the ideas that inspire conduct had attached themselves, did not require to be transformed by the new spirit. They did... 'The popular faith was everywhere shaken, and a life resting on the traditional notions was no longer possible. A dangerous rupture was at hand, unless the ancient faith were purged and elevated in such a manner as to meet the wants of the age. Mediators in this sense appeared in the persons of the great poets of Athens' ("A Speech at Eton", CPW, IX, pp. 32-33).

A man like Pericles or Phidias seemed to afford promise that Athens would know how to make a real success of her qualities - the quality of flexibility. Lucidity of thought, clearness and freedom from stiffness, openness of mind, amiability of manners, - all these seem to go along with a certain flexibility of nature, and to depend upon it.

Greek civilisation is even more important for the signs that heralded its fall or rather disintegration. The balance of forces which produced this golden age was precarious. "It soon became evident," says Arnold, "that the balance between the old morality and the new freedom was not to be maintained" (ibid., p. 32). The current was setting too strongly another way. It was threatened both from within and from without -- from w i t h i n by the claim of each city to absolute sovereignty [in Arnold's time it was each person] as well as the bitter and bloody strife between rich and poor within most cities, and from without by Sparta [not unlike Germany]. Poetry itself, after the death of Sophocles, "was seized by the same current which dissolved the foundations of the people's life, and which swept away the soil where in the emotions of the classical period had been rooted. The old perished; but the modern age, with its readiness in thought and speech, was incapable of creating a new art as a support to its children" (Ibid., pp. 32-33).

It is, then, to Arnold's credit that he was one of the few thinkers who observed the similarities between Athenian history in the age of

Pericles and the Victorian age. Athens after its victory in the Persian wars (like England's victory over the Spanish Armada that opened the doors for the Elizabethan renaissance and the victory over Napoleon that opened the door for the Victorian one) became rich and powerful, not much troubled by wars, and possessed of a democratic constitution administered by aristocrats. Under the stimulus of victory and wealth and the need of reconstruction, architects, sculptors, and dramatists produced works which dominated the future down to modern times. This is the more surprising, as Arnold puts it in "Numbers", when one considers the smallness of the population involved. Athens at its maximum, about 430 B.C., is estimated to have numbered about 230,000.

After having an idea of the world and life, "It remained," says Arnold "to select a subject from among those which had been considered to possess the true requisites of good tragic subjects; on which great works had been composed, but had not survived to chill emulation by their grandeur. Of such subjects there is, fortunately, no lack. In the writings of Hyginus, a Latin mythographer of uncertain date, we possess a large stock of them" ("Preface to Merope," CPW, I, p. 40). The stage is thus set for a discussion of the principles which should guide a Victorian poet. Implicit in this debate over subject matter are, of course, the persistent demands made of the poet: one was that the poet should choose subjects from contemporary life, subjects which have a direct relevance to the people and their times; the other demand is that the poet should recognise and accept his responsibility to be not simply an interpreter and critic of his age, but a moral guide and spiritual comforter as well.

Implicit in this argument is the accusation levelled against Arnold that he is a subjective poet since he, in his poetry, does not refer

directly to the works of men of his time. The Guardian (VIII 1853), enlarging upon such a conclusion, said that: "of a writer who never speaks about the men and women with whom he lives, we are apt to think that he has not entered into the realities of his own times. We suspect him of a lofty contempt for his age, or of a listless indifference to its wants and interests -- too indolent to undertake the trouble of comprehending its difficulties, too irresolute to enter into its life and death, for fear of being involved in the dangers of the strife. We are far from imputing such Epicurean sentiments to Mr Arnold; we only point out the imputation to which the bent of his poetry is liable" (p. 870).

In the Preface <sup>of</sup> 1853 Arnold explains why he has discarded Empedocles on Etna. The fact that the subject of the poem is taken from classical story allowed Arnold to reopen the debate on the topic. He insists at the beginning that the subject of the poem was entirely appropriate and that he did not fail in the delineation which he intended to effect. The age of Empedocles was very much like the modern era; it was an age when the old religious vision was fading, the influence of the Sophists was sowing the seed of doubt without providing the wholeness of consolation. "The calm, the cheerfulness, the disinterested objectivity [of the older Greek literature] have disappeared; the dialogue of the mind with itself has commenced; modern problems have presented themselves; we hear already the doubts, we witness the discouragement, of Hamlet and of Faust" ("The Preface /," <sup>of 1853</sup> CPW, I, p. 1): "What is that world? It is the world of man viewed as a being ondoyant et divers, balancing and indeterminate, the plaything of cross motives and shifting impulses, swayed by a thousand subtle influences, physiological and pathological" (CPW, X, p. 192).

It is plain that Arnold is doing a number of different things in the Preface. Ostensibly its main subject is Empedocles on Etna, but this is soon lost from sight, and Arnold takes the opportunity to answer critics of his own early poems, especially Clough, and then to expose some of the excesses of the Romantic movement, especially as shown by Alexander Smith. This rapidly develops into a general condemnation of the poetry and the poetics of the previous fifty years. Naturally this implied an unfavourable judgement of Arnold's own contemporaries. The sixth paragraph of the Preface for instance is easily constructed as an attack, perhaps deliberate, on In Memoriam.

He attacks the critics of his own time who not only prescribed, with their insistence on contemporaneous subject matter, a false poetic practice, but also prescribed false poetic aims:

They [critics] will permit the poet to select any action he pleases, and to suffer that action to go as it will, provided he gratifies them with occasional bursts of fine writing, and with a shower of isolated thoughts and images. That is, they permit him to leave their poetical sense ungratified, provided that he gratifies their rhetorical sense and their curiosity ("The Preface", *ibid.*, pp. 7-8).

Before that, Arnold does not forget to remind young poets that there are certain situations from the representation of which no poetical enjoyment can be derived, those in which the suffering finds no vent in action... in which there is everything to be endured, nothing to be done... when they occur in actual life they are painful, not tragic... To this class of situation, poetically faulty as it appears to me, that of Empedocles, as I have endeavoured to represent him, belongs. 16

The poet, then, has in the first place to select an excellent action. For "what are the eternal object of poetry," asks Arnold, "among all nations and at all times? They are actions; human actions possessing an

inherent interest in themselves, and which are to be communicated in an interesting manner by the art of the poet" (Preface, *ibid.*, p. 3). The context of these lines echoes Aristotle's concept:

Most important of all is the structure of the incidents. For Tragedy is an imitation, not of men, but of an action and of life, and life consists in action, and its end is a mode of action, not a quality. Now character determines men's qualities, but it is by their actions that they are happy or the reverse. Dramatic action, therefore, is not with a view to the representation of character: character comes in as subsidiary to the action. Hence the incidents and the plot are the end of a tragedy; and the end is the chief thing of all.<sup>17</sup>

Poets should ask themselves two questions to guide them in their choice:

'What are we to take? What will nourish us in growth towards perfection?'

It is better for the poet to select his actions from tradition: "The tradition is a great matter to a poet; it is an unspeakable support; it gives him the feeling that he is treading on solid ground. Aristotle tells the tragic poet that he must not destroy the received stories" ("Preface to *Merope*", *CPW*, I, p. 53).

"All depends," says Arnold, "upon the subject; choose a fitting action, penetrate yourself with the feeling of its situations; this done, everything else will follow... The poet then has in the first place to select an excellent action; and what actions, asks Arnold, are the most excellent? Those, certainly, which powerfully appeal to the great primary human affection: to those elementary feelings which subsist permanently in the race, and which are independent of time" (*CPW*, I, p. 4). In other words, actions should be universal not private or provincial.

In conformity with this conception Arnold condemns Tennyson's Maud and Other Poems: "I think this is a lamentable production, and like so much of our literature thoroughly and intensely provincial, not European" (*CL*, p. 148). In the same vein he condemns Wordsworth's famous Ode:

Even the 'intimations' of the famous Ode, those cornerstones of the supposed philosophic system of Wordsworth, - the idea of the high instincts and affections coming out in childhood, testifying of a divine home recently left, and fading away as our life proceeds, - this idea, of undeniable beauty as a play of fancy, has itself not the character of poetic truth of the best kind; it has no real solidity. The instinct of delight in Nature and her beauty had no doubt extraordinary strength in Wordsworth himself as a child. But to say that universally this instinct is mighty in childhood, and tends to die away afterwards, is to say what is extremely doubtful. In many people, perhaps with the majority of educated persons, the love of nature is nearly imperceptible at ten years old, but strong and operative at thirty ("Wordsworth", CPW, IX, pp. 49-50).

The problem involved here is the distinction between personal, topical, and universal. But are these different in nature? Some critics argue that the universal is but a projection of the topical, and that immediate realities contain and project universals. In the light of this, the most unvarnished economic and political issues are related to the universals of anxiety, fear of deprivation, pain, extinction, anguish, rage, disappointment, dejection and despair; they involve love and hate, loyalty and treason, selfishness and self-sacrifice, honour and dishonour, falsehood and truth, good and evil.

Thus, the case of Mr Smith, that Arnold cited in Culture and Anarchy, who feared he would come to poverty and be eternally lost and then committed suicide, can be interpreted, in the light of this view, in terms of fear of deprivation and anxiety. But he, according to Arnold, cannot be a subject for poetry because though the motives are universals, such a subject would be "too near... too mixed up with what was accidental and passing, to form a sufficiently grand, detached, and self-subsistent object for a tragic poem. Such objects belonged to the domain of the comic poet, and of the lighter kinds of poetry" (CPW, I, p. 7). The subjects chosen should speak, to use Wordsworth's lines,

Of truth, of grandeur, beauty, love and hope,  
And melancholy fear subdued by faith,  
Of blessed consolations in distress,  
Of moral strength and intellectual power,  
Of joy in widest commonalty spread.

(Fragment of "The Recluse" prefixed to the Excursion in  
1814, lines 14-18).  
Then, says Arnold, "we have a poet intent on 'the best and master thing'"  
("Wordsworth", CPW, IX, p. 47).

Imagination, of course, is required of the poet, but observation must precede imagination. His object, in short, is to convince the spectator of the realness of his situation as well as of its immediacy by accurately observed details, imaginatively selected and combined. Thus, the rich and satisfying nature of artistic experience lies in the power of the work to bring into awareness, by selected images and emotions, the real situation of one's own. The test of excellence, then, is the degree of enlightenment that the work effects on the reader. But it seems that Arnold's interpretations of his situation were too obscure for his age to appreciate them.

Kingsley asks scornfully "What does the age want with fragments of  
18 Antigone?" Arnold, however, answers him with a subdued air of irony implying that it is good to teach him since he, himself is a writer:

An action like the action of the Antigone of Sophocles, which turns upon the conflict between the heroine's duty to her brother's corpse and that to the laws of her country, is no longer one in which it is possible that we should feel a deep interest. I am speaking too, it will be remembered, not of the best sources of intellectual stimulus for the general reader, but of the best models of instruction for the individual writer (ibid., p. 12).

Arnold must have realised that the theme of Antigone is significant and central to his writings. Her conflict, as he has observed, is the choice between her duty, which is moral, to her brother's corpse and that to the laws of her country. It is a choice between two rights. Her fault is that she has gone too far in insisting on her rights and thus

jeopardised the unity of her country by defying her country's laws. This has a direct bearing on Arnold's own time where, to use Arnold's words, it is a most happy and important thing for a man merely to be able to do as he likes. In insisting on her rights she has violated the doctrine of Greek society: Sophrosyne, or moderation. Up till now the action is still rich. Of Antigone's choice, C. Brooks says "In our day Antigone's choice has actually been rewritten as a defiance of the claims of the tyrannical Fascist state" (A Shaping Joy, p. 7).

In his comment on the poem, Arnold says: "my Antigone supports me and in some degree subjugates destiny" (CL, p. 101). Again the aspect that the poem emphasises is central to Arnold's thinking: the primacy of the law that consecrates the ties of blood [humanism] over self-selected good.

In little companies,  
And, our own place once left,  
Ignorant where to stand, or whom to avoid,  
By city and household grouped, we live; and many shocks  
Our order heaven-ordained  
Must every day endure:  
Voyages, exiles, hates, dissensions, wars.  
Besides what waste he makes,  
The all-hated, order-breaking,  
Without friend, city, or home,  
Death, who dissevers all.

Him then I praise, who dares  
To self-selected good  
Prefer obedience to the primal law,  
Which consecrates the ties of blood; for these, indeed,  
Are to the Gods a care;  
That touches but himself.  
For every day man may be linked and loosed  
With strangers; but the bond  
Original, deep-inwound,  
Of blood, can he not bind,  
Nor, if Fate binds, not bear.

(Poems, p. 61)

But such an objective diagnosis of its ills, however, the modern age seems



not to want. It wants, says Arnold, one of two things: it wants introspection, "a true allegory of the state of one's own mind," or it wants glorification of its own achievements -- it wants its poets to inflate "themselves with a belief in the pre-eminent importance and greatness of their own times," and to this latter function it gives the modest name of "interpreting their age:" in the context it is perfectly clear that interpreting means praising and nothing else ("Preface to Poems 1853," CPW, I, p. 17).

In conclusion, the Greeks, Arnold declares, "in a passage that points forward to much of his literary, social, and biblical criticism, (could help) to cure the great vice of the modern intellect -- a want of sanity which is manifested in literature, art, religion, morality. Sanity is the great virtue of ancient literature; the want of it is the great defect of modern literature. 'It is impossible,' Arnold concludes, 'to read carefully the great ancients, without losing something of our caprice and eccentricity; and to emulate them we must at least read them'".<sup>19</sup> The poet who studies them will catch, like Gray, "their poetic point of view for regarding life, ...and their poetic manner" (CPW, IX, p. 181). "Only, the poet who would reproduce this must cultivate in himself a Greek virtue by no means common among the moderns in general, and the English in particular, - moderation" ("On Translating Homer", CPW, I, p. 168). "In the Athenians the sense of energy abhorred every kind of waste of time, their sense of measure abhorred bombast and redundancy, and their clear intelligence everything partaking of obscurity or vagueness; it was their habit in all things to advance directly and resolutely to the goal" ("A Speech at Eton", CPW, IX, p. 24). These are the qualities that Arnold was trying to cultivate in his age.

In the meantime Arnold contented himself with a brief Preface to the Edition of 1854 in which he cleared up some minor misunderstandings:

It has been said that I wish to limit the poet, in his choice of subjects, to the period of Greek and Roman antiquity; but it is not so. I only counsel him to choose for his subjects great actions, without regarding to what time they belong. Nor do I deny that the poetic faculty can and does manifest itself in treating the most trifling action, the most hopeless subject. But it is a pity that power should be wasted; and that the poet should be compelled to impart interest and force to his subject, instead of receiving them from it, and thereby doubling his impressiveness (CPW, I, p. 17).

Though it is a partial retreat, it is not made without passing value judgement on such procedure, - trifling action , hopeless subject . Arnold, however, in selecting the actions of Sohrab and Rustum from Persian legend and Balder Dead from Nordic Saga, while at the same time treating them both in a Greek fashion, certainly conformed to this advice.

### III

#### Concept of Form

But the fact remains that whatever Arnold may think as a critic, he is operating as a poet too: insofar as he is constructing constitutive parts and assembling them into a whole. In these operations lies what Arnold calls, the "concept of form":

Which do both give it [poem] being and maintain  
A balance, an ennobling interchange  
Of action from without and from within;  
The excellence, pure function, and best power 20  
Both of the object seen, and eye that sees.

Warren, speaking of the Preface, says that "Arnold is virtually the only critic in the Early Victorian period who was seriously concerned with the problem of form in poetry, and who gave anything like an adequate

weight to it in his theory. This may account for the fact that, of the various critical essays of the period, the 'Preface' is likely to be the only one familiar to the general reader, which is merely another way of saying that Arnold is the most modern of the Early Victorian critics".<sup>21</sup>

Arnold speaks in a letter to Clough of "Form of conception" as well as "Form of expression", suggesting that there is more to it than simply diction, rhyme, meter, and figures:

It is to be observed that power of style, in the sense in which I am here speaking of style, is something quite different from the power of idiomatic, simple, nervous, racy expression, such as the expression of healthy, robust natures so often is, such as Luther's was in a striking degree. Style, in my sense of the word, is a peculiar recasting and heightening, under a certain condition of spiritual excitement, of what a man has to say, in such a manner as to add dignity and distinction to it.

("On the Study of Celtic Literature",  
CPW, III, pp. 263-64)

Form in a poem also includes, more importantly, as this study will show, the structure of the embodied experience and its significance. For, as Arnold puts it, "the dramatic form exhibits, above all, the actions of man as strictly determined by his thoughts and feelings; it exhibits, therefore, what may be always accessible, always intelligible, always interesting ("On the Modern Element in Literature", CPW, I, p. 34).

The question that comes to one's mind is: How can we capture, hold and handle feelings so that their content may be made accessible and intelligible? Arnold would say "Fit details strictly combined, in view of a large general result nobly conceived; that is just the beautiful symmetria prisca of the Greeks, and it is just where we English fail, where all our art fails ("Literature and Science", CPW, X, p. 71). So, one finds that among the guiding principles in the Preface is the subordination

of parts to the whole, the preference for a mighty total-impression rather than for brilliant single lines and passages. Careful construction assuring the true relation of the parts to the whole was in Arnold's view the hallmark of a true artist: "They [Shakespeare, Molière, and Swift] are great literary masters, they are supreme writers, because they knew how to work into a literary composition their materials, and to subdue them to the purposes of literary effect" (CPW, X, p. 174).

There is no doubt that the idea of beauty, for many people, is linked with the idea of symmetry. They apply it to harmoniously proportioned statues and pictures, harmonious and rhythmical music and poetry, and refuse to apply it to discordant and harsh-sounding music and poetry, and disproportioned sculpture and painting. Arnold knows that. He makes it a condition that if the poem is to be beautiful, it should have a certain magnitude as determined by the specific whole and its parts. It must have symmetry:

The regular correspondence of part with part, the antithesis, in answering stanzas, of thought to thought, feeling to feeling, with the balance of the whole struck in one independent final stanza or epode... [that is] something of the peculiar distinctness and symmetry, which constitute the vital force of the Greek tragic forms.

("Preface to Merope", CPW, I, pp. 61-62).

Again, Arnold, in expounding Milton's three adjectives, simple, sensuous, and passionate, which Coleridge regards as an adequate summary definition of poetry, he makes the point that the second condition, sensuousness, insures that framework of objectivity, that definiteness and articulation of imagery, without which poetry evaporates into day-dreaming, while the third condition, passion, provides that neither thought nor imagery shall be simply objective, but that the passio vera of humanity shall warm and animate both.

The Preface being basically an expression of a critical theory that takes its starting point from the idea of a rejection of romantic subjectivism, urges the nineteenth-century poet to choose an excellent action and to subordinate his talents to the presentation of it. Again in a letter to Clough, he says:

I feel that the difference between a mature and a youthful age of the world compels the poetry of the former to use great plainness of speech as compared with that of the latter: and that Keats and Shelley were on a false track when they set themselves to reproduce the exuberance of expression, the charm, the richness of images, and the felicity, of the Elizabethan poets. Yet critics cannot get to learn this, because the Elizabethan poets are our greatest, and our canons of poetry are founded on their works. They still think that the object of poetry is to produce exquisite bits and images... whereas 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, as a power existing independent of the poetical power. But the language, style and general proceedings of a poetry which has such an immense task to perform, must be very plain direct and severe: and it must not lose itself in parts and episodes and ornamental work, but must press forwards to the whole.

(CL, p. 124)

The idea behind this is that "The end and aim of all religion, access to God, - the sense of harmony with the universal order, the partaking of the divine nature, that our faith and hope might be in God, that we might have life and have it more abundantly, - meant, for the Hebrew, access to the source of the moral order in especial, and harmony with it" (CPW, VI, p. 24). This is the main road toward man's proper totality and perfection. "In this conformity to the will of God, as we religiously name the moral order, is our peace and happiness (ibid., p. 32). The echo of Dante's famous line: 'In la sua voluntade e nostra pace' - one of Arnold's critical touchstones - is very audible.

This way of thinking depends on the assumption that human nature, in its passion and sensibilities no less than its reason, is everywhere fundamentally the same. For it seems to be a universal human desire to wish to occupy a place in the world of at least one other person. Perhaps the greatest solace in religion is the sense that one lives in the presence of an Other. Once a person imagines vividly his union with a force greater than his solitary self, he begins to act as if the authority of the moral law were acting through him. With the death of the ordinary self, he merges in the life of the universe.

But the Cartesian cogito, in its reinforcement by the impact of modern science, has inspired the philosophical itinerary in the course of which the traditional conviction that the alienated man is the man who does not believe in God has given way to the view that belief in God is a profound source of human alienation. This theme is illustrated in the philosophies of Kant, Hegel, Feuerbach and Marx and in its contemporary expression in positivistic Naturalism and Existentialism. "It is maintained that the affirmation of God as infinite being necessarily implies the devaluation of finite being and, in particular, the dehumanisation of man. The merely negative form of atheism has been replaced by a more sophisticated version according to which contemporary man if he is to be truly human must, perhaps reluctantly, dispense with belief in God. Thus the 'problem of God' is posed today as a feature of a more basic problem of human alienation and authenticity" (Masterson, Atheism and Alienation, p. 13).

Given the conclusion of modern thought, Arnold was convinced that the decline of belief, especially of old Christianity, was inevitable. But he also believed that "feeling and the religious mood are eternally the deepest being of man, the ground of all joy and greatness for him"

(Yale MS, Poems, p. 149). How does, then, poetry bring man to a due sense of religion? The problem is that modern poets cannot any more preach, like Dante or Milton, a sublime sermon on a given text like the Bible, because the Bible itself was fighting for its existence against the claims of science. "The best and indeed the only method," says David Hume, "of bringing every one to a due sense of religion, is by just representations of the misery... of man. And for that purpose a talent of eloquence and strong imagery is more requisite than that of reasoning and argument. For is it necessary to prove, what every one feels within himself? 'Tis only necessary to make us feel it, if possible, more intimately and sensibly." <sup>22</sup>

Arnold seems to think in that direction. For he quotes from T. Gray that "He who best knows our nature (for he made us what we are) by such afflictions recalls us from our wandering thoughts and idle merriment, from the insolence of youth and prosperity, to serious reflection, to our duty, and to himself" (CPW, IX, p. 195). Again he writes, in the Preface 1853, "the more tragic the situation, the deeper becomes the enjoyment; and the situation is more tragic in proportion as it becomes more terrible" (CPW, I, p 2). Perhaps nothing is more terrible than one's feeling of loneliness, confusion, separateness, and incompleteness. Arnold did not invent these states, they were the bent of the time: "In an epoch of dissolution and transformation, such as that on which we are now entered, habits, ties, and associations are inevitably broken up, the action of individuals becomes more distinct, the shortcomings, errors, heats, disputes, which necessarily attend individual action, are brought into greater prominence" ("Preface to Essays in Criticism", CPW., III, 288).

Arnold's critical practice conforms with this method. John S. Eells has

written a valuable study of Arnold's well-known touchstones in "The Study of Poetry" (1880), showing that the bulk of them express emotions of loss, pain, grief, death, "the transience of both glory and happiness, the abiding pathos of young death; the manifold sorrow of man; the pathetic vicissitudes of man; the inward petrification caused by grief too deep for tears; the pain of living; the grandeur and majesty of a noble personality brought to ruin by a tragic flaw; the sense of loss of something beloved".<sup>23</sup>

This shows that Arnold's concept of form is not separated from that of content: they modify each other. To this effect Arnold says to Clough that the "idea of style [is] half the work... And had Shakespeare and Milton lived in the atmosphere of modern feeling, had they had the multitude of new thoughts and feelings to deal with a modern has, I think it likely the style of each would have been far less curious and exquisite. For in a man style is the saying in the best way what you have to say. The what you have to say depends on your age" (CL, pp. 64-65). Again he stresses the idea that poetic style has a noble and an important function: to produce a noble effect. Grand moral effects are produced by style. "For the style is the expression of the nobility of the poet's character, as the matter is the expression of the richness of his mind" (CL, p. 101).

To this aim Arnold lists the finest of the Greek literary techniques such as: clearness of arrangement, vigour of development, simplicity of style and the manifestation of a severe and scrupulous self-restraint. Their expression "is excellent because it is so admirably kept in its right degree of prominence, because it is so simple and so well subordinated; because it draws its force directly from the pregnancy of the matter which it conveys" (CPW, I, p. 5). "'What distinguishes the artist from the mere amateur,' says Goethe, 'is Architectonicè, in the highest sense; that



power of execution, which creates, forms, and constitutes: not the profoundness of single thoughts, not the richness of imagery, not the abundance of illustration" (Ibid., p. 9).

Arnold's most distinctively original achievements were in free verse, or what R.H. Hutton called "pieces of unrhymed recitative", for which his models seem to have been both Greek lyrics and poems of Goethe and Heine. He tried fifteen quite different verse-forms in the sixteen poems that were not sonnets; only "The Hayswater Boat" and "A Memory Picture" use somewhat similar stanzas. The sonnets, too, are clearly practice pieces; he scarcely used the form again until his last collection in 1867. His sonnets, which comprise about a fourth of his published poems, are microcosms of his later poetic themes. In subject matter, they deal with literature, politics, nature, religion, and personal philosophy. However, love, the traditional subject of sonneteers, is absent. In addition, his sonnets illustrate his metrical diversity, his use of nature imagery, and his balanced, classic line.

Most critics, however, complain that Arnold is inconsistent in his critical theory, not to mention their complaints about the lack of correspondence between his theory and practice: there is, first, the Arnold of the 1853 Preface where he puts his emphasis on style; there is also the Arnold of the 1864 "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time", whose historical concern with the source of ideas - the enabling factor of poetry - leads him to belittle the Romantics. There is, finally, the Arnold of the 1880 "The Study of Poetry", whose devotion to poetry's moving power - its power to unify man's sensibilities - leads him to declare that the greatness of poetry lies "in the matter and substance, ... and in its manner and style" (CPW, IX, p.171). Arnold does not, in fact, put his emphasis only on style. As early as October 28, 1852 he writes to Clough that "modern poetry can only subsist by its contents: by

becoming a complete magister vitae" (CL, p. 124). The idea is developed later in "The Study of Poetry" (1880).

There is, however, a development - in the sense of one belief emerging recognisably from the previous one and leading inevitably to the next: it would be all much tidier were this not so. It is the prerogative of the artist as well as the thinker to use some other thinkers and poets to mediate between his material and his imagination. Arnold has anticipated this accusation. In his preface to *The Poems of Wordsworth* (1879), he says:

As if a man, journeying home, and finding a nice inn on the road, and liking it, were to stay for ever at the inn! Man, thou hast forgotten thine object; they journey was not to this, but through this. 'But this inn is taking.' And how many other inns, too, are taking, and how many fields and meadows! but as places of passages merely. You have an object, which is this: to get home, to do your duty to your family, friends, and fellow-countrymen, to attain inward freedom, serenity, happiness, contentment. Style takes your fancy, arguing takes your fancy, and you forget your home and want to make your abode with them and to stay with them, on the plea that they are taking. Who denies that they are taking? But as places of passages, as inns. And when I say this, you suppose me to be attacking the care for style, the care for argument. I am not; I attack the resting in them, the not looking to the end which is beyond them.

(CPW, IX, p. 47)

Another accusation levelled against Arnold is that his poetry fails musically. Lowry, to this effect, says "It is a little hard to understand how he who had made the golden cars of Mycerinus 'sweep in the sounding stillness of the night,' and uttered the perfect felicities of 'Dover Beach,' could have imagined that there was a line of poetry even dormant in 'Germany, France, Christ, Moses, Athens, Rome'" (Introduction to CL, p. 40). Douglas Bush, in his comment on Arnold's poetry, writes: "Arnold's characteristic and often prosaic plainness came in part from his theory

of poetry, in part from the nature of his poetic gifts. In setting forth his spiritual troubles he seeks first of all to achieve a true and adequate statement, bare of non-essential decoration... The reader, while moved by what is said, may feel that the writing is not inspired and inevitable, that perhaps he himself could make improvement in diction and rhythm. Though Arnold achieves beautiful and individual rhythms, ... he has a notoriously unreliable ear".<sup>24</sup>

Arnold used to think that rhythm, metre, diction are provided by the age: the poet does not make them. If this is so and he sees that his age is unpoetic, good construction, in this situation, would be taken as a mark of insincerity; instead of expressing naturally and uninhibitedly what he is feeling, one would suspect that he has worked on his poetry and dressed it up for public presentation. In conformity with this line of thought some critics rightly argue that cacophony in Arnold's poetry is a deliberate plan that Arnold follows to show that form and content determine each other. To this effect Park Honan writes "we should hardly wish to be without those sonnets and reflective lyrics in which Arnold deliberately sought degrees of harshness to fulfill two needs: to provide a sound metaphor for the spiritual temper of the age, and to provide a style-metaphor for the noble character of the poet who was to instruct that age. His thought in these poems has influenced our own thought considerably. And his technique in them has influenced modern poetic technique."<sup>25</sup> This line of argument will be dealt with in more detail in Part Two of this Thesis.

Arnold must have been aware of these imperfections. He considers them as acceptable, for as he says "Perfection of a certain kind may there be attained, or at least approached, without knocking yourself to pieces, but to attain or approach perfection in the region of thought and

feeling, and to unite this with perfection of form, demands not merely an effort and a labour, but an actual tearing of oneself to pieces, which one does not readily consent to (although one is sometimes forced to it) unless one can devote one's whole life to poetry" (Letters, I, pp. 62-63).

Again in a strain of self justification he says:

Shakespeare frequently has lines and passages in a strain quite false, and which are entirely unworthy of him. But one can imagine his smiling if one could meet him in the Elysian Fields and tell him so; smiling and replying that he knew it perfectly well himself, and what did it matter? But with Wordsworth the case is different. Work altogether inferior, work quite uninspired, flat and dull, is produced by him with evident unconsciousness of its defects, and he presents it to us with the same faith and seriousness as his best work (CPW, IX, p. 42).

26

It is worthy of notice that whenever Arnold speaks of poetry he speaks "of poetic genius as employing itself upon narrative or dramatic poetry, - poetry in which the poet has to go out of himself and to create. In lyrical poetry, in the direct expression of personal feeling, the most subtle genius may, under the momentary pressure of passion, express itself simply" ("On Translating Homer", CPW, I, p. 206). And of dramatic poetry he means tragedy, for "comedy," according to Arnold, "escapes... the test of entire seriousness; it remains, by the law of its being, in a region of comparative lightness and irony. What is artificial passes in comedy more easily" (CPW, IX, p. 73). "The case of the great Molière himself will illustrate the truth of what I say. Molière is by far the chief name in French poetry; he is one of the very greatest names in all literature. He has admirable and delightful power, penetrativeness, insight; a masterly criticism of life. But he is a comic poet. Why? ...

For only by breasting in full the storm  
and cloud of life, breasting it and passing  
through it and above it, can the dramatist who  
feels the weight of mortal things liberate  
himself from the pressure, and rise, as we all  
seek to rise, to content and joy. Tragedy breasts  
the pressure of life. Comedy eludes it, half  
liberates itself from it by irony. But the  
tragedian, if he has the sterner labour,  
has also the higher prize. Shakespeare has more joy  
than Molière, more assurance and peace (CPW, IX, p. 72).

John Farrell, in his comment on Arnold's idea of tragedy, has rightly observed that "'since the French Revolution, the idea of tragedy can be seen as in different ways of response to a culture in a conscious change and movement.' Arnold's idea of tragedy is just such a response. The response is determined by the tragic sense of history that involves these attitudes: the attitude that human destiny is profoundly shaped by one's milieu, that this milieu derives its organisation from a historical process which is both magnificent and radically flawed, and that the participation of a heroic individual in this process, his confrontation with its revolutionary direction, may possess the dignity of tragic conflict".<sup>27</sup>

But Arnold's originality and his finest achievement, as a poet-critic, lies in his making the issues discussed in this chapter, "The Poetic Process", which belong to abstract thinking, dramatic. The question that underlies his poetic process might be phrased as follows: How does the poet relate himself to the external world; how does he perceive the world objectively and yet retain his own integrity and individuality? In the next two chapters, - "Varieties of Poetic Vision" and "On Poets", I

shall try to show how Arnold handles this abstract question poetically.

NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> P. Drew, The Poetry of Browning (Great Britain: Methuen, 1970), pp. 355-56.
- <sup>2</sup> W.K. Wimsatt, The Verbal Icon (Op. cit.), p. 8.
- <sup>3</sup> M.H. Abrams, The Mirror and the Lamp (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), p. 214.
- <sup>4</sup> A.D. Culler, Imaginative Reason (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1966), p. 68.
- <sup>5</sup> See also Arnold's letter to Clough on the same point. CL. p.63.
- <sup>6</sup> To attend to these ideas time and effort are needed. This may account for Arnold's abandonment of poetry. In one of his letters he writes: "one main reason why I am so little available for letters is that these educational questions have laid their hold upon me" (Russell, quoted by Super, vol. IX, p. 328 n).
- <sup>7</sup> C.D. Broad, The Mind and Its Place in Nature (London: Kegan Paul, 1925), p. 559.
- <sup>8</sup> David Hume, A Treatise of Human Nature, ed. L. Selby-Bigge (Oxford: Oxford Clarendon Press, 1896), p. 1.
- <sup>9</sup> C.B. Tinker and H.F. Lowry, The Poetry of Matthew Arnold: A Commentary (London: Oxford University Press, 1940), p. 79. It will be referred to as Commentary.
- <sup>10</sup> Patrick Masterson, Atheism and Alienation (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1973), p. 20.
- <sup>11</sup> J.S. Mill, Autobiography (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), p. 233.

- 12 David J. DeLaura, "Matthew Arnold and the Nightmare of History" in Victorian Poetry, ed. M. Bradbury and D. Palmer. Stratford-Upon-Avon Studies 15 (London: Edward Arnold, 1972), pp. 44-45.
- 13 Kenneth Allott, "Pater and Arnold", Essays in Criticism, 2 (1952), 19-21.
- 14 Frank E. Manuel, Shapes of Philosophical History (California: Stanford University Press, 1962), pp. 122-123.
- 15 Henri de Saint-Simon, "De La reorganisation de la Societe European" (1814), Oeuvres Choisies (Brussels, 1859), II, p. 328. Quoted by Manuel, p. 102.
- 16 Curiously enough, Arnold has included in that volume "Mycerinus", even though it is a poem which pre-eminently fixes upon a situation in which there is everything to be endured, nothing to be done. To this Professor Drew adds that 'all his (Arnold's) most celebrated poems are aptly described by his own strictures on Empedocles, Balder Dead, Sohrab and Rostum, and Tristram and Iseult all deal with situations in which man is forced to realise his own impotence - he must either wait in vain or act in vain: although the note of despair is less insistently sounded, "The Scholar-Gipsy" and "Thyrsis" deal with men cut off from their sources of power: many of the shorter poems, for example, "To Marguerite", "To a Gipsy Child", and "The Forsaken Merman", take as their theme alienation and isolation: to all of them we may apply Arnold's own words about Empedocles.
- 17 Aristotle's Poetics, tr. S.H. Butler. Quoted by R.H. Super, (op. cit.,) p. 219. Although Arnold accepts Aristotle's thesis that the 'action' or subject dominates other factors, he alters Aristotle's "catharsis" to "commiseration and awe; while Aristotle speaks of the catharsis in connection with the protagonist, Arnold speaks about it in connection with the audience.
- 18 H.W. Garrod, "Matthew Arnold's 1853 Preface", RES, 17 (July, 1941), 318.
- 19 Sidney M.B. Coulling, "Matthew Arnold's 1853 Preface", Victorian Studies, 7 (1964), 255-56.
- 20 The last lines of the thirteenth book of Wordsworth's Prelude (1805).  
"Imagination and Taste, How ~~impaired~~ and Restored" 11. 379-378.
- 21 A.H. Warren Jr. English Poetic Theory 1825-1865 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950), p. 169.

- 22 D. Hume, Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood, 1907), pp. 123-124.
- 23 John S. Eells, The Touchstones of Matthew Arnold (New Haven: Conn., n.d., 1955), p. 203.
- 24 Douglas Bush, English Poetry (London: Methuen, 1971), pp. 172-73.
- 25 Park Honan, "Matthew Arnold and Cacophony", Victorian Poetry, 1 (1963), 122.
- 26 "The novel," says Arnold, "is a more superficial form of literature than poetry, but on that very account more attractive" (CPW, X, p. 189). And that "the essential difference between melodrama and poetic drama is that one relies for its main effect upon an inner drama of thought and passion, the other upon an outer drama of, as the phrase is, sensational incidents" (*ibid*, p. 95).
- 27 John P. Farrell, "Matthew Arnold's Tragic Vision", PMLA, 85 (1970), 109.



## CHAPTER III

### Varieties of Poetic Vision

Ah! two desires toss about  
The poet's feverish blood.  
One drives him to the world without,  
And one to solitude.

M. Arnold "In Memory of the Author of 'Obermann'"

The aim of this chapter is to show that Arnold rejects, in part, the Romantic personality as well as the Romantic theory of poetry as inadequate to cope with social, religious, and philosophical problems of a progressive, sceptical, and scientific age; it will show his own conception of the appropriate poetic vision and the kind of poetry that ought to be written in that age. The key poems on that matter are "The Strayed Reveller", "Resignation", and "Epilogue to Lessing's Laocoon". My argument will be to show that these three poems represent successive stages in the development of an argument by poetic means about the appropriate poetic vision.

#### I

"The Strayed Reveller" is (after the early and not very coherent "The New Sirens"<sup>1</sup>) Arnold's fullest exploration of the romantic poet's plunge into experience and the consequence for his creativity. The poem is Arnold's examination of the strayed poet giving himself up to a kaleidoscopic and almost psychedelic swirl of vision — and curiously

exempt from the pain which the reveller himself says a poet must undergo.

The fact that "The Strayed Reveller" was chosen to be the title poem of the 1849 volume shows, among many other things, Arnold's satisfaction in what he has created. This is confirmed by the fact that "it was reprinted in every collected edition with practically no alteration of the text" (Commentary, pp. 159-160). The poem is the title of a volume of verse whose preoccupation is the relation of the poet, the sensitive and deeply thinking harmoniser of experience, to the raw material he handles: can the poet see the world as it really is without becoming involved in it? Is not the god-like detached vision illusory and superficial? And is not the painful and time-bound vision of the poet too emotional and too subjective? These questions are, in fact, the frame of the argument in the poem. The argument shows that poetry should correspond with human experience and deal with the universal experience of all men. In a word, Arnold expects the poet to answer the question: how to live. This is a long and laborious way that needs patience, knowledge, self-discipline, virtue, decisiveness and self-control. The poet should have an ardent impulse to seek the genuine truth on all matters he thinks of, and a gift for finding and recognising it when it is found. Undoubtedly, the reveller has nothing of these qualities. Some modern readers see it as Arnold's most authentic anatomy of true classicism, before the more frozen and Apollonian pseudo-classicism of 1853 and later. Warren D. Anderson, in his comment on the poem, says "'The Strayed Reveller' suggests no clear similarity between the ecstatic intoxication of Dionysiac revels and the act of poetic creation. In fact, it makes a certain effort to keep them separate".<sup>2</sup> This remark seems to be a criticism of Tinker and Lowry's study in which they say, "This symbolic poem seems to suggest

a similarity between the intoxication of the Bacchic revellers in their ecstasy and the experience of poets in the act of creation" (Commentary, p. 16). Anderson comes to the conclusion that the poem shows Arnold unable, or unwilling to resolve that dilemma by choosing between alternatives (p. 70). Alan Roper, concerning the difficulty of the poem, says "what makes the 'Strayed Reveller' difficult is that, unusually for Arnold, it lacks the features which permit a value judgement upon the action and professions it contains. It is Arnold's fullest poetic statement about the nature of the poet and his creation... But the statement is made without the sort of comment, however indirect, which could tell us whether or not it constitutes a full and adequate aesthetic".<sup>3</sup> Robert Stange, to this effect, writes that "the poem's statement is, unfortunately, somewhat blurred - chiefly, I think, because the suggestions of the plot are not carried to a conclusion".<sup>4</sup> N. Friedman says that "the fault of the poem is that it sets up a problem which it fails to resolve, or even illuminate or embody successfully".<sup>5</sup> To the same effect, L. Gottfried says "many readers, including members of Arnold's own family, found some or all of these performances obscure, puzzling, or remote from the serious concerns of contemporary reality".<sup>6</sup>

This might intimidate an inexperienced critic, but once one realises that the critic's temptations do not proceed from what is ordinary but from what is not, one finds it rewarding to attempt an interpretation of this poem. The critics' remarks can be roughly rewritten as follows: Arnold's argument is not clear because it lacks a value judgement upon the action it contains; and if there is an argument, it is not carried to a conclusion.

It is a characteristic of Arnold that he often builds his poems around a dramatic contrast between two or three characters who represent

varying ways of life; and that he uses a frame of reference to recommend one thing and to condemn another. To this effect he writes in Culture and Anarchy "we are often supposed, when we criticise by the help of culture some imperfect doing or other, to have in our eye some well-known rival plan of doing, which we want to serve and recommend".<sup>7</sup> Naturally, the first thing the artist does, is to try to find that frame of reference in his own society. But the ideal order in human society, the world of man, which "had provided Shakespeare and Pope with a frame of reference," as Foakes puts it, "had collapsed and could no longer supply images of harmony".<sup>8</sup> Indeed, human society has become, in the poetry of Arnold, an image of waste, futility, ultimate disorder and anarchy; the city as well has become an image of spiritual exhaustion, or even an image of hell.

Arnold in general solves this problem in three ways: firstly, by taking myths as man's formulation of his own experience and of the values that operate upon him in time and in nature; secondly, by using images from the natural world such as light, rivers, mountains etc. and; thirdly, by using a vocabulary of assertion, value words, words that have religious associations. In "The Strayed Reveller", he uses all these methods.

Many critics are dissatisfied with Arnold's usage of the myths in this poem. Friedman says "I can find no particular dramatic reason why this setting [Book X of the Odyssey] is chosen, for Ulysses' functional role is slight indeed". (p. 407). Of myths one would like to say that the value of any myth cannot depend on its demonstrability as a fact, but only on the value of the attitudes it embodies, the further attitudes it engenders and the actions it motivates. In addition to that, myth allows selection and rhetorical exaggeration and frees the writer from the burden

of irrelevant detail that attends descriptions of modern life. It can be used as an interpretive device - the poet reinterprets the present in terms of the past. What distinguishes one poet from another is the art of catching the essence of the situation, of putting one's finger on the heart of the matter.

In many of Arnold's poems the dream of a primitive mythological world of simple joy and harmony is emphasised. This is the impression Arnold likes to give but beneath the surface one finds the opposite. Such a world is rhetorically used to oppose or contrast with the sick hurry of modern life. Arnold uses it, as Professor Bush put it, "not as a preferable or possible alternative or as a complete ideal, for Arnold would not disown his intellectual heritage, however painful its responsibilities, but as a partial corrective of ill-balanced modernity and as a cool refuge for his perplexed and lonely soul. And his sense of the high seriousness of life and poetry, his constant effort to see himself and nature under the reign of law, prevented his mythological visions from being mere poetry of escape".<sup>9</sup> It is true, for Arnold knows that there is no escape from the city except in temporary excursions into a nostalgically regarded past.

In this poem Arnold contrasts two ways: the way of involvement and that of detachment and solitude. He disinterestedly remains aloof, paring his fingernails in the expectation that the reader will be encouraged to appreciate how complex the problem is. The poem is pregnant with many suggestive ideas and questions due to its mythological background.

If the poem is to be taken as allegory, the title ought to be carefully considered. It would appear that the word "strayed" must convey more meaning than its literal significance. It belongs to a class of

words poets use to establish a transcendental order, usually called a vocabulary of assertion or value words. They represent concepts or feelings universally regarded as valuable due to the fact that they are endowed by religious associations. This may explain why Arnold calls his youth a strayed reveller because the word astray has<sup>a</sup> Biblical connotation of sheep who have strayed from the path of righteousness. Similarly the word reveller has a religious connotation too, it is often used by St Paul [I Pet. 4:3 "Let the time that is past suffice for doing what the Gentiles like to do, living in licentiousness, passions, drunkenness, revels, carousing, and lawless idolatory."]<sup>10</sup> From this point of view one can say that Arnold is condemning the way of the reveller. This view will be sufficiently supported and proved in the remainder of this essay.

The topography of the action is given clearly: a valley slopes up to high ground on which the Reveller lives alone in a hut; part way down the valley and apparently on opposite sides of it there are two buildings: the temple of Iacchus:

In the town, round the temple,  
Iacchus' white fane  
On yonder hill.

(II.37-39)

And the palace of Circe:

Down the dark valley; I saw  
On my left, through the beeches,  
Thy palace, Goddess,  
Smokeless, empty.

(II.42-45)

As the poem opens the youth, who has strayed from the Bacchic rout, is discovered in the evening at the portico of Circe's palace. In his first speech he explains that he has drunk the enchantress's wine and succumbed to the charms of her magical world. The reveller may be taken to represent the

inexperienced romantic poet who has neglected the moral mode of the vision [Bacchic way] and given himself into enchantment and intoxication: the naturalistic mode of vision [Circe way]. His way is not enough: for poetry, says Arnold, "interprets... by expressing with magical felicity the physiognomy and movement of the outward world, and it interprets by expressing with inspired conviction, the ideas and laws of the inward world of men's moral and spiritual nature" ("Maurice de Guérin", CPW, III, p. 33). The poet in the poem does not master the technique of versification either. Anyhow, there is pictorial vividness which Professor Allott says "is unusual for Arnold; it may have been worked up partly to compensate for the lack of rhyme and conventional metre" (Poems, p. 66).

The reveller, being unfurnished with an idea about the world, succumbs to the spells of Circe who changes him and robs him of his manhood: The youth is immensely changed after he drinks from the cup. Most noticeably he now prefers imaginative to real life. Drinking from Circe's cup has changed the Reveller's appearance. Ulysses gives this picture of him just after he has taken the potion:

... he sits, bending downward  
His white, delicate neck  
To the ivy-wreathed marge  
Of thy cup; bright, glancing vine-leaves  
That crown his hair,  
Falling forward, mingling  
With the dark ivy-plants-  
His fawn-skin, half untied,  
Smear'd with red wine-stains.

(II.82-90)

In this description the youth, as Sundell puts it, "appears just the opposite of what he was in the morning. Before he was rough, active and masculine; now he is delicate, passive, and even feminine".<sup>11</sup> This brings to the reader's mind Arnold's description of the poetic temperament of Guérin and Keats. In this type of poetic temperament

the poet, as Arnold puts it, aspires to be a sort of Aeolian harp. This might, too, remind the reader of a period where the poet was a Shaman of whom Roheim writes "in his relation to the supernatural world he is the female, the Receiver, completely overcome in his ecstatic state by a Will that imposes itself from without and penetrates into his body".<sup>12</sup>

Most critics describe the youth as a young follower of Dionysus. This description is not in fact in harmony with his deepest nature, for his dwelling place, in the hut at the head of the high valley, is a place of fresh natural beauty. The temple of Iacchus is in the town and is surrounded by a rout of people. It clearly represents the world in opposition to the solitude in which the youth lives, and his descent into the town is the usual Arnoldian symbol for the descent onto the burning plain. Arnold is fond of contrasting these two worlds to give value judgement. Of this opposition, Professor Drew writes that "It is the life of the countryside, innocent, restorative, and making for easy natural poetry, while the 'city-noise' and 'the great town's harsh heart-wearying roar' represent all the forces that overtask and ultimately silence a poet's voice" ("The Passage of Time", p. 207). This is true, Arnold is never tired of describing the age as unpoetical. What makes one believe that the contrast is a rhetorical device is Arnold's awareness that the past is already dead and that he "knew enough of the world to realise that Britain was certain to grow steadily more urban" (ibid., p. 205).

Arnold, in fact, associates the world of Circe with Hellenism and that of Dionysus with Hebraism. The fault of the youth, in this case, is that he mistakes one for the other and that he takes one of them as an end in itself. Arnold does not present Hellenism and Hebraism as two ways of life.



He has proved, in many places, the fallacy of following one and neglecting the other. To this effect, he says in Culture and Anarchy that "the evolution of these forces, separately and in themselves, is not the whole evolution of humanity, -- their history is not the whole history of man; whereas their admirers are always apt to make it stand for the whole history. Hebraism and Hellenism are, neither of them, the law of human development, as their admirers are prone to make them; they are... a contribution to human development".<sup>13</sup>

Similarly, Circe is chosen because she represents, among many other things, a stage in the journey of Ulysses. She does not have the secret of knowledge so as to guide him to his home. She tells him "but before I can send you home you have to make a journey of a very different kind, and your way to the Halls of Hades and Persephone the Dread, to consult the soul of Tiresias, the blind Theban prophet, whose understanding even death has not impaired".<sup>14</sup> This shows that the way to the vision is the way of pain and suffering and not that of intoxication. He who wants the vision must suffer like Ulysses and his crew who say "And a melancholy crew we were... in the City of Perpetual Mist" (p. 171). He should take the long way of suffering and experience to come to the vision.

In order to emphasise the contrast between the Reveller and Ulysses, the sailor and hunter who, as Homer says, can resist enchantment, knows where he wants to go and gets there, Arnold stabilises one factor which is Circe and takes the Reveller and Ulysses as variable elements. The latter is well defined, he retains his identity. The youth recognises him at once. While the youth's character is not well-defined, Ulysses is not certain of him:

I am Ulysses.  
And thou, too, sleeper?  
Thy voice is sweet.  
It may be thou hast followed  
Through the islands some divine bard,  
By age taught many things,  
Age and the Muses;  
And heard him delighting  
The chiefs and people  
... and learned his songs,  
Of Gods and Heroes,  
Of war and arts  
And peopled cities,  
Inland, or built  
By the grey sea. - If so, then hail!  
I honour and welcome thee.

(II.114-129)

It is Arnold's intention that Circe is to be an ambiguous character. On one level she is used to recommend Hellenism and in this way he condemns the Hebraistic tendencies in the Victorian city. This is implied by the fact that she can make people lose all memory of their native land. On the other level she is not recommended as the only way of life, she is but one-fourth of life. The youth has made the secondary the principal at the wrong moment, and the principal he has at the wrong moment treated as secondary. Of a situation like this Arnold says in Culture and Anarchy that:

This contravention of the natural order has produced, as such contravention always must produce, a certain confusion and false movement, of which we are now beginning to feel, in almost every direction, the inconvenience. In all directions our habitual courses of action seem to be losing efficaciousness, credit, and control, both with others and even with ourselves; everywhere we see the beginning of confusion, and we want a clue to some sound order and authority. This we can only get by going back upon the actual instincts and forces which rule our life, seeing them as they are, connecting them with other instincts and forces, and enlarging our whole view and rule of life (CPW., V, 175)

This, in fact, can be said of the youth.

Ulysses is seen, in the poem hunting with Circe:

Hist! Thou-within there!  
Come forth, Ulysses!  
Art tired with hunting?  
While we range the woodland,  
See what the day brings.

(II.70-74)

Ulysses is obviously introduced to be contrasted with the more dreamy youth and not to give him a pretext to say his long speech as some critics think. Most critics contrast them on the basis of action. Action, however, is not the salient feature of Ulysses. The basic differences are experience and knowledge: 'Idea of the world'.

Ulysses is a wanderer who has acquired experience and knowledge of the world. He is the 'proved, much enduring, /Wave toss'd wanderer!'" (pp. 102-3). The bards see and bear Ulysses's experience:

They see the heroes  
Near harbour; but they share  
Their lives, and former violent toil in Thebes,  
Seven-gated Thebes, or Troy;  
Or where the echoing oars  
Of Argo first  
Startled the unknown sea.

(254-60)

The youth describes three modes of vision; that of the Gods, that of the wise bards, and finally his own.

The first vision (II.130-206) portrays a transcendent and divinely serene view of the world and its inhabitants, the import being that the Gods see all things from a blissfully detached point of view, since all they see appears easy and natural and without pain or suffering. But the vision of Gods is superficial and impassive. One senses, here, an oblique criticism of gods as being indifferent to man's fate, consequently man should arrange his own affairs. He should not expect anything from

gods. Dorothy Mermin, in her comment on the poem, says that "Gods whose vision is so superficial, narrow, and detached can hardly care much about men, or deserve that men care about them. They are Epicurean gods, and their indifference must be a prime cause of the grim futility of human life".<sup>15</sup> This view, one thinks, reads more into the situation than really is. Such a view is alien to Arnold's line of thought; the poem, itself, does not support it.

The gods are said to see six specific things: Tiresias, the Centaurs, the Indian in the vale of Cashmeer, the Scythians, the ferry crossing the Oxus, and the heroes nearing the Happy Island. They see Tiresias comfortably musing and sitting

On the warm, grassy  
Asopus Bank,  
His robe drawn over  
His old, sightless head.

(137-140)

This is a static, comfortable, and external vision. The wise bards can also see Tiresias, but the vision of the poets pierces through that robe. They project themselves into or identify themselves with what they see and experience. Through this process -- Empathy, poets get their knowledge of life and Nature. A poet's alienation may arise in this area. Such feelings of unease and constriction arise when the writer aims at conveying the meaning and feelings of a certain experience in his attempt to unify himself, the reader, and the experience in its concrete forms, and finds it difficult because of the concretion of the imagery. The bards remember the doom that accompanied Tiresias's gift of prophecy. They see and bear:

His groping blindness,  
His dark foreboding,  
His scorned white hairs.

(217-19)

The gods see the Centaurs. The notable quality of the gods' view is its charm. To them the Centaurs present only a scene of living nature. However, the relation of the Centaurs to the youth is more oblique, as impassioned half-men, half-beasts they are reminiscent of all who come under Circe's power.

The gods see the Scythian's "wheeled house" halted on a plain like an ocean, the track stretching ahead into the "sunny waste":

On the wide steppe, unharnessing  
His wheeled house at noon.  
He tethers his beast down, and makes his meals -  
. . . . .

The track, a straight black line,  
Furrows the rich soil; here and there  
Clusters of lonely mounds  
Topped with rough-hewn,  
Grey, rain-bleared statues, overpeer  
The sunny waste.

(163-65 and 175-80)

The poets see the same scene, but at the end of a long, harsh winter. They see this sunny waste become a "bare steppe" in winter, and the Scythian submerged in the plain, fading like the grass that the gods see round him.

— They see  
The Scythian; but long frosts  
Parch them in winter-time on the bare steppe,  
Till they too fade like grass; they crawl  
Like shadows forth in spring.

(239-43)

In conformity with the premise that Arnold knows what he is about, it

appears from this point of view that he composes images to cover a wider sector of people and places. Professor Allott, who has identified these sources, says "why did he (Arnold) call his nomadic steppe-dweller of lines 162-176... a Scythian?... The question can be answered out of Chapter XXVI of The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, by Gibbon's footnote: 'In speaking of all, or any of the northern shepherds of Europe, or Asia, I indifferently use the appellation of Scythians or Tartars.'"<sup>16</sup> That Arnold is selective in his choice of his images, is undeniable. He uses another source to provide himself with another aspect of the same image. "A later section (of Pallas' Travels) 'Journey from Taganrog to Tourida,' gives us Arnold's 'Wheel'd house' in the 'two wheeled carts, or Araba of the wandering Nagays'" (ibid., 165).

Finally, gods see the Heroes approaching the Happy Isles; poets remember the struggles that led to their death.

In a word the poets see all that gods see, but whereas the gods see them directly, from their height on Mount Olympus, a symbol of solitude and detachment, the poets see them only by projecting themselves into the scenes they describe. They see it through pain and agony. That is the first difference, and by this Arnold seems to associate vision, the true vision, with pain.

such a price  
The Gods exact for song:  
To become what we sing.

D. Culler, in his comment on these lines, says "The basis of this idea was an eighteenth -century concept of the imagination as grounded in Sympathy: through Sympathy one enters into the characters he would depict. But in the 1820s Hazlitt, followed by Keats, distinguished between two types of imagination, one founded on Sympathy and the other on Self-love" (Imaginative

Reason, p. 65). This view is not so far divorced from Arnold's practice in this poem, for the vision of the gods springs from Self-love. A vision of whatever is, is right. A vision that does not allow pain, worry, agony or ennui to spoil the sense of fulfillment that emanates from their satisfaction from what they created. Hence their vision is a kind of flat visual and external one. It stops at the surface of things and so gives an impression that all is well.

The youth, in the final stanza, ends the poem where it begins. As the vision fades, he calls for the cup again, and thus the poem ends with the invocation:

Faster, faster,  
O Circe, Goddess,  
Let the wild, thronging train,  
The bright procession  
Of eddying forms,  
Sweep through my soul.

(II.292-97)

The circularity of structure, which accounts for the critics' complaints that the suggestions of the plot are not carried to a conclusion, indicates that Arnold is condemning this way.

If one were asked to give an account of the Reveller's character one would say, to use Arnold's words about Byron, that the Reveller "as a man could not manage himself, could not guide his way aright, but was all astray ... he has no light, cannot lead us from the past to the future" (CPW., IX, p. 234). He had not the patience, knowledge, self-discipline, virtue, requisite for seeing the way out of the false state of things.

One has an inclination to believe that Keats is the poet that is invoked in the poem. One's reason for that is the Victorian reactions to him. The major Victorian reactions to Keats appear in the views of

Tennyson and Rossetti. To Tennyson, the poetry of Keats is on the whole completely adequate. Gradually, however, as he accepts the Victorian belief that a poet should deal with the problem of his age, he found Keats lacking in intellect. Rossetti, on the other hand, remains completely satisfied with Keats. In addition to that, Arnold used to compare Browning to Keats, as a man with a moderate gift passionately desiring movement and fullness. "They [Browning and Keats] will not be patient neither understood that they must begin with an Idea of the world in order not to be prevailed over by the world's multitudinousness" (CL, p. 97).

What one has been trying to show is that pure and absolute detachment and isolation, in Arnold's poetic theory, would not produce genuine art at all.

## II

"Resignation", more than any other poem in this volume - 1849, reveals Arnold's real stance. It shows that he knows what he is about and leads directly to his critical doctrine in the Preface (1853). It has been a favourite with all the admirers of Arnold's poetry, and critics have sought an explanation of its philosophical reflections in sources as remote and diverse as Lucretius, Senancour, and the Bhagavad Gita.

The poem is better understood if read while considering the spirit in which it was composed: the death of Arnold's father, the broken engagement of Jane,<sup>17</sup> the religious unrest, the Oxford Movement, and Carlyle's notion of the importance of reducing one's denominator. Add to that the



Romantic influence "on the modern English habit [in poetic matters] (too much encouraged by Wordsworth) of using poetry as a channel for thinking aloud, instead of making anything" (Whitridge, Letters, p. 17).

The purpose of this part is to show that the poem is Arnold's own rejection of the Romantic theory of poetry. But the term "Romantic" is vague itself. It is "a word for which, in connection with literature, there is no generally accepted definition" (Oxford Companion to English Literature, S.V. "Romantic"). A definition like this "will not take us much farther," says Professor Drew, "unless we can attach a definite meaning to the word 'Romantic' (The Poetry of Browning, pp. 3-4).

Professor Drew gives a series of textbook attributes of Romanticism, which one finds invaluable for one's reading of "Resignation". He sets them out as follows:

- (i) an interest in the magical, exotic, and supernatural;
- (ii) an interest in, often amounting to a worship of, natural scenery;
- (iii) the use of a diction, often remote from ordinary speech, which is particularly rich in euphonious and evocative words and phrases;
- (iv) a tradition of detailed observation especially of natural objects (see (ii) ); and
- (v) a belief in the supreme importance of the individual, and hence in the primacy of the personal will and intuition over the dictates of external authority. This often leads to an introspective melancholy, or to a mood of rebellion against established institutions. It is expressed in various other ways -- as a regard for primitive rather than for civilised man, for Nature as opposed to Art, and for the countryside as opposed to the City (*ibid.*, p. 4).

It is not difficult to decide that most of these qualities are not to be found, but rather their contraries:

- (i) The situation, in "Resignation", has nothing mysterious, exotic, or supernatural about it. On the contrary, it is based on two actual walks the poet took over the Wythburn fells: the first in childhood with a family group in 1833, the second ten years later with his sister Jane [called Fausta in the poem]. What happens in the poem - the walk, the

recollection of the previous walk, the poet's consideration of various ethical attitudes, and his earnest debate with Fausta - is, in its total configurations, a kind of metaphor for the activity of the poetic intelligence.

(ii) The poem though shows an interest in natural scenery, it does not amount to a worship of it. The repetition of the walk does not bring the spiritual rebirth of Tintern Abbey, to which, indeed, "Resignation" has been called 'a conscious reply', an expression of Arnold's inability to accept the Wordsworthian religion of nature. The concept of Nature, in the poem, is qualified by the wider intellectual views afforded by scientific scepticism and historicism. To the Victorians Nature could not mean what it had meant to Wordsworth. Scientists had uncovered a nature red in tooth and claw, and economists had claimed Nature as the spirit of Laissez-faire -- neither concept especially inviting to spiritual contemplation.

(iii) The diction, though intellectualised, is simple and not remote from ordinary speech.

(iv) The poem has a detailed observation of natural objects. But this does not emanate from a worship of Nature, it is part of Arnold's poetic method -- the naturalistic mode of interpretation.

(v) Finally, the fact that the poem takes, for its title and philosophy, the idea of resignation, shows that Arnold does not accept the Romantic 'belief in the supreme importance of the individual, and hence in the primacy of the personal will and intuition over the dictates of external authority'. This attitude is implied in his concept of Nature. In his poem, for example, "The Youth of Nature", one finds that "the core of the poem and its final sentiment... are not so much Wordsworth's as they are

the ancient classical problem of the Greek elegists marvelling at permanence of the objective world and the transitory life of man" (Commentary, p. 188).

This concept, partly, accounts for "this quality, the 'pity and mournful awe' which Arnold speaks of in 'Grande Chartreuse', that seems," as Professor Drew puts it, "... to be the most powerful informing force in Arnold's best poems. In 'Resignation'... the terms of the poem so qualify any tentative expressions of hope that it is hard to be certain of more than the quality of Arnold's initial despair" ("Passage of Time", p. 204). This is due to the fact that Arnold embodies in the fabric of the poems the one ultimately irresistible force of destruction, Time. For Arnold, in the poem, is not only concerned with the question of what a poet must be and do, he is also concerned with the subject that worries him personally, the subject of Time, and the question of man's place in the temporal order.

The poem, then, is one of Arnold's most complete poems. Its position as the last poem in The Strayed Reveller and Other Poems indicates the emphasis Arnold wished to put on it. It does not, like "The New Sirens", pose a question that is left unanswered. It can be seen as an answer to some of the questions raised in other poems of the volume about views of life and art that a young poet is subject to. Mr Stange, in his comment on the poem, has rightly observed that "It offers no less than a description of that state of mind which is requisite both to the creation and the fullest enjoyment of poetry" (p. 54).

The poem, as its title implies, explores the function of resignation as an ethical attitude for life. It purports to be a dialogue between Arnold and his sister, who is here given the name of Fausta because of her impatience at time and human limitation. The poem, as a palinode to

the title poem - "The Strayed Reveller", explores the type of poetry that could be written in modern times. It marks too Arnold's rejection of poetry that is written according to the Romantic theory with special reference to Wordsworth. To Arnold, Wordsworth is out of step with history. Living in an age marked by momentous changes in all aspects of life, Wordsworth retired... into a monastery... he plunged himself in the inward life, he voluntarily cut himself off from the modern spirit. And instead of accepting the need for social reform to answer the problems raised by the new industrialism and the demands of a growing spirit of democracy, Wordsworth counsels a return to nature and adherence to forms and institutions of the past.

To this effect Knoepflmacher has rightly observed that "Arnold's 'Resignation' is his version, or, more properly, his inversion, of Wordsworth's 'Tintern Abbey'. The parallelism between the two poems is deliberate. It enables Arnold to employ his predecessor's work as a frame of reference, an ironic 'touchstone' essential to his own meaning".<sup>18</sup> Wordsworth's vision "is transcendent and symbolical... (but) Arnold's vision is analytical and allegorical... Therefore, while Wordsworth's poet is a medium for the divine plan of Nature, Arnold's poet is the interpreter of (it)... Whereas Wordsworth becomes infused and intoxicated by Nature, Arnold must stand aside and examine his own relative position in time and space in order to preserve his 'lucidity of soul'" (ibid., p. 21).

Arnold often builds his poems, as one has observed before, around a dramatic contrast between two or three characters who represent varying ways of life. In this poem one has four distinct attitudes towards experience: there are (i) the activist pilgrims; (ii) the wise men who have achieved resignation; (iii) the Faustian Romantics; and (iv) the speaker himself who, one infers, is an aspirant towards resignation.

The poem begins with a vision of men travelling through time toward their "self-ordained" goals:

To die be given us, or attain!  
Fierce work it were, to do again.  
So pilgrims, bound for Mecca, prayed  
At burning noon; so warriors said,  
Scarfed with the cross, who watched the miles  
Of dust which wreathed their struggling files  
Down Lydian mountains; so, when snows  
Round Alpine summits, eddying, rose,  
The Goth, bound Rome-wards; so the Hun,  
Crouched on his saddle, while the sun  
Went lurid down o'er flooded plains  
Through which the groaning Danube strains  
To the drear Euxine.

(1-13)

These are the men of forceful and unquestioning action.

Next section of the poem (22-29) describes the condition of the resigned natures, the extreme opposite of the previous vision:

But milder natures, and more free--  
Whom an unblamed serenity  
Has freed from passions, and the state  
Of struggle these necessitate;  
Whom schooling of the stubborn mind  
Has made, or birth hath found, resigned--  
These mourn not, that their goings pay  
Obedience to the passing day.

(22-29)

In response to Fausta's restlessness, Arnold suggests the adoption of a stoic resignation as the best means of meeting life and conquering fate. He gives her two examples for clarification: The first is a band of gypsies, whom they have met on both trips. They are wanderers rather than striders, they would seem to have achieved a kind of resignation. But Arnold points out that their attitude is an unconscious one: Though life becomes a little harder for them every year, they have learned to put

up with it until death releases them:

But no! - they rubbed through yesterday  
In their hereditary way,  
And they will rub though, if they can,  
Tomorrow on the self-same plan,  
Till death arrive to supersede,  
For them, vicissitude and need.

The second example is the poet, who feels the changes more deeply and understands them more clearly. Perhaps the chief influence on Arnold's concept of the poet is Goethe's Wilhelm Meister. Tinker and Lowry have identified the source; it is worthy to be quoted in full. Chapter two of the second book contains a discourse between Werner and Wilhelm, the disappointed romantic, on the theme of 'Resignation' -- man's unrest and ambition, and the role of the poet:

Look at men, how they struggle after happiness and satisfaction! Their wishes, their toil, their gold are ever hunting restlessly; and after that? After that which the poet has received from nature; the right enjoyment of the world; the feeling of himself in others; the harmonious conjunction of many things that seldom exist together.

What is it that keeps men in continual discontent and agitation? It is, that they cannot make realities correspond with their conceptions, that enjoyment steals away from among their hands, that the wished-for comes too late, and nothing reached and acquired produces on the heart the effect, which their longing for it at a distance led them to anticipate. Now, fate has exalted the poet above all this, as if he were a god. He views the conflicting tumult of the passions; sees families and kingdoms raging in aimless commotion; sees those inexplicable enigmas of misunderstanding, which frequently a single monosyllable would suffice to explain, occasioning convulsions unutterably baleful. He has a fellow-feeling of the mournful and the joyful in the fate of all human beings... the lightly-moved and all-conceiving spirit of the poet, steps forth, like the sun from night to day, and with soft transitions tunes his harp to joy or woe. From his heart, its native soil, springs up the lovely flower of wisdom... And thus the poet is at once a teacher, a prophet, a friend of gods and men. How! thou wouldst have him to descend from his height to some paltry occupation? He who is fashioned like the bird to hover round the world... ought also to work at the plough.

(Commentary, pp. 65-66)

Arnold, then, writes in lines that show his classicism that:

The poet, to whose mighty heart  
Heaven doth a quicker pulse impart,  
Subdues that energy to scan  
Not his own course, but that of man.  
Though he move mountains, though his day  
Be passed on the proud heights of sway,  
Though he hath loosed a thousand chains,  
Though he hath borne immortal pains,  
Action and suffering though he know—  
He hath not lived, if he lives so.

(144-53)

M. Bonnerot, in his comment on these lines, has rightly observed that "Il [classicisme] se distingue du vulgaire et de l'homme d'action par une sensibilité plus vive... Le mot subdues, d' une si vigoureuse précision, marque bien la prédominance de la conscience sur les instincts, de la volonté sur l'inspiration. Ces quatre vers constituent, à mon sens, l'une des meilleures définitions du classicisme. Tout en reconnaissant l'influence secrète du ciel, l'importance primordiale de la sensibilité, Arnold pose en principe que le rôle du poète est non de s'abandonner au courant de cette énergie, mais de la canaliser pour l'utiliser à des fins conscientes et désintéressées. Il est ici d'accord avec Pope quand il declare:

Know then thyself, presume not God to scan;  
The proper study of mankind is man.

Chez Pope comme chez Arnold nous trouvons la même condamnation implicite de la poésie personnelle, du lyrisme, au profit d'une poésie plus générale, plus objective."<sup>19</sup>

William A. Madden, in his comment on the poem, says that the poem "marks Arnold's rejection of the way of the wise bard who suffers what he sings. Not only does the speaker identify himself with those, who, like Fausta, have been deprived of the poet's 'rapt security', but his

description of the poet's vision eliminates entirely the element of pain that is so prominent in 'The Strayed Reveller.'" <sup>20</sup> The poem, in my view, does not support such view, on the contrary it shows that pain is part and parcel of the vision:

Though he (the poet) hath borne immortal pains,  
Action and suffering though he know—  
He hath not lived, if he lives so.

(151-53)

. . . . .

Leaned on his gate, he gazes - tears  
Are in his eyes, and in his ears  
The murmur of a thousand years.

(186-88)

These lines assert the element of pain in the poetic vision as well as the idea of sympathy and pity. They point to Arnold's ideas in his essay "On the Modern Element in Literature" where he asserts the idea of sympathy. The poet, through sympathy, identifies himself with the life of the others. "He does so not to increase his selfhood but rather to lose it" (Trilling, Matthew Arnold, p. 99) and thus, to use Arnold's words, "He hath not lived, if he lives so".

Arnold's own attitudes and judgements concerning the poet's relation to action need some explanations. First, it is the actions of unintelligent ordinary men that make the poet lose himself in unnecessary details; second, it is politics, in particular, from which the poet should dissociate himself. The true poet who is evoked in the poem must know all the strong and beautiful forces of life and not be tempted to make them his own. These notions are illustrated in an orderly way as Arnold gives examples of the poet freeing himself from individual attachment in the several important areas of human experience. Concerning the temptation



of power, the poet sees:

A ruler of the people stand,  
Sees his strong thought in fiery flood  
Roll through the heaving multitude;  
Exults - yet for no moment's space  
Envies the all-regarded place.

(155-59)

P. F. Baum, in his comment on these lines, has rightly observed that "it is likely that Arnold had Lamartine in mind, who was minister of Foreign Affairs in 1848. The idea is plausible, for Arnold, in one of his letters to Clough, says "My man [Lord Lansdowne] remarks that Poets should hold up their heads now a Poet [Lamartine] is at the head of France" (CL, p. 69). The idea is constant with Arnold for he remarked towards the end of his career that Plato would have been less perfect had he mingled with politics.

Arnold's position is intermediate between Quietism and Action. He puts it clearly in his essay "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time" (1864):

In action's dizzying eddy whirl'd: The rush and roar of practical life will always have a dizzying and attracting effect upon the most collected spectator, and tend to draw him into its vortex; most of all will this the case where that life is so powerful as it is in England. But it is only by remaining collected, and refusing to lend himself to the point of view of the practical man, that the critic can do the practical man any service.

(CPW., III, 274-75)

The poem, in one's view, meets Arnold's demands from poets and poetry. The following lines show the poet accompanying the movement of life in time and space:

From some high station he [the poet] looks down,  
At sunset, on a populous town;  
Surveys each happy group which fleets,  
Toil ended, through the shining streets,  
Each with some errand of its own--  
And does not say : I am alone.  
He sees the gentle stir of birth  
When morning purifies the earth;  
He leans upon a gate and sees  
The pastures, and the quiet trees.  
Low, woody hill, with gracious bound,  
Folds the still vally almost round;  
The cuckoo, loud on some high lawn,  
Is answered from the depth of dawn;  
In the hedge straggling to the stream,  
Pale, dew-drenched, half-shut roses gleam;  
But, where the farther side slopes down,  
He sees the drowsy new-waked clown  
In his white quaint-embroidered frock  
Make, whistling, tow'rd his mist-wreathed flock--  
Slowly, behind his heavy tread,  
The wet, flowered grass heaves up its head.  
Leaned on his gate, he gazes - tears  
Are in his eyes, and in his ears  
The murmur of a thousand years.

(164-88)

Here, his seeing of the City is from a distance and at sunset, people are seen as group where they have lost their identity. But his seeing of nature is something profound and close, and results in an intense emotion which involves the fusion of seeing and feeling as the last three lines indicate. It, really, is a poetry that interprets life.

It applies ideas to life by the fact that the speaker's mind is focussed-- and the objects in the landscape as well as his memories are brought into that focus-- upon the brevity and pain of human life. The question implied here is the question of how to use one's time, in other words, how to live. There is a suggestion that the gypsies enjoy freedom from anxiety and struggle because they are so close to cyclical nature and so little absorbed with past and future. If the poet can, with more difficulty, extricate himself from bondage to the transient ends it is

because he sees not so little but so much, because he hears "the murmur of a thousand years" and feels it. It is an intellectual act even though it were only a matter of feeling. For if feeling be regarded as conscious, it is unquestionable that it involves an intellectual process.

In the next section (189-230), Arnold establishes a hierarchy: the poet, man, and the gypsies. At the top is the contemplative poet, who is said to scan "Not his own course, but that of man":

Before him he sees life unroll,  
A placid and continuous whole -  
That general life, which does not cease,  
Whose secret is not joy, but peace;  
That life, whose dumb wish is not missed  
If birth proceeds, if things subsist;  
The life of plants, and stones, and rain,  
The life he craves - if not in vain  
Fate gave, what chance shall not control,  
His sad lucidity of soul.

(189-98)

Professor Bush, in his comment on these lines has rightly observed that Arnold "here seems to crave participation, not in the cosmic order, but in mere nonsentient being well below even the gipsy level".<sup>21</sup>

The poet knows the general life by attending upon it. It is the life of the whole universe, both human and natural; to approach it means to abandon the romantic striving self. There is pain in that life. To Arnold, the landscape is but an emblem of the general life an impersonal power which demands the submission of all men. But rather than becoming a mere object subjected to the capriciousness of chance, man can achieve the dignity if he understands his own relative position within the general scheme of life. This understanding is achieved instinctively by gypsies plodding in their hereditary way; it is achieved consciously by those who can imaginatively raise themselves out of the flux of things, and attend upon the idea of life itself in its true

essence. To this effect, Arnold argues in Literature and Dogma that the very words mind , memory and remain , come, probably, all from the same root, from the notion of staying, attending. Possibly even the word 'man' comes from the same; so entirely does the idea of humanity, of intelligence, of looking before and after, of raising oneself out of the flux of things, rest upon the idea of steadying oneself, concentrating oneself, making order in the chaos of one's impressions, by attending to one impression rather than the other.

But knowing life does not mean the excess of thought in a poem or trying to go into and to the bottom of an object. Critics may say that "Resignation" abounds in erudite allusion and that it echoes from sources as varied as Lucretius and Goethe. This is true, but the fact remains that Arnold takes only one idea: the idea of Stoicism. He attends on it in an attempt not in rendering abstract that which is sensible, but in rendering sensible that which is abstract; apparent that which is hidden; imaginable, if so it may be, that which is only intelligible; and intelligible, finally, that which an ordinary attention fails to seize. Arnold believes, as he says to Clough, that "a slight gift of poetical expression... is overlaid and crushed in a profound thinker... The trying to go into and to the bottom of an object instead of grouping objects is as fatal to the sensuousness of poetry as the mere painting" (CL, p. 99).

The broad scope of the poem brings the reader into the main stream of Arnold's poems of ideas. It is, as one has observed before, conditioned by the large premise: that Christianity no longer serves to establish man in an ordered providential universe with assured religious and moral guidance. How does it apply ideas to life? The poem by virtue of the fact that it

embodies the element of Time, gives an expression to Heraclitus' idea of perpetual flux and change. But Arnold knows that the search for something permanent is one of the deepest instincts in man. It is desired, no doubt, from love of home and desire for a refuge from danger.

Religion seeks permanence in two forms: God and immortality. In God is no variableness neither shadow of turning; the life after death is eternal and unchanging. But nineteenth century thinkers being obsessed with the idea of progress and evolution turned men against these static conceptions; some of them even contended "that there is progress in heaven and evolution in the Godhead".<sup>22</sup>

Philosophers, though unable to deny that whatever is in time is transitory, have invented, says Russell, a conception of eternity as not persistence through endless time, but existence outside the whole temporal process. Eternal life, according to, for example, Dean Inge, does not mean existence through every moment of future time, but a mode of being wholly independent of time, in which there is no before and after, and therefore no logical possibility of change. This view has been poetically expressed by Vaughan:

I saw Eternity the other night,  
Like a great ring of pure and endless light,  
All calm, as it was bright;  
And round beneath it, Time in hours, days, years,  
Driven by the spheres  
Like a vast shadow moved; in which the world  
And all her train were hurled.

Arnold, like the Greek philosopher Parmenides, seems to solve the problem by suggesting permanence through memory. He offers two examples: the gipsies who seem to have no memory:

they rubbed through yesterday  
In their hereditary way,  
And they will rub through, if they can,  
To-morrow on the self-same plan,  
Till death arrive to supersede,  
For them, vicissitude and need.

The other example is the poet:

.. .. and in his ears  
The murmur of a thousand years.

The main idea of the line is that: since the poet can know the past, it can not really be past, but must, in some sense, exist now. When one recollects, the recollection occurs now. Now, if memory is to be accepted as a source of knowledge, the past must <sup>be</sup> before the mind now, and must therefore in some sense still exist.

It is worthy of notice that by September 1849 Arnold had decided that his "one natural craving was not for profound thoughts, mighty spiritual workings etc., but a distinct seeing of my way as far as my own nature is concerned" (Lowry, p. 110). Fausta, he thinks would rate the gypsies as less, the poet as more:

Those gipsies, so your thoughts I scan,  
Are less, the poet more, than man.  
They feel not, though they move and see;  
Deeper the poet feels; but he  
Breathes, when he will, immortal air,  
Where Orpheus and where Homer are.  
In the day's life, whose iron round  
Hems us all in, he is not bound;  
He leaves his kind, o'erleaps their pen,  
And flees the common life of men.  
He escapes thence, but we abide--  
Not deep the poet sees, but wide.

(204-14)

The central idea in these lines is the double affirmation: deeply the poet feels - Not deep the poet sees, but wide. This is one of the problems that

confronts any poet. M. Bonnerot finds in this idea an expression of dualism: "To feel, to see, sont les deux termes d'un dilemme où la pensée d'Arnold est prisonnière" (p. 292).

The next section (231-60) is a summary of the philosophy of the poem: renunciation of personal desires in favour of the poet's freedom and security.

And though fate grudge to thee and me  
The poet's rapt security,  
Yet they, believe me who await  
No gifts from chance, have conquered fate.  
They, winning room to see and hear,  
And to men's business not too near,  
Through clouds of individual strife  
Draw homeward to the general life.

(245-52)

What one has been trying to show is that the poem represents a fundamental change in the theory of the poet's function. In the Romantic theory that function was animated by belief in Nature, but here it proceeds from an awareness of the limitations suggested by landscape:

Yet, Fausta, the mute turf we tread,  
The solemn hills around us spread,  
This stream which falls incessantly,  
The strange-scrawled rocks, the lonely sky,  
If I might lend their life a voice,  
Seem to bear rather than rejoice.

(265-70)

III

Ever since Aristotle's Poetics (Peri Poietikes) there has been an established tradition in any poetic theory to define poetry and its various branches and subdivisions, forms and technical resources, as well as the principles that govern it and that distinguish it from other creative activities. "Epilogue to Lessing's Laocoon" is Arnold's most detailed discussion of the principles that distinguish poetry from other Arts. It is, to use Professor Drew's words, "an invaluable compendium of Victorian attitudes to the relation of painting, music and literature" (Poetry of Browning, p. 441). So the best remark about the poem is that it is precisely what it is called: an Epilogue.

The poem assumes a knowledge of Lessing's theories; it takes its departure from his thesis: that poetry deals with temporal, painting with spatial relations, poetry with the successive and painting with the co-existent. Lessing's treatise, published in 1766, tries to remove the confusion in theory and practice between poetry and painting and plastic arts that resulted from, as M. H. Abrams puts it, "an uninquisitive acceptance of Simonides' maxim that 'painting is dumb poetry and poetry a speaking painting'" (The Mirror and the Lamp, p. 13). Lessing's intention is to establish aesthetic principles by an inductive logic which is deliberately opposed to the procedure of Batteaux.<sup>23</sup> Nevertheless, like Batteaux, Lessing concludes that poetry, no less than painting is imitation. The diversity between these arts follows from their difference in medium, which imposes necessary differences in the objects each is competent to imitate.



Professor Stange, who studied the poem in some detail, has rightly said that "The Epilogue is a variation on the scheme of 'Resignation' ; it too describes a walk in which the peripatetic poet speaker, accompanied by a responsive, but not fully perceptive, friend, achieves an awareness that is both illustrated and, in a sense provoked by the course of the walk and the objects of the concrete environment" (p.87). The setting is made to symbolise the Victorian world; Hyde Park is an appropriate microcosm of that world. It has been a place, and is still, for public meetings and riots. It is at the same time an emblem of nature itself. The question which the poem raises is why the arts of music and painting have so much more often achieved success in their spheres than poetry has in the sphere proper to it.

The argument begins with the painter's sphere and his limitation:

'Behold! I said, 'the painter's sphere!  
The limits of his art appear.  
The passing group, the summer-morn,  
The grass, the elms, that blossomed thorn —  
Those cattle couched, or, as they rise,  
Their shining flanks, their liquid eyes —  
These, or much greater things, but caught  
Like these, and in one aspect brought!  
In Outward semblance he must give  
A moment's life of things that live;  
Then let him choose his moment well,  
With power divine its story tell.'

(49-60)

The next section deals with music and composers:

The inspired musician what a range,  
What power of passion, wealth of change!  
Some source of feeling he must choose  
And its locked fount of beauty use,  
And though the stream of music tell  
Its else unutterable spell;  
To choose it rightly in his part,  
And press into its inmost heart.

(81-88)

Stange, in his comment on these lines, says that "The composer's freedom is suggested by the repetition of the word 'choose', and the expansiveness and clarity of his materials contrast sharply with the strict limitations of the poet's condition (the verb for him is must)" (p. 91).

Then, comes the poet's sphere:  
'Behold, at last the poet's sphere!  
But who,' I said, 'suffices here?  
'For, ah! so much he has to do;  
Be painter and musician too!  
The aspect of the moment show,  
The feeling of the moment know!  
The aspect not, I grant, express  
Clear as the painter's art can dress;  
The feeling not, I grant, explore  
So deep as the musician's lore--  
But clear as words can make revealing,  
And deep as words can follow feeling.'

(127-38)

"Lessing holds that poetry differs from the plastic arts in being a progressive imitation of an action" (Allott, Poems, p. 513). Arnold agrees with this idea, but he brings to the notion his own reflections on art and experience and thereby extends it and gives it a moral and spiritual dimension "it becomes the poet's duty to convey the movement of life itself" (ibid., p. 513).

Arnold shows that more is required of the poet than of the painter or the composer:

But, ah! then comes his sorest spell  
Of toil - he must life's movement tell!  
The thread which binds it all in one,  
And not its separate parts alone.  
The movement he must tell of life,  
Its pain and pleasure, rest and strife;  
His eye must travel down, at full,  
The long, unpausing spectacle;  
With faithful unrelaxing force  
Attend it from its primal source,  
From change to change and year to year  
Attend it of its mid career,  
Attend it to the last repose  
And solemn silence of its close.

(139-52)

These lines show clearly Arnold's own account of the poet's function. The poet's task, compared to the painter's or the musician's, is the most difficult. He must tell of life's movement with its complex, shifting process and penetrate it.

Arnold, reiterating his idea in "Resignation" and "The Strayed Reveller" of the poet who must experience many kinds of lives, says:

'The cattle rising from the grass  
His thought must follow where they pass;  
The penitent with anguish bowed  
His thought must follow through the crowd.  
Yes! all this eddying, motley throng  
That sparkles in the sun along,  
Girl, statesman, merchant, soldier bold,  
Master and servant, young and old,  
Grave, gay, child, parent, husband, wife,  
He follows home, and lives their life.'

(153-62)

The palm is given to the poet. For, though painters and musicians deal with perfection, the poets' glory is that they must bring beauty out of life's failure and distress:

And many, many are the souls  
Life's movement fascinates, controls;  
It draws them on, they cannot save  
Their feet from its alluring wave;  
They cannot leave it, they must go  
With its unconquerable flow.  
But ah! how few, of all that try  
This mighty march, do ought but die!  
For ill-endowed for such a way,  
Ill-stored in strength, in wits are they.  
They faint, they stagger to and fro,  
And wandering from the stream they go;  
In pain, in terror, in distress,  
They see, all round, a wilderness.  
Sometimes a momentary gleam  
They catch of the mysterious stream;  
Sometimes, a second's space, their ear  
The murmur of its waves doth hear.  
That transient glimpse in song they say,  
But not as painter can portray--  
That transient sound in song they tell,  
But not, as the musician, well.  
And when at last their snatches cease,  
And they are silent and at peace,  
The stream of life's majestic whole  
Hath ne'er been mirrored on their soul.

(164-88)

These lines show that Arnold is consistent in his poetic theory. Line 187 may be thought of as an extension of his conception of the "general life" in "Resignation", that placid and continuous whole.../ which does not cease (cf. lines 189ff.)

The last two sections of the poem contrast the unsuccessful poet, swamped by life, with the rare, supreme poet who both contains and removes himself from life's profuse activity. In other words he contrasts the youth in "The Strayed Reveller" with the poet in "Resignation". The true poet is characterised by his untiring attendance on life's movement. He does more than recording some outer semblance, as the painter must, more even than the musician's work of communicating emotions; the poet does more, for he reveals the scope of life and its movement. He combines and transcends the power of painter and musician. His process is one of

fusion or, as Arnold puts it, synthesis:

                                  their eye  
Drinks up delighted ecstasy,  
And its deep-toned, melodious voice  
For ever makes their ear rejoice,  
They speak! the happiness divine  
They feel, runs o'er in every line;  
Its spell is round them like a shower--  
It gives them pathos, gives them power.

(193-200)

The three poems are thus Arnold's instrument for expressing his views about poetry and of the poet's relation to his age. They are a remarkably coherent body of poetry about poetry. This is precisely what Arnold meant by his reference to his poems as a body of doctrine .

The main movement of these poems is primarily a process of dispelling the dream. The movement begins with the "Strayed Reveller" where the creative process is unconscious and involuntary; then the transitional stage of "Resignation" where Arnold voices the travail of imagination as it grows in understanding of its situation: the process is that of a deepened and more realistic understanding. Finally, "Epilogue to Lessing's Laocoon" comes, the full realisation is achieved through its definition of the poet's function and his position among other artists.

In conclusion one can say that Arnold's poetic theory is a theory that recognises the conditions of modern life and is chiefly directed towards them. There is no escapism even in his poetry of isolation. With these three poems in mind one is prepared to meet the question that Professor Drew puts, in his                                   work on Arnold, "You say that Arnold writes superbly in some poems, and that in others he offers us an argument of great subtlety and importance, but does he ever do both at once?" ("Passage of Time", p. 201).

In answering this question, one is tempted to use Arnold's own critical criterion in his essay "On the Modern Element in Literature":

What is, in fact, the character of the poem, the frame of mind of the poet? Has the poem the depth, the completeness of the poems of Aeschylus or Sophocles, of those adequate and consummate representation of human life? Has the poet the serious cheerfulness of Sophocles, of a man who has mastered the problem of human life, who knows its gravity, and is therefore serious, but who knows that he comprehends it, and is therefore cheerful? Over the whole of the great poem of Virgil, over the whole Aeneid, there rests an ineffable melancholy: not a rigid, a moody gloom, like the melancholy of Lucretius; no, a sweet, a touching sadness, but still a sadness; a melancholy which is at once a source of charm in the poem, and a testimony to its incompleteness

(CPW, I, p. 35).

One is apt to say that these poems show depth, completeness and a perfect representation of human life. The poet, Arnold, is serious and knows the gravity of his situation. But the fact remains that there rests an ineffable melancholy. This is not a symptom of the failure of poetic control or of the lack of moral fibre! It is the poems' source of sincerity, for it is impossible to "represent... the main movement of the last quarter of [the nineteenth century]", as Arnold puts it in one of his letters, and ignore this element. It has always been Arnold's aim to analyse his situation:

But woe was upon me if I analysed not my situation: and Werther (,) Rene (,) and such like (,) none of them analyse the modern situation in its true blankness and barrenness, and unpoetrylessness (CL, p. 126).

#### NOTES

- 1 Some critics, quite logically, link "The New Sirens" (1843-45?) with "The Strayed Reveller", since the poet-speaker is dealing with the condition of poetic creativity.
- 2 W.D. Anderson, Matthew Arnold and the Classical Tradition (Michigan: Michigan University Press, 1965), pp. 27-28.

- 3 Alan Roper, Arnold's Poetic Landscapes (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1969), p. 29.
- 4 G.R. Stange, Matthew Arnold the Poet as Humanist (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), p. 21.
- 5 N. Friedman, "The Young Matthew Arnold 1847-1849: THE STRAYED REVELLER and THE FORSAKEN MERMAN", Victorian Poetry, 9 (1971), 409.
- 6 Leon Gottfried, "Matthew Arnold's THE STRAYED REVELLER", Review of English Studies, 2 (1960), 403.
- 7 Matthew Arnold, Culture and Anarchy, CPW., V, 234.)
- 8 R.A. Foakes, The Romantic Assertion (London: Methuen, 1958), p. 44.
- 9 D. Bush, Mythology and The Romantic Tradition in English Poetry (New York: Pageant Books, 1957), p. 247.
- 10 Isobel MacDonald, The Buried Self: A Background to the poems of Matthew Arnold, 1847-1851 (London: 1949), p. 8.
- 11 M. G. Sundell, "Story and Context in 'The Strayed Reveller'", Victorian Poetry Vol. 3 (1965), 164.
- 12 M. Bodkin, Archetypal Patterns in Poetry (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1974), p. 231.
- 13 CPW., V, 170-71.
- 14 Homer, The Odyssey, trans., E.V. Rieu (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975), p.168.
- 15 D.M. Mermin, "The Two Worlds in Arnold's THE STRAYED REVELLER", Studies in English Literature, 12:4 (Aut. 1973), 738.
- 16 Kenneth Allott, "The Scythian in THE STRAYED REVELLER", Victorian Poetry, 11 (Win. 1973), 164.
- 17 These facts were first set forth by Kathleen Tillotson, "Dr Arnold's Death and a Broken Engagement", Notes and Queries 197 (1952) 409-11.
- 18 U.C. Knoepflmacher, "Dover Revisited: The Wordsworthian Matrix in the Poetry of Matthew Arnold", Victorian Poetry, 1 (1963), 18.

- 19 Louis Bonnerot, Matthew Arnold Poète (Paris: Librairie Marcel Didier, 1947), pp. 290-91.
- 20 William A. Madden, "Arnold the Poet", in Matthew Arnold, ed. Miriam and K. Allott (London: G. Bell & Sons, 1975), p. 55.
- 21 Douglas Bush, Matthew Arnold (London: Macmillan, 1971), p. 36.
- 22 Bertrand Russell, History of Western Philosophy (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1947), p. 64.
- 23 Batteux's method is a classic instance of a priori and deductive aesthetic. He says "the majority of known rules refer back to imitation, and form a sort of chain, by which the mind seizes at the same instant consequences and principle, as a whole perfectly joined, in which all the parts are mutually sustained" (Abrams, p. 13).
- 24 These lines "were taken in 1888 as the motto for the Royal Academy" (Commentary, p. 186).



## CHAPTER IV

### On Poets

Such, poets, is your bride, the Muse! young, gay,  
Radiant, adorn'd outside; a hidden ground  
Of thought and of austerity within.

Arnold's "The Austerity of Poetry"

... .. the miseries of the world  
Are misery and will not let him rest.

Keats

... .. such a price  
The Gods exact for song:  
To become what we sing.

"The Strayed Reveller"

In Chapter one, I have defined the nature of Poetry pragmatically, that is, in terms of its function. Similarly, the nature of the poet follows from his function: he is what he does. From chapter one of this part, one could infer the demands that are made on the poet in Arnold's poetic theory. To this effect he would say: "what Plato has thought, he [the poet] may think; what a saint has felt, he may feel; what at any time has befallen any man, he can understand" ("Emerson", CPW, X, p. 167). Or as he puts it in "Bacchanalia; or the New Age":

The world but feels the present's spell,  
The poet feels the past as well;  
Whatever men have done, might do,  
Whatever thought, might think it too.

(Poems, p. 538)

I

The Poet's Dilemma

But everything the poet gains he pays for in more than equal coin:

But oh, what labour!  
O prince, what pain!  
... .. such a price  
The Gods exact for song:  
To become what we sing.

In the background to this question lies a more general and epistemological issue that was first developed after the psychological contributions of Hobbes and Locke in the seventeenth century. The issue involves the increasing attention that was given, in Arnold's time, to the mental constitution of the poet, the quality and degree of his 'genius', and the play of his faculties in the act of creation. Is the poet born or made? Is he different from other men and alienated from society by the superiority of his perception? Is this superiority inextricably bound up with a certain malady of the poet?

These questions were part and parcel of the nineteenth-century thinking. In France, de Vigny, in Stello (1832), developed the idea that the poet is a marked man: a poète maudit. In England, Carlyle, in "Hero as Poet", espoused a notion that vision and pain, like strength and mutilation, are inextricably bound up together. In America, there was the Emersonian idea of compensation: that the poet's way is not the world's way, and he who succeeds in the one cannot succeed in the other. This

chapter attempts to show, beside answering these questions, that the poet, in Arnold's poetics, is at bottom an esprit maladif : ondoyant et divers: balancing and indeterminate, the plaything of cross motives and shifting impulses, swayed by a thousand subtle influences, physiological and pathological.

This conclusion could be inferred from Arnold's method in his critical essays. The underlying idea in these essays is that art and personality are correlated variables. A critic may properly deal with a poet's character as Arnold did in his essays on Gray and Keats. Arnold's method, like that of Saint-Beuve, - tel arbre, tel fruit, - attempts to isolate and explain the special quality of a work by reference to the special quality of the character, life, lineage, and milieu: the man and the moment.

Arnold's treatment of an important author usually falls into three parts: (1) an initial record of biographical facts, with a review of the occasion and the public reception of his works with special emphasis on the author's milieu: the hindrance or encouragement which his poetic inspiration meets from without; (2) an appraisal of the author's intellectual and spiritual powers with an analysis of the relative power of his sources of inspiration, - Hellenism and Hebraism. The poet's poetic development is explained in terms of the conflict of these two forces; and finally (3) a review of some of the author's representative works: taking the reader on a conducted tour pointing out the beauties and defects of the work through a comparison with touchstones of the best examples in the world's classics.

Now, the question is: is there any correlation between pain and vision? Arnold tried hard to refute this concept. In a letter (September, 1859) to Clough he says: "Froude says... about your being so happy and so

virtuous that it is not desirable to get literary work out of you - in that regular Carlylean strain which we all know by heart and which the clear-headed among us have so utter a contempt for - since we know very well that so long as segnities is, as Spinoza says, with superbia the great bane of man, it will need the stimulant of literary work or something equally rousing, to overcome this, and to educe out of man what virtue there is in him" (CL, p. 151).

But the fact remains that Arnold's life, poetry, and critical essays indirectly supports this concept. In his criticism of James Spedding, Arnold writes: "About Spedding there is much to be said - his great fault is that he is not ondoyant and divers enough, to use Montaigne's language, to deal rightly with matters of poetical criticism" (CL, July, 1861, p. 156). He quotes the following story:

In the year 1340, says the Chronicle of Limburg, all over Germany everybody was strumming and humming certain songs more lovely and delightful than any which had ever yet been known in German countries; and all people, old and young, the women particularly, were perfectly mad about them, so that from morning till night you heard nothing else. Only, the Chronicle adds, the author of these songs happened to be a young clerk, afflicted with leprosy, and living apart from all the world in a desolate place. The excellent reader does not require to be told how horrible a complaint was leprosy in the Middle Ages, and how the poor wretches who had this incurable plague were banished from society, and had to keep at distance from every human being... This poor clerk, then, whose poetical gift the Limburg Chronicle extols, was a leper, and he sate moping in the dismal deserts of his misery, whilst all Germany, gay and tuneful, was praising his songs...

("Pagan and Mediaeval Sentiment",  
CPW, III, pp. 228-29)

The story is significant for it illustrates Arnold's idea of the dual nature of the poet and his duty to maintain hope in his misery and not to parade his wound to his readers. It can be taken as a footnote to

Arnold's sonnet: "The Austerity of Poetry", in which he says:

Such, poets, is your bride, the Muse! young, gay,  
Radiant, adorn'd outside; a hidden ground  
Of thought and of austerity within.

The poet, in the context of Arnold's writings, is an esprit maladif, and this can be said about Arnold himself. In 1853, he wrote to his sister K: "There is only one esoteric poem in this collection - only one, that is calculated to interest none but the writer and a few esprits maladifs; you, who are not an esprit maladif will nevertheless discover it and read it for my sake" (Unpublished letters, p. 21). It is no secret that when Arnold's first volume of poems appeared in 1849 his own family was startled at the profundity and serious depth they revealed. His sister, Mary, wrote at the time:

It is the moral strength, or, at any rate, the moral consciousness which struck and surprised me so much in the poems. I could have been prepared for any degree of poetical power, for there being a great deal more than I could at all appreciate; but there is something altogether different from this, something which such a man as Clough has, for instance, which I did not expect to find in Matt; but it is there. 1

Several interpretations were given of this apparent contradiction between Arnold's outward behaviour and what he was writing during the forties. Critics argue that Arnold, like Edgar or Hamlet, was preserving himself intact beneath a mask. The idea is plausible for he writes to this effect that "In the long-run one makes enemies by having one's brilliancy and ability praised; one can only get oneself really accepted by men by making oneself forgotten in the people and doctrines one recommends..." (Letters, January, 1864, I, p. 219).

The fact remains that the poet's instinct for good, his genius, an ardent impulse for seeking the genuine truth on all matters, and his refined

sentiment, the powers that gives genius its materials of quick and strong perception, will exercise pressure on his soul and incur pain:

The motive of Shakespeare, the master-thought at the bottom of Shakespeare's production, is the same as the master-thought at the bottom of the production of Homer and Sophocles, Dante and Moliere, Rousseau and George Sand. With all the difference of manner, power, and performance between these makers, the governing thought and motive is the same. It is the motive enunciated in the burden to the famous chorus in the Agamemnon - 'Let the good prevail'.

("G. Sand", CPW, X, p. 188)

The master-pressure upon their spirit is the pressure exercised by this same thought: "Let the good prevail". This instinct exists in human nature. The difference is not in kind, but in degree of passion to see good prevail. It is the passion in human nature that prompts man to see good. The existence of this instinct is the ground of all hope for communication. Along with the astounding power and passion for good that poets have, they have too a strong and deep sense for what is perfect and beautiful in nature, and for what is beautiful in human action and suffering which they make their own:

... the miseries of the world  
Are misery and will not let him rest.

Poets, according to Arnold, are lovers of light, who, when they have an idea to put forth, brood long over it first, and wait patiently till it shines...

Spirits who know by experience that the driest matter and the dullest words hide within them the germ and spark of some brightness... spirits who maintain that, to see and exhibit things in beauty, is to see and show things as in their essence they really are, and not as they exist for the eye of the careless, who do not look beyond the outside; spirits hard to satisfy, because of a keen-sightedness in them, which makes them discern but too clearly both the

models to be followed and those to be shunned; spirits active though meditative, who cannot rest except in solid truths, and whom only beauty can make happy; spirits far less concerned for glory than for perfection, who, because their art is long and life is short, often die without leaving a monument, having had their own inward sense of life and fruitfulness for their best reward.

("Joubert", CPW, III, p. 196)

There must be due to that some degree of sacrifice. This is not just a matter of time and energy, but of the poet's priestly dedication to ideas. It concerns the kind of attention, of contemplation, analysis and verification through creation. The sacrifice involves a momentary exile to the world of thought and a return again to the world of men. To this effect Arnold writes in Empedocles on Etna:

Where shall thy votary fly then? back to men?  
But they will gladly welcome him once more,  
And help him to unbend his too tense thought,  
And rid him of the presence of himself,  
And keep their friendly chatter at his ear,  
And haunt him, till the absence from himself,  
That other torment, grow unbearable;  
And he will fly to solitude again,  
And he will find its air too keen for him,  
And so change back; and many thousand times  
Be miserably bandied to and fro  
Like a sea-wave, betwixt the world and thee,  
Thou young implacable God! and only death  
Can cut his oscillation short, and so  
Bring him to poise. There is no other way.

(Act II, Sc. ii, 220-34)

This is the fate of the poet, there is no escape. To this effect S. Freud says: "whoever wishes to be intellectually creative must submit himself to a peculiar rhythm: he is bound to withdraw from other men and must return to them again. Only in solitude can the mind work creatively. A man who seeks only among other men will never find himself".<sup>2</sup> The life of every free, fruitful spirit moves like a pendulum between these two

poles. He dares not live only for the others; something always drives him back into solitude. And he dares not live only for himself; something always drives him back to other men" (ibid., p. 198). Freud's words seem to reiterate Arnold's lines in "In Memory of the Author of 'Obermann'":

Ah! two desires toss about  
The poet's feverish blood.  
One drives him to the world without,  
And one to solitude.

(Poems, p. 134, lines: 92-95)

The poet, in penetrating himself with actions and ideas, will find himself parting from a way of life: the way of simple acceptance of life without thought of its anguish and pain. In other words the Panglosian one dimension way of whatever is, is right. He becomes espoused to the way of pain. This gives the poet a more comprehensive vision of life as a mixture of agony and ecstasy. For, as Emerson puts it, 'he has seen but half the universe who never has been shown the house of pain'. It is, in short, a lonely way. To this effect Arnold says: "Whoever sets himself to see things as they are will find himself one of a very small circle; but it is only by this small circle resolutely doing its own work that adequate ideas will ever get current at all" ("The Function of Criticism", CPW., III, 274).

The poet, with this intellectual powers as well as that strong passion for perfection, will find that the necessity to produce, to produce constantly, to produce whether in vein or out of the vein, to produce something, - is the most intolerable of torture. "I do not like to put off writing," says Arnold, "any longer, but to say the truth I do not feel in the vein to write even now, nor do I feel certain that I can write as I should. I am past thirty, and three parts iced over - and my pen, it seems



to me is even stiffer and more cramped than my feeling" (CL, February, 1853, p. 128). Again he writes (August 6, 1858): "It is only in the best poetical epochs (such as the Elizabethan) that you can descend into yourself and produce the best of your thoughts and feeling naturally, and without an overwhelming and in some degree morbid effort; for then all the people around you are more or less doing the same thing" (Letters, I, 63).

The situation was like that of Gray, with whom Arnold must have felt much in common. "I am glad," says Arnold to his wife, "you like Gray; that century is very interesting, though I should not like to have lived in it; but the people were just like ourselves, whilst the Elizabethan are not" (Letters, December, 1880, II, p. 187). Gray was isolated in his age. Maintaining and fortifying his mind and soul by lofty studies, he yet could not fully educe and enjoy them; the want of a genial atmosphere, the failure of sympathy in his contemporaries, were too great. Arnold must have felt Gray's dilemma, for in his letters to Clough one recurring theme is the utterly arid, unpoetical character of the age, of modern civilisation:

I have been at Oxford the last two days and hearing Seller and the rest of that clique who know neither life nor themselves rave about your poem gave me a strong almost bitter feeling with respect to them, the age, the poem, even you. Yes I said to myself something tells me I can, if need be, at last dispense with them all, even with him: better that, than be sucked for an hour even into the Time Stream in which they and he plunge and bellow. I became calm in spirit, but uncompromising, almost stern. More English than European, I said finally, more American than English: and took up Obermann, and refuged myself with him in his forest against your Zeit Geist.

(CL, November, 1848, p. 95)

At this stage one comes to the question of the relation of the artist to his age.

The relation of the poet to his age was the central issue in Arnold's writings: poetry as well as prose.

There is but a very small remnant [says Plato] 'of honest followers of wisdom, and they who are of these few, and who have tasted how sweet and blessed a possession is wisdom, and who can fully see, moreover, the madness of the multitude, and that there is no one, we may say, whose action in public matters is sound, and no ally for whosoever would help the just, what,' asks Plato, 'are they to do? They may be compared, says Plato, 'to a man who has fallen among wild beasts; he will not be one of them, but he is too unaided to make head against them; and before he can do any good to society or his friends, he will be overwhelmed and perish uselessly. When he considers this, he will resolve to keep still, and to mind his own business; as it were standing aside under a wall in a storm of dust and hurricane of driving wind; and he will endure to behold the rest filled with iniquity, if only he himself may live his life clear of injustice and of impiety, and depart, when his time comes, in mild and gracious mood, with fair hope.'

("Numbers", CPW, X, pp. 145-46).

This can be taken as a fair description of the alienated poets. Arnold dismisses it as gloomy. But he allows a degree of dissatisfaction: "So with the spectacle of our civilisation most people are well satisfied. But there are two sorts of people who have always been, or generally been, dissatisfied and malcontents - the poets and the saints" ("Reports of Public Lectures", CPW, X, p. 250). "Sages and saints are apt to be severe, it is true; apt to take a gloomy view of the society in which they live, and to prognosticate evil to it. But then it must be added that their prognostications are very apt to turn out right" ("Numbers", CPW, X, pp. 145-46).

Now, the question is: how did Arnold react to his situation? Did he withdraw from his age, like Plato's remnants? Did he resolve to keep still, and to mind his own business? Did he even vacillate? No, let us listen to him himself: "I have so lately had a stronger wish than usual

not to vacillate and be helpless, but to do my duty, whatever that may be; and out of that wish one may always hope to make something" (Letters, December, 1854, I, p. 41). "Perhaps there is nothing in which one may more safely employ oneself, or which brings one, and properly brings so much happiness as beneficence. But do not you feel sometimes anxious to attack the condition of the things which seems to bring about the evils on which your beneficence has to be exercised? When once you have got it into your head that this condition in great measure brings the evils about, and that it is in great measure remediable, I think one can hardly rest satisfied with merely alleviating the evils that arise under it" (Letters, 11, January 1879, pp. 151-52).

Even with his own personal sufferings Arnold did not forget his public role: "And so this loss [the death of his son] comes to me just after my fortyfifth birthday, with so much other 'suffering in the flesh', - the departure of youth, cares of many kinds, an almost painful anxiety about public matters" (Letters, January, 1868, I, p. 382). In these lines lies the key to Arnold's career. In all this one is passing from the external environment of the poet to the interior state of the poet.

Poets generally unite in themselves two sources of inspiration, - Hellenism and Hebraism. Heinrich Heine is one of those poets who "had in him both the spirit of Greece and the spirit of Judea; both these spirits reach the infinite, which is the true goal of all poetry and all art, - the Greek spirit by beauty, the Hebrew spirit by sublimity. By his perfection of literary form, by his love of clearness, by his love of beauty, Heine is Greek; by his intensity, by his... 'longing which cannot be uttered,' he is Hebrew" (CPW, III, p. 128).

But Hellenism and Hebraism, as faculties, are not at equipoise all the time. They are, above all, instincts and feelings. Their coexistence creates

tension or conflict. For example "the religious feeling, which [is] as much a part of [the poet's] essence as the passion for nature and the literary instinct, shows itself at moments jealous of these its rivals, and alarmed at their predominance. Like all powerful feelings, it wants to exclude every other feeling and to be absolute" ("Maurice de Guérin", CPW, III, pp. 21-22). "From the first, two conflicting forces, two sources of inspiration, had contended with one another... for the possession of Milton, - Renaissance and Puritanism. Milton felt the power of both... [his] early poems, such as the Allegro, the Penseroso, are poems produced while a sort of equilibrium still prevailed in the poet's nature, hence their charm" ("A French Critic on Milton", CPW, VIII, p. 178).

The Hellenic source of inspiration gratifies the senses and understanding. The predominance of this instinct gives the poet, like Keats as well as Guérin, a certain type of temperament: "a temperament common enough among artists, but with which few artists, who have it to the same degree as Guérin, unite a seriousness and a sad intensity like his" ("Dr Stanley's Lectures", CPW, III, p. 67). This instinct appeals to human nature. "But by the very intensity and unremittingness of its appeal to the senses and the understanding, by its stimulating a single side of us too absolutely, ends by fatiguing and revolting us; ends by leaving us with a sense of confinement, of oppression, - with the desire for an utter change, for clouds, storms, effusion, and relief" ("Pagan and Mediaeval Religious Sentiment", CPW, III, p. 223). For at the same time there is something else in human nature prompting man to live by his soul and imagination rather than by his senses. The existence of this something is the ground of all hope.

Human nature is neither all senses and understanding, nor all heart and imagination. It is a combination of both: the imaginative reason.

Hellenism and Hebraism

are a familiar content to poetic mind. When they are equally felt they create tension. Freud calls that state the "principle of ambivalence". Most of Arnold's great poetry is a series of variations on this many-sided conflict: spontaneity and discipline, emotion and reason, faith and scepticism, the rich youth and the dry age. But the fact remains that his poems are not self-expression, they are representative, not individual in the emotion they express. It was the dilemma of an age in state of transition.

Arnold must have felt this many-sided conflict otherwise he would not have been able to express it so strongly. Above all he is a man endued with the sensibility of a poet. He had also the intellect to understand it. His realisation of his own responsibility as a guide in his age made his Dionysian strain stop short of the sensual and violent. It was none-the-less genuine. In 1865 he wrote to his mother: "No one has a stronger and more abiding sense than I have of the 'daemonic' element - as Goethe called it - which underlies and encompasses our life; but I think, as Goethe thought, that the right thing is, while conscious of this element, and of all that there is inexplicable round one, to keep pushing on one's posts into the darkness, and to establish no post that is not perfectly in light and firm. One gains nothing on the darkness by being, like Shelley, as incoherent as the darkness itself" (Letters, I, p. 249).

The poet's realisation of his own responsibilities towards his age as well as his own awareness that the time when you could 'descend into yourself and produce the best of your thought and feeling naturally' is past and even to do so now requires 'an overwhelming and in some degree morbid effort', has created a rare phenomenon that could be described as "constricted situation", - the quality that describes the poet's sense of unease. On the plane of action it is represented by the passive role

played by the poet in the major part of Arnold's poetry, where passivity and suffering are but two faces to one coin, - the image of a constricted man.

This is Arnold's interpretation of the poet's dilemma that what he had to say about his life and the world he lived in was to be expressed only in an image of constricted man. He seems to be quite conscious of his own dilemma. About 1852 in "The Grande Chartreuse" he had written:

My melancholy, sciolists say,  
Is a past mode, an outworn theme...  
Ah, if it be passed, take away,  
At least, the restlessness, the pain;

Be man henceforth no more a prey  
To these out-dated stings again!

(II.99-106).

He meets his critics by challenging them to show that his dejection is not amply warranted by the miseries of existence:

The kings of modern thought are dumb;  
Silent they are, though not content,  
And wait to see the future come.  
They have the grief men had of yore,  
But they contend and cry no more.

(II.116-120).

Byron, Shelley and Senancour cried aloud, but what good did they do? Have restless hearts one throb the less? On the whole the sons of the world ignored the poets and went on their self-confident way. To them Arnold's remarks in the same tone of unemphatic irony:

We admire with awe  
The exulting thunder of your race;  
You give the universe your law,  
You triumph over time and space!  
Your pride of life, your tireless powers,  
We laud them, but they are not ours.

(II.163-168)

"The Scholar-Gipsy" and "Thyrsis" are Arnold's most complete argument by poetic means, in addition to Empedocles on Etna, about men cut off from their sources of power. The question that "The Scholar-Gipsy" poses in its simple form is whether it is possible for a young man to avoid the challenge of the modern world. In 'Thyrsis' the question is put in another way: if a middle-aged man is immersed in 'the world and wave of men' does this mean that the ideal world dreamed of when he was young and indeed for a time enjoyed, is in fact thereby destroyed? The two questions are shown to be related when the Scholar-Gipsy is formally identified with a particular tree in the familiar landscape" ("Thyrsis", II.26-30).<sup>3</sup>

In "The Scholar-Gipsy" the correlative is a mythical figure of a young man, about to be a poet, who has somehow managed to avoid the contagion of the world and moves freely through a countryside which he has become a part. Its structure is threefold: the first section proceeds by means of the natural mode of interpretation (stanzas 1-13); the second section proceeds by means of the moral mode of interpretation (stanzas 14-22); and finally two concluding stanzas with their end-symbol of the Tyrian Trader - a notorious point of difference among critics, that sums up in itself all that Arnold has said in the poem.

The first section concentrates upon the Cumnor landscape, recreating Glanvil's historical figure as a genius loci who has kept himself unspotted while awaiting the spark from heaven to fall. Andrew Farmer, in his comment on the poem, complains that "the description of the countryside through which the Scholar Gipsy wanders, is developed far beyond what is required by the argument".<sup>4</sup> Arnold, by dwelling so long on his description, was trying to fix the remembrance of those delightful days and thus adding a mnemonic function to poetry. For Arnold knows that Britain is growing more

urban every day. To this effect he writes to his brother Tom: "Do you remember a poem of mine called 'The Scholar-Gipsy?' It was meant to fix the remembrance of those delightful wanderings of ours in the Cumner hills, before they were quite effaced - and as such Clough and Walrond accepted it, and it has had much success at Oxford, I am told, as was perhaps likely from its couleur locale" (A Writer's Recollections, pp. 72-73).

By doing that Arnold gives the poem a wider implication: through his description of the landscape and the introduction of the shepherd, the poem is introduced to the pastoral tradition that can carry a number of meanings, personal, poetic, academic, and religious:

Go, for they call you, shepherd, from the hill;  
Go, shepherd, and untie the wattled cotes!  
No longer leave thy wistful flock unfed,  
Nor let thy bawling fellows rack their throats,  
Nor the cropped herbage shoot another head.  
But when the fields are still,  
And the tired men and dogs all gone to rest,  
And only the white sheep are sometimes seen  
Cross and recross the strips of moon-blanch'd green,  
Come, shepherd, and again begin the quest!

(Poems, pp. 333-334, lines 1-10)

Tinker and Lowry, in their comment on these lines, say "the function of the shepherd, mentioned at the beginning of the poem, is not clear. What is the quest which is to be renewed by moonlight? Is it the same quest as that of the scholar-gipsy, or merely emblematic of the spiritual quest of the thoughtful soul? And who is the companion that is to share it? 'Thyrsis', very probably, for Clough and Arnold are naturally associated in the reader's mind with the spiritual and philosophical 'quest' of their time. Moreover such companionship is implied by the conventions of pastoral poetry; c.f. the line in 'Thyrsis' 'Alas, for Corydon no rival now!'" (Commentary, pp. 208-9).



The shepherd's quest may recall to the reader's mind Moses' quest. He, too, had a companion - his brother, and he was a shepherd. The idea of a quest implies a fixed object in life, which in turn implies that all activity is not random, since some principle of order is to be discovered. Arnold, in his prose as well as in his poetry, is trying to prove that a truth does exist. His argument is that the search for truth must be unrelenting and that its very attainment promotes a further search for a more ultimate truth. If there is any touch of scepticism about Arnold's writing or sense of uncertainty it is not about the reality of truth but about the possibility of attaining it in one's life. And whether we are on the right path to it or not.

The old tale of the frustrated scholar who left Oxford to learn the gipsies' magical lore is in Arnold's hands a parable of the modern spirit's quest for unity and totality. For the Scholar-Gipsy, essentially, has hellenistic qualities that Arnold wants to foster in his own over-Hebraic age. He himself aspired to lucidity and balance, the harmony between the mind and the heart. But the story contains some other suggestive ideas: the time and the place. The time in which the original story took place is the seventeenth century: an age of transition. As for the place, perhaps Arnold's description of Oxford might explain that significance:

A city steeped in sentiment as she lies, spreading her  
gardens to the moonlight, and whispering from her  
towers the last enchantments of the Middle Ages...  
unravaged by <sup>the</sup> fierce intellectual life of our century.<sup>5</sup>

And of the Middle Ages he says:

I have a strong sense of the irrationality of that period, and of the utter folly of those who take it seriously and play at restoring it, still, it has poetically the greatest charm and refreshment for me.

(Letters, Vol., I, p. 127, December, 1860)

These lines might be taken as a disguised criticism of the Oxford Movement of which Sir Llewellyn Woodward writes:

The Oxford Movement appears out of scale with the early railway age... It was scarcely possible for sensitive and clever men like Keble, Pusey, Newman, or... Froude to understand the world of George Stephenson or Feargus O'Connor or Edwin Chadwick. The fascination of Oxford was too much for them. There was interest enough in her intellectual discipline; her internal disputes had the vividness of the politics of a city state. The domination of ecclesiastical subjects and religious beliefs was a real domination... For all their intellectual ability, the Oxford reformers knew little or nothing of the physical and biological sciences.

In addition to that, though Oxford was a national university, it limited its endowments to members of the Church of England. So a lad being of very pregnant parts, yet wanting the encouragement of preferment, would be forced, by his poverty, to leave his studies there. All these questions must have weighed on Arnold's thinking while writing the poem. Above all the master-thought with him was the idea of integrity. The integration of the self was the prime object of Arnold's intellectual quest.

On June 21, 1870, the honorary degree of D.C.L. was conferred upon Arnold by Lord Salisbury, Chancellor of the University of Oxford. Arnold was naturally gratified by the attention, but some of Salisbury's remarks during the ceremonials of the week led him to conceive that Salisbury was, as he wrote to his mother, "a dangerous man... chiefly from his want of any true sense and experience of literature and its beneficent function.

Religion he knows, and physical science he knows, but the immense work between the two, which is for literature to accomplish, he knows nothing of" (Letters, II, p. 35). All this pressed a good deal upon his mind at Oxford. But, by this dramatic collision with Oxonian religious dogma, he came to an idea for the book which he believed his most important one: Literature and Dogma.

The situation needed a mediator, a healing and reconciling influence, between the claims of science and those of religion. But people should be balanced first. Arnold found that they lack the qualities of Hellenism. Hellenism, and human life in the hands of Hellenism, are invested with a kind of aerial ease, clearness and radiancy, they are kept full of sweetness and light. Such qualities he finds in the scholar-gipsy himself, and on the strength of them is soon identifying the gipsy with Dionysian powers. Arnold, however, was not blind to its imperfection: a sort of moral weakness, and of relaxation or insensibility of the moral fibre.

This sort of awareness is reflected in Arnold's concept of the gypsies in the poem. A highly romantic view of the gipsy is found in the "Stanzas on a Gipsy Child by the Sea-Shore", and a realistic one in "Resignation", both poems in the volume of 1849. But the conception of gipsy's life set forth in "The Scholar-Gipsy" differs from both these earlier views. The wandering scholar betrays an ungipsy-like disinclination to associate with his own kind. His search is philosophical - that of the sage living in retirement from the distracting world. He means, when he has mastered the secret of this magic, to offer it to mankind:

But once, years after, in the country-lanes,  
Two scholars, whom at college erst he knew,  
Met him, and of his way of life enquired;  
Whereat he answered, that the gipsy-crew,  
His mates, had arts to rule as they desired  
The workings of men's brains,  
And they can bind them to what thoughts they will.

'And I,' he said, 'the secret of their art,  
When fully learned, will to the world impart;  
But it needs heaven-sent moments for this skill.'

(Poems, p. 335, lines: 41-50)

The Scholar-Gipsy, then, himself is a figure of perfect poise and balance. He achieves this unity of purpose in life through calm that he gets from nature. His intimacy with nature becomes explicit when:

... the blackbird, picking food  
Sees thee, nor stops his meal, nor fears at all;  
So often has he known thee past him stray.

To make him eternal Arnold associates him with the cycle of seasons. He is seen in spring:

Shepherds had met him on the Hurst in spring. (I.57)

In Summer:

Maidens, who from the distant hamlets come  
To dance around the Fyfield elm in May,  
Oft through the darkening fields have seen thee roam,  
Or cross a stile into the public way.  
Oft thou hast given them store  
Of flowers - the frail-leafed, white anemone,  
Dark bluebells drenched with dews of summer eves. (I.82-88)

And

In autumn, on the skirts of Bagley Wood. (I.110)

Finally in stanza XIII, winter comes:

And once, in winter, on the causeway chill  
Where home through flooded fields foot-travellers go,  
Have I not passed thee on the wooden bridge,  
Wrapped in thy cloak and battling with the snow,  
Thy face tow'rd Hinksey and its wintry ridge? (121-125)

The question here is very significant for it prepares the reader for the scepticism of the nineteenth-century.

In lines that mark the return to the realism of the age Arnold says:

But what - I dream! Two hundred years are flown  
Since first the story ran through Oxford halls,  
And the grave Glanvil did the tale inscribe  
That thou wert wandered from the studious walls  
To learn strange arts, and join a gipsy-tribe;  
And thou from earth art gone  
Long since, and in some quiet churchyard laid-  
Some country-nook, where o'er thy unknown grave  
Tall grasses and white flowering nettles wave,  
Under a dark, red-fruited yew-tree's shade.

At this stage the poem takes on its religious function.<sup>7</sup> The two themes are interwound. For poetry, like religion, was attacked in the nineteenth century as "primitive and [that it] must inevitably decay with the progress of science and civilisation" (Bush, English Poetry, p. 159). Arnold had distinguished three trends in his age whose attitudes would be fatal to any imaginative experience either in the Bible or in poetry.

The Pharisees, with their genuine concern for religion, but total want of perception of what religion really is, and by their temper, attitude, and aims doing their best to make religion impossible, are the Protestant Dissenters. The Sadducees are our friends the philosophical Liberals, who believe neither in angel nor spirit but in Mr Herbert Spencer. Even the Roman governor has his close parallel in our celebrated aristocracy, with its superficial good sense and good nature, its complete inaptitude for ideas, its profound helplessness in presence of all great spiritual movements.

(Literature and Dogma, CPW, p. 399)

Arnold must have asked himself the question that Dr Newman asked himself before: How, then, in our age are those wants and feelings of our common nature satisfied, which were formerly supplied by symbols, now that symbolical language and symbolical rites have almost perished or dismissed as dreams? Arnold's answer is what he had urged in the poem "Progress": "Leave then the cross as ye have left carved gods,/ But guard the fire within." And if Christ is to be understood and followed, the prime necessity is to get free from the anthropomorphic supernaturalism. Though the myth of

Christianity, as embodied in the Bible, may not be true, still it contained moral truths which were very necessary in the conduct of life. Therefore, these truths should be kept alive. The truth of the Scholar-Gipsy should also be kept alive by disengaging it from the flimsiness of seventeenth-century superstition.

At this point, the poem proceeds by means of the moral mode of interpretation (stanzas 14-23). In that part the Scholar-Gipsy is changed into a symbol of immortal youth and hope whose single-minded pursuit and quiet self-possession stand as a devastating indictment of the hurry, disease, and endless fluctuation of life in the modern world. The poem moves correspondingly from the vivid description of an actual landscape into the language of abstraction - "change to change", "repeated shocks... numb the elastic powers", "bliss and teen", "a thousand schemes". In contrast to the firm physical imagery which characterises the Scholar and his world, modern man is marked by vague, widely-applicable classes of experience.

The Scholar-Gipsy has become a model Arnold employs to make his critique as effective as possible. But one has to learn what gave the Scholar his immunity: the explanations follow. First he fled while he was young 'with powers/Fresh, undiverted to the world without.' Those who have to go on living find that age itself brings dissatisfaction. The unsatisfactoriness is rendered in Arnold's intangible, slippery vocabulary - "sick fatigue", "languid doubt", "much to have tried, in much been baffled", "nor knows for what he strives", "casual creeds", "vague resolves", "new beginnings, disappointments new". The faults and griefs of modern man are touched in the widest possible terms in phrases such as 'Who hesitate and falter life away,' And lose tomorrow the ground won today,'

These idle fluctuations "without term or scope" contrast painfully, by their generality and randomness, with the Gipsy's "one aim, one business, one desire."

It is because men are tossed to and fro in the multitudinousness of life that they die, that they perish with their own generation:

For what wears out the life of mortal men?  
'Tis that from change to change their being rolls;  
'Tis that repeated shocks, again, again,  
Exhaust the energy of strongest souls  
And numb the elastic powers.

(Poems, p. 339, lines 142-46).

By line 201, the model is so far restored and purified to be a proper model. In the vision he was a shy, romantic figure. But in the non-mythical statement of the second part he is made of sterner stuff: "Thou hadst one aim, one business, one desire." He seems now to belong to the world of classical antiquity. At this point Arnold has come close to the second reason for the Scholar's immunity, his good luck in being:

O born in days when wits were fresh and clear,  
And life ran gaily as the sparkling Thames;  
Before this strange disease of modern life,  
With its sick hurry, its divided aims,  
Its heads o'ertaxed, its palsied hearts, was rife-

This was doubly fortunate, since earlier ages were not simply easier to live in, because they were calmer, but easier to write poetry in. The idea which occupies the rest of the poem is the importance for the Scholar of avoiding 'feverish contact' with the modern world:

Fly hence, our contact fear!  
Still fly, plunge deeper in the bowering wood!  
Averse, as Dido did with gesture stern  
From her false friend's approach in Hades turn,  
Wave us away, and keep thy solitude!

(Poems, p. 342)

His salvation can lie only in flight. This suggests an explanation of the

concluding simile of the Tyrian trader.

The Dido image, says Culler, is appropriate because in her the ideal of love and personal faith was wronged by one whose errand was the practical founding of the most practical empire in the world. But it is also appropriate because the scene is Hades, the Hades in which the poet himself is located, and Dido is preserving her integrity after she has suffered, not before. And finally, her conflict with Aeneas represents the historic conflict between East and West, of which the Scholar Gipsy's conflict with the modern world is a modern variant. And through her connection with Carthage, the colony of Tyre, she leads into the final symbol of the Tyrian trader, which is the culmination of the poem (Imaginative Reason, p. 189).

Finally, there are the last two stanzas with their end symbol of the Tyrian trader that has caused difficulty for some readers. Recent interpretations of the poem, however much they differ on other points, invariably agree in seeing the final stanzas as an image of culture confrontation. G. Wilson Knight<sup>8</sup> finds that Arnold's poem confronts our western tradition with suggestions of a wisdom, lore, or magic of oriental affinities or origin. A.E. Dyson in a refutation of Professor Knight's interpretation, says something very similar. E.K. Brown points out that "The Tyrian trader's flight before the clamorous spirited Greeks is exactly analogous to the scholar gipsy's flight before the drink and clatter of the smock-frock'd boors or before the bathers in the abandoned lasher or before the Oxford riders blithe. Both flights express a desire for calm, a desire for aloofness. And little ingenuity is required to discover a similarity between the gipsies and those 'shy traffickers, the dark Iberians' to whom the Tyrian trader flies. There is, at the least a general relevance to the character of the gipsy in the elaborate simile".<sup>9</sup>



Professor Drew adds that the image has an obvious punctuating role in the poem and that it provides a bridge to the Greek myths which lie behind "Thyrsis".

All these views were a response to G. Saintsbury's claims that "No ingenuity can work out the parallel between the 'uncloudedly joyous' scholar who is bid avoid the palsied, diseased enfants du siecle, and the grave Tyrian who was indignant at the competition of the merry Greek, and shook out more sail to seek fresh markets" (Poems, p. 343). The imagery might be taken as Arnold's method to apply his idea of the symmetrical structure of a poem: of the regular correspondence of part with part, of thought to thought, feeling to feeling. The Tyrian trader with his gravity of demeanour and settled habits betrays Apollonian leanings in contrast to Dionysian excessiveness of the youthful Greeks. This aspect is made explicit through imagery that is associated with the Dionysian cult:

And saw the merry Grecian coaster come,  
Freighted with amber grapes, and Chian wine,  
Green, bursting figs, and tunnies steeped in brine-  
And knew the intruders on his ancient home.

(Poems, p. 344)

The image also shows the contrast between two different modes of communication: communication through involvement and assimilation, and communication controlled and limited by detachment. What is being suggested here is a form of action without unnecessary involvement. The conclusion that the poem suggests is that Hebraism and Hellenism: doing and knowing, must in the end be reconciled, and thus man's two great natural forces will no longer be dissociate and rival, but will be a joint force of right thinking and strong doing to carry him on to perfection.

The character of the Scholar-Gipsy surely stands for this kind of awareness, a new poise, a unified functioning of faculties. The poem,

despite what Arnold says about it, is animating. It animates by the fact that we are waiting. The act of waiting itself involves hope. This hope is made nearer every stanza through the verbal sequence that describe the rumours hanging about the countryside: begins in the past tense in stanza six, moves through the subjunctive in stanza seven, to the present perfect in stanza eight: "was seen", "had met", "had found", "would fly", "(if) hast passed", "(if) haunt'st", "lov'st", "have met". This hope is carried on to the companion piece, "Thyrsis", where it is finally identified with a fixed object: the tree.

Roam on! The light we sought is shining still.  
Dost thou ask proof? Our tree yet crowns the hill,  
Our Scholar travels yet the loved hill-side.

(Poems, p. 508)

The image of the tree reinforces the idea of integrity: root, shoot, blossom.

In "Thyrsis" the correlative is an uphill journey on foot at the end of a winter's day by a middle-aged man finding his way by memory through an altered countryside in search of a tree whose position he has forgotten and which may no longer be where it was. He is not to write very much more poetry. The countryside which he once knew so well but which is now so altered is of course the first half of "The Scholar-Gipsy". It purports to be A Monody to commemorate Arnold's friend, Arthur Hugh Clough, who died on 13 November 1861. Arnold placed it after "The Scholar Gipsy", to which it is, first and foremost, a sequel in style and tone. But in theme it is intended as an antidote.

It is an antidote in a sense that in the "Scholar-Gipsy" the poet's dilemma is that he has fallen on an uncongenial, arid and unpoetical age. It is the dilemma of Gray, Leopardi and Arnold. It is also Keats' dilemma where the two forces of inspiration could only be kept in balance at a high price. The poet's dilemma in "Thyrsis" is different: the poet dies

because he allowed himself to become involved in human strife and be  
sucked in the Time Stream: Thyrsis of his own will went away,

It irked him to be here, he could not rest.  
He loved each simple joy the country yields,  
He loved his mates; but yet he could not keep,  
For that a shadow loured on the fields,  
Here with the shepherds and the silly sheep.  
Some life of men unblest  
He knew, which made him droop, and filled his head.  
He went; his piping took a troubled sound  
Of storms that rage outside our happy ground;  
He could not wait their passing, he is dead.

(Poems, p. 500)

Clough's resignation of his Oriel fellowship was for Arnold the time of  
Clough's real death.

In these two poems one finds involvement and detachment are juxtaposed,  
and Arnold remains aloof, paring his fingernails in the expectation that  
the reader will be encouraged to appreciate how complex the problem is.  
Seen from this standpoint, Arnold has found an objective correlative for  
his emotion rather than merely trying to explain it directly, and in doing  
so he avoided becoming didactic. He even succeeded in avoiding being  
subjective by setting 'his own grief for Clough, for his lost youth and  
for his ill-luck in falling on an uncongenial age in the context of a  
universal lament for the fate of modern man'.

The poem on the whole animates and gives joy. It remains unique in  
Arnold's poetry, as a fusion of his typical tender nostalgia, associated  
with the natural scenes he most dearly loved, with a mood, not of melancholy  
defeatism, but of hope and tentative optimism. His sight of the tree as  
"Bare on its lonely ride, the Tree! the Tree! (160), and his immediate  
recognition that he cannot reach it tonight are a way of saying that the  
search for truth, however difficult, is not hopeless, and that the tree  
still stands if it cannot be reached at once:

I cannot reach the signal-tree to-night,  
Yet, happy omen hail!

(165-166)

## II

### The Poet's Ideal

The study has, so far, shown that the poet in Arnold's theory is at bottom ondoyant et divers: balancing and indeterminate, the plaything of cross motives and shifting impulses, swayed by a thousand subtle influences, physiological and pathological. But the fact remains that the greatness of the poet lies in his being able to subdue this side of his troubled self and to retain a hopeful and serene temper. This has been the main idea behind Arnold's evaluation of poets.

In his study of Emerson Arnold follows this principle:

As late as 1870, he [Emerson] writes to Carlyle '... the strong hours conquer us; and I am the victim of miscellany, - miscellany of designs, vast debility, and procrastination'. The forlorn note belonging to the phrase 'vast debility', recalls that saddest and most discouraged of writers, the author of *Obermann*, Senancour, with whom Emerson has in truth a certain kinship. He has in common with Senancour his pureness, his passion for nature, his single eye; and here we find him confessing, like Senancour, a sense in himself of sterility and impatience.

("Emerson", CPW, X, pp. 176-77)

Yet the secret of his effect is not even in these; it is in his temper. It is in the hopeful, serene, beautiful temper wherewith these, in Emerson, are indissolubly joined; in which they work, and have their being. He says himself: "We judge of a man's wisdom by his hope, knowing that the perception of the inexhaustibleness of nature is an immortal youth"

(ibid., pp. 181-82). "By his conviction that in the life of the spirit is happiness, and by his hope that this life of the spirit will come more and more to be sanely understood, and to prevail, and to work for happiness, - by this conviction and hope Emerson was great, and he will surely prove in the end to have been right in them" (ibid., pp. 184-85).

So in spite of his inner conflict Emerson retains his aspirations for happiness, and he is great because he gives the reader this hopeful vision of life, while Carlyle's perverse attitude towards happiness cut him as well as his readers off from hope. Thus Arnold uses him for contrast:

But consider Carlyle's temper, as we have been considering Emerson's; take his own account of it: '... I lead a most dyspeptic, solitary, self-shrouded life; consuming; if possible in silence, my considerable daily allotment of pain, glad when any strength is left in me for working, which is the only use I can see in myself, - too rare a case of late. The ground of my existence is black as death; too black, when all void too; but at times there paint themselves on it pictures of gold, and rainbow, and lightning, all the brighter for the black ground, I suppose. Withal, I am very much of a fool' - No, not a fool, but turbid and morbid, wilful and perverse. 'We judge of a man's wisdom by his hope'.

(ibid., pp. 182-83)

Wise men everywhere, says Arnold, know that we must keep up our courage and hope; they knew that hope is, as Wordsworth well says, -

The paramount duty which Heaven lays  
For its own honour, on man's suffering heart.

But the very word duty points to an effort and a struggle to maintain our hope unbroken. The poet can maintain this line, as Arnold did, by becoming less personal in his endeavour:

I more and more, [writes Arnold to his mother] become conscious of having something to do, and of a resolution to do it...to be less and less personal in one's desires and workings is the great matter, and too I feel, I am glad to say, more deeply than I did, but for progress in the direction of the 'seeketh not her own' there is always room.

(Letters, I, p. 344)

In short, character and self-control, the virtus verusque labor so necessary for any kind of greatness, and for the great artist too. Poets, in the context of Arnold's thinking, are part of a:

certain number of aliens, if we may so call them, - persons who are mainly led, not by their class spirit, but by a general humane spirit, by the love of human perfection; and that this number is capable of being diminished or augmented. I mean (says Arnold), the number of those who will succeed in developing this happy instinct will be greater or smaller, in proportion both to the force of the original instinct within them, and to the hindrance or encouragement which it meets with from without.

(Culture and Anarchy, CPW., V., 146).

The aliens are detached from classes and parties. They yet are lovers of their country, and lovers of human life and of civilisation, and therefore grievously distressed at the condition in which they see their own civilisation at the present time, and appalled at the prophecies they hear of the turn which things in their society must certainly take. Arnold's objective was to increase their number. "But what we have to do is to raise and multiply in this country a third host, with the conviction that the ideals both of Simpletons, and Savages are profoundly inadequate and profoundly unedifying, and with the resolve to win victory for a better ideal than of either of them" ("Falkland", CPW, VIII, p. 205).

These are Arnold's criteria in classifying poets into men of genius on one hand and men of ability on the other:

There are the famous men of genius in literature, - the Homers, Dantes, Shakespeares: of them we need not speak; their praise is for ever and ever. Then there are the famous men of ability in literature: their praise is in their own generation. And what makes this difference? The work of the two orders of men is at the bottom the same, - a criticism of life... But the criticism which the men of genius pass upon human life is permanently acceptable to mankind; the criticism which the men of ability pass upon human life is transitorily acceptable.

... The first kind are the great abounding fountains of truth, whose criticism of life is a source of illumination and joy to the whole human race for ever, - the Homers, the Shakespeares. These are the sacred personages, whom all civilised warfare respects. The second are those whom the outskirmishers of the new generation, its forerunners, - quick-witted soldiers... the select of the army, - recognise, though the bulk of their comrades behind might not, as the same family and character with the sacred personages, exercising like them an immortal function, and like them inspiring a permanent interest.

("Joubert", CPW, III, pp. 209-10)

The second order of poets marry the spirit of their own generation and become the widow to the next one. "But for a spirit of any delicacy and dignity, what a fate, if he could foresee it! to be an oracle for one generation, and then of little or no account for ever. How far better to pass with scant notice through one's own generation, but to be singled out and preserved by the very iconoclasts of the next, then in their turn by those of the next, and so, like the lamp of life itself, to be handed on from one generation to another in safety" ("Joubert", CPW, III, pp. 210-11).

But Arnold knows that this is not an easy task and it depends in part on the poet's age. In his sonnet "Shakespeare", he speaks of the perennial problem of the objective poet confronted by an audience that expects or demands subjective poetry. It is, in one's view, Arnold's own criticism of Romantic poets for writing so much about themselves as well as an early condemnation of those who advocated a true allegory of the state of one's own mind as the highest thing that one can attempt in the way of poetry.

Shakespeare had so schooled himself and made himself so secure against this confusion of his personality and his poetry that he could tread on earth unguess'd at:

Others abide our question. Thou art free.  
We ask and ask - Thou smilest and art still,  
Out-topping knowledge. For the loftiest hill,  
Who to the stars uncrowns his majesty,

Planting his steadfast footsteps in the sea,  
Making the heaven of heavens his dwelling-place,  
Spares but the cloudy border of his base  
To the foiled searching of mortality;

And thou, who didst the stars and sunbeams know,  
Self-schooled, self-scanned, self-honoured, self-secure,  
Didst tread on earth unguessed at. - Better so!

All pains the immortal spirit must endure,  
All weakness which impairs, all griefs which bow,  
Find their sole speech in that victorious brow.

Line 10 may remind the reader of the poet in "Resignation". In the sonnet, Arnold argues that Shakespeare had endured the pains, weaknesses, and griefs of man's mortality but left them out of his poetry; and his victory over them might be seen only in his serene temper.

The sonnet, as most critics have observed, is admittedly obscure and the dubious logic of its images has been diversely interpreted. Three possibilities present themselves: (1) the question of Shakespeare's rank or supremacy as a poet; (2) the question whether his plays contain a revelation of his own character and his private understanding of life [or more generally, perhaps, the whole question of how a creative artist works]; and (3) the question whether his plays may be regarded as providing the readers with a guide to conduct: a practical criticism of life. All these issues could be raised. But if one takes into consideration the historical background of the sonnet and relates it to Arnold's poetic theory, then there can hardly be any doubt at least as to the general tenor of its meaning.

In the years immediately preceeding 1844, when the sonnet was written, there was a great deal of research done on the life of Shakespeare. In



the very year in which Arnold's sonnet was written there appeared two studies of Shakespeare's life: one by John Payne Collier and the other by Charles Knight. The studies were unproductive in their results - so unproductive that the stage was all set for attributing the works of Shakespeare to Bacon and sometimes to Marlowe.

It is true that many have asked before about Shakespeare's private life and opinions; they have scrutinised his plays for some supplement to the meagre biographical knowledge of the poet. They were looking for some autobiographical hints revealing the man. For instance Schiller writes:

Misled by my acquaintance with recent poetry so as in every work to look first for the poet, to meet him heart to heart, and to reflect with him upon his object, in short to look at the object only as it is reflected in the subject, I found it intolerable that here the poet never showed himself and would never let me question him. <sup>11</sup>

Another critic was Schlegel who came to the conclusion that "just as God, despite His transcendence, is immanent in the world, showing 'the invisible things of him... by the things that are made,' so also the typical modern writer, Shakespeare in his instance, despite his transcendence of his works by virtue of his objectivity, is plainly immanent in them and reveals his invisible presence by things that he has made" (Abrams, The Mirror and the Lamp, p. 240). It is possible, Schlegel thought, that the literary qualities of "objectivity" and "interestedness" are not incompatible, so that a modern writer may at the same time be in, and aloof from, his own dramas. This is seeming contradiction, but one which had sanction in an ancient and persistent concept about the relation of God to the universe. The recourse to theology for resolving the paradox of Shakespeare had been suggested by Schiller himself, in the passage comparing the poet to Deity behind this universe: "Like Deity behind the universe, he [i.e. the 'objective' poet of Shakespeare's kind] hides himself behind his work" (Allott, Poems, p. 49).

The disagreement between Schiller and Schlegel whether Shakespeare was objective or subjective continued to divide literary critics, though the majority concurred with Schiller that Shakespeare was the very type of the objective poet who does not reveal his personality in his writings but loses himself in the characters he creates. Coleridge, thus, employs the term "sympathy" to explain how a poet is able to annul space and the isolation of his individual nervous system and become, for the nonce, the personality he contemplates. The very idea which Arnold used in his poem "The Strayed Reveller", that the poet "becomes what he sings".

Through sympathy the poet cultivates an appropriate state of feeling in himself, as one of various artistic means to which he resorts for affecting his readers. It also helps him to enter into the characters he would depict. But in the 1820's Hazlitt, followed by Keats, distinguished between two types of imagination: one founded on Sympathy and the other on Self-love. The former Keats called "Negative Capability" and the latter the "Egotistical Sublime".

Negative Capability involved, among other things, the ability to transform oneself almost at will into all sorts and conditions of men. Lacking a proper nature of one's own, one could take on the nature of an Iago, a Desdemona, a Hamlet. The Egotistical Sublime, on the other hand, lacked this ability. It had so powerful a nature, and was so deeply self-absorbed, that it could not enter into others, rather transformed them into some aspect of itself. The one projected itself into a multifarious world and took on the colours of its subject, the other assimilated the world into itself and imbued it with the colour of its own mind. In Hazlitt's view, Wordsworth, Milton, and Byron were examples of the latter, whereas Shakespeare was the supreme example of the former.

Critics have associated Arnold with the doctrine of the Egotistical

Sublime because of the fact that the poet in his poetry is racked by inner conflicts. But who would deny that this was the case of all influential poets in the early nineteenth century such as Senancour, Leopardi, Carlyle, Keats and many others who were considered as models to imitate. The poet, in Arnold's poetry, is defined negatively. In this way Arnold was able to hold the mirror to his contemporary poets without being didactic. However, more will be said about this topic in the course of the second part.

Arnold wished the European poets would become aware of their own ineffectiveness and passivity. His aim was not only England but Europe. The continent has always so much interest for him. He writes to his mother: "I value his praise [Saint-Seuve's] both in itself, and because it carries one's name through the literary circles of Europe in a way that no English praise can carry it" (Letters, I, p. 134). His name was carried far enough to attract the attention of the Italian government. "The Italian Government", he writes to his mother, "has proposed to me to take charge of Prince Thomas of Savoy..." (Letters, II, pp. 1-2). Besides these responsibilities, he is a man in the daily exercise of a profession full of practical detail, full of routine. But he has had a culture which keeps his thinking quick and large and fresh and lucid, and which makes thinking of this sort a necessity to him.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> H. Ward, A Writer's Recollection (London, 1918), p. 45.

<sup>2</sup> Theoder Reik, From Thirty Years with Freud, tr. R. Winston (New York and Toronto: Farrar & Rinehart, 1940), p. 198.

<sup>3</sup> "The Passage of Time", 206.

- 4 Andrew Farmer, "Arnold's Gipsy Reconsidered" Essays in Criticism, Vol. 22 (1972), 64.
- 5 In A.E. Dyson, "The Last Enchantments" Between Two Worlds (Great Britain: Macmillan, 1972), p. 47.
- 6 E.L. Woodward, The Age of Reform 1815-1870 (Oxford, 1938), p. 512, p.520.
- 7 In spite of Mr Michael Thorpe's view that Arnold "did not use poetry as a vehicle for his religious ideas. His religious thinking plays little part in his most memorable poetry". In Matthew Arnold (London: Evans Brothers, 1969), p. 81.
- 8 G. W. Knight, "The Scholar Gipsy: An Interpretation", Review of English Studies, Vol. 6 (1955).
- 9 E.K. Brown, "The Scholar-Gipsy", Revue Anglo-Americaine, 12 (1934-5), 224-5.
- 10 Emerson, "Spiritual Laws" Centenary ed., 11, 137-38.
- 11 The translation is that in Bernard Bosanquet, A History of Aesthetic (London, 1939), p. 299. Quoted by P.F. Baum, Ten Studies in the Poetry of Matthew Arnold (Druham, 1958), p. 7n.

PART II

MATTHEW ARNOLD'S POETIC PRACTICE

O God, on Nature, and on human life.-

Matthew Arnold

## CHAPTER V

### Prologue

A single line of poetry, working in the mind,  
may produce more thoughts and lead to more light,  
which is what man wants, than the fullest  
acquaintance with the processes of digestion. -

Matthew Arnold

#### Man's Idea of God and Its Relation to the Phenomenon of Alienation

The goal towards which I shall move will be the one already foreshadowed in the introduction of this thesis: Man's entire life, if not history, depends on his concept of God. From this concept there develops an immense system of institutions, established facts, accredited dogmas, customs, rules etc. In all religion, the possibility of man's estrangement from the Divine Order is fundamental; indeed, perhaps the central function of religion is to prevent this estrangement of man from God. What brings about or prevents this estrangement is man's idea of God. Some concepts in conformity with human nature, are more in view and more in honour at one time, some at another. To this effect Arnold says:

Human life and human society arise out of the constant endeavour of these instincts to satisfy and develop themselves. We may briefly sum them up, these needs or instincts, as being, first and foremost, a general instinct of expansion; then, as being instincts following diverse great lines, which may be conveniently designated as the lines of conduct, of intellect and knowledge, of beauty, of social life and manners. Some lines are more in view and more in honour at one time, some at another. Some men and some nations are more eminent on one line, some on another. But the final aim, of making our own and of harmoniously combining the powers to be reached on each and all of these great lines, is the ideal of human life. And our race is for ever recalled to this aim, and held fast to it, by the instinct of self-preservation in humanity.

("A Speech at Eton", CPW, IX, pp. 26-7)

But human nature is not static: there will come times when men will feel the sense of want of correspondence between these social institutions and their own nature. To this effect Arnold writes:

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.

("Heinrich Heine", CPW, III, p. 109)

Regarding the problem in this light, as essentially a problem of a contradiction between an ever dynamic and changing human nature and rigid religious and social institutions, I set aside from the outset, as foreign to my purpose, any kind of enquiry into the objective validity of any one among the religious beliefs thus set before us as subject-matter. I am not even, at the moment, concerned with the question whether God exists or not, for a philosophical as well as scientific proof of God's existence is in principle impossible. It does but endeavour to show how inevitable these ideas were, and how man's life and history were affected by them.

There are certain traditional questions which men and women have asked in all ages, and which they are still asking today:<sup>1</sup> Is the universe a fortuitous collection of atoms, or is it the embodiment of design and plan? Is the world we know a chance world, or a planned? Is life an incidental by-product of material processes, a mere eddy in the primaevial slime, or is it fundamental in the scheme of things? Is the process of evolution haphazard or purposive? Is humanity, in particular, its most promising achievement, destined to carry life to higher levels than have

yet appeared, or is it doomed to failure and extinction so soon as the material conditions which favoured its development have ceased to obtain? Are we free to make our lives as we please, or are our wills determined by bodily reflexes and unconscious wishes? Is mind a unique and independent activity, or a mere function of bodily processes which have produced consciousness as a kind of glow surrounding the brain like the bright colours on an oil-film?

All cultures provide for a patterned system in which certain answers to these questions are predominant: hence certain striving and satisfactions. Religion, theistic or non-theistic, and philosophy are attempts to give an answer to man's existential problem as embodied in these questions. Both, religion and philosophy, have the same general objective: to combine all experience into a single, all comprehensive system, a system, moreover, which will provide the ultimate ground and unity of all being and all knowledge; in other words a description of reality as a whole, of truth, "not in one region but in all; Truth apprehended, if it may be, in its highest unity".<sup>2</sup>

The finest, and the most barbaric cultures have the same function - the difference is only whether the answer given is better or worse. The deviation from the cultural pattern is just as much in search of an answer as his more well-adjusted brother. His answer may be better or worse than the one given by his culture - it is always another answer to the same fundamental questions raised by human existence. In this sense all cultures are religious and every deviation is a private form of religion, provided one means by religion an attempt to answer the problem of human existence. All these questions and their answers are embodied in man's concept of God and His relation to the world. It might be daring for an



amateur of philosophy to say that the history of philosophy can be read as a story of this concept in history. In point of theory there are two concepts: Pantheistic concept of God and a Deistic or Dualistic one. In philosophy, they are called pluralism and monism respectively.

Pantheism is one of those terms to which, though of familiar use, vague and often contradictory meanings are attached. Perhaps, what it generally stands for in the popular thought is the notion or doctrine which identifies God with the world. According to this view, all things and beings are parts of the divine nature, all events and actions are expressions of the divine activity. The forces of nature, the movements of the human spirit, the incidents of each individual life, the history of nations and of the human race, all thinking things, all objects of all thought, are immediate manifestations of the being and life of God. Man does not need to rise above the finite world to find God, or discern in nature and man proofs of the divine existence; for nature and man are themselves divine. Pantheism, so understood, is simply the deification of the finite world.

This trend, Pantheism, finds its practical expression in pantheistic religions such as the cult of Osiris (ancient Egypt), the cult of Adonis, Brahmanism and, in one point of view, Buddhism, the cult of Dionysus or Bacchus, and Catholicism in the Christian religion. It might be said that pantheism has found its most developed and systematic speculative expression in Spinoza's philosophy. If one asks what is the ethical bearing of pantheism, the answer must be that pantheism knows nothing of moral distinctions: with the ideas of freedom and individuality, the ideas of responsibilities and of moral good and evil disappear.

The natural reaction, from a unity which rules out the element of difference, is a view of things which, by exaggerating it, becomes virtually

dualistic. In the recoil from a theory which swamps the finite in the infinite, the tendency arises to an excessive emphasising of the independence of the finite world. In the endeavour to maintain the infinitude of the divine nature consistently with the ascription of any measure of reality - nature and man, Deism betakes itself to anthropomorphic analogies derived from the relations of man to the outward world - such as that of a human contriver or artist to the work of his hands, or that of a potentate to his subjects. This Deistic conception of the relation of God to the world, whether as Creator or as Ruler and Governor, is one which rests essentially on the notion of arbitrary will and power. It traces the existence of the world, not to anything in the nature of God, but only to an arbitrary inexplicable act, by which of His mere will and pleasure He calls a world into being.

In the system of the universe there is an unbridged gap, a dualistic breach of unity, so long as there is nothing to connect the essential nature of God with the world He creates.

Now, the difference between these two concepts is not a mere matter of abstract speculation; it is full of practical consequences and lies at the foundation of all the greatest differences of practical opinion. For instance, Max Weber attributes the differences between Protestant students and Catholic students to the mental and spiritual peculiarities acquired from the environment, here the type of education favoured by the religious atmosphere of the home community and the parental home . All these "have determined the choice of occupation, and through it the professional career ... The principal explanation of this difference must be sought in the permanent intrinsic character of their religious beliefs, and not only in their temporary external historico-political institutions".<sup>3</sup>

These two concepts, in considering the teachings of the various religions, express themselves in the form of representational thought. Thus, for example, the theme of the Father begetting the Son, the Creation story, and many other stories, all belong to the realms of representational thought whose truth in a pure form is accessible only to abstract thinking. This is necessary for the being of God is not merely intellectual: it involves feeling and will as well as thought.

"From time to time each of these elements has been emphasised at the expense of the others, e.g. Thought in Scholasticism, Enlightenment, Hegel, etc. Emotional elements in devotional theology, Romanticism, Pietism, Schleiermacher, etc. - Elements of will in moralistic theology, the rigour and activism of bourgeois Protestantism, Kant, Ritschl, etc."<sup>4</sup>

The course of human history may be compared with a gigantic pendulum which swings back and forth between these two concepts:

Pantheism and Deism. One likens the idea of religion to a tree that grows till it becomes very difficult for it to carry any fruit.

Then comes a reformer, in the order that Carlyle expounded in his

Heroes and Hero-worship, to trim the tree so as to produce fruit

again and so on along the march of mankind. The mechanism of the

metamorphosis is not difficult to explain: as the tree must be a

seed at the beginning when it grows it absorbs some elements from

the soil, in this case social circumstances of the people. With

the passage of time a branch might be mistaken for the stem and

hence the deviation from the original concept of religion.

People are not conscious of this process: it is a game of many generations. They add concepts to the original concept of God like those weavers who never see the tapestry they are weaving. Now, it is important to recall here that the relationship between human activity and the world produced by it is and remains dialectical.<sup>5</sup> Thus men add to their gods what Arnold calls extra-belief or Aberglaube even while they apprehend themselves as totally dependent upon them. But by the same token, the "other world" of the gods takes on a certain autonomy vis-à-vis the human activity that produces it: it is capable of acting back upon the empirical existence of men in society. This points to another important fact, that is, the rootedness of religion in the practical concerns of everyday life. To this effect Arnold says:

All roads lead to Rome; and one finds in like manner that all questions raise the question of religion .... Questions of good government, social harmony, education, civilisation, come forth and ask to be considered; and very soon it appears that we cannot possibly treat them without returning to treat of religion.

("Irish Catholicism and British Liberation", CPW, VIII, pp. 321).

The concept of the historical development as a necessary force, irresistably changing and reshaping the forms of religion and thought, is central to Arnold's thinking especially in his Literature and Dogma. He as well was aware of the mechanism of the process of the metamorphosis from one concept to another. To this effect he says that with either concept there grows the Aberglaube:

All this [says Arnold] is in Paul. And there is besides, the Aberglaube, or extra-belief, of the bodily resurrection, of Christ's second advent during the lifetime of men then living; there is the Calvinistical God 'willing to show his wrath and to make his power known by vessels of wrath fitted to destruction' (Rom. iv. 22); there is the Rabbinical Logic, and the unsound use of prophecy and the Old Testament ....<sup>6</sup> This Aberglaube has sprung out of a false criticism of the literary records in which the doctrine is conveyed; what is called 'orthodox divinity' is, in fact, an immense literary misapprehension.

(ibid, p. 276)

The practical reformer has to be sure that changes to be made in things are supported by powerful and widely-spread feelings; and it is often an indispensable part of his argument to show, how those powerful feelings had their origin, and how those facts came to seem necessary and indefeasible. It is his first task then, to ascertain what is the nature of man,<sup>7</sup> and what are the needs which stem from his nature. The task is furthermore to recognise the laws inherent in human nature and the inherent goals for its development and unfolding. This is precisely what Arnold did. He began with the premise of a human nature common to the human race, throughout all

cultures and ages, and of certain ascertainable needs and strivings

inherent in that nature:

Human nature is built up of (four powers: the power of conduct, the power of intellect and knowledge, the power of beauty, and the power of social life and manners), we have the need for them all. When we have rightly met and adjusted the claims of them all, we shall then be in a fair way for getting soberness and righteousness, with wisdom.

(Literature and Science, CPW, X, p. 62)

The task now is to test one's hypothesis of the continually alternating movement between two concepts of God: Pantheism and Deism, by a brief excursion into the history of thought. This is also necessary as an introduction to the nineteenth-century's dilemma and the role of the reformer in that situation.

In the Presocratic philosophers, in the archaic Egyptian history, and in the earliest books of the Old Testament, scholars see evidence that our culture at its beginnings experienced the divine power as immediately present in nature, in society, and in



each man's heart. One particularly telling representation of the fundamental relation between man and nature is offered in the biblical myth of man's expulsion from paradise: Man and woman live in the Garden of Eden in complete harmony with each other and with nature. There is peace and no necessity to work. The social history of man started with his emerging from that state of unity with the natural world to an awareness of himself as an entity separate from surrounding nature and men. Yet this awareness remained very dim over long periods of history, for primitive religions bear testimony to man's feeling of oneness with nature. The individual continued to be closely tied to the natural and social world from which he emerged; while being partly aware of himself as a separate entity, he felt also part of the world around him.

Erich Fromm, in his comment on this situation, writes:

The problem of man's existence, then, is unique in the whole of nature; he has fallen out of nature, as it were, and is still in it; he is partly divine, partly animal; partly infinite, partly finite. The necessity to find ever-new solutions for the contradictions in his existence, to find ever-brighter forms of unity with nature, his fellowmen and himself, is the source of all psychic forces which motivate man, of all his passions, affects and anxieties. 8

The records of the Ancient Egyptian history show that after that state of oneness with nature, there emerged a deistic concept of god - Re. The god Re continued to rule till he was challenged with the religion of Osiris (Pantheistic concept). The history of ancient Egypt can be read as a history of the conflict between these two cults.<sup>9</sup>

A similar process had been enacted on the stage of Greek civilisation. To be brief, the worshipper of Dionysus (Pantheism) reacts against any form of restraints. "In intoxication, physical or spiritual, he recovers an intensity of feeling which prudence had destroyed; he finds the world full of delight and beauty, and his imagination is suddenly liberated from the prison of every-day

preoccupation. The Bacchic ritual produced what was called 'enthusiasm', which means, etymologically, having the god enter into the worshipper, who believed that he became one with the god. Much of what is greatest in human achievement involves some elements of intoxication, some sweeping away of prudence by passion. Without the Bacchic element, life would be uninteresting; with it, it is dangerous. Prudence versus passion is a conflict that runs through history. It is not a conflict in which we ought to side wholly with either party" (B. Russell, op.cit., p. 34). In other words, it is the type of religion that gives full gratification to the senses. It stimulates a single side of the human nature too absolutely, that makes man desire for utter change. For at the same time there is something else in human nature, says Arnold, prompting man to live by his soul and imagination rather than by his senses only. It was Orpheus (an ascetic cult) that brought that change by substituting mental for physical intoxication.

To go to the other root of Western Civilisation, it is certain that the Israelite tribes left Egypt with the Osiris religious cult in its lowest state: their behaviour in Sinai shows that. Moses emerged and trimmed the tree and gave it back to the Israelites in the form of a Deistic concept of God and His commandments. "The God of the Jews is an authoritarian master and they themselves an isolated and alienated people" (Masterson, op.cit., p. 98). "I am nothing - He is everything - and therein lies my ultimate bliss' - in this formula," says Peter Berger, "lies the essence of the masochistic attitude....

It transforms the self into nothingness, the other into absolute reality. Its ecstasy consists precisely in this double metamorphosis, which is profoundly liberating in that it seems to cut all at once through the ambiguities and anguish of separate, individual subjectivity confronting the subjectivities of others. The fact that the masochistic attitude is inherently predestined to failure, because the self cannot be annihilated this side of death and because the other can only be absolutised in illusion, need not concern us here. The important point for our considerations is that masochism, by its radical self-denial, provides the means by which the individual's suffering and even death can be radically transcended, to the point where the individual not only finds these experiences bearable but even welcomes them. Man cannot accept aloneness and he cannot accept meaninglessness. The masochistic surrender is an attempt to escape aloneness by absorption in an other, who at the same time is posited as the only and absolute meaning, at least in the instant in which the surrender occurs".

(Op.cit., pp. 63-64)

What is interesting in these lines is the point that Professor Berger has omitted: 'The fact that the masochistic attitude is inherently predestined to failure'. This point, in one's view, is the essence of alienation that is inherent in the Deistic concept of God as this study will show. However, for Hegel, the Jew is a slave who has alienated, handed over to God, his freedom, his autonomy, his authentic creativity and subjectivity. More precisely, he has not yet achieved a conscious realisation of his kinship and unity as spirit with the absolute, and of the exigencies of this spirituality which must be satisfied in any allegedly authentic religious relationship.<sup>10</sup> Because of his impoverished conception of human life he submits to an absolute dichotomy between man and God and locates the source of any meaning and value which might adorn human existence in the inscrutable providence of an utterly transcendent Lord.

The problem began with Israel's definition of God. "As he had developed his idea of God from personal experience," says Arnold, "Israel knew what we, who have developed our idea from his words about it, so often are ignorant of: that his words were but thrown out at a vast object of consciousness, which he could not fully grasp, and which he apprehended clearly by one point alone - that it made for the great concern of life, conduct" (Literature and Dogma, pp. 187-88).

"But we," says Arnold, "have seen how in the hopes of the nation and in the promises of prophecy this true and vital belief of Israel was mixed with a quantity of what we have called Aberglaube or extra-belief, adding all manner of shape and circumstance to the original thought... most of this has a poetical value, some of it has a moral value" (ibid., p. 229). With the passage of time, the stress was put on that Aberglaube. This prepared the way to Christianity which is, in principle, the authentic

religious expression of the unity of finite and infinite:

"Thus, [says Arnold] did Jesus seek to transform this immense materialising 'Aberglaube,' into which the religion of Israel had fallen, and to spiritualise it at all points; while in his method and secret he supplied a sure basis for practice. But to follow him entirely there was needed an 'epieikeia,' an unfailing sweetness and unerring perception, like his own".

(ibid., pp. 321-22)

What Jesus wished to draw the attention to, as Hegel as well as Arnold had observed, was that morality must be raised from the thou shalt of law to the is of love. The superiority of a morality of love over one of law is illustrated by the fact that it includes the content of the latter but obviates its alienating legal form. "This moral insight," says Patrick Masterson, who rendered adequately Hegel's ideas on this topic, "has a metaphysical counterpart, namely, that the unifying power of love rather than the objectifying and analytic quality of thought is the key to the truth about reality" (Op. cit., pp. 48-9). Through love man can come to a concrete awareness of the unity of his life with infinite life and through it with all life. "Love itself," says Hegel, "pronounces no imperative. It is no universal opposed to a particular, no unity of the concept, but a unity of spirit, divinity. To love God is to feel one's self in the 'all' of life, with no restrictions, in the infinite" (ibid., pp. 48-9).

In the Jewish tradition, reverence for the "thou shalt" of the moral imperative is proposed as the essence of morality. Jesus repudiated as inadequate this view of the human condition. His gospel of love exhibits that which fulfils the law but annuls it as law. By opening man's eyes to the unifying value of love Jesus overcame the alienation implicit in a morality of law and commands. He showed that love, understood as an inner harmony of inclination and reason, is a fundamental disposition of

human life, transcending the order of duties and commands. To express it in the form of an imperative is quite inadequate to its reality as a modification of life itself.

With such a view of the relationship between Man and God, created things would not be "merely signs," says J. Hillis Miller, "pointing to something which remained off at a distance, separated from them. The Eucharist was the archetype of the divine analogy where by created things participated in the supernatural reality they signified. Poetry in turn was, in one way or another, modeled on sacramental or scriptural language. The words of the poem incarnated the things they named, just as the words of the Mass shared in the transformation they evoked. The symbols and metaphors of poetry were no mere invention of the poets. They were borrowed from the divine analogies of nature. Poetry was meaningful in the same way as nature itself - by a communion of the verbal symbols with the reality they named".<sup>11</sup>

Arnold, in Empedocles On Etna, speaks of God in pantheistic terms: He speaks of a Power which is life itself: a universal and immanent Force manifesting itself by necessity:

All things the world which fill  
Of but one stuff are spun,  
That we who rail are still,  
With what we rail at, one;  
One with the o'erlaboured Power that through the breadth  
Of earth, and air, and sea, and length  
In men, and plants, and stones,  
Hath toil perpetually,  
And travails, pants, and moans;  
Fain would do all things well, but sometimes fails in  
strength.

(Lines, 287-296, Poems, p. 168)

At the level of community no less than at the level of individual existence acknowledgement of God was, in the Middle Ages, the basic source of unity, harmony and peace. Virtue would consist in conformity to the divine will. As Masterson puts it: "In such a cultural context, permeated

by a lively sense of the sacred, it was readily accepted that the alienated man, the estranged man, was the man who did not believe in God or who did not live out the consequences of belief in God. Only through lived fidelity to divine providence could man achieve inner harmony, reconciliation, and fulfilment. 'Thou hast made us for thyself O Lord and our hearts are restless until they rest in thee' (St Augustine). The man who denied God was not the mature, sophisticated, well-integrated man. On the contrary he was the irrational, morally disoriented and foolish man". (Op. cit., pp. 14-15).

In other words God was then immersed in nature and in man's heart: God, nature and man himself were one common wave of thought and joy. The illiterate peasant, in that cultural context, who comments upon the death of a child by referring to the will of God is, in fact, engaging in theodicy as much as the learned theologian who writes a treatise to demonstrate that the suffering of the innocent does not negate the conception of a God both all-good and all-powerful. This sort of unity in mediaeval society has found classical expression in Jacob Burckhardt's description of mediaeval culture:

In the Middle Ages both sides of human consciousness - that which was turned within as that which was turned without - lay dreaming or half awake beneath a common veil. The veil was woven of faith, illusion, and childish prepossession, through which the world and history were seen clad in strange hues. Man was conscious of himself only as member of a race, people, party, family, or corporation - only through some general category. 12

Undoubtedly many of the mediaeval theologians and philosophers made important distinctions between reason and faith, grace and nature, sacred and the secular. Likewise, they developed profound reflections concerning the intrinsic intelligibility and relative autonomy of the created order. But the cultural context within which such reflections were developed was an



unquestioned theistic context pre-reflectively animated and pervasively informed by Christian faith. As the personal influence of Jesus, says Arnold in Literature and Dogma, faded, the 'extra-belief' grew stronger. First we got the Apostles' Creed, the popular science of Christianity. As Christianity spread, the Aryan genius for metaphysics worked over this material, and the result was the Nicene Creed, or learned science of Christianity. But metaphysicians could and did quarrel, and the victorious party, ruffled by fighting, set forth the dogmatic formulation of Christianity in ever more insistent and uncompromising terms. The outcome was the Athanasian Creed, learned science with a strong dash of vindictive temper. Now, Arnold continues, it is quite possible (to a man of culture) and highly desirable to cut back through these later dogmatic formulations and discover the true Bible-dogma. And what is this but the simple and verifiable truths of historical human experience.

These differences of the metaphysicians did not affect the life of the individual at that time. But in the High Renaissance, God became both transcendent and immanent: the God within nature and the God beyond nature gradually became separate from one another. Scepticism grew, thus man started to look for an authority outside himself. Martin Luther (d. 1546) gave this authority by trimming the tree with one eye on the God of the Old Testament (Deistic), and the other on the God of St. Augustine. The highest religious experience which the Lutheran faith strives to attain is the Unio mystica with the deity. As the name itself, which is unknown to the Reformed faith in this form, suggests, it is a feeling of actual absorption in the deity, that of a real entrance of the divine into the soul of the believer. But it seems that this was not enough to give man the sense of security he demanded from his beliefs: more was needed. It was Calvin who seemed to offer this:

The rule of Calvinism as it was enforced in the sixteenth century in Geneva and in Scotland, at the turn of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in large parts of the Netherlands, in the seventeenth in New England, and for a time in England itself, would be for us the most absolutely unbearable form of ecclesiastical control of the individual which could possibly exist. That was exactly what large numbers of the old commercial aristocracy of those times, in Geneva as well as in Holland and England, felt about it... Now how does it happen that at that time those countries which were most advanced economically, and within them the rising bourgeois middle classes, not only failed to resist this unexampled tyranny of Puritanism, but even developed a heroism in its defence? For bourgeois classes as such have seldom before and never since displayed heroism. It was 'the last of our heroism,' as Carlyle, not without reason, has said.

(Max Weber, p. 37)

As one has made it the rule in this study to take the impact of man's concept of God on his view of life, the same procedure is followed in one's treatment of Puritanism. That is, one takes the results which the adoption of Puritanism might have had on the conduct of the individual, and not an evaluation of the doctrine itself. Puritanism, like every rational type of asceticism, tried to enable man to maintain and act upon his constant motives, especially those which it taught him itself, against the emotions. In this formal psychological sense of the term it tried to make him into a personality. Contrary to many popular ideas, the end of this asceticism was to be able to lead an alert, intelligent life: the most urgent task was the destruction of spontaneous, impulsive enjoyment, the most important means was to bring order into the conduct of its adherents. "On this methodical control over the whole man rests the enormous expansive power of both, especially the ability of Calvinism as against Lutheranism to defend the cause of Protestantism as the Church militant" (Max Weber, pp. 119-20).

One of the essential qualities of the sacred in Puritanism, as encountered in religious experience, is otherness, its manifestation as

something totaliter aliter as compared to ordinary, profane human life. It is precisely this otherness that lies at the heart of religious awe, numinous dread, of the adoration of what totally transcends all dimensions of the merely human. The lines of connection between Man and God have been, due to this concept, broken down: God no longer inheres in the world as the force binding together all men and all things. Man, as Arnold puts it, "entered the prison of Puritanism and had the key turned upon his spirit there for two hundred years" ("Equality", CPW, VIII, p. 294). The history of modern literature is in part the history of the splitting apart of this communion. To this effect Miller writes:

This splitting apart has been matched by a similar dispersal of the cultural unity of man, God, nature, and language. It is not possible to explain why this fragmentation has come about. A great historical transformation remains mysterious, just as does the homogeneity of the culture of a single age. We can neither explain why people stop feeling and believing in an old way, nor why a new way of feeling and believing appears simultaneously in widely separated individuals. The attempt to establish the genesis of historical change usually reveals more about the presuppositions of the historian than about cause and effect relations in the events themselves. To a Marxist economic and social changes produce ideological changes. To a man like Yeats the rise of a materialistic civilisation has itself been governed by occult forces turning the gyres of history. It may be that the disappearance of God has been caused not so much by man's turning his back on God, as by a strange withdrawal of God himself.

(Op. cit., pp. 3-4)

This quotation is interesting and useful in two ways: first, it shows how one could speak, as the last line shows, in anthropomorphic terms without being aware of it. Second, though this book from which the quotation is taken has a long chapter on Arnold, a view such as "It is not possible to explain why this fragmentation has come about," means that the author missed the main thesis of Arnold's poetic practice. Arnold starts with the assumption that the process of transformation is quite

predictable: binary logic or alternation between periods of Hellenism and others of Hebraism.

To be able to feel the difference between literature that is written under a Pantheistic concept of God and one that is written under the shadow of a Deistic one, one need only to take for instance the end of the Divine Comedy, where the poet in Paradise stands speechless in his passive contemplation of the secrets of God, and compare it with the poem which has come to be called the Divine Comedy of Puritanism - Paradise Lost. Milton closes the last song of Paradise Lost after describing the expulsion from paradise as follows:

They, looking back, all the eastern side beheld  
Of Paradise, so late their happy seat,  
Waved over by that flaming brand, the gate  
With dreadful faces thronged and fiery arms:  
Some natural tears they dropped, but wiped them soon;  
The world was all before them, Where to choose  
Their place of rest, and Providence their guide:  
They hand in hand with wandering steps and slow,  
Through Eden took their solitary way.

(Bk. XII, 641-649).

And only a little before Michael had said to Adam:

... .. Only add  
Deeds to thy knowledge answerable; add faith,  
Add virtue, patience, temperance; add love,  
By name to come called Charity, the soul  
Of all the rest: then wilt thou not be loth  
To leave this Paradise, but shall possess  
A Paradise within thee, happier far.

This powerful expression of the Puritan's serious attention to this world, his acceptance of his life in the world as a task, could not possibly, says Max Weber, have come from the pen of a mediaeval writer.

The life of the individual was directed solely towards a transcendental end: salvation. But precisely for that reason it was thoroughly rationalised in this world and dominated entirely by the aim to add to the glory of

God on earth. Never has the precept omnia in major<sup>2</sup>m dei gloriam been taken with more bitter seriousness. Only a life guided by constant thought could achieve conquest over the state of nature. Descartes's cogito ergo sum was taken over by the contemporary Puritans with this ethical reinterpretation. It was this rationalisation which gave the Reformed faith its peculiar ascetic tendency, and is the basis both of its relationship to and its conflict with Catholicism.

The influence of the God-fearing but perfectly unemotional wisdom of the Hebrews, which is expressed in the books most read by the Puritans, the Proverbs and the Psalms, can be felt in their whole attitude towards life. In particular, its rational suppression of the mystical, in fact the whole emotional side of religion, has rightly been attributed by Sanford to the influence of Old Testament.<sup>13</sup> Examples of this asceticism from theology as well as literature could be multiplied almost at random: from the awesome throne vision of Isaiah to William Blake's of the tiger, burning bright in the forests of the night pointing beyond its own "fearful symmetry" to the divine other behind the phenomena of nature. Arnold summarises the situation as follows:

What were the wise man's plan?  
Through this sharp, toil-set life,  
To work as best he can,  
And win what's won by strife.  
But we an easier way to cheat our pains have  
found.

Scratched by a fall, with moans  
As children of weak age  
Lend life to the dumb stones  
And bend <sup>whereon to vent their rage,</sup> their little fists, and rate the senseless  
ground;

So, loth to suffer mute,  
We, peopling the void air,  
Make Gods to whom to impute  
The ills we ought to bear;  
With God and Fate to rail at, suffering easily.

(Lines: 267-281, Poems, p. 167-168)

In other words Monotheistic religion itself has, to a large extent,

regressed into idolatry:

Man projects his power of love and of reason unto God; he does not feel them any more as his own powers, and then he prays to God to give him back some of what he, man, has projected unto God. In early Protestantism and Calvinism, the required religious attitude is that man should feel himself empty and impoverished, and put his trust in the grace of God, that is, into the hope that God may return to him part of his own qualities, which he has put into God. 14

It might be interesting to mention that grace, in Puritanism, is the sole product of an objective power, and not in the least to be attributed to personal worth. The interest of it is solely in God, not in man; God does not exist for men, but men for the sake of God. All creation, including of course the fact that only a small proportion of men are chosen for eternal grace, can have any meaning only as means to the glory and majesty of God.

The most important practical consequence of this concept upon the humanly constructed world is that empirical history and biography are falsely apprehended as grounded in supra-empirical necessities. To this effect Peter Berger writes:

The innumerable contingencies of human existence are transformed into inevitable manifestations of universal law. Activity becomes process. Choices become destiny. Men then live in the world they themselves have made as if they were fated to do so by powers that are quite independent of their own world-constructing enterprises. When alienation is religiously legitimated, the independence of these powers is vastly augmented, both in the collective nomos and in individual consciousness.

(The Social Reality of Religion, p.102)

Yet, in spite of all this evidence, the history of man shows that he cannot live under this fearful image of God for ever: It is against one of man's basic instincts - the instinct of expansion and love of liberty. People react to this condition. In most cases, poets are the first to react

against it, and then they produce a corresponding state of belief and feeling in the minds of their readers.

Thus on the stage of nineteenth-century thought, the problem of God was posed as a feature of a more basic problem of human alienation and authenticity. The debate revolved around the following question:

What is it that alienates man from himself -  
the confessions of God's presence in history and  
in man's consciousness or the suppression of  
him from history and the repression of him from  
consciousness? 15

This question found expression in the major poets of the age. For example, God and immortality are, to Tennyson, matters not of knowledge or proof, but of faith. This position is maintained throughout Tennyson's poetry, and is set forth

most fully and maturely, says Professor Bradley,<sup>16</sup> in the following lines from The Ancient Sage:

Thou canst not prove the Nameless, O my son,  
Nor canst thou prove the world thou movest in,  
Thou canst not prove that thou art body alone,  
Nor canst thou prove that thou art spirit alone,  
Nor canst thou prove that thou art both in one;  
Thou canst not prove thou art immortal, no  
Nor yet that thou art mortal - nay my son,  
Thou canst not prove that I, who speak with thee,  
Am not thyself in converse with thyself,  
For nothing worthy proving can be proven,  
Nor yet disproven: wherefore thou be wise,  
Cleave ever to the sunnier side of doubt,  
And cling to Faith beyond the forms of Faith!

Arnold, in his summing up of the spiritual situation, writes:

This is what everyone sees to constitute the special moral feature of our times: 'the masses' are losing the Bible and its religion. At the Renaissance, many cultivated wits lost it; but the great solid mass of the common people kept it, and brought the world back to it after a start had seemed to be made in quite another direction. But it is 'the people' which is getting detached from the Bible.

(Literature and Dogma, CPW, p. 362)

It is impossible to finish this review of the major poets without mentioning Browning. His poem "Gold Hair", published in 1864, was popular and was often quoted:

The candid incline to surmise of late  
That the Christian faith proves false, I find:  
For our Essays and Reviews debate  
Begins to tell on the public mind,  
And Colenso's words have weight. 17

The Philosophers, too, quite very early sensed the problem and began a series of rationalisations of it. Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), in his Religion within the limits of Reason alone, had argued that the only true worship of God consisted in fidelity to the moral imperatives of



man's practical reason. Such a view commanded itself to the young G.W.F. Hegel (1770-1831) who was repelled by the imposed, institutional and dogmatic character of Christianity as it was presented to him. Such Christianity in virtue of its positivity, as he puts it, could only be a source of alienation - a religion for servile man. Thus, for Hegel, the Jew is a slave who has alienated, handed over to God, his freedom, his autonomy, his authentic creativity and subjectivity. More precisely, he has not yet achieved a conscious realisation of his kinship and unity as spirit with the absolute, and of the exigencies of this spirituality which must be satisfied in any authentic religious relationship. This, in Hegel's opinion, was the only aim pursued in the religious teaching of Jesus who "undertook to raise religion and virtue to morality and to restore to morality the freedom which is its essence ... Jesus, on this view, was the teacher of a purely moral religion, not a positive one".<sup>18</sup>

Arnold, in his interpretation of the phenomenon, looked in that direction. In Literature and Dogma he writes to this effect:

It has often been remarked that the Puritans are like the Jews of the Old Testament; and Mr. Froude thinks he defines the Puritans by saying that they, like the Jews of the Old Testament, had their hearts set on a theocracy, on a fashioning of politics and society to suit the government of God. How strange that he does not perceive that he thus passes, and with justice, the gravest condemnation on the Puritans as followers of Jesus Christ! At the Christian era the time had passed, in religion, for outward adaptations of this kind, and for all care about establishing or abolishing them. The time had come for inwardness and self-reconstruction - a time to last till the self-reconstruction is fully achieved (p. 225).

of religion<sup>19</sup>

Hegel's philosophy attempts to reconcile the anthropocentric and theocentric viewpoints, albeit at the expense of the traditional conceptions of both man and God. But contrary to its author's intention it paved the way for Feuerbach's<sup>20</sup> explicit denial of God and his more radical affirmation of the view that belief in God is a source of human alienation. Thus he writes:

All divine attributes, all the attributes which make God God, are attributes of the species - attributes which in the individual are limited, but the limits of which are abolished in the essence of the species, and even in its existence, insofar as it has its complete existence only in all men taken together. My knowledge, my will, is limited; but my limit is not the limit of another man, to say nothing of mankind, what is difficult to me is easy to another; what is impossible, inconceivable, to one age, is to the coming age conceivable and possible. My life is bound to a limited time; not so in the life of humanity. 21

For Feuerbach, the religious man is by definition the alienated man. The crowning perfections of his essential nature he mistakenly ascribes to God, and, by contrast with this extrapolation, defines himself in terms of the merely individual, the incidental, the imperfect. Since the religious projection is essentially a transference of human properties to

an illusory God, the richer the notion of God elaborated, the more man is impoverished and reduced to a miserable and servile condition:

Religion is the disuniting of man from himself; he sets God before him as the antithesis of himself. God is not what man is - man is not what God is. God is the infinite, man the finite being; God is perfect, man imperfect; God eternal, man temporal; God almighty, man weak; God holy, man sinful. God and man are extremes: God is the absolutely positive, the sum of all realities; man the absolutely negative, comprehending all negations.

(ibid., p. 33)

Each person, according to Feuerbach, as an individual human being recognises himself to be limited and recognises his dependence upon Nature. But in also recognising the infinity of the human species, as characterised by perfections which transcend man simply as an individual - namely, reason, will, and love - he attains an object of absolute worth. "The 'absolute' to man is his own nature" (ibid., p. 5). But man is inclined to ascribe his own individual limitations to the species as such and to project the infinite perfection of his essence into an external object. In this way he comes to the idea that religion, in its pejorative sense, is man's earliest and indirect form of self-knowledge in which he contemplates his own nature as though extrinsic to himself and pertaining rather to a transcendent deity. Religion represents the naive childlike condition of humanity which must be transmuted by philosophy into an integral humanism. This false antithesis must be resolved, not in the illusory way of Hegel's philosophy of spirit, but in a manner which will genuinely liberate man and reconcile him with true reality. Thus, in conscious opposition to the idealist tradition, Feuerbach proposes what he calls a "materialist" or "realist" resolution of the problem of human alienation.

Karl Marx (1818-83), whose doctoral dissertation was on Feuerbach, developed this secular or materialist line. What, he asked himself, constitutes this self-contradictoriness of the secular world which must be understood in its contradiction and then revolutionised in practice? Its simplest and most basic contradiction is that man, who as a worker and a social being should find fulfilment in his work and in his social relationships, is in fact dehumanised through his work and deformed by his social relationships. This is why the critique of religion is so necessary. "The criticism of religion disillusions man so that he will think, act, and fashion his reality as a man who has lost his illusions and regained his reason; so that he will revolve about himself as his own true sun."<sup>22</sup>

It is the thesis that any attempt to explain man in terms of a principle allegedly superior to man himself constitutes an alienation of human autonomy:

A being does not regard himself as independent unless he is his own master, and he is only his own master when he owes his existence to himself. A man who lives by the favour of another considers himself a dependent being. But I live completely by another person's favour when I owe to him not only the continuance of my life but also its creation; when he is its source. 23

Marx, in other words, accepts without reservation that the critique of religion must be total and radical - to the point of affirming man as the only absolute: Effective human emancipation is possible only if "one adopts the point of view of that theory according to which man is the highest being for man" (ibid., p. 59). The universal quality of man will be truly achieved when everyone experiences the world as that which, through the combined work of man, has become the dwelling place of a community which embodies the adequate fulfilment of everyone's needs and allows the proper expression of everyone's capacities. In virtue of his concrete accomplishment of this society man will have eradicated the conditions of the possibility of religion. For he will have overcome the economic alienation which is its hidden source and, in the process, will have provided himself with palpable evidence that his whole human reality and values have derived from within his own productive resources. Even the indirect reference to God, which characterises the conventional understanding of atheism, will no longer be necessary. As Marx, himself, puts it in the following extended quotation which might be said to summarise his philosophy of religion:

Since, however, for socialist man, the whole of what is called world history is nothing but the creation of man by human labour, and the emergence of nature for man, he therefore, has the evident and irrefutable proof of his self-creation, of his own origin. Once the essence of man and of nature, man as a natural being and nature as a human reality, has become evident in practical life, in sense experience, the quest for an alien being, a being above man and nature (a quest which is the avowal of the unreality of man and nature) becomes impossible in practice. Atheism, as a denial of this unreality, is no longer meaningful, for atheism is a negation of God and seeks to assert by this negation the existence of man. Socialism no longer requires such a roundabout method; it begins from the theoretical and practical sense perception of man and nature as essential beings. It is positive human self-consciousness, no longer a self-consciousness attained through the negation of religion.

(Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts, pp. 166-67).

One, with all the privileges of retrospection, could come to the conclusion that all this complex of ideas is but a movement from a monism of authority and values towards pluralistic liberalism. What all philosophers, including Marx,<sup>24</sup> were trying to do is but an attempt at a deification of the finite world. The historical analogy of this movement is the transition from Judaic culture to the Christian one: God (the infinite) came to the world (finite).

But philosophy as such does not affect the life of the masses. It can, truly, clear up obscurities, it can measure and enumerate with greater and ever greater precision. But in no sense can it be said to affect the masses or expand their consciousness. But there is another way by which philosophy, as in our age, could be said to affect the life of the individual: when the laws that govern his life are made according to particular philosophy. This could be said of Utilitarianism. "Throughout the middle portion of the nineteenth century, the influence of the Benthamites on British legislation and policy was astonishingly great, considering their complete absence of emotional appeal" (B. Russell, p. 805).

Utilitarianism, in one's view, by the virtue of its first principle,

the supreme good is the greatest happiness of the greatest number, is the practical expression of this movement from the monism of authority and values towards the pluralistic liberalism (with the pluralistic concept of authority go the ideas of tolerance and equality not only between man and woman but of races too]. This 'greatest happiness principle' gained its name and first fame through the work of Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832). The present point is made in an essay on "Bentham" by Bentham's disciple John Stuart Mill (1806-1873):

Whether happiness be or be not the end to which morality should be referred - that it should be referred to an end of some sort, and not left in the dominion of vague feeling or inexplicable internal conviction, that it be made a matter of reason and calculation, and not merely of sentiment, is essential to the very idea of moral philosophy; is, in fact, what renders argument or discussion on moral question possible. That the morality of actions depends on the consequences which they tend to produce, is the doctrine of rational persons of all schools; that the good or evil of those consequences is measured solely by pleasure or pain is all of the doctrine of the school of utility which is peculiar to it. 25

This Utilitarian doctrine - it is worth underlining - was, says A. Flew, first introduced as, and still remains, "a doctrine for benevolent reformers. For Bentham and for his immediate followers it provided the criterion by which to test established laws and institutions, and to find them very often and very badly wanting" (ibid., p. 117). But because it ignored the emotional side of man, Utilitarianism left Man's spiritual needs unsatisfied. J.S. Mill, as the chief follower and exponent of this doctrine, came in later life to realise its limitations, and its lack of any satisfactory philosophy of either society or history. The publication of his Theism, written between 1868-1870, but not published until 1874 the year after his death, aroused considerable dismay among his followers and made 'a sort of intellectual scandal'. This philosophy, however, was

"a transitional school. [Its] system gave birth to two others, of more importance than itself, namely Darwinism and Socialism" (B. Russell, p. 807).

This situation left a great impact on every sector of life and thinking. In philosophy, Sidgwick, in 1866, "had concluded that it was 'a monstrous mistake [talking about Idealism in its later development],' adding 'we must go back to Kant and begin again from him'".<sup>26</sup> In the social life, scepticism was coupled with all those changes associated with the rise of science and technology: industrialisation, the increasing predominance of the middle class, the gradual breakdown of the old hierarchical class structure. In the life of individual, man became alienated from God, from nature, from his fellow men, and finally from himself. The result was a radical sense of inner nothingness with nowhere to go:

Wandering between two worlds, one dead,  
The other powerless to be born,  
With nowhere yet to rest [his] head,  
Like these, on earth [he] waits forlorn.

(Lines: 85-88. Poems, pp. 288-89).

The protagonist's position in nineteenth century literature is usually expressed in terms of these lines. For instance the central character in Kierkegaard's Repetition says:

My life has been brought to an impasse. I loathe existence... One sticks one's finger into the soil to tell by the smell in what land one is: I stick my finger into existence - it smells of nothing. Where am I? Who am I? How came I here? What is this thing called world? What does this word mean? Who is it that has lured me into the world? Why was I not consulted, why not made acquainted with its manners and customs...? How did I obtain interest in this big enterprise they call reality? Why should I have an interest in it? Is it not a voluntary concern? And if I am to be compelled to take part in it, where is the director? I should like to make a remark to him. Is there no director? Whither shall I turn with my complaint? 27

The sceptical atmosphere of the age produced two dogmatic trends of thought: Scientists<sup>28</sup> and theologians. Scientists wanted to cut the tree of



of religion from its roots. This trend is represented by Professor Huxley whom Arnold quotes saying:

Professor Huxley told the London School Board lately, that 'if these islands had no religion at all, it would not enter into his mind to introduce the religious idea by the agency of the Bible.'

(Literature and Dogma, CPW, p. 172).

The other trend, the theologian's one, insisted that every branch as well as leaf is equipollent.

Mediators<sup>29</sup> were needed to harmonise these conflicting attitudes. It needed a critic to disengage the kernel from the husk, the spiritual principle from the temporal expression of it: to cut back through these later dogmatic formulations and discover the true Bible-dogma . And

To have before [his] mind - instead  
Of the sick room, the mortal strife,  
The turmoil for a little breath -  
The pure eternal course of life.  
Not human combatings with death.

This pure eternal course of life, for Arnold, is nothing but the simple and verifiable truths of historical human experience. It is, however, not an easy task:

It is one of the hardest tasks in the world to make new intellectual ideas harmonise truly with the religious life, to place them in their right light for that life. The moments in which such a change is accomplished are epochs in religious history; the men through whose instrumentality it is accomplished are great religious reformers. The greatness of these men does not consist in their having these new ideas, in their originating them. The ideas are in the world; they come originally from the sphere of pure thought; they are put into circulation by the spirit of the time. The greatness of a religious reformer consists in his reconciling them with the religious life, in his starting this life upon a fresh period in company with them. No such religious reformer for the present age has yet shown himself.

("Dr Stanley's Lectures on the Jewish Church",  
CPW, III, pp. 69-70)

Arnold thought of himself in these terms. The Spinozistic view of the universe, which is indeed also that of modern science, serves for a starting point: one does not look outside the system for any causes whatsoever of events within the system. Therefore, God, according to Arnold, may be defined, for purposes of modern science, as 'the stream of tendency by which all things seek to fulfill the law of their being'. This definition has a curiously familiar ring about it these days: it has similarities with both the ideas of the new theologians of the Honest to God variety who define God as the ground of our being and with the form of pantheism which Wordsworth expressed openly in his lines composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey and which he carefully eliminated from The Prelude:<sup>30</sup>

And I have felt  
A presence that disturbs me with the joy  
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime  
Of something far more deeply interfused,  
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,  
And the round ocean and the living air,  
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:  
A motion and a spirit, that impels  
All thinking things, all objects of all thought  
And rolls through all things.

Indeed, as Reich puts it, "If and when God represents nothing but the personification of the natural laws which govern man and make him part of the universal natural process, then - and only then - can science and religion come to terms".<sup>31</sup>

The two people who had actively anticipated Arnold in this line, and made it their mission, Jesus Christ and Giordano Bruno (1548-1600), were both martyred. Bruno was burnt at the stake in Rome for his adherence to pantheism: "His enthusiasm for nature, however, led him to hold an extreme form of pantheistic immanentism" (Oxford Dictionary of Christian Church, London, 1957). Arnold thought that a rational and intelligent outlook would lead men to a new view of their relationship to nature which resembles the religious conception of pantheism: "God and the world are not distinct, and that everything in the world is part of God. This view is developed most fully in Spinoza, but is one to which almost all mystics are attracted" (B. Russell, p. 373). This, in fact,<sup>is</sup> the source of some contradictions in Arnold's thought: he thought to preach a pantheistic view of God and life, which <sup>is</sup> <sup>/of</sup> necessity mystic and unconscious, by a rationalistic method.

The metaphysical system of Spinoza is the type inaugurated by Parmenides. There is only one substance, - God or Nature. Nothing finite is self-subsistent. There can be no such personal immortality as Christians believe in, but only that impersonal sort that consists in becoming more and more one with God. Finite things are defined by their boundaries,

physical or logical, that is to say, by what they are not: "all determination is negation". There can be only one Being who is wholly positive, and He must be absolutely infinite. Hence, Spinoza is led to a complete and undiluted pantheism.

Arnold, in his attempt to discover an ethical principle to underlie the naturalism of his new world, adopted Spinoza's ideas. This principle is expressed in his own adaptation of a sentence by Spinoza: "Our desire is not that nature may obey us, but, on the contrary, that we may obey nature". Meanwhile, Arnold is quite clear on the governing ideas of Spinoza. They are the denial of final causes, the belief in an active stoicism, and the distinction, - which became 'a current notion for educated Europe', between adequate and inadequate ideas; and a non-teleological view of the universe:

It is not the mathematical rationalism of the Ethics which attracts Arnold, however. It is rather the practical teaching of the Tractatus-Theologico-Politicus, where religion, the Bible, and Christianity are interpreted in the light of human nature and human experience, purified of irrational excrescences, and justified as a permanent contribution to the adequate realisation of man's distinctively human nature, a nature whose goal is the achieving, as fully as possible, that moral perfection which is one aspect of God. 32

Arnold, in his comment on the work, says, "The scope of that work is this. Spinoza sees that the life and practice of Christian nations professing the religion of the Bible, are not the due fruits of the religion of the Bible; he sees only hatred, bitterness, and strife, when he might have expected to see love, and joy, peace in believing; and he asks himself the reason of this. The reason is, he says, that people misunderstand their Bible. Well, then, is his conclusion, I will write a Tractatus-Theologico-Politicus".<sup>33</sup> But what attracted Arnold more is Spinoza's width and grandeur of his view of nature:

He [Spinoza] fortifies and stills his mobile, straining, passionate poetic temperament by the moral lesson he draws from his view of nature. And a moral lesson not of mere resigned acquiescence, not of melancholy quietism, but of joyful activity within the limits of man's true sphere: Man's very essence is the effort wherewith each man strives to maintain his own being... Man's virtue is this very essence, so far as it is defined by this single effort to maintain his own being... Happiness consists in a man's being able to maintain his own being... Joy is man's passage to a greater perfection... Sorrow is man's passage to a lesser perfection.

("Spinoza and the Bible," CPW., III, 177)

Spinoza rejects anthropomorphic deity, literal inspiration, and the whole metaphysical basis of traditional theology. Miracles do not happen, since they would transgress the eternal and immutable laws of nature, which are laws of God, are in fact of His essence. The prophets were men of vivid imagination, speaking Hebrew poetry, of extraordinary piety but of ordinary minds:

The divine law, properly so named, is the method of life for attaining this height of human blessedness: this law is universal, written in the heart, and one for all mankind. Human law is the method of life for attaining and preserving temporal security and prosperity: this law is dictated by a lawgiver, and every nation has its own (*ibid.*, p. 188)... He [Spinoza] makes the love of God to consist in the knowledge of God, and, as we know God only through his manifestations of Himself in the laws of all nature, it is by knowing these laws that we love God, and the more we know them the more we love him. This may be true, but this is not what the Christian means by the love of God.

(*ibid.*, p. 178).

To sum up. The main critical ideas common to Arnold and Spinoza might be summarised as follows: the dismissal of anthropomorphic deity, miracles, plenary inspiration, and general Bibliolatry; the treatment of the resurrection in a spiritual sense; the stress on the Bible as addressing the experience and imagination of men, not the reasoning powers of metaphysicians and theologians, the pragmatic test for faith and good

conduct as resulting in blessedness. Not only these critical ideas but the foundations of Arnold's psychology are similar to that of Spinoza. To Spinoza, there is neither morality nor reason in the natural state, but just power and desire. But in man, by the necessity of his nature, the potentialities are there, enabling him to escape from the miseries of this state of nature, of unlicensed freedom, to a civil and religious state. To work towards that life is to fulfil the deepest law of his being, to obey a divinely implanted impulse, to realise his moral, social, and religious happiness in terms of the law peculiar to his own nature.

But "moral ideas," as Arnold puts it, "apprehended as ideas first, and then rigorously followed as laws, are and must be, for the sage only. The mass of mankind have neither force of intellect enough to apprehend them clearly as ideas, nor force of character enough to follow them strictly as laws. The mass of mankind can be carried along a course full of hardship for the natural man, can be borne over the thousand impediments of the narrow way, only by the tide of a joyful and bounding emotion" (CPW, III, p. 134). This is the function of the poet and his poetry, for, as Shelley puts it, poetry redeems from decay the visitations of the divinity. And apart from that,

What a remarkable philosopher really does for human thought, is to throw into circulation a number of new and striking ideas and expression, and to stimulate with them the thought and imagination of his century or of after-times. So Spinoza had made his distinction between adequate and inadequate ideas a current notion for educated Europe. So Hegel seized a single pregnant sentence of Heraclitus, and cast it, with a thousand striking applications, into the world of modern thought.

(CPW, III, p. 181)

In addition to that, philosophers, as Arnold puts it, belong to the world of the few - the world of speculative life. The world of the few, however, is not the world of the many, the world of religious life; the

thoughts of the former cannot properly be transformed to the other, cannot be called true in the latter, except on certain conditions. As a condition of an idea to be popular, - to be a comfort for the mass of mankind, under the pressure of calamity, to live by - it must be touched with emotion:

Poetry gives the idea, but it gives it touched with beauty, heightened by emotion. This is what we feel to be interpretative for us, to satisfy us - thought, but thought invested with beauty, with emotion. Science (as well as philosophy) thinks, but not emotionally. It adds thought to thought, accumulates the elements of a synthesis which will never be complete until it is touched with beauty and emotion; and when it is touched with these, it has passed out of the sphere of science, it has felt the fashioning hand of the poet.

(CPW, IX, p. 62)

Arnold thought of himself in these terms: It was the task which he put upon himself for, as he puts it, "I for my part find here that I could willingly fish all day and read the newspapers all the evening, and so live - but I am not pleased with the results in myself of even a day or two of such life" (CL, p. 151).

My task in the following chapters is to show how Arnold entered this complex of ideas into poetry: How he transformed reality into poetry rather than poetry into reality:

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 the movement of mind is, and interested in the literary productions which reflect it.

(Letters, II, p.9)

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> C.E.M.Joad. Guide to Modern Thought (London: Faber and Faber, 1933), p. 13.

<sup>2</sup> Westcott, Religious Thought in the West, p. 251. Quoted by L.E. Elliott-Binns, English Thought 1860-1900: The Theological Aspect (London: Longman, 1956), p. 79.

- 3 Max Weber, The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism (London: Unwin University Books, 1970), pp. 39-40.
- 4 Unpublished lecture given by Professor A.D. Galloway to the students of Senior Honours, Department of Systematic Theology, Glasgow University, October of 1977.
- 5 This line is fully developed by Professor Peter L. Berger, The Social Reality of Religion (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1973).
- 6 Matthew Arnold, "Literature and Dogma," CPW, VI, p. 332.
- 7 See Arnold's Idea of the Self in the chapter on the "Poetic Process".
- 8 Erich Fromm, The Sane Society, (Op. cit., ), p. 25.
- 9 Arnold Toynbee, A Study of History, an abridgement of Vol. I-VI, by D.C. Somervell (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1947).
- 10 F. Hegel, Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion, (ed.,) and trans. E.B. Spiers and J.B. Sanderson (London 1895) rep. (1968), Vol. II, p. 213. This work is published in three volumes and includes a work on The Proofs on the Existence of God.
- 11 J. Hillis Miller, The Disappearance of God (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), p. 3.
- 12 Jacob Burckhardt, The Civilisation of the Renaissance in Italy (London: G. Allen and Unwin, 1921), p. 124.
- 13 John Langton Sanford, Studies and Reflections of the Great Rebellion, Quoted by Max Weber (Op. cit.,), p. 123.
- 14 Erich Fromm, The Sane Society (Op. cit.,), p. 122.
- 15 Courtney Murry<sup>a</sup>, The Problem of God (New Haven and London, 1964), pp. 120-21.
- 16 A.C. Bradley, A Commentary on Tennyson's In Memoriam (London: Macmillan, 1902), p. 55.
- 17 Quoted by L.E. Elliott-Binns, (Op. cit.,), p. 6.
- 18 F. Hegel, On Christianity, trans. T. Knox and R. Kroner (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1961), pp. 69-71.
- 19 See F.Hegel's Philosophy of Religion (Op. cit.,),vol.I



- 20 The basic association between religion and alienation was first made by Feuerbach. Not only Marx but also Nietzsche and Freud were influenced by Feuerbach in their conception of religion.
- 21 L. Feuerbach, The Essence of Christianity ed. and trans. by George Eliot (Marian Evans), introd. K. Barth, foreward H.R. Niebuhr (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1957), p. 157.
- 22 K. Marx, "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right," in Karl Marx Early Writings, trans. T.B. Bottomore (London, 1963), p. 44.
- 23 Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts (ibid.), p. 165.
- 24 One would not go as far as Daya Krishna who writes that: "Marx, though he loved to call himself a materialist, was essentially an idealist and a dreamer. He loved to dream of a time in the future when there would be no alienation and when real History would begin; he had convinced himself by abstracts, ratiocinative logic that what he so devoutly desired was bound to come to pass as the very necessity of history itself. That 'the real is rational' and that 'the real is valuational' are the twin pillars of all idealism - the latter more basic than the former - and Marx subscribed to both" (Op cit., pp. 41-42). However, Marx fits in one's scheme: the seeming contradiction lies in the fact that he viewed the movement from monism to pluralism with a deistic concept of authority, the result was totalitarianism.
- 25 Quoted by Anthony Flew, An Introduction to Western Philosophy (Great Britain: Thames and Hudson, 1971), pp. 116-17.
- 26 L.E. Elliott-Binns, (Op. cit.,) p. 71.
- 27 S. Kierkegaard, Repetition, trans. Walter Lowrie (Princetown, N.Y., 1946), p. 114.
- 28 It is true that the growth of positive science was first made under the inspiration of men such as Copernicus (1473-1543), Galileo (1564-1642), and Newton (1642-1727), but the fact remains that their findings were confined to a small circle of readers. In the nineteenth century, knowledge was accessible to a wider circle. A partial list of the well-known books and names might be useful in this respect: There were, to go no further back, the rationalistic legacy of the eighteenth century (Hume, Paine, Godwin, et.al.), Gibbon's Roman Empire; that bulwark of orthodoxy, Paley's view of the Evidences of Christianity (1794). It came to alienate more readers most notably of all Coleridge who appealed to inward experience. Coleridge's Natural Theology (1802) had a strong formative influence on Darwin. Sir Charles Lyell's Principles of Geology (1830-33), though he was discreet, undermined the biblical story of creation and set the earth and its creatures in a time-less continuum of natural process. Charles Hennell's earnestly sceptical Inquiry Concerning the Origin of

Christianity (1838), which was highly praised by David Strauss, accomplished the conversion of young Mary Ann Evans. She herself translated Strauss's Life of Jesus (1846) and Feuerbach's Essence of Christianity (1854). Robert Chambers Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation (1844): a popular account of evolution that was widely read and attacked. It even inspired an amusing dialogue in Disraeli's Tancred (1847). Along with Darwin's Origin of Species, Mill's On Liberty (1859), and Buckle's History of Civilisation (1858), there was the general influence of Herbert Spencer (1820-1903), as well as Huxley (1825-95), and August Comte (1795-1857). The publication of Comte's principal work: the six-volume Course of Positive Philosophy (completed in 1842) helped, in addition to Marx's historical materialism and the evolutionism of Darwin, to mould the positivistic naturalism that characterised the latter half of nineteenth century European culture.

29 The majority of the theologians in Britain were unacquainted with the works of the German "mediating" critics. And those who had become convinced of the truth of many things in the new outlook were reticent about making them widely known; they even tried to conceal from the public the results arrived at by German scholars, a procedure that was exposed and condemned by Bishop Thirlwall and Benjamin Jowett.

The German "mediating" critics' chief idea was: that the Old and New Testament, taken in a literal fashion, would not stand up to tests of exactitude concerning history, language, natural science, and so forth, but that the spirit which had been expressed in the frequently loose, inaccurate, and legendary accounts was of eternal value. These theologians felt that both the rationalists and the Pietists had missed the greatest verities of religion by attacking or defending its historical expressions. What was needed, Schleiermacher wrote, "was a thorough-going historical, linguistic, literary, and scientific criticism to disengage... the spiritual principle from temporal expression of it" (Quoted by Merton A. Christenson, "T. Arnold's debt to the German Theologians: A Prelude to Matthew Arnold's Literature and Dogma", p. 19).

Arnold's ideas in Literature and Dogma are not dissimilar, not because he was influenced by them but because the source of them both is one: that expressed in Spinoza's Tractatus-Theologico-Politicus. To this effect Arnold says in a letter to Huxley:

"Your letter gave me very great pleasure. First, because it put the saddle on the right horse, and made me indebted to Spinoza and not to the Germans. It makes me rather angry to be affiliated to German Biblical critics; I have had to read masses of them, and they would have drowned me if it had not been for the corks I had brought from the study of Spinoza. To him I owe more than I can say" (W.H.G. Armytage, "Matthew Arnold and T.H. Huxley: Some New Letters 1870-1880", p. 350).

30 See section 10 of Ernest de Selincourt's Introduction to the uncensored 1805 version (London: 1933).

31 W. Reich, The Function of the Orgasm (New York: Noonday, 1949), p. 319.

32 William Robbins, The Ethical Idealism of Matthew Arnold (London: Heinemann, 1959), p. 167.

33 Matthew Arnold, "Spinoza and the Bible", in CPW., III, 160.

## CHAPTER VI

### On God

O Earth's upholder, who on earth dost dwell,  
Whoe'er thou art, past finding out, whate'er  
Thy name be, Zeus, or Necessary Law  
Of Nature, or the Mind of Mortal Man,  
I worship thee, for still with noiseless tread,  
Thou guid'st all human things the righteous way.

Euripides's Troades

#### I

It has been observed in the last chapter that the main movement of the spirit of the time is from a monistic concept of authority and values towards a pluralistic one. It is worthy of notice too that in the history of mankind, this process is usually accomplished by means of the dissolution of the institutions and systems that are based on a Transcendent or deistic concept of God. Jesus Christ for instance preached love as a method for this dissolution. Arnold understood this mechanism and made his contribution to this movement by preaching intelligence or to use his words: sweetness and light. The light of intelligence and the sweetness of the method:

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 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... To remove this want of correspondence is beginning to be the settled endeavour of most persons of good sense. Dissolvents of the old European system of dominant ideas and facts we must be.

(CPW., III, 109-10).

Applied to religion, what does this mean? That means to destroy the "illusions of popular Christianity" and to preserve the kernel of belief, for belief, as M. Schorer puts it, "organises experience not because it is rational but because all belief depends on a controlling imagery, and rational belief is the intellectual formalisation of that imagery".<sup>1</sup> But to preserve the old exactly as it had been handed down from the past was out of the question; the only wise course is to accept the new truths and incorporate them in the structure of the faith without cutting the connection with the past:

Not to break one's connexion with the past in one's religion (says Arnold, in June 1876) is one of the strongest instincts in human nature. Protestantism is breaking up every where it has severed this connexion; only in England has it any hold upon the educated class, and that is because the Church of England is the one Protestant Church which maintained its connexion with the past.

(Letters, II, p. 131)

Arnold's Literature and Dogma aims at an understanding of the Bible that is acceptable to the modern mind. The execution of this task may, for convenience, be considered in two parts: the first is the theoretical part which turns principally upon Arnold's view that the Bible is literature, not science, and must be studied as literature if it is to yield the saving truths that it contains. The other part is the application of the theory, which takes the form of a re-examination and reinterpretation of some of the most fundamental points of the Christian faith, such as the meaning of God, the divinity of Christ, the miracles of the Incarnation, and the Resurrection, and the meaning of 'revealed' and 'revelation' as applied particularly to the Scriptures.

Arnold's religious position is based, as A.O.J. Cockshut puts it, on the following assumptions:<sup>2</sup>

1. There is a general tendency in the universe that makes for righteousness.
2. Jesus was always over the heads of his reporters.
3. Miracles do not happen.
4. Conduct is three-fourths of life, and charity and sexual purity are the key principles of conduct.

To these points, Eugene L. Williams adds:<sup>3</sup>

1. Rejection of the idea of plenary Biblical inspiration.
2. Emphasis on the ethical rather than the metaphysical significance of the Bible.
3. Validation of religious doctrines by the teachings of Christ.
4. Reference to experience, - the experimental test , as a demonstration of the efficacy of Christian teachings.
5. Distrust of anthropomorphic conceptions of God's nature.
6. The employment of humanistic learning in Bible interpretation.

But Arnold's contribution does not lie only in what he says but in the way he says it too, - his argument. Arnold begins his argument by saying: "If the present time is a time to speak, there must be a reason why it is so

And there is a reason; and it is this - Clergymen and ministers of religion are full of lamentations over what they call the spread of scepticism, and because of the little hold which religion now has on the masses of the people - the lapsed masses, as some call them. Practical hold on them it never, perhaps, had very much, but they did not question its truth, and they held it in considerable awe. As the best of them raised themselves up out of a merely animal life, religion attracted and engaged them. But now they seem to have hardly any awe of it at all, and they freely question its truth".

(Literature and Dogma, CPW, p. 148)

We hope, says Arnold, to put ourselves right with our adversaries as to the real question between us and them, we will proceed with our endeavour to free the Bible - by showing that it is not science but literature; by following it continuously and by interpreting it naturally (ibid., p. 280). So true and prophetic, says Arnold, are Vinet's words:

"'We must,' he said, 'make it our business to bring forward the rational side of Christianity, and to show that for thinkers, too, it has a right to be an authority.'"<sup>4</sup> Let us anticipate, says Arnold, the objection that the religion here spoken of is but natural religion, by pointing out the falseness of the common antithesis, also, between 'natural' and 'revealed'. For that in us which is really natural is, in truth, 'revealed'. We awake to the consciousness of it, we are aware of it coming forth in our mind; but we feel that we did not make it, that it is discovered to us, that it is what it is whether we will or no. If we are little concerned about it, we say it is 'natural'; if much, we say it is 'revealed' (ibid., pp. 144-45).

Arnold, in his definition of religion and its function, says that the end and aim of all religion is access to God - the sense of harmony with the universal order - the partaking of the divine nature... (IX, p. 32).

"Religion, if we follow the intention of thought and human language in the use of the word, is ethics heightened, enkindled, lit up by feeling: the passage from morality to religion is made when to morality is applied emotion. And the true meaning of religion is thus, not simply 'morality', but 'morality touched by emotion'. And this new elevation and inspiration of morality is well marked by the word 'righteousness'. Conduct is the word of common life, morality is the word of philosophical disquisition, righteousness is the word of religion" (ibid., p. 176).

The books of the Bible were written by men; they record and create, in a nation of unique religious genius, a movement from external observations to inwardness, a process culminating in Jesus and his interpreter, St. Paul. The authors' words of reflection and presentation are inevitably literary, metaphorical, poetic: The Bible must not be taken as a set of scientific propositions, or as a sort of talisman given down to

us out of Heaven, with all its parts equipollent - which became the Jewish view and is now the unhistorical, uncritical fundamentalist view:

I have said elsewhere (Culture and Anarchy) how much it has contributed to the misunderstanding of St. Paul, that terms like 'grace', 'new birth', 'justification' - which he used in a fluid and passing way, as men use terms in common discourse or in eloquence and poetry, to describe approximately, but only approximately, what they have present before their mind, but do not profess that their mind does or can grasp exactly or adequately - that such terms people have blunderingly taken in a fixed and rigid manner, as if they were symbols with as definite and fully grasped a meaning as the names 'line' or 'angle', and proceeded to use them on this supposition. Terms, in short, which with St. Paul are 'literary' terms, theologians have employed as if they were scientific terms.

(Ibid., p. 170)

Arnold, by his emphasis upon the totally contextual nature of the language and how the same words may be used in a wide variety of utterances, has touched upon one of the main issues in present-day linguistic philosophy. Contemporary linguistic philosophers no longer accept the empiricists' assumptions concerning knowledge and meaning as completely as did logical positivists. In its current form, linguistic philosophy favours a more flexible and less iconoclastic conception of meaning. One of the chief sources of inspiration of this more recent approach to meaning is the Austrian philosopher, Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951).

Logic is, therefore, of quite limited usefulness even in philosophy. It cannot formalise contextual discourse, and yet most philosophical, not to mention theological, problems arise from such contexts. Certainly logic may be of use in situations where context does not matter, such as, for example, in mathematics and science, but it cannot cope with the complexity of informal discourse. To this effect Arnold writes: "But matters are not at all mended by taking their language of approximate figure and turning it into the language of scientific definition; or by crediting them with our



own dubious science, deduced from metaphorical ideas which they never had. A better way than this, surely, is to take their fact of experience" (ibid., p. 200).

Arnold's attitude on the rejection of the doctrine of the plenary inspiration of the Bible may be illustrated briefly from the following quotation:

Recognition of the liability of the New Testament writers to make mistakes, both of fact and argument, will certainly, as we have said, more and more gain strength and spread wider and wider. The futility of their mode of demonstration from prophecy... will be more and more felt. The fallibility of that demonstration from miracles to which they and all about them attached such preponderating weight, which made the disciples of Jesus believe in him, will be more and more recognised.

(Ibid., p. 253)

Now, one comes to the most controversial point in Arnold's thought: his definition of God. Arnold's analysis of the phenomenon of alienation and his explicit conviction that its most grievous source is a false conception of God made him to give this point an important place in his argument:

There stand the Bible words! how you construe them depends entirely on what definition of God you start with... to start with an assertion which can be verified: the assertion, namely, not of 'a Great Personal First Cause,' but of 'an enduring Power, not ourselves, that makes for righteousness.' Then by the light of this discovery we read and understand all the expressions that follow. Jesus comes forth from this enduring Power that makes for righteousness, is sent by this Power, is this Power's Son; the Holy Spirit proceeds from this same Power, and so on".

(ibid., pp. 374-5)

It was a common idea in the age (Hegel, Feuerbach, and Marx) that a servile religious conception of men will inevitably be accompanied by an alienated social and political condition. But while Arnold was proposing a demythologisation of the concept of God in terms of a pantheistic concept of

of the ultimate unity of man and God, most philosophers, except Hegel, were in favour of tackling the problem rather in terms of a thoroughgoing explicit atheism. "For the total man, therefore, the truer conception of God is as 'the Eternal Power, not ourselves, by which all things fulfil the law of their being;' by which, therefore, we fulfil the law of our being so far as our being is aesthetic and intellectual, as well as so far it is moral" (ibid., p. 409). Again Arnold adds, God is "the stream of tendency by which all things fulfil the law of their being" (ibid., p. 42). In his comment on the second definition Eugene Williams says that Arnold "opposed religious anthropomorphism with an approximation to the 'pantheistic doctrines' repudiated by Dr. Arnold" (op. cit., p. 542).

Arnold's aims and strategies are complex: against Orthodox Christians he argues that the notion of a Personal God is unintelligible and unverifiable - according to a special notion of verification. Against the rationalising philosophical liberals: positivists, he argues that the masses need emotional and imaginative support for the practice of morality, and that this can only come from the Bible. God, he argues, cannot be regarded as a person, and all reasoning based on such a notion is on a false track, including the notion that Jesus is the Son of God in any sense in which a father may be thought of as having sons, or the Personal First Cause of the universe, as the Bishops of Gloucester and Winchester say, nor is he the Absolute Self-Existent, as the more philosophical theologians say; nor is he even the Supreme Father: he is the Eternal-not-ourselves-which makes-for-righteousness. "We see how far the pseudo-scientific language of our creeds, about 'persons', and 'substance', and 'godhead', and 'co-equal', and 'co-eternal', and 'created', and 'begotten', and 'proceeding', has anything at all to do with what Jesus said or meant" (ibid., p. 311).

To the masses , Arnold continues, the dogmas have always been unintelligible, but while in the ages of faith, and particularly before the Reformation, they were unintelligible but accepted for truth as the chief part of man's obedience to the Church, they are now, especially in the later nineteenth century, both unintelligible and rejected as false, or at best as irrelevant to the love and practice of righteousness. Yet the Church insists that the dogmas are points of faith, that sincere belief in them is necessary to salvation, that Christianity stands or falls by them. "Thus religion has been made to stand on its apex instead of its base. Righteousness is supported on ecclesiastical dogma, instead of ecclesiastical dogma being supported on righteousness" (ibid., p. 350).

"But, after all," says Arnold, "the question sooner or later arises in respect to a matter taken for granted, like the Catholic doctrine of the Mass or the Protestant doctrine of Justification: Is it 'sure'? can what is here assumed be verified? And this is the real objection both to the Catholic and to the Protestant doctrine as a basis for conduct - not that it is a degrading superstition, but that it is 'not sure;' that it assumes what cannot be 'verified'" (ibid., pp. 360-61).

The other elements in popular religion which were exposing it to scientific attack, and which Arnold wished to remove were, in addition to the petrified formulas of Calvinism, the whole miraculous element in Christianity itself. The proof of Christianity had long been made to rest upon miracle and upon prophecy, instead of its own internal and verifiable truth. And now that both prophecy and miracle<sup>5</sup> are being impugned by the Zeitgeist, many feel that "the whole certainty of religion seems discredited, and the basis of conduct gone" (ibid., p. 108). It is not religion that is discredited, says Arnold, it is Aberglaube.

"The great prophecies," says Arnold, "of Isaiah and Jeremiah are, critics

can easily see, not strictly predictions at all; and predictions which are strictly meant as such, like those in the Book of Daniel, are an embarrassment to the Bible rather than a main element of it. The 'Zeit-Geist', and the mere spread of what is called 'enlightenment', superficial and barren as this often is, will inevitably, before long, make this conviction of criticism a popular opinion, held far wide. And then, what will be their case, who have been so long and sedulously taught to rely on supernatural predictions as a mainstay?" (Ibid., p. 236).

Arnold in his diagnosis of the Time-Spirit in Culture and Anarchy has pointedly underlined the rôle of historical perspective in the task of ordinary man's past and present experiences. In the light of the historical development of man's spiritual life and the changes wrought on man's consciousness by the advance of science, religion must be recast to meet the changing needs of man. This adjustment could be accomplished by extracting the permanently useful message of Christ which now is buried in the mass of Aberglaube, or extra-beliefs, peculiar to the mental climate of the past epoch. In this Arnold was convinced of two things: First, that the general tendency was inevitable: The spirit of the age was killing belief in miracles as surely as it had killed belief in witchcraft:

For it is what we call the Time-Spirit which is sapping the proof from miracles - it is the 'Zeit-Geist' itself. Whether we attack them, or whether we defend them, does not much matter. The human mind, as its experience widens, is turning away from them. And for this reason: it sees, as its experience widens, how they arise. It sees that, under certain circumstances, they always do arise; and that they have not more solidity in one case than another.

(Ibid., p. 246)

The very position is expressed in "Obermann Once More":

While we believed, on earth he went,  
And open stood his grave,  
Men called from chamber, church, and tent;  
And Christ was by to save.  
Now he is dead! Far hence he lies  
In the lorn Syrian town;  
And on his grave, with shining eyes,  
The Syrian stars look down.

Secondly, that the moral influence and spiritual consolation of religion must be retained, since religion is the solidest of realities, and Christianity the greatest and happiest stroke ever yet made for human perfection. To achieve that is a great change: "Of course, to pass from a Christianity relying on its miracles to a Christianity relying on its natural truth is a great change" (ibid., p. 143).

The emphasis of Arnold's argument about the miracles fall upon no necessary connection. Even if it were scientifically and historically true, says Arnold, that Jesus walked upon the waters, this by itself would be powerless to prove that he was the Son of God and that his Gospel therefore proceeded from God, the Eternal that loveth righteousness. There is no necessary connexion between the miracles of Jesus and the redemptive power of his Gospel. The miracles, then, being merely external, are no evidence of the divinity of Jesus or his Gospel. There is only one kind of evidence that can prove that Jesus' Gospel proceeds from God and that is internal: "Its grandeur and truth is brought out experimentally, and the thing is to make people see this" (ibid., p. 366).

Thus Arnold shows that he has a pragmatic theory of ethics as well as a pragmatic theory of aesthetic. To this effect he writes:

That is, we preach a doctrine, not thaurmaturgical and not speculative, but practical and experimental; a doctrine which has no meaning except in positive application to conduct, but in this application is inexhaustible (ibid., p. 357-58). And so, when we are asked, what is the object of religion? - let us reply: Conduct. And when we are asked further, what is conduct? - let us answer: Three-fourths of life (ibid., p. 175). Eating, drinking, ease, pleasure, money, the intercourse of the sexes, the giving free swing to one's temper and instincts - these are the matters with which conduct is concerned, and with which all mankind know and feel it to be concerned.

(ibid., p. 173)

II

Although Arnold, in speaking about God, says that "we would not allow ourselves to start with any metaphysical conception at all, not with the monotheistic idea, as it is styled, any more than with the pantheistic idea" (ibid, pp. 241-42), it is clear from his practice that he started with concepts of this sort.<sup>6</sup> For from the link he established in his mind between the fragments of Empedocles and the Bhagavad Gita one can deduce the fact that the common denominator is the pantheistic notion of "A God identical with the world and with the sum of force therein contained: not exterior to it" (Yale Ms.) which is expressed in Empedocles on Etna:

All things the world which fill  
Of but one stuff are spun,  
That we who rail are still,  
With what we rail at, one...

(I.ii. 287-90).

But ideas, as one has observed, do not affect the masses as such: thought needs emotion beside it. For as Arnold puts it:

Powerful thought and emotion, flowing in strongly marked channels, make a stronger impression: this is the main reason why a metrical form is a more effective vehicle for them than prose: in prose there is more freedom, but, in the metrical form, the very limit gives a sense (of) precision and emphasis. This sense of emphatic distinctness in our impressions rises, as the thought and emotion swell higher and higher without overflowing their boundaries, to a lofty sense of the mastery of the human spirit over its stormiest agitations.

("Preface to Merope", CPW, I, pp. 58-9)

There are well known traditional stories that embody that concept of pantheism and all of them were favourite with poets: The ancient Egyptian myth of Osiris, the Syrian myth of Adonis and the Greek myths of Orpheus

and that of Persephone. The last three names are particularly influential in Western tradition. Arnold's interpretation of the story of Adonis as leading to thoughts of "Hope, and a renovation without end", borrows a line from Wordsworth but parallels Muller's treatment of the story of Persephone: "the return of Persephone to the world of light also denoted a renovation of life and a new birth to men," and hence the mysteries "inspired the most elevating and animating hopes with regard to the condition of the soul after death."<sup>7</sup>

Orpheus was a reformer of the religion of Dionysus. His followers were associated with the Eleusinian Mysteries and the Chthonian gods of nature and the underworld. The myth, as was understood in Arnold's time, embodied the pantheistic concept of gods and nature and was opposed to Olympian gods who stood for a Transcendental or deistic concept of life. This case is reflected in "Arnold's interpretation of the Orphic beliefs of Empedocles. To understand the significance of Orpheus in Empedocles on Etna we must first consider the Olympians who dominate the poem, chiefly Apollo" (Schneider, 32-33). For it is worthy of notice that Muller's account of the Orphics differs from that of modern scholars. What is important is the way in which each of these myths acts on the reader. It would be tempting to try to discover the rule by which certain myths may seem to exercise a greater spell than others. However, in one's view, it is the idea of hope and renovation that Arnold spoke about.

Arnold's object, almost from the start, was to grasp the spiritual essence of his age and to use his knowledge as the subject for poetry. Thus, his poems are more or less related to one another in theme, a fact that indicates a remarkably coherent body of poetry. The fallacious concept of inimical gods is given in many poems of his such as "Human Life", "Meeting", "To Marguerite-Continued", in "Self-Deception", "Stanzas in Memory of the

Author of 'Obermann'", "Mycerinus", and in Empedocles on Etna. Most of these poems will be dealt with in other chapters, the ones I have chosen to illustrate my point in this chapter are: "Human Life", "Self-Deception", "Mycerinus", and "Empedocles on Etna".

In "Human Life" (1849-50?), Arnold describes the impossibility of steering a course "As, charted by some unknown Powers,/We stem across the sea of life by night." The tone is sternly moral, but finally it is unknown nature which sweeps man away from the "unsuiting consort" and the attractive coast "on life's incognizable sea".

No! as the foaming swath  
Of torn-up water, on the main,  
Falls heavily away with long-drawn roar  
On either side the black deep-furrowed path  
Cut by an onward-labouring vessel's prore,  
And never touches the ship-side again;  
Even so we leave behind,  
As, charted by some unknown Powers,  
We stem across the sea of life by night,  
The joys which were not for our use designed;  
The friends to whom we had no natural right,  
The homes that were not destined to be ours.

(Lines, 19-30, Poems, p. 140)

The voyager does not bring his ship safely to harbour by faithfully steering by this inner chart, on the contrary his safe arrival is because of the mysterious operations of 'some unknown Powers' who determine men's course on life's sea. One wonders, how much is put here of the puritan's interpretation of the doctrine of grace as well as of Calvin's doctrine of election:

The phenomenon of the religious sense of grace is combined... with the feeling of certainty that that grace is the sole product of an objective power, and not in the least to be attributed to personal worth... The interest of it is solely in God, not in man; God does not exist for men, but men for the sake of God. All creation, including of course the fact, as it undoubtedly was for Calvin, that only a small proportion of men are chosen for eternal grace, can



have any meaning only as means to the glory and majesty of God. To apply earthy standards of justice to His sovereign decrees is meaningless and an insult to His Majesty, since He and He alone is free, i.e., is subject to no law. His decrees can only be understood by or even known to us in so far as it has been His pleasure to reveal them. We can only hold to these fragments of eternal truth. Everything else, including the meaning of our individual destiny, is hidden in dark mystery which it would be both impossible to pierce and presumptuous to question.

(Max Weber, *Op. cit.*, pp. 101-103).

To make one's position clear concerning these ideas, one would like to say that one's concern is not with the evaluation of these dogmas, but the historical significance of them.

"Self-Deception" (1849-52) derives partly from the Platonic myth Er, but it presents "a Power beyond our seeing" who has left man with:

Shreds of gifts which he refused in full.  
Still waste us with their hopeless straining,  
Still the attempt to use them proves them null.  
And on earth we wander, groping, reeling;  
Powers stir in us, stir and disappear.  
Ah! and he, who placed our master-feeling,  
Failed to place that master-feeling clear.

(Poems, p. 277)

In Plato's account of souls preparing to enter mortal existence, each chooses his lot and does so with complete impartiality. "God is not responsible," Plato points out, "the responsibility is his who has made the choice." The determinism of "Self-Deception", says Anderson, has no classical origin (Classical Tradition, *Op. cit.*, p. 34). However, this determination is to some extent watered down by the sense of longing when Arnold asks:

Ah! some power exists there, which is ours?  
Some end is there, we indeed may gain?

(Lines, 27-28, Poems, 277)

"Mycerinus" (1843-44?) is another case of inimical and incomprehensible gods. In the poem, Arnold transforms a tale of Eastern ingenuity (Herodotus,<sup>8</sup> ii, 133) into a small variation on the problem of Job. The poem is "an indictment of heavenly injustice, answering Wordsworth's Laodamia to which it draws attention by its metrical imitation" (ibid., p. 82). In Herodotus, Mycerinus, a young Egyptian king, has endeavoured to live all his life in perfect virtue; now, however, he learns from the oracle that he is doomed to an early death while his father "loved injustice and lived long". Disillusioned, Mycerinus determines to imitate and even compete with the careless gods by giving up his last remaining years to an intense Epicureanism in order to compensate for a life time of misguided asceticism. Arnold, in his treatment of the subject, had suppressed the motive behind the gods' decision in cutting short the life of Mycerinus. Then it can only follow that there is a fundamental divorce between the divine power and human values.

Having received the oracle, Mycerinus gave an address to his people considering the nature of the gods:

'Mere phantoms of man's self-tormenting heart,  
Which on the sweets that woo it dares not feed!  
Vain dreams, which quench our pleasures, then depart,  
When the duped soul, self-mastered, claims its meed;  
When, on the strenuous just man, Heaven bestows,  
Crown of his struggling life, an unjust close!

Seems it so light a thing, then, austere Powers,  
To spurn man's common lure, life's pleasant things?  
Seems there no joy in dances crowned with flowers,  
Love, free to range, and regal banquetings?  
Bend ye on these, indeed, an unmoved eye,  
Not Gods but ghosts, in frozen apathy?

Or is it that some Force, too wise, too strong,  
Even for yourselves to conquer or beguile,  
Sweeps earth, and heaven, and men, and gods along,  
Like the broad volume of the insurgent Nile?  
And the great powers we serve, themselves may be  
Slaves of a tyrannous necessity?

Or in mid-heaven, perhaps, your golden cars,  
Where earthly voice climbs never, wing their flight,

And in wild hunt, through mazy tracts of stars,  
Sweep in the sounding stillness of the night?  
Or in deaf ease, on thrones of dazzling sheen,  
Drinking deep draughts of joy, ye dwell serene?'

(II. 25-54, Poems, 28-9)

Bonnerot, in his comment on this passage, summarises Mycerinus' pondering by saying that three different hypotheses are presented: "ou bien les Dieux n'existent pas: ce ne sont que de fantômes issus de notre imagination, ou bien ils sont dominés eux-mêmes par une puissance supérieure; ou encore ils sont sereinement indifférents" (p. 163). He goes on to say that the second of these hypotheses is the one held by Arnold. This is not true. There is, here, a suppressed conditional clause: If things were such and such then the response develops.

The response of Mycerinus to this cosmic conception is immediate as well as natural: he turns at once to an Epicurean style of life

'The rest I give to joy. Even while I speak,  
My sand runs short; and - as yon star-shot ray,  
Hemmed by two banks of cloud, peers pale and weak,  
Now, as the barrier closes, dies away -  
Even so do past and future interwine,  
Blotting this six years' space, which yet is mine.

(II. 55-60. Poems, p. 29)

Leaving his throne, the young king retires to finish his few remaining years among the cool groves of the Nile, bitterly giving his days to revel and sensual delight. It is worthy of notice that when the 'frozen' universe was thrust upon Mycerinus, he responded to it by asserting the self: If the gods are indifferent to man's fate or they are dead, the self then must fill the world. In previous time the reaction was different: man responded by liquidating the self in the Absolute-Transcendental-Other.

But the fact remains that the king's theological speculation in the first part of the poem is not forgotten in the final revelry:

There by the river-banks he wandered on,  
From palm-grove on to palm-grove, happy trees,  
Their smooth tops shining sunward, and beneath  
Burying their unsunned stems in grass and flowers;  
Where in one dream the feverish time of youth  
Might fade in slumber, and the feet of joy  
Might wander all day long and never tire.

(II. 85-91, Poems, pp. 30-31)

The Epicureanism which the king displays is only an apparent one: for he revels with but half his mind, and his real inward thoughts are on the transformation which this whole experience has occasioned within his soul. This is reflected in the speculative hypothesis of lines 100-111:

It may be that sometimes his wondering soul  
From the loud joyful laughter of his lips  
Might shrink half startled, like a guilty man  
Who wrestles with his dream; as some pale shape  
Gliding half hidden through the dusky stems,  
Would thrust a hand before the lifted bowl,  
Whispering: A little space, and thou art mine!  
It may be on that joyless feast his eye  
Dwelt with mere outward seeming; he, within,  
Took measure of his soul, and knew its strength,  
And by that silent knowledge, day by day,  
Was calmed, ennobled, comforted, sustained.

(II. 100-111, Poems, p. 31)

What Mycerinus has learned is that he was not originally a truly virtuous person, since he practised virtue in the expectation of some reward. This lesson echoes Kant's insistence that morality arises only from a rational will's obedience to self-imposed universal laws, and his determination not to compromise this crowning glory of man, his moral autonomy, colours his whole attitude to religion. Kant admits that morality certainly leads us to religion and to the affirmation of God as supreme Lawgiver. Religion is the recognition of all duties as divine commands. But it would be a perversion of both man and religion to argue that I must know in advance that something is a divine command in order to

recognise it as my duty, needless to mention the expectation of reward. The poem ends, like so many of Arnold's poems, on the sad resolution of clear water, the murmur of the moving Nile.

Before leaving "Mycerinus" one should comment on the poem's Concept of Content and Concept of Form. To begin with the first, Tinker and Lowry record the complaint "that the meaning of 'Mycerinus' is not clear, since the poet expresses no disapproval of the young king's abandonment of his duty, and seems to sympathise with the devotion of his six remaining years to revelry" (Commentary, p. 36). To the same effect Anderson writes: "No amount of ingenuity can reconcile Stoic serenity with revelling that turns night into day for the pretence of cheating death" (Classical Tradition, p. 19). In the opinion of the critic for the English Review, Arnold was doubting, too full of melancholy. And the poem "is a kind of apotheosis of despair; it looks as if suggested by a father's fate. At the same time, it seems almost a profession of atheism".<sup>9</sup> Professor Super, in his attempt to solve the seeming "contradiction between the first part of the poem and the second,"<sup>10</sup> ends up with a lucid paraphrasing of the poem.

It is true that Arnold does not condemn Mycerinus for the decision he took. He also endows him with a modern sort of scepticism and rebelliousness against the course of fate and adds the Puritan's sense of guilt that blights pleasure and thwarts spontaneity. There is even some evidence, as most critics have observed, that the poem has an autobiographical significance. This autobiographical element, however, does not detract or reduce the importance of the poem as an objective interpretation of the situation it depicts: false conception of gods. For Arnold, by juxtaposing opposites: austere ascetism and epicuranism, shows, not that they are irreconcilable in their extremist forms and so a choice must be

made but, that the comparison is fruitful in yielding illumination for both sides.

As for the concept of form, the external form of the poem, to many critics, is also surprising if not confusing. Baum, in his comment on the shift from stanzas to blank verse, says "Evidently a contrast was intended, but one might have expected the dramatic speech to be in blank verse and a lyrical descriptive portion to be in stanzas. Yet one finds the rimed stanzas just right for the ironic sequel, especially since the blank verse is handled with its own peculiar originality" (Ten Studies, pp. 19-20).

The poem, in one's view, is a fine example where form and content merge together to produce a certain effect: in the first section of the poem the king was a theist with all that this term means, he practised virtue in expectation of a reward. In the second part he speaks of the spontaneous liberation of man's energy and of his inner harmony with nature, thus it is written in blank verse and is quieter and subtler. There is hardly a weak line in the poem, it ends on a high note: a technique that Arnold used again and most successfully at the end of Sohrab and Rustum and in Empedocles on Etna, the work to which the rest of this chapter is devoted.

### III

Human life and human society arise [says Arnold] out of the constant endeavour of these instincts to satisfy and develop themselves. We may briefly sum them up, these needs or instincts, as being, first and foremost, a general instinct of expansion; then, as being instincts following diverse great lines, which may be conveniently designated as the lines of conduct, of intellect and knowledge, of beauty, of social life and manners. Some lines are more in view and more in honour at one time, some at another. Some men and some nations

are more eminent on one line, some on another. But the final aim, of making our own and of harmoniously combining the powers to be reached on each and all of these great lines, is the ideal of human life. And our race is for ever recalled to this aim, and held fast to it, by the instinct of self-preservation in humanity.

("A Speech at Eton", CPW, IX, pp. 26-27)

But men, as Arnold has shown, find themselves with an immense system of institutions, established facts, accredited dogmas, customs, rules that by no means correspond exactly with the wants of their actual life. The awakening of this sense is the awakening of the modern spirit. This awakening is ignited by the predominance of thought and reflection. However,

The predominance of thought, of reflection, in modern epochs is not without its penalties; in the unsound, in the over-tasked, in the over-sensitive, it has produced the most painful, the most lamentable results; it has produced a state of feeling unknown to less enlightened but perhaps healthier epochs - the feeling of depression, the feeling of ennui. Depression and ennui; these are the characteristics stamped on how many of the representative works of modern times!

("On the Modern Element in Literature",  
CPW, I, p. 32)

Empedocles on Etna is Arnold's most complete analysis of this situation. Yet it suffered at Arnold's own hands more than any other poem of his. In his explanation of the omission, he says in "The Preface 1853" that there are certain situations from the representation of which no poetical enjoyment can be derived "those in which the suffering finds no vent in action; in which a continuous state of mental distress is prolonged, unrelieved by incident, hope, or resistance; in which there is everything to be endured, nothing to be done... When they occur in actual life, they are painful, not tragic; representation of them in poetry is painful also.

To this class of situations, poetically faulty as it appears to me, that of Empedocles, as I have endeavoured to represent him, belongs; and I have therefore excluded the poem from the present collection".

(CPW, I, pp. 2-3).

Curiously enough, he had included in that volume "Mycerinus", even though it is a poem which pre-eminently fixes upon a situation in which 'there is everything to be endured, nothing to be done.'

The purpose of this reading of the poem is to show that Matthew Arnold is interpreting the phenomenon of alienation while it is yet in germ. He examines it through a number of its manifestations: the break down of the faith due to the misunderstanding of the real essence of Christianity:

The central fact of the situation always remains for me this: that whereas the basis of things amidst all chance and change has even in Europe generally been for ever so long supernatural Christianity, and far more so in England than in Europe generally, this basis is certainly going - amidst the full consciousness of the continentals that it is going, and amidst the provincial unconsciousness of the English that is going.

(Letters, Vol. II, to Grant Duff, p. 201)

In this chapter, the study will show that Arnold finds Christianity, as it is understood by his age, no longer serves to establish man in an ordered providential universe with assured religious and moral guidance.

i

Hell is the Other

The theme of Empedocles on Etna centres around the contrast between three ways of life, or rather three modes of seeing life, as represented by Pausanias, Calliocolos, and Empedocles. Firstly, the mode of one who looks



at the world with his two eyes: the mode of ordinary man, like Pausanias. His is the attitude of the practical man who would learn the secrets of nature in order to use them for immediate practical ends. Secondly, the mode of the one who looks at the world with one eye and looks inside himself with the other one. This is the poet in Arnold's poetry: Callicles. Such a mode helps to create a dialogue between the central self and the outer reality in its simplest forms. This in itself increases the ability to sense the transcendent reality behind all individual perceptions, and to synthesise the fragmentary objects of everyday consciousness. Thirdly, the mode of the one who looks inside himself with his two eyes creating a "dialogue of the mind with itself". This is Empedocles's mode of seeing.

The contrast is developed partly by means of the natural scene. The topography of the action is given clearly. Arnold depends on Lyell's book Principle of Geology (1830-33):

The cone [of Etna] is divided by nature into three distinct zones called the 'fertile', the 'woody', and the 'desert' region. The first of these, comprising the delightful country around the skirts of the mountain is well cultivated, thickly inhabited, and covered with olives, vines, corn, fruit-trees, and aromatic herbs. Higher up, the woody region encircles the mountain - an extensive forest, six or seven miles in width, affording pasturage for numerous flocks. The trees are of various species, the chestnut, oak, and pine being most luxuriant; while in some tracts are groves of cork and beech. Above the forest is the desert region, a waste of black lava and scoriae, where, on a kind of plain, rises the cone to the height of almost eleven hundred feet, from which sulphurous vapours are continually evolved.

(Quoted in Imaginative Reason, p. 157)

Professor Culler has observed that Arnold collapses the fertile and woody regions into one and adds a third, the hot cities on the dusty plain below. Each of these Arnold associates with one of his characters, Pausanias with

the cities, Callicles with the fertile and woody region of the lower slopes, and Empedocles with the barren cone.

It is worthy of notice that while mountains ordinarily suggest precincts of wisdom in Arnold's poetry, in Empedocles on Etna Etna is something else, though it is not inconsistent with the usual pattern: Etna is intellect like other mountains, but instead of wisdom it represents the devouring flame of thought. Men's intellectual passions are as dangerous as their fleshy desires. Empedocles' mountain is one of flame, not calm, because his intellect is not calm and poised but ablaze, beclouded, and enslaved. The poem's central concern, then, is with the reasons for Empedocles' alienation: what is this fatal illness of the spirit from which he suffers? The poem provides a number of answers viewed from three different angles:

Pausanias is the first interpreter of Empedocles' illness. His analyses embody the formula "Hell is the other" (l'enfer, c'est les autres), he sees it mainly in terms of social context - the change between the conditions of Empedocles' field of action in the past and the present. The times, here, are at fault. The charismatic powers of Empedocles, connected to his mastery of music, have been paralysed, the direct result not of interior forces but of exterior, social degeneration. His misery, it seems, is partly due to the hostility of his environment, for the great period of Greek religious philosophy is past and the influence of the Sophists has begun to prevail. To this effect Arnold says "I intended to delineate the feelings of one of the last of the Greek religious philosophers, one of the family of Orpheus and Musaeus, having survived his fellows, living on into a time when the habits of Greek thought and feeling had begun fast to change, character to dwindle, the influence

of the Sophists to prevail. Into the feelings of a man so situated there entered much that we are accustomed to consider as exclusively modern" (CPW, I, p. 1). So Pausanias says:

but now, since all  
Clouds and grows daily worse in Sicily,  
Since broils tear us in twain, since this new swarm  
Of sophists has got empire in our schools  
Where he was paramount, since he is banished  
And lives a lonely man in triple gloom -  
He grasps the very reins of life and death.

(Act I, Sc. i, 119-125, Poems, p. 154)

The quality of the verse, here, is not as high as that of Callicles for example. But Arnold, who believes that form and content should merge together to produce the required effect, reserved for Pausanias, the most unimaginative philistine, this prosaic verse.

The sophists are analogous to the triumphant Utilitarians and positivistic philosophers in general. The sophists, one might say, include German philosophers like Schopenhauer (1788-1860). This view can be justified if one sees his impact on Guy De Maupassant (1850-1893) who declares that the German philosopher has "stamped mankind with the seal of his disdain and disenchantment", and continues: "He has upset belief, hope, poetry, fantasy, destroyed aspirations, ravaged confidence, killed love, overthrown the idealistic cult of womanhood, murdered the illusions of the heart, and altogether performed the most gigantic sceptical operation ever carried out. He has riddled everything with his mockery, and drained everything dry." <sup>11</sup> The impact has been very great on many writers who have begun to see only avarice and lechery, cruelty and greed, selfishness and hatred at work wherever they turned. Arnold has been aware of this problem and its consequences.

Pausanias is the type of bewildered nineteenth-century clergyman who sees

in miracles the focal point in the conflict between science and religion.  
He asks Empedocles to give him the secret of his healing spell, for

It is enough that all men speak of it.  
But I will also say, that when the Gods  
Visit us as they do with sign and plague,  
To know those spells of thine which stay their hand  
Were to live free from terror.

(Act I, Sc. ii, 22-25, Poems, p. 157)

Arnold admits in one of his letters that Empedocles on Etna betrays an impatience with the language and assumptions of the popular theology of the day" (Commentary, p. 288). This impatience is centred on the figure of Pausanias who himself represents precisely the kind of thinking that the sophists have risen to attack. He is a simpleton of the first order, and is rebuked by Empedocles for his dependence on Aberglaube : "Spells? Mistrust them?" (I, ii, 27). Professor Culler, in his comment on the poem, says "one has the feeling that under the figure of Pausanias Arnold may be making a sly allusion to his fellow poets. For it is striking that the miracle in Christian story which is parallel to the classical miracle of Pantheia is the raising of Lazarus. Tennyson used it in 'In Memoriam', and since 'In Memoriam', published two years before 'Empedocles on Etna', is the poem in which Tennyson struggles with the same intellectual and spiritual problems as did Arnold, one suspects a covert allusion" (pp. 161-162).

So, the first source of Empedocles' illness is 'de sa différence avec son temps'. It is an age which is unimaginative and unpoetical: "how deeply unpoetical the age and all one's surroundings are. Not unprofound, not ungrand, not unmoving: - but unpoetical" (CL, p. 99). In other words it is the temper of the age, as being 'unpoetical' and 'arid', that accounts for the public misunderstanding and subsequently the alienation of the artist. Psychologically speaking, one might say that Empedocles is put into an

alien position.

ii

Hell is ourselves (l'enfer, c'est nous-même)

Callicles is the second interpreter of Empedocles' sufferings. He is Arnold's principal addition to the story. His voice here is that of the moralist and critic, it has the moral implication "Hell is ourselves (l'enfer, c'est nous-même)."

In Act I scene I, he explicitly recommends a more positive attitude to the natural world:

Apollo!  
What mortal could be sick or sorry here?

(Lines 19-20, Poems, p.150)

These lines bear the implication that Empedocles suffers because he cannot respond to the beauty of nature and its joy. This line of thought is made absolutely clear in the final speech where, after proclaiming that the outward world is dead to him, he projects his melancholy to the stars and fancies that they too have survived themselves, that they once lived moved joyfully in an older world, "a mightier order":

But now, ye kindle  
Your lonely, cold-shining lights,  
Unwilling lingerers  
In the heavenly wilderness,  
For a younger, ignoble world.

(II, ii, 288-292, Poems, 187)

Callicles has the insight to deride Empedocles' power as a miracle worker and his pride and vanity in allowing the people to believe that he has

supernatural gifts:

Bah! Thou a doctor! Thou art superstitious.  
Simple Pausanias, 'twas no miracle!  
Pantheia, for I know her kinsmen well,  
Was subject to these trances from a girl.  
Empedocles would say so, did he deign;  
But he still lets the people, whom he scorns,  
Gape and cry wizard at him, if they list.

(I, i, 133-139, Poems, p. 154)

He refutes Pausanias' idea that the sophists are the cause of Empedocles' malady:

The sophists are no enemies of his;  
I hear, Gorgias, their chief, speaks nobly of him,  
As of his gifted master, and once friend.  
He is too scornful, too high-wrought, too bitter.  
'Tis not the times, 'tis not the sophists vex him;  
There is some root of suffering in himself,  
Some secret and unfollowed vein of woe,  
Which makes the time look black and sad to him.

(I, i, 146-153, Poems, p. 155)

Matthew Arnold, in his delineation of Empedocles' character, follows, to use his words, "Aristotle's profound remark...that the tragic personage whose ruin is represented, should be a personage neither eminently good, nor yet one brought to ruin by sheer iniquity; nay, that his character should incline rather to good than to bad, but that he should have some fault which impels him to his fall. For, as he explains, the two grand tragic feelings, pity and terror, which it is the business of tragedy to excite, will not be excited by the spectacle of the ruin of a mere villain; since pity is for those who suffer undeservedly, and such a man suffers deservedly: terror is excited by the fall of one of like nature with ourselves" (CPW, I, pp. 54-55).

What then, are Empedocles' faults that Arnold condemns? Arnold's method is clear - contrast. To this effect he writes "we are often supposed, when we criticise by the help of culture some imperfect doing

{action} or other, to have in our eye some well-know rival plan of doing {standard}, which we want to serve and recommend" (CPW., V, 234).

So, in his condemnation of Lucretius, with whom Empedocles is rightly associated, Arnold contrasts him with Thucydides: "... Thucydides is no mere literary man; no isolated thinker, speaking far over the heads of his hearers to a future age - no: he was a man of action, a man of the world, a man of his time ("On the Modern Element in Literature", CPW, p. 76). As for Lucretius, whose representation in Arnold's writings is hardly distinguishable from Empedocles, Arnold writes: "with stern effort, with gloomy despair, he [Lucretius] seems to rivet his eyes on the elementary reality, the naked framework of the world, because the world in its fullness and movement is too exciting a spectacle for his discomposed brain. He seems to feel the spectacle of it at once terrifying and alluring; and to deliver himself from it he has to keep perpetually repeating his formula of disenchantment and annihilation... Lucretius is, therefore, overstrained, gloom-weighted, morbid (CPW, I, pp.33-34) and Arnold continues: "yes, Lucretius is modern; but is he adequate? And how can a man adequately interpret the activity of his age when he is not in sympathy with it? Think of the varied, the abundant, the wide spectacle of the Roman life of his day; think of its fullness of occupation, its energy of effort. From those Lucretius withdraws himself; and bids his disciples to withdraw themselves; he bids them to leave the business of the world, and to apply themselves 'naturam cognoscere rerum - to learn the nature of things;' but there is no peace, no cheerfulness for him either in the world from which he comes, or in the solitude to which he goes" (CPW, I, p. 33).

So, Arnold's attack on Empedocles is in fact an oblique criticism of authors who fix their attention on the negative aspect of modern life - the feeling of depression, the feeling of ennui. Certainly the nature

of Empedocles' illness is no mystery to the reader of Romantic poetry. It is the Romantic melancholy of Byron's 'Manfred', of George Sand's 'Lelia', of Foscolo's "Ultime Lettere di Jacopo Ortis", and above all, of Senancour's "Obermann". That Empedocles is identified with Senancour through Lucretius is plain if one compares Callicles' analysis with Arnold's own views in his essay on "Obermann": "But a root of failure, powerlessness, and ennui, there certainly was in the constitution of Senancour's own nature; so that unfavourable as may have been his time, we should err in attributing to any outward circumstances the whole of the discouragement by which he is pervaded" (Poems, p. 155). Arnold's remark on Byron's heroes is significant too: "...not so much in collision with outward things, as breaking on some rock of revolt and misery in the depths of their own nature; Manfred, self-consumed, fighting blindly and passionately with I know not what..." (Poems, Fn., p. 155). Professor David DeLaura rightly suggests that Coleridge's Hamlet criticism may have influenced Arnold's portrait of Empedocles' problem. "The disintegration of the 'balance' of faculties, of inward and outward, of thought and feeling."<sup>12</sup>

On the thoughts and feelings that Arnold has put in the character of Empedocles Professor Allott writes: "we have learned from the careful disentangling of the philosophical and literary sources of Empedocles on Etna that whatever Arnold may have taken for his portrait of Empedocles from his reading of Karsten's Philosophorum Graecorum Veterum... (1838), the influences most deeply affecting the central thought and feeling in the poem... derive from his response to Lucretius, Marcus Aurelius and Epictetus among the ancients, Spinoza among later writers, and Carlyle among his contemporaries, together with strong injections of Romantic melancholy from nineteenth-century writers ranging from Byron to George Sand and from Foscolo to Senancour of 'Obermann'".<sup>13</sup> One may add Leopardi, Dr Arnold,



and Goethe especially when he describes the deeply understood despondency and suicide of Werther in such a way as to 'save myself from a tempestuous element", in My Life: Poetry and Truth, Bk. XIII.

The Romantic poet, generally speaking, suffers from a consciousness of the superiority of his perception that leads him, as it has led Empedocles, to be "too scornful, too high-wrought, too bitter", so he lacks the saving faculty of compromise and surrenders himself to despair. Of the Romantic element in Empedocles, Culler says: "the Romantic hero frequently unites in himself an element of the infinite with an element of the finite. This is the form which that incongruous union takes in Empedocles" (p. 165).

Of the different tradition in Romantic poetry Fred Kaplan has distinguished two: "In the minor one, melancholy, depression, and eventual paralysis result from the poet's awareness of the 'worry, the fever, and the fret' that inevitably occur when he realises that he lives in a corrupt world of mutability. In the major one, perhaps conditioned by his awareness of exterior corruption and mutability, often against a background of deep epistemological uncertainty about the nature of reality, the poet confronts a crisis of confidence not only in the general value of socially organised life but in the cosmic purpose that he believed had been superrationally and somewhat ineffably struggling to be revealed in his own imagination and in his own poetic language. Sometimes the doubt in this general cosmic purpose precedes loss of faith in his own ministry, sometimes the process is reversed; often the complex subtleties of such thoughts and expressions do not permit the poet or his readers to make the distinction at all".<sup>14</sup> This view, in fact, reveals much of what one is going to say about Empedocles.

Empedocles' long diatribe to Pausanias<sup>n</sup> is introduced by Callicles'

first song that recounts the myth of Chiron. Due to the fact that the mythological references are ambiguous, most critics have made little note of the significance implied in Callicles' songs. Professor Culler, for instance writes that "Callicles is blissfully ignorant of all this [artists' dilemma]. He sings these songs simply because they are beautiful and because they are about music. He is the kind of artist who does not realise that poems have a content as well as a form" (p. 176).

To answer this view, a digression in one's argument about myth and its function and the truth implied in its content is necessary, "Poetic myth," says C. Day Lewis, "was created by a collective consciousness; the poetic image returns to that consciousness for its sanction. It is not merely that, time and again, we find in the images of modern poetry forms and impulses derived from the myths; but the very nature of the image of poetry in its metaphorical aspect invokes that consciousness as though man, even at his most individual, still seeks emotional reassurance from the sense of community, not community with his fellow-being alone, but with whatever is living in the universe and with the dead".<sup>15</sup>

The myth, as extended verbal image in which relations between man and the supernatural order are dynamically depicted, offers authentic knowledge. The ideas contained in its structure are present in modern man's subconscious, or to use Arnold's words "the unchangeable substructure" (Literature and Dogma, p. 211) of man's being. In other words myth subsists as the substructure of all human activity. This is due to the fact that all ideas in the language are supported by submerged metaphor: all generalisations proceed from things, no system of abstractions can affect man's behaviour, as Arnold has observed, unless it has generated an imaginative symbolism in his mind. In all this, myth is the element that activates ideas. According to Lévi-Strauss, the knowledge embodied in the myth "is just as

sophisticated as [ours is] it is simply that they use a different system of notation... the whole structure of primitive thought is binary" (Leach, Op. cit., pp. 87-88).

Underlying nineteenth-century views of myth, both the empirical and the transcendental, there is the generally accepted notion that myth contains and retains and celebrates some significant experience of man in relation to the alien universe, to nature and to time, that through the various stages of his development he has been unwilling to let it go, and has therefore incorporated into his religion and his poetry and kept it. There comes the view that poetry embodies archetypal symbols which are the repository of racial memories, vestiges of primordial ritual and ceremony. The poetic imagination is archetypal in nature when it takes particular objects as embodiments of a universal experience. In the light of this, there comes the view that to understand a phenomenon is to understand it in its historical development. To this effect Frege writes "... for all the multiplicity of languages, mankind has a common stock of thought... The task of logic can hardly be performed without trying to recognise the thought in its manifold guises".<sup>16</sup> The view of myth, in general, that Arnold has been acquainted with from his reading, the generally accepted nineteenth-century view, is that mythical story, a trans-cultural primitive phenomenon, is a form of knowledge, anthropomorphic in nature, and recording man's original significant experience in nature and in time, in all the variety of these experiences.

Now, to resume the argument, Callicles' first song, "The Last Glen", moves from a description of the last dell on the mountain to the myth of Chiron, Achilles, and Peleus. The glen is a traditional feature of Arnold's 'symbolic landscape'. Central to this metaphoric landscape, are the Forest Glade and the Burning Plain. In the Forest Glade man is "in Unison with

God, Nature, and his fellow man", but on the Burning Plain, "he is abandoned by Gods, divorced from nature, and alienated from his fellow man. What is more, he is alienated even from himself" (Culler, p. 12). The Last Glen has been interpreted as the half-way point which the poet must maintain in relation to society, but by analogy it may also be read as a metaphor for man's relation to the truth. The song alludes to the myth of Chiron, the aged centaur who taught Achilles, Hercules, and other heroes the lore of nature:

In such a glen, on such a day,  
On Pelion, on the grassy ground,  
Chiron, the aged Centaur lay,  
The young Achilles standing by.  
The Centaur taught him to explore  
The mountains; where the glens are dry  
And the tired Centaurs come to rest.

(I, ii, 57-63).

... ..

He showed him Phthia far away,  
And said: O boy, I taught this lore  
To Peleus, in long distant years!  
He told him of the Gods, the stars,  
The tides; and then of mortal wars,  
And of the life which heroes lead  
Before they reach the Elysian place  
And rest in the immortal mead;  
And all the wisdom of his race.

(I, ii, 68-76, Poems 158-159)

Being aware of the relation between form and content, Arnold aptly shifts from the five beat lines of the first section of the song, which is entirely descriptive of landscape, to a tripping storytelling four beat line in the second section to describe the student-teacher relationship between Achilles and the Centaur. Professors K. and M. Allott have rightly observed that "in Empedocles on Etna, ... the metrical variations signal and help to define the complex feelings which shape the poem. Act I, i is in blank verse for the explanatory speeches given to Callicles and Pausanias and so is Act I, ii for the not yet highly charged exchanges between Empedocles and Pausanias, but the metre begins to change at I, ii 36-76 for Callicles'

first song, which opens with a twenty-line descriptive introduction... in irregularly stressed unrhymed verse (though five-beat lines still predominate) and continues with a chant-celebrating the importance of traditional wisdom - which is four-beat lines and has an irregularly patterned rhyme scheme [I, ii. 57-75]" (Writers and their Background, p. 78).

It has been rightly observed that there is a parallel between the counselling of Achilles by Chiron and the counselling of Pausanias by Empedocles. To this effect Professor Allott writes "the traditional lore taught to Achilles contrasts with the philosophical instruction about to be given to Pausanias" (Poems, 158). Professor Culler, explaining the significance of the contrast, says that Callicles is a poet of Keatsian natural magic deficient in the moral profundity Empedocles so obviously possesses. The reading one proposes is to show that the relation is of similarity rather than of contrast. It is two modes of communicating the same thing. If there is contrast it is in the type of the language they use: Empedocles, certainly, uses ethical language, while Callicles uses aesthetical .<sup>17</sup>

Empedocles and Chiron are known teachers and healers, and moreover both have supposedly raised someone from the dead, they have sought truths which belong only to the gods. The result, in Empedocles' case, is his exile and estrangement from society, the loss of feeling, despair, and suicide. This theme operates through an intensifying series of mythological analogies and contrasts. The analogy of this aspect is the inadvisability of rebelling against the limitations imposed by gods. There is throughout the poem the implication that to defy the gods is both hopeless and chaotic. The contrast is not in the message itself but rather is between a logic which is constructed out of observed contrasts in the sensory qualities of concrete objects and a logic which depends upon formal contrast of entirely

abstract entities.

Following this, Empedocles himself holds the centre of the stage for the rest of the poem. He expounds his philosophy on "God, on nature, and on human life". E.D.H. Johnson, in his comment, writes that Empedocles "appears to be somewhat insecure in his moralising. When he preaches reliance on the mind to Pausanias, his friend quotes the wise man's own words which he is now understood to contradict: mind, he once said, is a mocking light that leads men false who trust it. Apparently the self-conscious mind vacillates between two diametrically opposed notions about itself. We might almost suspect Arnold here of oblique self-criticism; Empedocles may seem, like his creator, to be a bundle of contradictions".<sup>18</sup>

It seems probable that Arnold knowingly and deliberately wants it to look like that, that terms like mind, are taken by theologians, like Pausanias, in a fixed and rigid manner as if they were symbols with **as** definite and fully grasped a meaning. If this reading is right, one would take it as an oblique criticism of theologians who take terms that Jesus Christ and St Paul have uttered in a 'literary' manner, and employ <sup>/them</sup> as if they were scientific terms. For mind in this poem is not reason but the understanding. This seems to be consistent with Arnold's view in Literature and Dogma. Thus he writes:

These hundred doctors try  
To preach thee to their school.  
We have the truth! they cry;  
And yet their oracle,  
Trumpet it as they will, is but the same as thine.

(I, ii, 137-141, p. 162).

But, next, we would reverse  
The scheme ourselves have spun,  
And what we made to curse  
We now would lean upon,  
And feign Kind Gods who perfect what man vainly tries.

(I, ii, 312-316, Poems, p. 169)

We shut our eyes, and muse  
How our own minds are made.  
What springs of thought they use,  
How rightened, how betrayed -  
And spend our wit to name what most employ unnamed.

(I, ii, 327-331, Poems, p. 169)

Empedocles, like Arnold who attempts to deal with modern religious problems from a naturalistic point of view, ridicules faith in an anthropomorphic God either hostile or benign: his ideas cover the topics like God and His relation to the world, miracles, salvation and future life and finally on how to live:

And, lastly, though of ours  
No weakness spoil our lot,  
Though the non-human powers  
Of Nature harm us not,  
The ill deeds of other men make often our life dark.

(I, ii, 262-366)

... ..

Harsh Gods and hostile Fates  
Are dreams!

(I, ii, 304-306)

But a little reflection must soon bring the man who takes this line of reasoning to the point where he finds that the attribution of cruelty to Nature is as futile an anthropomorphism as is the attribution of paternal benevolence to a deity. Arnold is aware of this and so his Nature is Spinozistically neutral; any animus it seems to have is but the product of human fancy:

Scratched by a fall, with moans  
As children of weak age  
Lend life to the dumb stones  
Whereon to vent their rage,  
And bend their little fists, and rate the senseless ground;  
So, loth to suffer mute  
We, peopling the void air,  
Make Gods to whom to impute  
The ills we ought to hear;  
With God and Fate to rail at, suffering easily.

(I, ii, 272-281, Poems, pp. 167-168)

Empedocles is angry with his people who fill the universe with Gods. Kindly or hostile, to account for good and bad fortune, they explain the limitations on human knowledge by assuming an omniscient God, they console themselves for their incapacity to reach ultimate and satisfying joy by imagining gods who do. All this is childish and foolish to Empedocles, who recognises only a Power which is life itself: a universal and immanent Force manifesting itself by necessity:

All things the world which fill  
Of but one stuff are spun,  
That we who rail are still,  
With what we rail at, one;  
One with the o'erlaboured Power that through the breadth and length  
Of earth, and air, and sea,  
In men, and plants, and stones,  
Hath toil perpetually,  
And travails, pants, and moans;  
Fain would do all things well, but sometimes fails in strength.  
And patiently exact  
This universal God  
Alike to any act  
Proceeds at any nod,  
And quietly declaims the cursings of himself.

(I, ii, 287-301, Poems, p. 168)

Empedocles is speaking here in a pantheistic term. This pantheist notion seems to arise from the link Arnold establishes in his mind between the fragments of Empedocles and the Hindu Scriptures - the Bhagavad Gita.<sup>19</sup> He writes "A God identical with the world and with the sum of force therein contained: not exterior to it" (Yale Ms.) (Poems, p. 168).

The Gods, says Empedocles, laugh at man, "who knows not what to believe/ Since he sees nothing clear" (p. 160). In short, "Harsh Gods and hostile Fates/ Are dreams" (I, ii, 304-305). But he goes on to ask 'Is this Pausanias, so?' - and he answers 'I will not judge'. For he is concerned



at the moment less with the metaphysical than with the pragmatic, a line that Arnold explains in details in Literature and Dogma .

One comes, now, to the very heart of Arnold's message: his treatment of one of the most important supports of popular Christianity; the Miracle. Miracles, according to Arnold, do not happen. There comes his emphasis on the permanent conflict between nature and mankind; even if man were just and pure, utterly without sin, there would be other existences in the universe to clash with his:

Like us, the lightning-fires  
Love to have scope and play;  
The stream, like us, desires  
An unimpeded way;  
Like us, the Libyan wind delights to roam at large.  
Streams will not curb their pride  
The just man not to entomb,  
Nor lightnings go aside  
To give his virtues room;  
Nor is that wind less rough which blows a good man's barge.

(I, ii, 247-256, Poems, p. 167)

Nature is neutral, man is part of nature and there is no morality, in the human sense, to be found in her:

Nature, with equal mind,  
Sees all her sons at play;  
Sees man control the wind,  
The wind sweep man away;  
Allows the proudly-riding and the foundering bark.

(I, ii, 257-261, Poems, p. 167)

The only cosmic morality, according to Arnold, is that all things fulfil the law of their own being. No special promise has been made to man. The denial of a special providence is an old doctrine. It has been found to be central to the Stoics and the Epicureans. Empedocles, or rather Arnold, is echoing Lucretius: "'Picture a storm at sea... Terrified, [the mariner] begs in his prayers that the winds may subside... But in vain no less for all his prayers is he borne by the violence of the hurricane to the shock of death'. If there really are personal gods to intervene in human

affairs, Lucretius asks, why does not their lightning strike the outrageously immoral wretch, instead of, as so often happens, the man whose conscience is clear of sin?" (Super, Time-Spirit, p. 70). Professor K. Allott has distinguished another source of this idea - Spinoza's Ethics: "'Experience day by day protested and showed by infinite examples, that good and evil fortunes fall to the lot of pious and impious alike'" (Poems, p. 167).

What matters here is Arnold's consistency as far as Empedocles on Etna is concerned. As one has shown, Empedocles shows a Pantheistic line of thought: a God identical with the world and with the sum of force therein contained: not exterior to it: "All things the world which fill/ Of but one stuff are spun". Consequently, a miracle - or understanding by a miracle which is but a breach of the laws of nature - is impossible, and to think it possible is, according to Spinoza, to dishonour God; for the laws of nature are the laws of God, and to say that God violates the laws of nature is to say that he violates his own nature.

In his despair over the people of Agrigentum Empedocles says "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe:

Ask not the latest news of the last miracle,  
Ask not what days and nights  
In trance Pantheia lay,  
But ask how thou such sights  
May'st see without dismay;  
Ask what most helps when known, thou son of Anchitus.

(I, ii, 106-111, Poems, p. 160)

Arnold here puts his finger on the heart of the matter - even the resurrected Lazarus died sometime, and man's problem is not how to postpone death, but how to accommodate his mind to the sure knowledge that it will come, for himself, for his friends, and for all mankind.

Empedocles mocks Pausanias and all those who believe in the idea of a personal God:

Heaven is with earth at strife,  
Signs make thy soul afraid,  
The dead return to life,  
Rivers are dried, winds stayed;  
Scarce can one think in calm, so threatening are the Gods;

(I, ii, 122-126, Poems, p. 161)

Empedocles on Etna , being one of Arnold's earliest attempt to deal with modern religious problems from a naturalistic point of view, ridicules faith in miracles, in an anthropomorphic God either hostile or benign. It states too Arnold's views on the future state of bliss:

Fools! That so often here  
Happiness mocked our prayer,  
I think, might make us fear  
A like event elsewhere;  
Make us, not fly to dreams, but moderate desire.

(I, ii, 382-386, Poems, p. 171).

The Carlylean tone of that last line is easily recognisable: "Blockhead! [thy misery] all comes of thy vanity; of what thou fanciest those same deserts of thine to be... The fraction of life can be increased in value not so much by increasing your numerator as by lessening your denominator... Make thy claim of wages a zero, then; thou hast the world under thy feet".<sup>20</sup>

There must be a concession on the part of man: the necessity of submission to the universal order. From Stoicism as well as from Goethe and Spinoza, Arnold draws this lesson: the inadequacy of Romantic self-assertion. Epictetus confirms the lesson and also teaches him that some questions, to use Professor Allott's words "are perhaps incomprehensible to human mind... and that it is enough to know the nature of good and evil... and not to trouble ourselves about the things above us".

("Background to Empedocles on Etna", pp. 85-86). Epictetus' lesson is very important in a time where "it is a most happy and important thing for a

man merely to be able to do as he likes" (CPW, p. 74). Right judgement is necessary here because man's desires conflict.

This is what Arnold is doing. The first purpose, he achieves by cultivating intelligence and inwardness. There comes Empedocles' advice to Pausanias on the importance of 'inwardness':

Once read thy own breast right,  
And thou hast done with fears;  
Man gets no other light,  
Search he a thousand years.  
Sink in thyself! there ask what ails thee, at that shrine!

Empedocles then tells Pausanias that he need not despair. He must look within for the truth, moderate his desires, and manufacture no gods to explain what cannot be explained:

I say: Fear not! Life still  
Leaves human effort scope.  
But since life teems with ill,  
Nurse no extravagant hope;  
Because thou must not dream, thou need'st not then despair.

(I, ii, 422-426, p. 172)

... ..

And yet, for those who know  
Themselves, who wisely take  
Their way through life, and bow  
To what they cannot break,  
Why should I say that life need yield but moderate bliss.

(I, ii, 387-396, p. 171)

Critics have noticed the similarity between these lines and Carlyle's equal dismissal of fear and hope as 'false shadows' in the "Everlasting Yea". So, if Pausanias is unhappy, it is because he is unable to accept this fact but continually deludes himself with hopes or fears which are unfounded. And above all Empedocles warns him to be "neither saint nor sophist-led" (I, ii, 136) but be a man. The saints parallel, as critics have observed, the Evangelicals and Protestant Dissension, the sophists

parallel the eudaemonist rationalists, the Utilitarians.

It is worthy of notice that Arnold, from the very beginning, distinguishes between two types of Stoicism: active and passive. So, he writes that the aspect of Spinoza's thought which has satisfied Goethe is the active, rather than passive, stoicism. Activity involves, by necessity, conduct. Here, the stoics provides the best example - that is Socrates. Socrates has been the chief saint of the Stoics throughout their history; his attitude at the time of his trial, his refusal to escape, his calmness in the face of death.

If activity involves conduct, conduct in turn involves society. Empedocles urges Pausanias to live with men but not as most men live. He gives him a sermon on proper active living:

The world's course proves the terms  
On which man wins content;  
Reason the proof confirms.  
We spurn it, and invent  
A false course for the world, and for ourselves, false powers.  
Riches we wish to get,  
Yet remain spendthrift still;  
We would have health, and yet  
Still use our bodies ill;  
Bafflers of our own prayers, from youth to life's last scenes.  
We would have inward peace,  
Yet will not look within;  
We would have misery cease,  
Yet will not cease from sin;  
We want all pleasant ends, but will use no hard means;  
We do not what we ought,  
What we ought not, we do,  
And lean upon the thought  
That chance will bring us through;  
But our own acts, for good or ill, are mightier Powers.

(I, ii, 222-241, Poems, 241)

There is still some delight in life:

Is it so small a thing  
To have enjoyed the sun,  
To have lived light in the spring,  
To have loved, to have thought, to have done;  
To have advanced true friends, and beat down baffling foes.

(I, ii, 397-401)

James Simpson has observed that "Arnold found in stoicism a certain joylessness which made it valueless as a creed to live by, and as he grew older it became steadily less appropriate to his situation" (Writers and their Background, p. 298). This is quite reasonable for there is, in fact, an element of sour grapes in stoicism. Man can't be happy by trying to be, but he can be good by trying to be, let him therefore pretend that, so long as he is good, it doesn't matter being unhappy. This doctrine is heroic, and is in a bad world, useful. For if man cannot see clear, as Arnold maintains, and that 'innumerable philosophies of man', to use Carlyle's words, and which Arnold represents, 'contending in boundless hubbub, must annihilate each other, before an inspired Poesy and Faith for Man can fashion itself together', the only way left is to be found in Indian Soteriologies - the Bhagavad Gita and Stoicism. In the Indian soteriologies "two typical implications have been the options of withdrawing from this illusion-world in the ascetic quest for liberation (moksha) and of continuing to act within it... but doing so in an attitude of inner detachment from one's mundane activity - the classic distinction between the so-called 'way of knowledge' jnana-monga and the 'way of action' karma monga, the latter finding its most famous expression in the Bhagavad Gita" (The Social Reality of Religion, Op. cit., pp. 103-4).

iii

The Poet's Burden

The third perspective in Arnold's analysis of alienation is concerned with the poet, his poetry, and his mission. It is not, like the Romantic poets, about the loss of the poet's feeling of creativity and the intensifying loss of faith in the power of poetry and creativity, it is

about the poet's burden and the price of his vision. Shakespeare's words are a good expression of the situation:

The time is out of joint; O cursed spite,  
That ever I was born to set it right.

(Hamlet, Act I, Sc. V, 188-189)

Again the outline of the poem leaves no doubt of it: "His mind is overtasked by the effort to hold fast so great <sup>and</sup> severe a truth in solitude: the atmosphere he breathes not being modified by the presence of human life, is too rare for him... His spring and elasticity of mind are gone: he is clouded, oppressed, dispirited, without hope and energy" (Commentary, 291-2). In the character of Empedocles, Arnold sees the possibility of portraying both modern thought and modern feeling. But what are the characteristics of modern age? It is the predominance of thought and of reflection. This is not without penalties: in the unsound, in the over-tasked, in the over-sensitive, it has produced a state of feeling unknown to less enlightened but perhaps healthier epochs - the feeling of depression, the feeling of ennui. Depression and ennui, or in other words alienation, are the characteristics stamped on how many of the representative works of modern times.

Empedocles stands between man, nature, and the gods, trying to balance between them. This is his mission, for these three realms have always been one, and could still be brought back into harmony. To preserve the harmony, the poet has to deal with the new ideas and to reconcile the old with the new in the realm of ideas. But too much thought is likely to destroy the proper balance between man's mental powers and his feelings. In Empedocles, thought has been the destroyer of joy. To this effect Arnold writes: "I cannot conceal from myself the objection... that the service of reason is freezing to feeling... and feeling and the religious

mood are eternally the deepest being of man, the ground of all joy and greatness for him" (Poems, 149).

Empedocles on Etna deals among many other topics, with its protagonist's immense struggle to preserve his power of perception of "the truth" and "to see things as they are". But this has a price, for as Arnold puts it, "Whoever sets himself to see things as they are will find himself one of a very small circle; but it is only by this small circle resolutely doing its own work that adequate ideas will even get current at all" (CPW., III, 274). This does not mean complete isolation, for perfection, as culture conceives it, is not possible, says Arnold, while the individual remains isolated. "The individual is required, under pain of being stunted and enfeebled in his own development if he disobeys, to carry others along with him in his march towards perfection, to be continually doing all he can to enlarge and increase the volume of the human stream sweeping thitherward" (Culture and Anarchy, (CPW., V, 94).

Men of culture constitute "a certain number of 'aliens', if we may so call them, persons who are mainly led, not by their class spirit, but by a general humane spirit, by the love of human perfection; and that this number is capable of being diminished or augmented... in proportion both to the force of the original instinct within them, and to the hindrance or encouragement which it meets with from without" (CPW., V, 146). This is due to the fact that culture is a social idea; and the men of culture are the true apostles of equality. They are those who have a passion for diffusing, for making prevail, for carrying from one end of society to the other, the best knowledge, the best ideas of their time; who have laboured to divest knowledge of all that is harsh, uncouth, difficult, abstract, professional, exclusive; to humanise it, to make it



efficient outside the clique of the cultivated and learned, yet still remaining the best knowledge and thought of the time, and a true source therefore, of sweetness and light. The poet may find himself in unpoetical, hostile environment in the Philistine's day, in a place and time when almost every idea current in literature has the mark of Dagon upon it, and not the mark of the children of light, he should keep aloof from the reigning superstitions, and refuse to bow the knee to the gods of Canaan.

In the light of these statements, Empedocles can be seen as Arnold's most impressive portrayal of the guiltless hero brought to calamity by some inadequacy inherent in his temperament - his passivity.

He is literally passive of course in the sense of being a sufferer . But, while the poem's major interest is focused on the nature of Empedocles' failing as a source of his alienation, Arnold sees the crisis on Etna, as one has shown, as precipitated by the revolutionary climate of Empedocles' age. Arnold sees, also, what may happen to a man when he leaves behind as illusion the religious beliefs which have hitherto given his life significance and moves into what Yeats calls the desolation of reality . Empedocles 'sees things as they are', but the vision is too much for him.

Act one concludes with Empedocles' abrupt dismissal of Pausanias. He makes clear his resolution to return, "in the sure revolutions of the world", in his ambiguous answer that he will revisit Catana: an oblique reference to reincarnation:

Either to-morrow or some other day,  
In the sure revolutions of the world,  
Good friend, I shall revisit Catana.  
I have seen many cities in my time,  
Till mine eyes ache with the long spectacle,  
And I shall doubtless see them all again.

(I, ii, 471-476, p. 175)

Just at the conclusion of Act I, Callicles resumes his irregular rhymed joyful chant, the story of the metamorphosis of Cadmus and Harmonia:

Far, far from here,  
The Adriatic breaks in a warm bay  
Among the green Illyrian hills; and there  
The sunshine in the happy glens is fair,  
And by the sea, and in the brakes.  
The grass is cool, the sea-side air  
Buoyant and fresh, the mountain flowers  
More virginal and sweet than ours.  
And there, they say, two bright and aged snakes,  
Who once were Cadmus and Harmonia,  
Bask in the glens or on the warm sea-shore,  
In breathless quiet, after all their ills;  
Nor do they see their country, nor the place  
Where the Sphinx lived among the frowning hills,  
Nor the unhappy palace of their race,  
Nor Thebes, nor the Ismenus, any more.

(I, ii, 427-442).

... ..

There those two live, far in the Illyrian brakes!

... ..

Placed safely in changed forms, the pair  
Wholly forget their first sad life, and home,  
And all that Theban woe, and stray  
For ever through the glens, placid and dumb.

(I, ii, 457-460, pp. 173-4)

These lines stress the idea that pain is part and parcel of life: a suggestion that dehumanisation is a defence against the pain of life.

H.W. Fulweiler, in his comment on the poem, says that "the lesson Empedocles learns from the song is that action in life is futile".<sup>21</sup> If this is so, one might venture and say that Empedocles does not grasp the significance of the story. The lesson he should have learnt is that if he accepts life, he should accept pain as a constituent in life's responsibilities. Life without pain is but death.

So, the first song of Callicles - Chiron, reminds Empedocles of his

duty and his debt to society:

- alone!

Pausanias is far hence, and that is well,  
For I must henceforth speak no more with man.  
He hath his lesson too, and that debt's paid.

The second song - "Cadmus and Harmonia", tells him of the price, the same price of the vision in the "Strayed Reveller" - i.e. Pain.

In Act II the metrical variations continue to draw attention to the personal conflict which brings together in the poem the contrasted figures of the young serene poet and the poet-philosopher who has left behind youth, joy and his poetic self. Empedocles climbs upward, like Obermann, into lofty solitude through the smoke-filled atmosphere of the upper slopes of Etna, a 'charr'd, blacken'd, melancholy waste' of the desolate spirit. In that atmosphere he subjects himself to ruthless self analysis:

No, thou art come too late, Empedocles!  
And the world hath the day, and must break thee,  
Not thou the world. With men thou canst not live,  
Their thoughts, their ways, their wishes, are not thine;  
And being lonely thou art miserable,  
For something has impaired thy spirit's strength,  
And dried its self sufficing fount of joy.

(II, 16-23, Poems, p. 176)

Empedocles is clear here about two areas of his alienation: he sees differently so he is lonely. This is a price to be paid for, as Arnold puts it, whosoever sets himself to see things as they are will find himself one of a very small circle. The next two lines are pivotal:

Thou canst not live with men nor with thyself-  
O sage! O sage! Take then the one way left.

(II, 24-25, Poems, p. 177)

Then he refers to the two immediate motivations for his suicide:

And turn thee to the elements, thy friends,  
Thy well-tried friends, thy willing ministers,  
And say: Ye helpers, hear Empedocles,  
Who asks this final service at your hands!  
Before the sophist-brood hath overlaid  
The last spark of man's consciousness with words -  
Ere quite the being of man, ere quite the world  
Be disarrayed of their divinity -  
Before the soul lose all her solemn joys,  
And awe be dead, and hope impossible,  
And the soul's deep eternal night come on.  
Receive me, hide me, quench me, take me home!

(II, 25-36, Poems, p. 177).

Walter Houghton, who has analysed the poem in some detail, rightly considers these lines as "a prologue because all of Act II is here implicit. Why Empedocles cannot live either with men in society or with himself in solitude is the subject of lines 331-337: why he now, at this moment, decides to take his life points forward to lines 331-416. At the end of the play, the chorus-like song of Callicles 417-469 may be viewed as an epilogue"<sup>22</sup>

With this speech the conflict changes its form, for whereas previously it has been between Empedocles and the social world of man, now it is between Empedocles and nature. So, Callicles' third song about Typho introduces this. Empedocles remembers the myth which ascribed to the roars of Typho, the Titan whom Jove has deposed and chained beneath Etna, and Jove's unjust triumph typifies for him the ethical failure of society. The song also illustrates the destructive results of man's refusal to accept the limitations imposed by his gods, and it warns of the terrible fate which awaits those who defy those limitations. Empedocles draws from the myth one lesson and misses the other. The lesson that the world has no place for the brave heart, that "littleness united/ Is become invincible". There are, however, analogies with Empedocles' character, temper and circumstance: he too is pushed aside by a younger

generation and now planning to leap into the same crater. He himself seizes on the parallel with his own banishment:

He fables, yet speaks truth!  
The brave, impetuous heart yields everywhere  
To the subtle, contriving head;  
Great qualities are trodden down,  
And littleness united  
Is become invincible.

(II, 89-94, p. 180)

... ..

But over all the world  
What suffering is there not seen  
Of plainness oppressed by cunning  
As the well-counselled Zeno oppressed  
That self-helping son of earth!  
What anguish of greatness,  
Railed and hunted from the world,  
Because its simplicity rebukes  
This envious, miserable age!

(II, 99-107, p. 181)

The interaction between these two areas of alienation emanates from the fact that there is in Arnold's writings a recurrent theme that a genuine society could be depended on to mediate between man and God. He attaches considerable importance to this close relationship between the spiritual liberation attained through religion and the attainment of genuine socio-political emancipation. A social order which is unjust, estranged, irrational and inegalitarian will certainly tend to prevent man's quest for union with self, society, and God. It will create a superstitious form of religious beliefs. More fundamentally, however, until man has attained a truly liberating form of religious consciousness there is no possibility of an integrated social order.

Empedocles' reaction is to withdraw from art and society:

I am weary of it.  
- Lie there, ye ensigns  
Of my unloved preeminence  
In an age like this!  
Among a people of children,  
Who thronged me in their cities,  
Who worshipped me in their houses,  
And asked, not wisdom,  
But drugs to charm with,  
But spells to mutter -  
All the fool's armoury of magic! Lie there,  
My golden circlet,  
My purple robe!

(II, 109-20, p. 181)

In these lines it is clear that Arnold is condemning both Empedocles for abandoning art on the basis of false argument, and his age for its misunderstanding of the true mission of art and poet. Suppose one has some fault with his desk lamp and brings an electrician to fix it, but instead of fixing it he blows it up, would it be convincing to give up all the uses of electricity because of that electrician's fault? If people are like children, <sup>if</sup> they want miracles and worship the wrong God, that is not the fault of religion. Religion as well as art is good, it is good not relatively but as an absolute - that is, its qualities and merits are independent of the criteria of time and place.

Callicles sings the Myth of Marsyas and Apollo (II, 121-190). The song "is about the price of being a poet - Empedocles, like Marsyas, is Apollo's victim and finds the price too high" (Poems, 181):

I am weary of thee.  
I am weary of the solitude  
Where he who hears thee must abide -  
Of the rocks of Parnassus,  
Of the gorge of Delphi,  
Of the moonlit peaks, and the caves.  
Thou guardest them, Apollo!  
Over the grave of the slain Pytho,  
Though young, intolerably severe!  
Thou keepest aloof the profane,

But the solitude oppresses thy votary!  
The jars of men reach him not in thy valley -  
But can life reach him?  
Thou fencest him from the multitude -  
Who will fence him from himself?  
He hears nothing but the cry of the torrents,  
And the beating of his own heart.  
The air is thin, the veins swell,  
The temples tighten and throb there -  
Air! Air!

(II, 198-217, p. 184)

Arnold, then, goes into the problem of the artist in society:

Where shall thy votary fly then? back to men?  
But they will gladly welcome him once more,  
And help him to unbend his too tense thought,  
And rid him of the presence of himself,  
And keep their friendly chatter at his ear,  
And haunt him, till the absence from himself,  
That other torment, grow unbearable;  
And he will fly to solitude again,  
And he will find its air too keen for him,  
And so change back; and may thousand times  
Be miserably bandied to and fro  
Like a sea-wave, betwixt the world and thee,  
Thou young, implacable God! and only death  
Can cut his oscillations short, and so  
Bring him to poise. There is no other way.

(II, 220-234)

These are dangerous alternatives. For many, like Chiron, society becomes bondage; and for many, like Empedocles, solitude is fatal. Some cannot find tranquility, and many who have found it cannot find their way back to the world of man. Some are so deafened by the tumult about them that they can no longer hear, says Freud, 'their own inner voice'; and many hear only this and have no more communion with the world.

"The life of every free, fruitful spirit", says Freud, "moves like a pendulum between these two poles. He dares not live only for the others; something always drives him back into solitude. And he dares not live only for himself; something always drives him back to other men" (Reik, p. 198). Freud's words seem to reiterate Arnold's lines in his

poems "In Memory of The Author of 'Obermann'":

Ah! two desires toss about  
The poet's feverish blood.  
One drives him to the world without,  
And one to solitude.

(92-96, Poems, p. 134)

The contrast of two ages is then given a further dimension as Empedocles looks up at the stars. The younger world is not only ignoble, it is also atheist. And since it is without character or faith, it makes man to be isolated: without a friend or home in society or in the Universe:

You (stars), too, once lived;  
You, too, moved joyfully  
Among august companions,  
In an older world, peopled by Gods.  
In a mightier order,  
The radiant, rejoicing, intelligent Sons of Heaven,  
But now, ye kindle  
Your lonely, cold-shining lights,  
Unwilling lingerers  
In the heavinly wilderness,  
For a younger, ignoble world,  
And renew, by necessity,  
Night after night your courses,  
In echoing, unneared silence,  
Above a race you know not -  
Uncaring and undelighted,  
Without friend and without home.

(II, 282-298, Poems, p. 187)

Once more there is an interaction between the loss of faith and the disintegration of social order.

Is it nature that is so bleak and forbidding? The cosmos that is dead? Empedocles puts these questions as he addresses the stars. "No", the answer comes, neither stars, nor earth, nor cloud, nor sea are dead -

I alone  
Am dead to life and joy, therefore I read  
In all things my deadness.

(II, 320-322)



Arnold, here, adopts "the answer which Coleridge had given in 'Dejection: an Ode', and which Arnold himself had given in 'The Youth of Nature', that the loss of joy is the loss of a power in the individual, not of a quality in the world, Empedocles returns to himself as the source of his difficulties" (Culler, p. 170). The poem's movement moves to the lowest point of Empedocles' development by his admission that he is:

A living man no more, Empedocles!  
Nothing but a devouring flame of thought -  
But a naked, eternally restless mind!

(II, 328-330).

Empedocles, in his final speech, talks about man's relationship with nature - a question which occupies Arnold's imagination always:

But mind, but thought -  
If these have been the master part of us -  
Where will they find their parent element?  
What will receive them, who will call them home?  
But we shall still be in them, and they in us,  
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 life of life  
Baffled for ever.

(II, 345-358, Poems, p. 189)

Just before his leap into the crater, Empedocles cheers himself with the recollection that he has never been a slave of sense or betrayed his intellectual integrity. But it has been his fate to be uplifted with an austere and tragic exaltation at his insight into the ultimate truth and the intellectual isolation this entails. Clearly the course for humanity is not to follow the way of Empedocles to its logical conclusion, but to embrace the melioristic stoicism suggested to Pausanias. This solution can be deduced from the fact that the culminating effect of Empedocles' final

speech is an affirmation of faith in feeling rather than reason. In addition to that there is his special use of myth as man's formulation of his own experience.<sup>23</sup>

Now, one comes to the problem of suicide. Many critics have observed that after Act I Empedocles has changed his mind without sufficient cause assigned, and on a sudden impulse decides to end his life. Since nothing in the text supports this theory, it can only rest on the ingenuous assumption that no man who preached a philosophy to live by could be meditating his own death.

Some other critics associate Empedocles's death with that of Christ and Socrates before him. To this effect, Walter Houghton writes: "Arnold must have known the five passages of Epictetus on the death of Socrates: by dying, 'he intended to preserve something else, not his poor flesh, but his fidelity, his honourable character! He would save, not his body, but 'that which is increased and saved by doing what is just, and impaired and destroyed by doing what is unjust'" ("Empedocles on Etna", p. 328). Professor Super writes "in fact, the inability of Empedocles, under the particular conditions of his life, to live up to his creed in no more a condemnation of the creed than is the inability of Christians to live up to theirs; the creed remains an ideal which it is better the world should have, should strive to live by. The founder of Christianity, like Socrates, died rather than repudiate his creed" (The Time-Spirit, pp. 21-22). Professor Allott writes that "so much in passing that one can not be sure how significant he thought the point... [Empedocles'] ascent of the volcano... becomes a secular way of the cross that ends in self-crucifixion" ("A Background for Empedocles on Etna", p. 99).

Suicide can be viewed as an action and judged on these grounds. For an action to be good it must answer more or less to certain criteria - no

doubt connected with emotions, and might have answered to these criteria in such a way as to have been still better or not quite as good. For an action to be right it must satisfy some definite requirements, in the simplest cases some elementary moral principle, so that if the requirements are satisfied the action is right and if not it is wrong.

As for the moral criteria, one can distinguish two traditions: firstly the idealistic tradition; secondly the utilitarian one - it gives morality a purpose outside itself. Kant, as an exponent of the idealistic tradition, argues that all moral concepts have their rest and origin wholly a priori in the reason. The essence of morality is to be derived from the concept of law; for, though everything in nature acts according to laws, only a rational being has the power of acting according to the idea of a law, i.e. by Will. The idea of an objective principle is called a command of the reason, and the formula of the command is called an imperative .

There are two sorts, says Kant, of imperatives: the 'hypothetical' imperative which says "you must do so-and-so if you wish to achieve such-and-such an end", and the categorical imperative, which says that a certain kind of action is objectively necessary, without regard to any end. To cut short this argument Kant expects one to "act only according to a maxim by which you can at the same time will that it shall become a general law" or: "act as if the maxim of your action were to become through your will a general natural law" (B. Russell, p. 737). One can in like manner show that suicide is condemned by the categorical imperative. The ethical part of the utilitarian doctrine says that man's desires and actions are good which in fact promote the general happiness. This need not be the intention of an action, but only its effect . It is impossible to imagine, in the light of this tradition, that Empedocles'

suicide will promote the general happiness.

Empedocles' suicide can be taken as an act of condemnation. Suicide here, is a double-edged weapon. If one applies it to the first area of Arnold's interpretation of alienation, that is, "Hell is the other", Empedocles will stand as a martyr of sweetness and light, of lucidity of mind and largeness of temper. He departs in innocence, a sufferer and not a doer of evil; a victim, like Socrates and Christ, not of laws, but of men. Humanity should bid him farewell, not with compassion for him, and not with excuses, but in confidence and pride. Slowly, very slowly, his ideal of lucidity of mind and largeness of temper conquers. In the end it will prevail.

But if Callicles is right in his analysis "hell is ourselves" and that inner discord makes the time look black and out of joint, Empedocles' complaints would be entirely unconvincing. Hence he is condemned - that is his suicide is the result of his way of thinking. For Arnold writes: "the dramatic form exhibits, above all, the action of man as strictly determined by his thoughts and feelings" (CPW, I, p.34).

In discussing the problem of Empedocles' suicide in the light of Arnold's third perspective of the phenomenon - the poet's vocation and his burden, the act is to be taken symbolically. It is in terms of a farewell to a period of one's life where he has been able to feel joy, the grandeur of life, spirit, and of animated life. "I cannot conceal from myself", says Arnold "the objection... that the service of reason is freezing to feeling... and feeling and the religious mood are eternally the deepest being of man, the ground of all joy and greatness for him" (Poems, 199). It is a period where "his spring and elasticity of mind are gone... to the utter deadness to joy, grandeur, spirit, and animated life" (ibid., 198).

It is the price that is exacted from the aliens by their vocation as deliverers. It is the only feeling that arises as well from the writer's sense of commitment and its burden. Arnold, in a letter to his mother, writes "I am not very well lately, have had one or two things to bother me... but I have so lately had a stronger wish than usual not to vacillate and be helpless, but to do my duty, whatever that may be and out of that wish one may always hope to make something" (Letters, I, p.41). And in another letter, he writes, "My great advantage is that everyone of the subjects I propose to treat is one that I have long reached in my mind, read and thought much about, and been often tempted to write of. The horrible thing must be to have to look about for subjects, and when this has to be done week after week, it must be enough to drive one mad" (Ibid., p. 187). In addition to that one has to penetrate himself with the subject for "no man can do his best with a subject which does not penetrate him: no man can be penetrated by a subject which he does not conceive independently" (CPW, I, pp. 39-40).

The poet should have experience, this is Arnold's criterion of sincerity: "I have been returning to Goethe's life, and think higher of him than ever. His thorough sincerity - writing about nothing that he had not experienced - is in modern literature almost unrivalled" (Letters, I, [May, 1848] p. 10). Arnold's experience is not derived from books, as some critics say, but it is a first hand experience. In his letter to his mother he shows that he does not live in an ivory tower and detached from people "I was in the great mob in Trafalgar Square [Riots in Trafalgar Square, March 6 and 7, 1848] yesterday, whereof the papers will instruct you; but they did not seem dangerous, and the police are always, I think, needlessly rough in manner" (Letters, I, (March, 1848) p. 4).

In penetrating himself with these experiences, the poet is parting

from a way of life - the way of simple acceptance of life without thought of its anguish and pain. It is the way of seeing differently. There is a price for that, it is not just a matter of time and energy directed and dedicated, but of the artist's priestly isolation from his fellow men and the pain it entails. It concerns the kind of attention, of contemplation, analysis and recreation which the poet necessarily interposes between the experience which 'goes into' the art and the art which results. To this effect, Arnold, in a letter to his sister K, says: "Perfection of a certain kind may there be attained, or at least approached, without knocking yourself to pieces, but to attain or approach perfection in the region of thought and feeling, and to unite this with perfection of form, demands not merely an effort and a labour, but an actual tearing of oneself to pieces, which one does not readily consent to (although one is sometimes forced to it) unless one can devote one's whole life to poetry" (Ibid., 62-63).

It is this standard of perfection, sincerity and the task of poetry that determines all the elements of Arnold's poetics. Hence, Empedocles is presented as a man who is:

Wandering between two worlds, one dead,  
The other powerless to be born.

He is a paradigm of the artist in his depressed moments, wrestling to create order from chaos, torn between ideal possibilities and transience, tasting defeat. If he dies, it may be that the burden laid upon him is well-nigh greater than he can bear. But honour to the sages who have felt this, and yet have borne it.

\* \* \*

One has been trying to show that to read Empedocles on Etna is to find reflections and exploration of man in the modern world: the scepticism

of any ultimate truths, the search for some constructive outlook that can give man solid ground for self-integration; the acute self-consciousness, the sense of isolation and loneliness, the feeling of ennui, the suspicion of pure intellectualism, the search for a wholeness and integrity of man with himself, society, and the universe. A search which is necessary for man to be alive and active.

But one may ask whether the malady which Arnold describes is actually the strange disease of modern life or the strange disease of Arnold himself. Arnold's relationship with his central character - Empedocles, is confessedly complex. This is due to his technique of disinterestedness. In prose he uses irony and quotes authorities. In one of his letters to his mother, Arnold says "one can only get oneself really accepted by men by making oneself forgotten in the people and doctrines one recommends" (Letters, I, 219-20).

In addition to that, Arnold writes indirectly about his subject: "One is from time to time seized and irresistibly carried along by a temptation to treat political, or religious, or social matters, directly; but after yielding to such a temptation I always feel myself recoiling again, and disposed to touch them only so far as they can be touched through poetry" (Ibid., 233).

Perhaps Arnold, in projecting himself into both Callicles and Empedocles, is employing a technique which Yeats has discovered in terms of Masks: "the 'mask' is worn for both attack and defence. By wearing the mask to prevent injury, the poet achieves a detachment from experience that leaves him only superficially involved, whatever the outcome".<sup>24</sup> The mask, in the case of Arnold, is necessary for he used to address the burning topics of his day - religion, politics, education etc., and at the same time Arnold has been aware of the limitation the Time-Spirit imposes on free disinterested criticism.

Undoubtedly, Arnold has exposed too much, in *Empedocles*, of his own times and his own situation. To this effect he writes about his poetry in general: "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" (Letters [June, 1869] Vol. II, p. 4). In another letter of his, Arnold writes, what one considers a crucial statement, that "Traces of an impatience with the language and assumption of the popular theology of the day may very likely be visible in my work, and I have now, and no doubt had still more than, a sympathy with the figure Empedocles presents to the imagination, but neither then nor now would my creed, if I wished or were able to draw it out in black and white, be by any means identical with that contained in the preachment of Empedocles... No critic appears to mark that if Empedocles throws himself into Etna his creed can hardly be meant to be one to live by. If the creed of Empedocles were, as exhibited in my poem, a satisfying one, he ought to have lived after delivering it himself of it, not died" (Commentary, p. 288).

One is concerned here with the term 'sympathy', Arnold must have been aware of the critical implication of the term either through Coleridge who has used it on Shakespeare, or through its development by eighteenth-century associationists who use it as an ethical concept. The term has been used, in 19th century, to explain how a poet is able to annul space and the isolation of his individual nervous system and become, for the nonce, the personality he contemplates. Arnold, however, uses the term in his evaluation of Lucretius.

In conclusion, what one has been trying to show is that Arnold has been interpreting a phenomenon which is typical of all committed artists in modern times. And that alienation is part and parcel of times characterised



by the advancement of thought - in Victorian Britain as well as Europe. On the whole, Arnold's interpretation of the spiritual state of his time, the subject of this chapter, and its slow fateful dissolution are clear and impressive. Their courageous directness, their monumental weight, and diamond-hard clarity, are reminiscent of the opening of the Beethoven "C Minor Symphony". Thus destiny knocks at the door of a culture.

NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Mark Schorer, "The Necessity of Myth", in Myth and Mythology ed. H.A. Murray (New York, 1960), p. 356.
- <sup>2</sup> A.O.J. Cockshut, The Unbelievers (New York: New York University Press, 1966), p. 60.
- <sup>3</sup> Eugene L. Williamson, "Significant Points of Comparison Between the Biblical Criticism of Thomas and Matthew Arnold", PMLA, 76 (December, 1961), 540.
- <sup>4</sup> Alexander Vinet, Discours sur quelques sujets religieux, 4th ed. (Paris, 1845), pp. x-xi.
- <sup>5</sup> It is worthy of notice that the appeal to miracles had not in the past been so common or so extensive as is often supposed, it had, indeed, been rejected by Jesus (Mt. 4:5.f., Lk.4:9ff) and by St Paul (I Cor. I:22f.). Liberal scholars insisted that the acceptance of the Virgin Birth should no longer be required of Christians. They pointed out that although found in early Western Creeds it was absent from the original Creed of Nicaea. The New Testament evidence is confined to the accounts in Mt. I:18ff. and Lk. 2:1ff., accounts which scholars regarded as of dubious value. There is no reference to it in Mark, John or in St Paul.
- <sup>6</sup> Arnold's reading-lists show that he was aware of the implications of such concepts, - Pantheism and Deism, and their importance in human life. The reading list of 1845, for instance, includes, among many other things, Berkeley's Siris: "Arnold's interest in Siris may be suggested by noticing that Berkeley discusses among other matters Greek cosmologies, Egyptian myths and their interpretation, speculations concerning the anima mundi and the respectability of pantheist views ('If nature be supposed the life of the world, animated by one soul, compacted into one frame, and directed or governed by one mind: this system cannot be accused of Atheism' (sect. 229); 'Plato and Aristotle considered God as abstracted or distinct from the natural world. But the Egyptians considered God and nature as making one whole, or all things together as making one universe. In doing which they did not exclude the intelligent mind, but considered it as containing all things. Therefore, whatever was wrong in their way of

thinking, it does not nevertheless, imply or lead to Atheism' (sect. 300). These topics recur frequently in connection with the other five reading-lists; and among the authors Arnold signified his intention of reading are Plotinus, Plutarch and Cudworth, who are much cited by Berkeley" (Allott, "Early Reading-lists", VS, ii, 1959, 258-59).

Another source of Arnold's Pantheistic views can be found in Arnold's admiration of Cousin. Arnold had read Gioberti's attack on Cousin's views, for translations into French of Abbe V. Gioberti's attack were published in the early 1840's: Le Panthéisme de M. Cousin exposé par lui-même (1842) and Considerations sur les doctrines religieuses de M. Victor Cousin (1844). V. Cousin seems to have directed Arnold to Wilhelm Von Humboldt's analysis of the Bhagavad Gita in the Transactions of the Royal Academy of the Science, Berlin (1826).

- 7 Muller, A History of the Literature of Ancient Greece, trans. George Cornewell Lewis and Donaldson (London, 1858), Vol. I, pp. 305-6. Quoted by Mary W. Schneider "Orpheus in Three Poems by Matthew Arnold", Victorian Poetry Vol. 10 (1970), 36.
- 8 "The subject had been associated in Arnold's mind since 1831 with the personality of his father, who had set it that year as the subject for a Rugby prize poem, it is hard not to link his renewal interest in it with Dr Arnold's death in 1842 and the warning that he had inherited a similar weakness of the heart." Kenneth and Miriam Allott "Arnold the Poet ii," in Writers and their background: Matthew Arnold (ed.) K. Allott (London: G. Bell & Sons, 1975), p. 82.
- 9 Unsigned notice in the English Review, (March, 1850).
- 10 R. H. Super, The Time-Spirit of Matthew Arnold (Ann Arbor: the University of Michigan Press, 1970), pp. 95-96.
- 11 Guy De Maupassant, Selected Short Stories (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975), tr. Roger Colet, introduction, p. 15.
- 12 David J. Delaura, "Arnold and Literary Criticism (i)", in Matthew Arnold Writers and their Background, ed. Kenneth Allott (London: G. Bell & Sons, 1975), p. 121.
- 13 Kenneth and Miriam Allott, "Arnold the Poet", (Ibid.), p. 102.
- 14 Fred Kaplan, Miracles of Rare Device (Detroit: Wayne University Press, 1972), pp. 128-9.
- 15 C. Day-Lewis, The Poetic Image (London: Jonathan Cape, 1968), pp. 32-33.
- 16 Gattlab Frege, "On Concept and Object", in Translations from the Philosophical Writings of Gattlab Frege, ed. by P. Geach and M. Black (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1952), p. 461 first note. Quoted by Jerrold J. Katz, Linguistic Philosophy (London: G. Allen and Unwin, 1971), p. 10.

- 17 Professor Ayer, in Language, Truth and Logic, says on page 13 "Aesthetic terms as 'beautiful' and 'hideous' are used in exactly the same way as ethical terms. Such aesthetic words are employed, not to make statements of fact, but simply to express certain feelings and evoke a certain response".
- 18 E.D.H. Johnson, The Alien Vision (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957).
- 19 Professor Allot says that "Victor Cousin seems to have directed him to Wilhelm Von Humboldt's analysis of the 'Bhagavad Gita' in the 'Transactions of the Royal Academy of the Sciences, Berlin (1826)'. 'This analysis contains, as does H.H. Milman's review of it and other works on Hindu Poetry in the Quarterly Review of April (1831), which Arnold certainly read, the assertion of a likeness between the Bhagavad Gita, the De Rerum Natura and the fragments of Empedocles. (thus)... Association between Lucretius, Empedocles and the 'Bhagavad Gita' had been formed in Arnold's mind before he began to study the Greek philosopher." In "A Background to Empedocles on Etna" Essays and Studies XXI (1969), 90-91.
- 20 T. Carlyle, "Everlasting Yea", Sartor Resartus. Quoted by R.H. Super, The Time-Spirit (Op.cit.,) pp. 71-72.
- 21 Howard W. Fulweiler, Letters From The Darkling Plain, (Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 1972), p. 40.
- 22 W.E. Houghton, "Arnold's 'Empedocles on Etna'", VS,1 (1958), 318.
- 23 It may be daring to say that even the phenomenon of 'dissociation of sensibility', which is thought to be a modern case, is as old as man's consciousness. The unity of sensibility has been symbolised by gods with two wings on their heads. 'The god EL', for example, 'had two wings on his head, one for pure intelligence, the other for feeling' (Larousse Greek Mythology, p. 83). Afterwards they were split. Gods stand either for pure intelligence - Apollo, or pure feeling - Dionysus.
- 24 Richard Ellmann, Yeats: The Man and the Masks (New York, 1948), p. 173. Quoted by Linda Lee Roy, "Callicles on Etna: the other Mask", Victorian Poetry 7:4. (Winter, 1969).

## CHAPTER VII

### On Nature

Paradise, and groves  
Elysian, Fortunate Fields - like those of old  
Sought in the Atlantic Main - why should they be  
A history only of departed things,  
Or a mere fiction of what never was?

... ..

For the discerning intellect of Man,  
When wedded to this goodly Universe  
In love and holy passion, shall find these  
A simple produce of the common day.

W. Wordsworth

What pitfalls there are in that word Nature.

M. Arnold

The term Nature belongs to a class of words whose inherent quality, is semantic ambiguity. In this way, it is capable of creating doctrinal or dialectical state, and hence causes emotional polarities. These are in fact, the three forces that operate, as Lovejoy has observed, as determining factors in the thought of both individual writers and ages. They are, according to Lovejoy, three kinds, corresponding to three levels of human thought: the semantic, the dialectical and the psychological.

The first force is that inherent in the ambiguity of words, and especially of those large and peculiarly multivocal catchwords, like 'Nature', that have dotted the pages of philosophers, essayists, and poets in all periods... The second force is again... inherent in the materials: it is the capacity of particular unit-ideas to attract or repel one another, often without the author's being aware of what is going on. The assumption here is that ideas themselves, apart from their particular uses in philosophical or literary discourse, are connected with other ideas by logical relations of 'simple congruity or mutual implication or mutual incongruity' and that this fact often gives rise to latent discords

or conflicts among the ideas compounded in a given system or piece of writing. The third force... is the internally conflicting forces, of temperamental predilection... 'the underlying affective factors in his [the writer's] personality. 1

The history of ideas, in general, reflects the working of two fundamental and opposing biases of temperament, that have competed with each other for domination throughout the evolution of Western thought: For Lovejoy, these two basic moods are: "otherworldliness" and "this-worldliness"; for Arnold, they are: "Hebraism" and "Hellenism"; for William James: "tough-minded" and the "tender-minded"; for Arnold Toynbee: "retreat" and "expansion"; and for the writer of these lines: "Deism" and "Pantheism".

Thus one sees that Romantic Nature, for example, is an invisible energy behind the things man sees. Classical Nature, whose relation to the Romantic one - in the history of literature - is like the systole and the diastole to the human heart, means the visible creation regarded as an orderly arrangement. In the course of time Nature changes its meaning in correspondence with the two concepts of God, explained in the introduction of this part: pantheistic and deistic, or immanence and transcendence respectively. But it is to be noted that in any single period more than one meaning for the word may be current. All theologies have, in fact, both immanent and transcendent elements in them, though this or that element may be obscured or suppressed. What is true in theology is equally true in the case of a metaphysical concept like "Nature". The suggestion one is considering, here, is not that a purely immanent conception of God or Nature is replaced by a purely transcended one, but that a conception in which immanence is emphasised gives way to one in which transcendence is emphasised.

Most significant thing of all, some of these concepts, as John F. Danby

has observed, will quarrel. "There are so many rivals committed to an internecine struggle. Quarrels over what 'Nature' really means are not merely verbal: weapons will out as often as words. People identify themselves with the fate of their meaning. The quarrel might be a matter of life or death. Thus Giordano Bruno was imprisoned in 1593 and burnt in 1600. One reason for this was an unacceptable sense in which he used the word 'Nature'."<sup>2</sup> The sorts of meanings men die for are structural frames by which they live, work, and think. A meaning is not a dictionary sense: It can be a programme of action. The human being who chooses such and such a meaning is deciding for such and such a course of behaviour among his fellows. And literary works do as much as philosophical works [or more] to determine what meaning men find most appealing.

"Nature", in its widest sense, can mean 'the totality of things', all that would have to appear in an inventory of the universe. It can also refer to the laws and principles of structure by which the behaviour of things may be explained. These two senses cannot be kept independent of each other at any advanced level of inquiry, for to state in any of the sciences what an entity is involves describing what it does, its patterns of activity or behaviour, and the activity of its constituent elements, as far as they can be known and subsumed under laws. The detailed study of natural fact is commonly called natural science; the reflection on principles, whether those of natural science or of any other department of thought or action, is commonly called philosophy, under which literary criticism comes. The artist should have a fair knowledge of the first, and be thoroughly acquainted with the latter. For he deals with nature at both levels. To this effect Abrams writes:

Take what I have called the 'universe', as an example. In any theory [of art], the aspects of nature which an artist is said to imitate, or is exhorted to imitate, may be either particulars or types, and they may be only the beautiful or the moral aspects of the world, or else any aspect without discrimination. It may be maintained that the artist's world is that of imaginative intuition, or of common sense, or of natural science; and this world may be held to include, or not to include, gods, witches, chimeras, and Platonic Ideas. Consequently, theories which agree in assigning to the represented universe the primary control over a legitimate work of art may vary from recommending the most uncompromising realism to the most remote idealism.

(Abrams, The Mirror and the Lamp, p. 7)

Most critics find Arnold's ideas on nature confused and inconsistent. There are, however, four detailed treatments of Arnold's poems on nature: Joseph Warren Beach finds the poems "lacking in the warmth and richness that marked the romantic treatment of nature".<sup>3</sup> L. Trilling argues that Arnold's concept of nature is "confused and inconsistent".<sup>4</sup> J. Hillis Miller says "In Arnold's hands nature poetry becomes like descriptions in a botanical handbook - accurate, but superficial" (The Disappearance of God, p. 233). Stange, who disagrees with both Beach and Trilling, defends Arnold's treatment of nature but has committed a serious mistake that undermines the whole chapter when he says that: "Arnold... had no interest in the pantheistic tendencies of Spinoza's thought" (The Poet as Humanist, p. 133).

It is true that there are paradoxes in Arnold's concept of nature. The aim of this chapter will be to understand what these paradoxes mean. One hopes to show that if Arnold's nature poems are read patiently, there would be no difficulty in seeing what he is about: (1) he is attempting to clear away the anthropomorphic tendencies of thought that had filtered down from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as well as (2) the mystical glorification of nature in the early nineteenth-century poets and, (3)

to recommend a modern concept of animism.

I

Arnold, in his interpretation of the phenomenon of alienation, locates its roots to the seventeenth-century: Man "entered the prison of puritanism and had the key turned upon its spirit there for two hundred years" ("Equality", CPW, VIII, p. 294). One, then, wonders what happened to man's attitude to nature. This is necessary, for to know the "what" of things one should know the "why" too. It has been shown, in the introduction to this part of the thesis, that behind the shift and drift of the concepts of God there is a correspondent shift and drift in the meanings of the term, nature - that is to say if God is conceived as a Transcendent Other Nature would appear as indifferent and make men feel lost in the empty spaces of the vast universe. Man will see his life on Earth as a short time spent in a physical world with inscrutable void on the other side. A life without inherent meaning or purpose.

The sixteenth century bequeathed to the seventeenth century the concept of God as both Transcendent Other and Immanent. But in the first half of the sixteenth century man felt himself to be part of the grand system of Nature in a real sense. Both his body and his mind were included. His attitude to nature would not therefore be that of observant analyst: Each creature, under God, was a self-maintaining intelligence observing its rightful place in a community. But this animism or hylozoism was a recessive factor. There was a tendency running counter to this, for in the early Renaissance cosmologies there was a tendency to separate the two: God and Nature.

The idea of Nature as an organism was gradually giving way to the idea



of nature as a machine. The change from the organic to the mechanical view was chiefly the work of Copernicus. To this effect R.G. Collingwood writes:

The Renaissance view of nature began to take shape as antithetical to the Greek view in the work of Copernicus (1473-1543), Telesio (1508-88), and Bruno (1548-1600). The central point of this antithesis was the denial that the world of nature, the world studied by physical science, is an organism, and the assertion that it is devoid both of intelligence and of life. It is therefore incapable of ordering its own movements in a rational manner, and indeed incapable of moving itself at all. The movements which it exhibits, and which the physicist investigates, are imposed upon it from without, and their regularity is due to 'laws of nature' likewise imposed from without. Instead of being an organism, the natural world is a machine: a machine in the literal and proper sense of the word, an arrangement of bodily parts designed and put together and set going for a definite purpose by an intelligent mind outside itself. The Renaissance thinkers, like the Greeks, saw in the orderliness of the natural world an expression of intelligence: but for the Greeks this intelligence was nature's own intelligence, for the Renaissance thinkers it was the intelligence of something other than nature: the divine creator and ruler of nature. 5

The shift, in the concept of Nature, between the sixteenth-century and the seventeenth-century resembles that shift which took place in the history of Greek philosophy by the time of Socrates (479-399): From a general knowledge of pre-Socratic physics one could see that Greek thinkers take it for granted that mind belongs essentially to body and lives with it in the closest union. Socrates reversed this and concentrated his thought on ethics and logic; and from his time onwards, although the theory of Nature was by no means forgotten even by Plato, the theory of mind predominated, and the theory of Nature took the second place. At the end of the sixteenth-century the very same movement was enacted: for Descartes (1596-1650), body is one substance and mind is another. Each works independently of the other according to its own laws. Just as the fundamental axiom of pre-Socratic thought about mind is its immanence in body, so the fundamental axiom of

Descartes is its transcendence.

Poetry as well as other arts accompanied this movement and interpreted it. For example, the painting of Nicolas Poussin (Plate 1, about 1630) reflects a concept of nature which itself is a reflection to the age's concept of God: as both Immanent and Transcendent at the same time. The distribution of the figures, the idea that nature is something to be used, the authoritative relationship at work, all this could be read in that plate. This trend in its extreme could be found in the paintings of Jean-Francois Millet (Plate 2, 1855). In contrast to this concept, and as an interpreter of the early Renaissance concept of nature, there are the paintings of Giorgione (Plate 3, between 1508-1510). From poetry one can choose a short extract from The Faerie Queene:

Then forth issewed (great goddesse) great dame Nature  
With goodly port and gracious Majesty,  
Being far greater and more tall of stature  
Then any of the gods or Powers on hie:  
Yet certes by her face and physnomy,  
Whether she man or woman inly were,  
That could not any creature well descry;  
For with a veil, that wimpled everywhere,  
Her head and face was hid, that mote to none appear.

That, some do say, was so by skill devized  
To hide the terror of her uncouth hew  
From mortall eyes that should be sore aggrized;  
For that her face did like a Lion shew,  
That eye of wight could not endure to view;  
But others tell that it so beautious was,  
And round about such beames of splendor threw,  
That it the Sunne a thousand times did pass,  
Ne could be seene but like an image in a glass.

(Bk. VII, viii, 5-6)

This sort of doubt, as to what nature really was like, pervades the whole of King Lear. To this effect John F. Danby writes: "Thus two societies must be added to the two Natures and two Reasons. Because the play is an allegory of ethical systems and people, it must be also an allegory of



Plate (1) Nicolas Poussin (1594-1665), The Four Seasons: Summer  
(Ruth and Boaz), painted between 1660-64. Musee du Louvre.



Plate (2) Jean-Francois Millet (1814-1875), Les Glaneuses, 1857.  
Musee du Louvre, Paris.



Plate (3) Giorgione (1478-1510) painted between 1509-1510?  
Le concert champêtre - Musée du Louvre



Plate (4) Edouard Manet (1832-1883) finished by May 1, 1863  
Le déjeuner sur l'herbe - Louvre, Musée de l'Impressionnisme

community. For according to one of the systems at least we are all members one of another. This society is that of the medieval vision. Its representative is an old king ('Nature in you stands on the verge of her confine'). It is doting and it falls into errors. The other society is that of nascent capitalism. Its representative in chief is the New man - and a politic machiavel" (Op. cit., p. 52).

Thus, by the beginning of the seventeenth century Man, Nature, and God fall apart. The age come to conceive the orderly movements of matter as a dead movement: a world of dead matter, infinite in extent and permeated by movement throughout, but utterly devoid of ultimate qualitative differences and moved by uniform and purely quantitative forces. This is why in the seventeenth century there is a huge outbreak of dualism: (a) in metaphysics, between body and mind; (b) in cosmology, between nature and God; (c) in epistemology, between rationalism and empiricism. This sort of dualism coupled with the sense of the vastness of nature produced two attitudes that filtered down to the nineteenth century: Anthropomorphic and Mechanistic.

i

Anthropomorphic. More generally, reference to man's place in nature, for instance to his minuteness, could be used to depreciate the quest for "unworldly" glory as a preparation for spiritual discipline. "Who can be great," asked Drummond of Hawthornden, "on so small a Round as this Earth?" And Pascal asked: "Qu'est ce qu'un homme dans l'infini?" (What is a man in face of infinity?).<sup>6</sup> Another point in the same attitude towards nature can also be illustrated from sixteenth-and-seventeenth-century arguments about the alleged "cosmic fall": If nature is inclement and hostile, this is

because nature participated in the effects of man's fall into sin. It follows that the proper God-intended destiny of man cannot be found in this fallen nature; it must be discovered in the revealed word of God.

Inherent in the anthropomorphic attitude there is the possibility of taking nature as norm: where different philosophies tried to find answers to questions about the relation of nature to value: Can values be in any way derived from descriptions of nature? does nature contain any norms for man? can appeals to nature settle moral or aesthetic perplexities? Questions like these could give an unwarranted and distorting support to the anthropomorphic tendency in the nature of man. On this attitude, Arnold says:

But will any one say that the proposition, that the course of nature implies an operating agent with a will and a character, produces or can produce a like sense of satisfying conviction, and can in like manner be built upon? It cannot. It does not appeal... to what is solid. It appeals really, to the deep anthropomorphic tendency in man; and this tendency, when we examine the thing coolly, we feel that we cannot trust.

("Bishop Butler and the Zeit-Geist",  
CPW, VIII, pp. 52-53)

Arnold pursued this argument in a number of his poems such as "In Harmony with Nature", "Religious Isolation", and "Morality". The main idea behind these poems is the vital differences between Nature and Man.

In the sonnet "In Harmony with Nature" (1844-47?), previously called "To an Independent Preacher", Arnold, denouncing rhapsodic sentimentalism and listing the vital differences between Nature and Man, writes:

'In harmony with Nature' Restless fool,  
Who with such heat dost preach what were to thee,  
When true, the last impossibility -  
To be like Nature strong, like Nature cool!

Know, man hath all which Nature hath, but more,  
And in that more lie all his hopes of good.  
Nature is cruel, man is sick of blood;  
Nature is stubborn, man would fain adore;

Nature is fickle, man hath need of rest;  
Nature forgives no debt, and fears no grave;  
Man would be mild, and with safe conscience blest.

Man must begin, know this, where Nature ends;  
Nature and man can never be fast friends.  
Fool, if thou canst not pass her, rest her slave!

(Poems, p. 54)

This poem attracted the attention of the critics because of the seeming contradiction to the main lines in Arnold's argument in other poems. Albert Van Aver, in his comment,<sup>7</sup> says that it expresses contradictory attitudes concerning man's relationship to nature. The first quatrain suggests the monistic view that conformity to nature is a desirable if unattainable goal; the following two quatrains imply man should surpass nature in his quest for spiritual values. This disunity, Aver continues, is seen also in the poem's conclusion, for the 12th line reflects the attitude of the first quatrain, while the last two lines reflect that of the second and third quatrains. And he concludes by saying that Arnold's inability to control his point of view indicates ambiguity about spiritual and intellectual issues. In my view, Mr Aver has complicated the matter by assuming something the sonnet form by its nature cannot contain: the sonnet form is too short to allow any room for a poet to manoeuvre with one idea much less with two contradictory ideas as Aver suggests. In the same vein, W.D. Anderson says "Among the poems of the first volume, 'In Harmony with Nature' is an anomaly. It seems a direct attack on the central idea of Stoic ethics, the vita secundum natura or life in accordance with nature. For the Stoics, natura embraces all existence. Man cannot be alien to it: he is inseparable from the cosmic whole, the

We all of us like to go our own way, and not be forced out of the atmosphere of commonplace habitual to most of us... We like to be suffered to lie comfortably in the old straw of our habits, especially of our intellectual habits, even though this straw may not be very clean and fine. But if the effort to limit this freedom of our lower nature finds, as it does and must find, enemies in human nature, it finds also auxiliaries in it. Out of the four great parts, says Cicero, of the honestum, or good, which forms the matter on which officium, or human duty, finds employment, one is the fixing of a monadus and an ordo, a measure and an order, to fashion and wholesomely constrain our action, in order to lift it above the level it keeps it left to itself, and to bring it nearer to perfection. Man alone of living creatures, he says, goes feeling after 'quid sit ordo, quid sit quod deceat, in factis dictisque qui modus - the discovery of an order, - a law of good taste, a measure for his words and actions.' Other creatures submissively follow the law of their nature; man alone has an impulse leading him to set up some other law to control the bent of his nature...

This holds good, of course, as to moral matters, as well as intellectual matters: and it is of moral matters that we are generally thinking when we affirm it. But it holds good as to intellectual matters too.

("The Literary Influence of Academies",  
CPW, III, pp. 235-36)

And in "Literature and Science", Arnold writes:

A certain Greek prophetess of Mantinea in Arcadia, Diotima by name, once explained to the philosopher Socrates that love, and impulse, and bent of all kinds, is, in fact, nothing else but the desire in men that good should for ever be present to them. This desire for good, Diotima assured Socrates, is our fundamental desire, of which fundamental desire every impulse in us is only some one particular form.

(CPW, X p.63)

The same idea, of the sharp distinction between Nature and Man, is found in Arnold's sonnet - "Religious Isolation", in which he warns a friend [Clough] against the anthropomorphism: the tendency to make nature share his thoughts, like a child imagining that 'some incurious bystander' has a common interest with him. Arnold urges upon that friend instead the Emersonian and traditionally humanistic doctrine of law for



This poem shows that Arnold is uncomfortably conscious of the problem involved in the position he takes: if, in order to refute those who claim that nature has a moral law and try to impose it on others, he argues that nature does not have a moral law, he would seem as if he were championing a mechanistic view of nature. And if he says that nature has a law he would seem as if he were arguing from an anthropomorphic stance. This is the paradox involved in the situation.

The problem is further complicated by the fact that in seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, a period dominated by religion, the law of nature meant a moral law, but in the nineteenth-century, religion, itself, seemed to be falling apart; and this law of nature came to be the law of evolution and the struggle for survival. On the level of social interaction it would generate a competitive and war-like individual. For if Darwin had elaborated on the philosophy underlying his biology he would have arrived at something like Schopenhauer's conception of the evolutionary process as the self-expression of a blind will, a creative and directive force utterly devoid of consciousness and of the moral attributes which consciousness bestows on the will of man; "and it is some such ideas which we find floating everywhere in the atmosphere of Darwin's contemporaries, such as Tennyson" [cf. Maud, In Memoriam] (Collingwood, Op. cit., p. 135).

The whole problem emanates from the fact that the nineteenth-century is, like the sixteenth-century, an age of transition. Transition in a sense that God or Life-force were conceived both as immanent and transcendent. For the theory of evolution implies the philosophical conception of a life-force at once immanent and transcendent in relation to each and every living organism; immanent as existing only as embodied in these organisms, transcendent as seeking to realise itself not merely in the survival of the

individual organisms, nor merely in the perpetuation of their specific type, but as always able and always trying to find for itself a more adequate realisation in a new type.

Arnold's definition of God betrays such a state for his concept is at once immanent and transcendent: "For the total man," he writes, "the truer conception of God is as 'the Eternal Power, not ourselves, by which all things fulfil the law of their being;' therefore, we fulfil the law of our being so far as our being is aesthetic and intellective, as well as so far it is moral" (Literature and Dogma, CPW, p. 409). Again, Arnold adds that God is "the stream of tendency by which all things fulfil the law of their being" (Ibid., p. 42).

By this, one comes to the other variety of man's attitude to nature in the Deistic concept of God: Mechanistic.

ii

Mechanistic. One of the most fascinating things about ideas is the phenomenon that the one and the same idea could be the source of diverse states of feelings. For instance, the vastness of nature could be taken to depreciate man as insignificant creature; it could equally well be taken as evidence of man's importance in God's eyes; for on independent theological grounds the whole of nature could be seen as primarily a dwelling place of man. As Pierre de la Primaudaye says "...I cannot marvel enough at the excellence of man, for whom all these things were created and are maintained..." (Encyclopaedia of Philosophy)

Most of these arguments with their ingredients are capable of endless variations. For instance, if, as the fundamental thought of this teleology affirms, the whole order of nature exists only for the benefit of man, the

obvious moral application is that man should try all things with a view to the use he may derive from them, and act accordingly. This type of ethics finds its philosophical expression in the writings of Leibniz (1646-1716) whom Voltaire caricatured as Doctor Pangloss in Candide; and in the ethical philosophy of Enlightenment. In all these ways of thinking, nature is just a source of raw power which man, if he is only clever, can make her serve his purposes. This attitude applied to society means man can use other men, or one class can use another. Arnold rejected this teleological way of thinking, to this effect he writes:

For a mind like Goethe's - a mind profoundly impartial and passionately aspiring after the science, not of men only, but of universal nature - the popular philosophy which explains all things by reference to man, and regards universal nature as existing for the sake of man, and even of certain classes of men, was utterly repulsive. Unchecked, this philosophy would gladly maintain that the donkey exists in order that the invalid Christian may have donkey's milk before breakfast; and such views of nature as this were exactly what Goethe's whole soul abhorred.

("Spinoza and the Bible", CPW,  
III, p. 176)

Arnold pursued this argument in a number of his poems such as "Self-Dependence" and "A Wish". The main idea behind these poems is that nature not only has a separate existence and more ancient than man himself, but it also has qualities that man strives after.

In "Self-Dependence" (1849-50?) the stars are invoked as sublime models, serene self-poised agents, undisturbed by the fevers of human egoism and discontent. Arnold, in contrasting man with these qualities, presents the speaker as weary with the effort to define himself and exposed as the victim of a delusion:

Weary of myself, and sick of asking  
What I am, and what I ought to be,  
At this vessel's prow I stand, which bears me  
Forwards, forwards, o'er the starlit sea.

And a look of passionate desire  
O'er the sea and the stars I send:  
'Ye who from my childhood up have calm'd me,  
Calm me, ah, compose me to the end!

'Ah, once more,' I cried, 'ye stars, ye water,  
On my heart your mighty charm renew;  
Still, still let me, as I gaze upon you,  
Feel my soul becoming vast like you!'

(Poems, pp. 142-43)

The lesson one learns from the poem is that passionate yearning impedes a significant relation with nature: Nature, thus, answers man:

From the intense, clear, star-sown vault of heaven,  
Over the lit sea's unquiet way,  
In the resulting night-air came the answer:  
'Wouldst thou be as these are? Live as they.

'Unaffrighted by the silence round them,  
Undistracted by the sights they see,  
These demand not that the things without them  
Yield them love, amusement, sympathy.

'And with joy the stars perform their shining,  
And the sea its long moon-silvered roll;  
For self-poised they live, nor pine with noting  
All the fever of some differing soul.

'Bound by themselves, and unregardful  
In what state God's other works may be,  
In their own tasks all their powers pouring,  
These attain the mighty life you see.'

(Ibid., p. 143 )

In "A Wish" (1865), the very idea, that nature has a separate existence, recurs again:

The world which was ere I was born,  
The world which lasts when I am dead;  
Which never was the friend of one,  
Nor promised love it could not give,  
But lit for all its generous sun,  
And lived itself, and made us live.

(Poems, p. 517)

To sum up. Deistic thinking itself is made in the structural image of social patriarchy when it regards the brain as the master, the nerves as the telegraph wires, and the organs as obedient executive subjects. At this point the mechanist would stop and the anthropomorphist would pick the argument up to say that behind the brain there is God, or reason, or purpose.

## II

In the recoil from a theory which, by exaggerating it, becomes virtually dualistic, the tendency arises to a theory which swamps the finite (man) in the infinite (God or Nature): In other words, Pantheism.

To see the difference in attitude between Transcendence and Immanence, one takes two quotations from Alexander Pope and Wordsworth respectively:

Nature to all things fixed the limits fit  
And wisely curbed proud man's pretending wit.

(Lines, 52-53)

... ..

First follow nature, and your judgement frame  
By her just standard, which is still the same.

(Essay In Criticism", Lines 68-69)

And to quote from the 1805 version of Wordsworth's Prelude :

... ..

Who through that bodily image hath diffused  
A soul divine which we participate,  
A deathless spirit.

(V, 15-17)

"To follow", or "to imitate", and "to share", or "to participate". With regard to the first, if one says that a thing follows or imitates an ideal or, to use the Platonic idea, a form, one implies that the form is not in the thing but outside it: And to say that a thing participates in a form, or shares in it, is to use a legal metaphor to imply a joint ownership. In other words, 'participation' implies immanence while 'imitation' implies transcendence.

This difference of attitude towards nature showed itself in the pre-romantic period, but by the last quarter of the eighteenth-century and the first one of the nineteenth-century, there emerged a strong pantheistic concept of nature whose chief characteristics are: the feeling that there is a hidden meaning and significance lying behind external phenomena: the feeling of an underlying love upholding and permeating everything: and the unity of the knower and the known: and, through it all, a feeling of intense joy, sureness, and serenity.

But the fact remains that in pantheism there are different varieties, and two poets could be seen as pantheists but this does not mean that they are the same. For pantheism, like deism, resolves itself into two main attitudes: Mysticism and Animism.

i

Pantheistic mysticism. The chief characteristics of this attitude are:

(1) It has the quality of ineffability, that is, it defies expression in terms which are fully intelligible to one who has not known some analogous experience. It thus resembles a state of feeling rather than a state of intellect. To this effect one can quote at random from Wordsworth. For instance he says:

Possessions have I that are solely mine,  
Something within which yet is shared by none ...

Again he says:

I had a world about me; 'twas my own,  
I made it; for it only liv'd to me,  
And to the God who look'd into my mind.

(2) While mystical states are akin to states of feeling, they are also states of knowledge: they have a noetic quality. Thus, Wordsworth, at the end of "Home at Grasmere", announces, ~~to use his own words,~~ his

discovery that he has been chosen to be a poet-prophet for his age. He has been granted 'an internal brightness' that is 'shared by none' and that compels him, 'divinely taught', to speak 'of what in man is human or divine'.

"I would impart it, I would spread it wide,  
Immortal in the world which is to come."

(3) Mystical states can seldom be sustained for long; they rarely last for any length of time. They have thus the quality of transiency: there is invariably a speedy return to normality. And when the mystical states occur, they invariably carry with them a feeling of something given. They have the quality of passivity. The mystic feels as if his own will were in abeyance, as if he were grasped and held by a power not his own. Arnold, in fact, sees Wordsworth in these terms: for to him Wordsworth's superiority,

is in the power with which Wordsworth feels the resources of joy offered to us in nature, offered to us in the primary human affections and duties, and the power with which, in his moments of inspiration, he renders this joy and makes us, too, feel it; a force greater than himself seeming to lift him and to prompt his tongue, so that he speaks in a style far above any style of which he has the constant command, and with a truth far beyond any philosophic truth of which he has the conscious and assured possession.

("Byron", CPW, IX, pp. 230-31)



(4) A common characteristic of all mystical states is the presence of a consciousness of the Oneness of everything. All creaturely existence is experienced as a unity, as All in One and One in All. "In theistic mysticism," says F.C. Happold, "God is felt to be in everything and everything to exist in God."<sup>8</sup> Bound up with this sense of oneness, there is the conviction that the familiar phenomenal ego is not the real I. "The soul is in itself regarded as numinous and hidden. The uncreated soul or spirit strives to enter not into communion with Nature or with God but into a state of complete isolation from everything that is other than itself. The chief object of man is the quest of his own self and of right knowledge about it" (Ibid., p. 44).

It has been rightly observed that "on the recurrent level of narration in which mind and nature must suffice to generate the plot of The Prelude, a heavy requisition is placed on nature, but a still heavier one is placed on mind, which in Wordsworth, as in the German Idealists, is the prior and preeminent power!"<sup>9</sup> To this effect Wordsworth writes:

... .. when we look  
Into our Minds, into the Mind of Man -  
My haunt, and the main region of my song.

Thus Wordsworth, in fact, proceeds to a coda which is a gloria in excelsis not to nature but to the mind of man: for he will

Instruct them how the mind of man becomes  
A thousand times more beautiful than the earth  
On which he dwells, above this Frame of things ....  
Of substance and of fabric more divine.

(XIII, 431-51)

This situation would produce a state at which individual souls, to use Plotinus' words, become

partial and self-centred; in a weary desire of standing apart they find their way, each to a place of its very own. This state long maintained, the Soul is a deserter from the All; its differentiation has severed it; its vision is no longer set in the Intellectual; it is a partial thing, isolated, weakened, full of care, intent upon the fragment; severed from the whole ... it nestles in one form of being; for this, it abandons all else, entering into and caring for only the one, for a thing buffeted about by a worldful of things .... It has fallen.

( Quoted by M.H.Abrams, Natural Supernaturalism, op. cit., p.148)

This complex of ideas, especially of the inadequacy of Wordsworth's concept of nature, enters into a series of poems written around 1849-50. Among them is his poem "Stanzas In Memory of the Author of 'Obermann'" (1849) in which he says:

But Wordsworth's eyes avert their ken  
From half of human fate.

(Poems, p. 132)

For Arnold, Wordsworth's 'sweet calm' was insecurely founded, as he says in his lecture on Heine (1863): Wordsworth 'plunged himself in the inward life, he voluntarily cut himself off from the modern spirit'. However, this sweet calm of solitude might appeal to the poet:

Ah! two desires toss about  
The poet's feverish blood,  
One drives him to the world without,  
And one to solitude.

(Poems, p. 134)

But for the committed poet there is no choice:

I go, fate drives me; but I leave  
Half of my life with you.  
We, in some unknown Power's employ,  
Move on a rigorous line;  
Can neither, when we will, enjoy,  
Nor, when we will, resign.  
I in the world must live.

(Ibid., p. 135-36)

These Powers, in the context of Arnold's thinking, are synonymous with the Time-spirit:

But we, brought forth and reared in hours  
Of change, alarm, surprise -  
What shelter to grow ripe is ours?  
What leisure to grow wise?  
Like children bathing on the shore,

Buried a wave beneath,  
The second wave succeeds, before  
We have had time to breathe.  
Too fast we live, too much are tried,  
Too harassed, to attain  
Wordsworth's sweet calm.

(Ibid., p. 133)

"Stanzas in Memory of the Author of 'Obermann'" has always been contrasted with Arnold's later poem "Obermann Once More" to show two contradictory stances of Arnold: alienation versus commitment respectively. The poem, as one sees it, shows Arnold to be aware of his responsibilities as a poet:

I go, fate drives me...  
I in the world must live.

The poem does not show as well any inconsistency in Arnold's interpretation of his own situation for lines 69-79 are remarkably similar to lines 143-146 in "The Scholar Gipsy":

'Tis that from change to change their being rolls;  
'Tis that repeated shocks, again, again,  
Exhaust the energy of strongest souls  
And numb the elastic powers.

(Poems, p. 339)

In "Memorial Verses", the elegy of April 1850, Arnold, 'combining elegy and literary criticism', praises Wordsworth:

And Wordsworth! - Ah, pale ghosts, rejoice!  
For never has such soothing voice  
Been to your shadowy world conveyed,  
Since erst, at morn, some wandering shade  
Heard the clear song of Orpheus come  
Through Hades, and the mournful gloom.  
Wordsworth has gone from us - and ye,  
Ah, may ye feel his voice as we!  
He too upon a wintry clime  
Had fallen - on this iron time  
Of doubts, disputes, distractions, fears.  
He found us when the age had bound  
Our souls in its benumbing round;  
He spoke, and loosed our heart in tears.  
He laid us as we lay at birth

On the cool flowery lap of earth,  
Smiles broke from us and we had ease;  
The hills were round us, and the breeze  
Went o'er the sun-lit fields again;  
Our foreheads felt the wind and rain.  
Our youth returned; for there was shed  
On spirits that had long been dead,  
Spirits dried up and closely furled,  
The freshness of the early world.

(Poems, pp. 228-29)

But now, ... "few or none / Hears thy voice right, now he is gone."

The abruptness of this statement is somewhat surprising because other poets have died and yet the values which they preached have remained. On this point, Culler writes: "This, indeed, is the crux of the elegiac form. The elegy especially in its pastoral version, has many conventions but none so necessary to its structure as that whereby the poet, towards the end of his lament, suddenly discovers that the person whom he is mourning is not dead but in some sense lives on... Arnold with his classical education understands this, and in 'Memorial Verses' he is writing an elegy. But there is no reversal in that poem. Wordsworth is dead and he will not return - a finalism which is the more glaring because in the case of Goethe and Byron, who are associated with Wordsworth in the poem, there is a possibility of their return.

"Time may restore us in his course  
Goethe's sage mind and Byron's force;  
But where will Europe's latter hour  
Again find Wordsworth's healing power'?"

"'Memorial Verses' is the only one of Arnold's elegies in which there is no reversal. All the others are marked by a sharp break, a kind of lyric peripeteia, in which the poet's attitude towards his subject is dramatically changed. But Arnold puts this break to a very different use from that found in conventional elegy. For whereas normally the elegy asserts that what has been lost here on earth will be recovered in another sphere, Arnold

asserts that what has been lost here on earth will be replaced - also on earth - by something different... It is purely naturalistic in its assumptions, and it is related to his philosophy of history" (Imaginative Reason, pp. 234-45).

What I have been trying to show is that it is unfair to criticise Arnold from the point of view of Romantic poetry, for it is not Romantic poetry that Arnold is attempting to write. To ask Arnold to write poetry like that of Wordsworth is like asking Edouard Manet (Plate 4) to paint like Giorgione (Plate 3): For though their attitude to nature is the same, - pantheistic, Manet's works would not have been conceived without his knowledge of the latest findings in the scientific field of light in his own time. Now, since one knows why Arnold departed from the Romantic tradition, it is one's duty to find out what it is that Arnold is attempting to do. This brings the argument to the second variety of pantheism: Animism or Functionalism.

ii

The Animism or Functionalism that one has in mind as well as Arnold is similar to that found in early Greek mythology and pre-Socratic philosophers. For the early Greeks, and with some qualification for all Greeks whatever, nature was a vast living organism, consisting of a material body spreading out in space and permeated by movements in time; the whole body was endowed with life, so that all its movements were vital movements, and all these movements were purposive, directed by intellect. This living and thinking body was homogeneous throughout in the sense that it was all alive, all endowed with soul and with reason; it was non-homogeneous in the sense that different parts of it were made of different substances each having

its own specialised qualitative nature and mode of acting. The problems which so profoundly exercise modern thought, the problems of the relation between dead matter and living matter, and the problems of the relation between matter and mind, did not exist. There was no dead matter, for no difference of principle was recognised between seasonal rotation of the heaven and the seasonal growth and fall of leaves on a tree, or between the movement of a planet in the sky and the movement of a fish in the water; it was never for a moment suggested that the one could be accounted for by a kind of law which did not even begin to account for the other. And there was no problem of the relation between matter and mind, for no difference was recognised between the way in which an Athenian conceives and obeys the laws of Solon, or a Spartan the laws of Lycurgus, and the way in which inanimate objects conceive and obey those laws of nature to which they are subject. There was no material world devoid of mind, and no mental world devoid of materiality.

Thales, for example, conceived the world of nature as an organism, in fact, as an animal. Anaximander believed in a plurality of worlds; he appears to have called each of them a god. Anaximenes, following Anaximander, believed in an immanent God identical with the world-creative process itself. It is even suggested that the conception of form as immanent was the original conception (the original Pythagorean conception in the case of mathematical forms and the world of nature, and the original Socratic conception, in the case of ethical forms and the world of human conduct). This seems likely on general grounds; for it would appear natural that when people first think about form and its relation to matter, they should begin by thinking of it as correlative to matter and as existing only in things which have a material element as well. And it may have been Plato who first abandoned this original conception and first propounded the

conception of form as transcendent.

This immanence lent dignity to the natural world itself. From that early time in the history of man it led people to think of nature as self-creative and in that sense divine, and therefore induced them to look at natural phenomena with a respectful, attentive, and observant eye; that is to say, it led to a habit of detailed and accurate observation, based on the postulate that everything in nature, however minute and apparently accidental, is permeated by rationality and therefore significant and valuable. In that state of Nature:

"Pride then was not, nor arts that pride to aid;  
Man walked with beast, joint tenant of the shade."<sup>10</sup>

In other words there was a sort of spontaneous relationship between man and nature, a relationship that connects the individual with the world without eliminating his individuality. A kind of relationship whose foremost expressions are love and productive work.

One understands the difficulty in convincing a scientifically oriented age of an argument like this. But if one presses deeper to the type of logic that runs through this argument one will see how reasonable it is. The Greeks, though they did not say so explicitly, evidently considered the power of movement a sign of life. To common-sense observation it seems that animals move themselves, while dead matter only moves when impelled by an external force. The soul of an animal, in Aristotle, has various functions, and one of them is to move the animal's body. The world of nature is thus, for the Greeks, a world of self-moving things. It is a living world: a world characterised not by inertia, like the world of seventeenth-century matter, but by spontaneous movements. This gave rise to another idea: nature as such is a process, growth, change. This process is a development - the changing takes successive forms a, b, y, ... in which



each is the potentiality of its successor; "but", says Collingwood, "it is not what we call 'evolution', because for Aristotle the kinds of change and of structure exhibited in the world of nature form an eternal repertory, and the items in the repertory are related logically, not temporally, among themselves. It follows that the change is in the last resort cyclical" (Op. cit., p. 82).

All this was permeated with the concept that the essence of life is to function. The etymology of the word nature is derived from, says Lovejoy, "'to beget, produce, give birth to' or more probably from the passive... 'to be born or produced, or to come into being'; and its original meaning, which it had already largely lost in Classical Greek, was doubtless simply 'birth' or 'origin'" (Op. cit., p. 103). In other words, early man animated nature according to his own sensations; he animated them, but did not mysticise them, as did his successor several hundred years later. Mysticism here means, to use Reich's words, "a change of sensory impressions and organ sensations into something unreal and beyond this world".<sup>11</sup> Or to use Arnold's words in his essay "Dante and Beatrice": to perceive the world supersensually and to reduce to nothing the sensible and human element.

The Greek view of nature as an intelligent organism, then, was based on an analogy between the world of nature and the individual human being, who begins by finding certain characteristics in himself as an individual. By the work of his own sub-consciousness he comes to think of himself as a body whose parts are in constant rhythmic motion, these motions being delicately adjusted to each other so as to preserve the vitality of the whole. What has been said so far about animism is, in fact, an explanation of what Arnold himself thinks. For as he puts it:

When we have noticed similar phenomena to man in provinces of the natural and spiritual world, we gladly place the two operations in juxtaposition; as to do so not only gives a livelier sense of the inward operation and graves it clearer in the memory; but also

awakens in us a pleasurable feeling of affinity and correspondence between ourselves and nature (illegible word) we never cease to apprehend the existence.

(Quoted by G. R. Stange, Yale Ms.,  
Op. cit., pp. 114-115).

Man, then, can learn to understand and love nature inside and outside himself only if he thinks and acts the way nature functions, namely, functionally and not mechanically or mystically. From this functionalism one can deduce a complex of ideas in ethics, politics, aesthetic etc., for in functionalism, there is no higher centre and no lower executive organ. "The nerve cells do not produce the impulses; they merely communicate them. The organism as a whole forms a natural cooperative of equivalent organs with different functions. If natural work democracy is biologically founded, we find it modelled after the harmonious cooperation among the organs. Multiplicity and variety are fused into unity. Function itself regulates cooperation" (W. Reich, Op. cit., p. 314).

When in the seventeenth century the centre of gravity in philosophical thought swung over from the theory of nature to the theory of mind, the problem of nature stated itself in this form: how can mind have any connection with something utterly alien to itself, something essentially mechanical and non-mental, namely nature? This was the only question, at bottom, that the eighteenth-century bequeathed unsolved to the nineteenth-century. It was the only question, concerning nature, that exercised the great philosophers of mind: Berkeley, Hume, Kant, and Hegel. "In every case their answer was at bottom the same: namely, that mind makes nature; nature is, so to speak, a by-product of the autonomous and self-existing activity of mind" (Collingwood, Op. cit., p. 7). Romantic poets followed that line of thinking. Thus Wordsworth, following the instance of Coleridge's "Frost at Midnight", says:

This efficacious spirit chiefly lurks  
Among those passages of life that give  
Profoundest knowledge to what point and how  
The mind is lord and master, outward sense  
The obedient servant of her will.

(Bk. xiii)

Arnold, contrary to what Johnson said,<sup>12</sup> rejects, as Allan Brick has rightly observed, "the assertion that the 'outer world' (both as physical and as conceptual phenomena) exists only in relation to a transcendental power which focuses through a perceiving ego... He does not imagine, for example, that the appearance of the woods, hills, and animals in his poem(s) depends upon the perceiving consciousness of the hero... For Arnold the discovery of reality is the discovery of self vis.à.vis the outer world".<sup>13</sup> Arnold, in fact, has been trying to solve this problem of discovering some intrinsic connexion between nature and mind: some connexion which would preserve the special character of each, and yet make them genuinely and intelligibly parts of the same world. Two pitfalls, Arnold was aware of, had to be avoided: first, their essential difference and indeed opposition must not be denied - mind must not be reduced to a special kind of matter, matter must not be reduced to a special form of mind; secondly, while this difference and opposition are still asserted, they must not be so asserted as to deny an essential unity connecting the two.

The fullest statement of this attempt could be found in two of Arnold's poems which, like so many of his poems about nature, are an explicit reconsideration of the Romantic doctrine of nature: "The youth of Nature" and "The Youth of Man".

In "The Youth of Nature", the poet is rowing on a lake near where Wordsworth lies dead, and musingly debates the relation between mind and nature. He begins by mourning the death of Wordsworth, who "lent a new life to these hills". He then goes on to ask the Berkeleyan question as to

whether nature lives itself or in the eye of the beholder:

For, oh! is it you, is it you,  
Moonlight, and shadow, and lake,  
And mountains, that fill us with joy,  
Or the poet who sings you so well?  
Is it you, O beauty, O grace,  
O charm, O romance, that we feel,  
Or the voice which reveals what you are?  
Are ye, like daylight and sun,  
Shared and rejoiced in by all?  
Or are ye immersed in the mass  
Of matter, and hard to extract,  
Or sunk at the core of the world  
Too deep for the most to discern?  
Like stars in the deep of the sky,  
Which arise on the glass of the sage,  
But are lost when their watcher is gone.

(Poems, p. 248)

Then Nature intervenes and answers the young poet:

'Loveliness, magic, and grace,  
They are here! they are set in the world,  
They abide; and the finest of souls  
Hath not been thrilled by them all,  
Nor the dullest been dead to them quite.  
The poet who sings them may die,  
But they are immortal and live,  
For they are the life of the world,  
Will ye not learn it, and know,  
When ye mourn that a poet is dead,  
That the singer was less than his themes,  
Life, and emotion, and I?'

The argument in these lines clearly rejects the Romantic notion of the projective apprehension of nature: Arnold cannot say with Coleridge: "Ours is her wedding garment, ours her shroud".

Nature goes on, in her address to the speaker, to indicate that man does not know himself so as to know accurately what lies 'outside himself:

'More than the singer are these.  
Weak is the tremor of pain  
That thrills in his mournfullest chord  
To that which once ran through his soul.  
Cold the elation of joy

In his gladdest, airiest song  
To that which of old in his youth  
Filled him and made him divine.  
Hardly his voice at its best  
Gives us a sense of the awe,  
The vastness, the grandeur, the gloom  
Of the unlit gulf of himself.

'Ye know not yourselves; and your bards -  
The clearest, the best, who have read  
Most in themselves - have beheld  
Less than they left unrevealed.

'Ye express not yourselves; can you make  
With marble, with colour, with word,  
What charmed you in others re-live?  
Can thy pencil, O artist! restore  
The figure, the bloom of thy love,  
As she was in her morning of spring?  
Canst thou paint the ineffable smile  
Of her eyes as they rested on thine?  
Can the image of life have the glow,  
The motion of life itself?'

The poem provides a very subtle movement for it begins by praising Wordsworth, but as the poem progresses it gradually changes its tone into a questioning of Wordsworth's power to read the secret of nature who ends her discourse with the assurance that while,

'Race after race, man after man,  
Have thought that my secret was theirs,  
Have dreamed that I lived but for them,  
That they were my glory and joy.  
- They are dust, they are changed, they are gone!  
I remain.'

So Nature's voice assures that the external world outlasts man and dominates him. This very theme is pursued in the "Youth of Man".

"The Youth of Man", the companion-piece to "The Youth of Nature", deals with the individual's developing consciousness of the external world: The action, as is often the case with Arnold; - partly dramatic and partly lyrical, takes place within the mind of the speaker and moves towards a moment of denouement in a form of revelation. In other words, the poem is an extended lyric of description and meditation in which the poet confronts a particular scene at a significant stage of his life, in a colloquy that specifies the present and evokes the past, and thereby

defines and evaluates what it means to have suffered and to grow older. The poem represents the poet as standing with an aged couple who, years before, had declared:

'We are young and the world is ours:  
Man, man is the king of the world!  
Fools that these mystics are  
Who prate of Nature! for she  
Hath neither beauty, nor warmth,  
Nor life, nor emotion, nor power.  
But man has a thousand gifts,  
And the generous dreamer invests  
The senseless world with them all.  
Nature is nothing; her charm  
Lives in our eyes which can paint,  
Lives in our hearts which can feel.'

(Poems, pp. 251-252)

These lines show that the poem is part of an argument with the Romantics, especially with their theory of knowledge and doctrine of Nature, for it is evident that these lines recall Coleridge's "Dejection" lines 47-54:

O Lady! we receive but what we give,  
And in our life alone does Nature live:  
Ours is her wedding garment, ours her shroud!  
And would we ought behold, of higher worth,  
Than that inanimate cold world allowed,  
To the poor loveless ever-anxious crowd  
Ah! from the soul itself must issue forth  
A light, a glory, a fair luminous cloud...

But now, old and infirm, their eye is dim, and so come to know the lesson:

We, O Nature, depart,  
Thou survivest us! this,  
This I know, is the law.  
Yes! but more than this,  
Thou who seest us die  
Seest us change while we live;  
Seest our dreams, one by one,  
Seest our errors depart;  
Watchest us, Nature! throughout,  
Mild and inscrutably calm.  
Well for us that we change!  
Well for us that the power  
Which in our morning-prime  
Saw the mistakes of our youth,  
Sweet, and forgiving, and good,  
Sees the contrition of age!

(Poems, p. 251)

And in a moment of poignant revelation,

... ... the mist of delusion,  
And the scales of habit,  
Fall away from their eyes;  
And they see, for a moment,  
Stretching out, like the desert  
In its weary, unprofitable length,  
Their faded, ignoble lives.

(Ibid., p. 254)

The poem ends, as W.S. Johnson has observed, with an echo of "Solomon's injunction, 'Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth'" (The Voices of Matthew Arnold, Op. cit., pp. 30-31).

While the locks are yet brown on thy head,  
While the soul still looks through thine eyes,  
While the heart still pours  
The mantling blood to thy cheek,  
Sink, O youth, in thy soul!  
Yearn to the greatness of Nature;  
Rally the good in the depths of thyself!

The poem, being written while Arnold could not have reached his thirties, is marred by overexplicitness of statement, but the moral question it explores is a subtle one. The man and woman when young were involved in a self-delusion not unlike the kind of delusion Arnold warned against in "In Utrumque Paratus", to which the rest of this chapter is devoted.

### III

"In Utrumque Paratus", opens a question of insistent importance for modern criticism: the relation of literature to ideas. Critics are divided on this question: Some deny that there is any idea in literature, some others argue that the idea is the work of art itself. One has shown, in the chapter on the poetic process, that Arnold's poetic process begins with the idea. For him literature is the mode of expression in which thought and

feeling are intimately united. This stance is adopted, in contemporary criticism, by many critics. Among them is L. Trilling who writes:

The most elementary thing to observe is that literature is of its nature involved with ideas because it deals with man in society, which is to say that it deals with formulations, valuations, and decisions, some of them implicit, others explicit.

(Liberal Imagination, p. 281)

The question that poses itself in these circumstances is: What sort of ideas is literature concerned with? Are they scientific, religious, or philosophic? This is the question one would like to answer in connection with Arnold's poem "In Utrumque Paratus".

i

To go back to Aristotle's definition of poetry, for it is the one that Arnold accepts:

Tragedy is an imitation, not of men, but of an action and of life, and life consists in action, and its end is a mode of action, not a quality. Now character determines men's qualities, but it is by their actions that they are happy or the reverse. Dramatic action, therefore, is not with a view to the representation of character: character comes in as subsidiary to the actions.

(CPW, I, p. 219n)

Suppose, then, that one sets out from the observation that a poem is about a person who undoubtedly has ideas that represent his role as an agent among other agents. Ideas, by the rule of their being, are aspects of social action, competing and cooperating in a community of other ideas, among variegated groups of interests and men. What is necessary here is to recognise that in the field of meaning ideas can be principles of action too.



Conversely, man's action can have the force of ideas, implying a view of what man really is, and what kind of a world surrounds him. What one wants to show is that ideas, action, and literature are part and parcel of undifferentiated whole, and that the sort of ideas that a writer is concerned with are ethical. To this effect Arnold says:

It is important, therefore, to hold to this: that poetry is at bottom a criticism of life; that the greatness of a poet lies in his powerful and beautiful application of ideas to life - to the question; How to live? (And again he says) ... The question, 'how to live', is itself a moral idea; and it is the question which most interests everyman, and with which, in some way or other, he is perpetually occupied. A large sense is of course to be given to the term moral. Whatever bears upon the question how to live, comes under it.

(CPW, IX, p. 45)

The very sort of ideas occur in many writers among whom is Dante. He writes, in a letter to Can Grande, that his work is allegorical; its purpose "is to remove those living in this life" from misery to happiness; and its genus is ethical, "for the whole and the part are devised not for the sake of speculation but of possible action".<sup>14</sup>

Having established the genesis of ideas in literature as ethical, one now is in a better position to interpret Arnold's poem "In Utrumque Paratus". The poem includes two philosophical ideas - Idealism and Materialism, that are the basis of conflict between religion and science respectively. Arnold, by an adroit control of tone and a disinterested manner of treatment, discusses these two doctrines not for their own sake but for their ethical implications for man. Yet, he chooses to leave the choice with the reader.

Because the poem is elliptical in structure, it is thought <sup>/of</sup> by many critics as obscure; and because it is obscure it has been unpopular, and inadequately interpreted. For instance, Charles Kingsley, in <sup>/an</sup> unsigned review, writes: "What, again, on earth do we want with a piece of obscure transcendentalism headed, 'In Utrumque Paratus' (prepared for either

eventuality); the moral, or we should rather say immortality, of which seems to be that, if there is a God, the author knows how to get on, and knows equally well how to get on if there is none? We should like to see his secret, for he has not very clearly revealed it: merely, of course, as a matter of curiosity - we have not quite sufficient faith in it to steal it for our own use, for though such an alternative is 'a one to him', it is by no means a one to his humble reviewer, or, as we aspire, to various poor, hardworked bodies who take a somewhat deeper interest in heaven and earth than this new Phoebus Apragmon seems to do".<sup>15</sup> All other critics have come to the same conclusion, namely, that the poem shows a certain confusion in Arnold's attitudes.

The poem presents a fairly distinct either / or: First, a Neo-Platonic idealism that isolates man from the physical world, and makes him the spiritual king by virtue of his consciousness:

If, in the silent mind of One all-pure,  
At first imagined lay  
The sacred word; and by procession sure  
From those still deeps, in form and colour dressed,  
Seasons alternating, and night and day,  
The long-mused thought to north, south, east and west.  
Took then its all-seen way;

O waking on a world which thus-wise springs!  
Whether it needs thee count  
Betwixt thy waking and the birth of things  
Ages or hours - O waking on life's stream!  
By lonely pureness to the all-pure fount  
(Only by this thou canst) the coloured dream  
Of life remount!

Thin, thin the pleasant human noises grow,  
And faint the city gleams;  
Rare the lone pastoral huts - marvel not thou!  
The solemn peaks but to the stars are known,  
But to the stars, and the cold lunar beams;  
Alone the sun rises, and alone  
Spring the great streams.

(Lines, 1-21)

In one sense, the first stanza presents the reader with a progression

from the pre-natal silence of the One mind "all-pure" to the relative refraction of phenomenal existence where things are dressed in colour. The rhythm and imagery conduce to the sense of serene and harmonious development. By transforming the Platonic ladder to a mountain stream in the third stanza, Arnold suggests that man must follow the stream, mounting to the pure, high sources of life.

The second alternative: if the scientific (materialistic) hypothesis is correct, then everything, including man, comes by chance from the same matter: animate and inanimate are brothers born of the obscure earth. If man accepts this scientific view, and here comes the ethical implication of this hypothesis, he must avoid the pride of thinking himself uniquely intelligent:

But, if the wild unfathered mass no birth  
In divine seats hath known;  
In the blank, echoing solitude of Earth,  
Rocking her obscure body to and fro,  
Ceases not from all time to heave and groan,  
Unfruitful oft, and at her happiest throes  
Forms, what she forms, alone;

O seeming sole to awake, thy sun-bathed head  
Piercing the solemn cloud  
Round thy still dreaming brother-world outspread!  
O man, whom Earth, thy long-vexed mother, bare  
Not without joy - so radiant, so endowed  
(Such happy issue crowned her painful care) -  
Be not too proud!

(22-35)

Here, man is not on a mountain peak with a clear view of things, but in a cloud above which he may only seem to rise to the light of understanding. The universe, rather than issuing from the divine mind, is the product of the fitful and unending labour of nature. Then, man should not be "too proud". The concluding stanza expands this point by suggesting that if man is a part of this nature and endowed with this moral consciousness, he must, in this case, not feel exalted over lesser forms of nature, but attempt to

understand it. Above all there is some thing in man that makes him yearn to be united with it:

Oh when most self-exalted most alone,  
Chief dreamer, own thy dream!  
Thy brother-world stirs at thy feet unknown,  
Who hath a monarch's hath no brother's part;  
Yet doth thine inmost soul with yearning team.  
- Oh, what a spasm shakes the dreamer's heart!  
'I, too, but seem.'

(36-42)

The second line in that stanza is ambiguous for on one level it could be taken as questioning the Marxian notion that man should own his history. Twenty years later, in the collected Poems of 1869, Arnold replaced this stanza with one that shows that he was attempting to reconcile these two doctrines:

Thy native world stirs at thy feet unknown,  
Yet there thy secret lies!  
Out of this stuff, these forces, thou art grown,  
And proud self-severance from them were disease.  
O scan thy native world with pious eyes!  
High as thy life be risen 'tis from these,  
And these, too rise.

This stanza introduces the conception of a world of matter as "rising" into the conscious life of Man. Arnold, here, seems to adopt the Hegelian idea of Nature to effect a reconciliation. This is plausible for in his theory of history, he adopted Goethe's idea of spiral movement to affect a reconciliation between the cyclical theory of history and the progressive one. Arnold, however, in the next edition (1877) returned to the earlier ending, and never reprinted this stanza again.

The poem, in general, is probably Arnold's reaction to Robert Chambers' Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation (1844), the most important work on evolution published during the quarter of a century before Darwin. Arnold, especially after restoring the original final stanza, shows that

he does not attempt to solve the mystery of creation, he only exhorts man to be in utrumque paratus. And this is a moral question: However life originated man can count himself in a sense superior, but this superiority brings a sense of isolation. Yet man is less isolated than he thinks (see stanzas 3 and 6).

One has been dealing so far with nature as a source of ideas in poetry, but this is not enough, for this in itself neglects another important aspect in Arnold's poetic: the affective aspect without which poetry would be devoid of emotion. That is why Arnold did not neglect the ways of handling nature for poetic ends in his criticism. This is the topic with which the remaining pages are concerned.

ii

When Arnold speaks of nature he usually has in mind "the material world... with its commonest elements - sun, air, earth, water, plants" (CPW, III, p. 320). According to him there are many ways of handling nature so as to apply ideas to it and to generate the appropriate emotional response: peace (for the Romantics it is Joy) or melancholy. Of these modes of handling nature, Arnold, in his essay "On the Study of Celtic Literature", writes:

These modes are many; I will mention four of them now: there is the conventional way of handling nature, there is the faithful way of handling nature, there is the Greek way of handling nature, there is the magical way of handling nature. In all these three last the eye is on the object, but with a difference; in the faithful way of handling nature, the eye is on the object, and that is all you can say; in the Greek, the eye is on the object, but lightness and brightness are added; in the magical, the eye is on the object, but charm and magic are added.

(p. 377)

In all these modes, however, the poet's function is rendering nature's beauty, and to make man feel it too. For, as Arnold quotes George Sand who asks, 'Does not this mysterious intuition of poetic beauty exist in him (man) already in the form of instinct of vague reverie?' It exists in him in the form of that nostalgia, that homesickness, which for ever pursues man if you transplant him. And of the artist attitudes to nature one can quote Arnold's words of George Sand who

regarded nature and beauty, not with the selfish and solitary joy of the artist who but seeks to appropriate them for his own purposes, she regarded them as a treasure of immense and hitherto unknown application, as a vast power of healing and delight for all, and for the peasant first and foremost.

("George Sand", CPW, VIII, p. 226)

These lines seem to be an oblique criticism of the Romantics in general and Wordsworth in particular whose love of nature is sometimes taken as a form of self-glorification that leads to an anti-social habit of mind and producing the "egotistical sublime". Hazlitt remarked with bitterness that Wordsworth himself could sympathise only with objects that could enter into no sort of competition with him.

The poet should render nature's beauty if his intention is to generate joy: the great lifter of man, the great unfolder. For life to be fruitful, life must be felt as a blessing. From the poets who succeeded in creating joy one sees that they always speak of nature as eternally young, bountiful. That she pours out beauty and poetry for all that live, she pours it out on all plants, and the plants are permitted to expand in it freely. That she possesses the secret of happiness, and no man has been able to take it away from her. And that the happiest man is the one who possesses the science of his labour and working with his hands, earning his comfort and his freedom by the exercise of his intelligent force, found time to live by the heart and by the brain to understand his own work

and to love the work of God.

The artist has satisfaction of this kind in the contemplation and reproduction of nature's beauty; but when he sees the affliction of those who people this paradise of earth, says George Sand whom Arnold quotes, the upright and human-hearted artist feels a trouble gives him pain. Joy and pain, if they are juxtaposed will create a feeling of peace with a pleasing touch of melancholy. When the joyful impulse is <sup>/more</sup> powerful than the painful one, there is peace; and if the opposite there would be melancholy. Arnold's method is simple and clear: contrast. He contrasts two modes of living: city versus nature, and from this contrast he generates either peace or melancholy. This, naturally, depends on the intensity and genuineness of the artist's feeling. And this depends on the degree of seriousness and sincerity of the artist.

To begin with a poem where the sentiment of peace is predominant, one chooses Arnold's poem: "Lines Written in Kensington Gardens". It is one of his lyrics that comes closest to being a descriptive nature poem, where the beauty and meaning of nature is enhanced by the proximity of the city around it:

In this lone, open glade I lie,  
Screened by deep boughs on either hand;  
And at its end, to stay the eye,  
Those black-crowned, red-boled pine-trees stand!

Birds here make song, each bird has his,  
Across the girdling city's hum.  
How green under the boughs it is!  
How thick the tremulous sheep-cries come!

Sometimes a child will cross the glade  
To take his nurse his broken toy;  
Sometimes a thrush flit overhead  
Deep in her unbroken day's employ.

Here at my feet what wonders pass,  
What endless, active life is here!  
What blowing daisies, fragrant grass!  
An air-stirred forest, fresh and clear.

Scarce fresher is the mountain-sod  
Where the tired angler lies, stretched out,  
And, eased of basket and of rod,  
Counts his day's spoil, the spotted trout.

(Poems, pp. 255-56)

In conformity with his poetics, Arnold proceeds, in these twenty lines (half the poem), by means of the natural mode of interpretation. But in the last stanza he introduces the imagery of "the tired angler" to prepare the reader for the second mode of interpretation: moralistic.

In the huge world, which roars hard by,  
Be others happy if they can!  
But in my helpless cradle I  
Was breathed on by the rural Pan.

I, on men's impious uproar hurled,  
Think often, as I hear them rave,  
That peace has left the upper world  
And now keeps only in the grave.

(Lines: 21-28)

The idea of peace and calm are linked, in this poem, with that of freedom from strife or ambition:

Yet here is peace for ever new!  
When I who watch them am away,  
Still all things in this glade go through  
The changes of their quiet day.

Then to their happy rest they pass!  
The flowers upclose, the birds are fed,  
The night comes down upon the grass,  
The child sleeps warmly in his bed.

(Lines: 29-36)

In the last two stanzas, Arnold prays, in the temple of nature, for peace, fortitude, and for a power of sympathy with others:

Calm soul of all things! make it mine  
To feel, amid the city's jar,  
That there abides a peace of thine,  
Man did not make, and cannot mar.



The will to neither strive nor cry,  
The power to feel with others give!  
Calm, calm me more! nor let me die  
Before I have begun to live.

As for Arnold's capacity as well as his technique of generating feelings of melancholy out of nature, one has nothing to add to what Professor Drew has already done:

Anyone acquainted with his [Arnold's] poetry must have noticed his extraordinary capacity for extracting a melancholy reflection from the landscape. So uniform is this habit that it is almost impossible to find in Arnold's poems a tract of countryside which is not in one way or another charged with emotion, the emotion being invariably grief or regret. Arnold has many routes to the same destination. First, Nature, being what man is not, implies the incompleteness of man, at which Arnold grieves. 'Rome-Sickness', 'Self-Dependence', 'Youth of Nature' and 'Youth of Man' are examples of this technique. Specifically Nature is unchanging, but man grows old, at which Arnold grieves. This is illustrated in 'Growing Old', and many other poems, notably the first stanza of 'The River'... Thirdly Nature is unified, especially the sea, but man is isolated, at which Arnold grieves. For this use of natural imagery see the last two stanzas of 'The Terrace at Berne', 'To Marguerite' ('Yes, in the sea of life'), and 'Obermann Once More' (lines 209ff.). Finally Nature was everything that noisy, pushful, urban Victorian Britain was not. This appears in poems such as 'Lines Written in Kensington Gardens' and 'On the Rhine': Arnold knew enough of the world to realise that Britain was certain to grow steadily more urban. The countryside thus represents the past, the 'old haunt', and is a symbol of the inexorable forces of time and a constant reminder of human powerlessness. Hence a further sort of grief.

("The Passage of Time", Op. cit.,  
pp. 205-6).

Arnold is at his best when he succeeds in combining both peace and melancholy. On reflecting on the passages that communicate this combination, one has observed that Arnold's method is to make the finite flow into the infinite accompanied with a strong sense of relief. It is something of the sort that one finds in Dante's line: "In la sua volontade e nostra pace". One finds this quality, for instance, Empedocles on Etna "where Helicon breaks down / In cliff to the sea" (lines: 423-24). The idea

of the 'volontade' in Dante's line is more artistically conveyed by means of nature's commonest elements: earth and water. Another example is the end of Sohrab and Rustum:

But the majestic river floated on,  
Out of the mist and hum of that low land,  
Into the frosty starlight, and there moved,  
Rejoicing, through the hushed Chorasmian waste,  
Under the solitary moon; he flowed  
Right for the polar star, past Orgunje,  
Brimming, and bright, and large; then sands begin  
To hem his watery march, and dam his streams,  
And split his currents; that for many a league  
The shorn and parcelled Oxus strains along  
Through beds of sand and matted rushy isles -  
Oxus, forgetting the bright speed he had  
In his high mountain-cradle in Pamere,  
A foiled circuitous wanderer - till at last  
The longed-for dash of waves is heard, and wide  
His luminous home of waters opens, bright  
And tranquil, from whose floor the new-bathed stars  
Emerge, and shine upon the Aral Sea.

(Poems, pp. 330-31)

NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> R.S. Crane, The Idea of the Humanities (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1967), pp. 179-80.
- <sup>2</sup> John F. Danby, Shakespeare's Doctrine of Nature (London: Faber & Faber, 1961), pp. 15-16.
- <sup>3</sup> Joseph Warren Beach, The Concept of Nature in Nineteenth Century English Poetry (New York; Macmillan, 1936), p. 397.
- <sup>4</sup> L. Trilling, Matthew Arnold (London: G. Allen & Unwin, 1939), pp. 92-95.
- <sup>5</sup> R.G. Collingwood, The Idea of Nature (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1945), p. 5.
- <sup>6</sup> Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 1972 ed., S.V. "Nature".
- <sup>7</sup> Albert Van Aven, "Disharmony in Matthew Arnold's 'In Harmony with Nature'", Personalist, 4 (Oct., 1967), 573-78.
- <sup>8</sup> F.C. Happold, Mysticism (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1973), pp. 45-6.

- <sup>9</sup> ~~Quoted by~~ M.H. Abrams, Natural Supernaturalism (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 49.
- <sup>10</sup> A.O. Lovejoy and George Boas, Primitivism and Related Ideas in Antiquity (New York: Octagon Books, 1965), p. 20.
- <sup>11</sup> W. Reich, Selected Writings (London: Vision Press Book, 1958) pp. 288-89).
- <sup>12</sup> "Arnold looked for inspiration to the great humanistic idea which asserts that man is the measure of all possibilities". In The Alien Vision of Victorian Poetry (Princeton, 1952), p. 147.
- <sup>13</sup> Allan Brick, "Equilibrium in the Poetry of Matthew Arnold," UTQ 30 (1961), 47, 49.
- <sup>14</sup> Quoted by M.H. Abrams, "Belief and the Suspension of Disbelief," in Literature and Belief, ed., M.H. Abrams (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958), p. 22.
- <sup>15</sup> C. Dawson, Matthew Arnold: the Poetry: Critical Heritage (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973), pp. 44-45.

## CHAPTER VIII

### On Human Life

#### A. General Life

Arnold, in his poetic theory, argues that poetry is at bottom a criticism of life; that the greatness of a poet lies in his powerful and beautiful application of ideas to life - to the question: How to live. The question, how to live, is itself a moral idea; and it is the question which most interests everyman, and with which, in some way or other, he is perpetually occupied. A large sense is of course to be given to the term moral. Whatever bears upon the question, how to live, comes under it. Then he gives an example of the moral idea from Milton's poetry:

"Nor love thy life, nor hate; but what thou liv'st,  
Live well; how long or short, permit to heaven."

"All people," says Arnold, "want to know life, above all the life which surrounds them and concerns them; and we come to the novel and to the stage-play to help us to what we want" ("An Old Playgoer on 'Impulse'", CPW, X, p. 135).

But the term morality brings to the reader's mind the idea of religion. For, according to Arnold, religion is morality touched with emotion. That is exactly what Arnold was aiming at: "All roads," writes Arnold, "lead to Rome; and one finds in like manner that all questions raise the question of religion... Questions of good government, social harmony, education, civilisation, come forth and ask to be considered; and very soon it appears that we cannot possibly treat them without returning to treat of religion" ("Irish Catholicism and British Liberalism," CPW, VIII, p. 321). In short,

the poet cannot treat the question, how to live, and of human life without a thorough knowledge of religious beliefs and their impact on life.

On attempting to approach Arnold from this side - human life, one is confronted on one hand with Arnold's own elusiveness as a result of his circuitous method of argument, and on the other with serious charges made against him by his critics that carry too much weight to be easily dismissed. Professor George Watson, for instance, writes: "The plain fact is that we must stop assuming that the Victorian sages told the truth about their own society. In Arnold's case it is even probable that he knowingly and deliberately misrepresented the facts".<sup>1</sup> Geoffrey Carnall, to the same effect, says that Arnold's social criticism is often commonplace and platitudinous.<sup>2</sup>

This sort of criticism, along with T.S. Eliot's famous one,<sup>3</sup> was accepted as a matter of fact. Keating, for example, says "It is futile to attempt to defend Arnold too rigorously against these charges, but it is equally futile to believe that such charges obliterate Arnold's claim to survival".<sup>4</sup> Hence, in one's view, arises the real need to reinterpret Arnold afresh.

By interpretation one does not mean just a commentary, it is the re-creation of that impression Arnold intended. The task is to elucidate Arnold's meaning, method, and to restore the single direct impression that he intended. But the interpreter should be careful lest he should fall into the logical error of "insinuating the future",<sup>5</sup> that is to say, of reading into Arnold's thoughts that did not become explicit until later. Such insinuation of the future is often a way of improving the author, of smoothing out his mistakes; and it is common both among those who wish to defend a writer and among those who wish to recommend a modern doctrine: This falls outside the scope of my plan in this study. To avoid this, I have

tried not to attribute to Arnold any inference that he does not make in so many words, or any abstraction that he does not have a name for, without giving a special reason for doing so. Most fundamentally of all, I have tried to show Arnold's line of development in his poetic career which, as this study will show, advanced by gradual variation rather than by sudden leaps or mutations as some of his critics suggest. The major poems one proposes to consider for elucidating Arnold's own interpretation of the condition of human life in nineteenth-century England as well as showing his line of development are, besides many minor ones - "The Forsaken Merman", "The Sick King in Bokhara" and "Merope". They represent Arnold's idea of human life and give conspicuously his method of applying ideas to life. One will try to show that these three poems reflect and interpret the society of Victorian England. The argument, in these three poems begins with the microcosm of the society - family life, and ends with issues pertaining to social harmony and good government.

## I

### The First Stage (1844-1849)

Professor Kenneth Allott suggests that Arnold's "missionary impulse in social matters, so evident later when the poetic power had waned, was kept in check in late 1840's by his conception of the poet as detached spectator ('Resignation'), by some pessimism about the limits of possible social action ('To a Republican Friend,' 1 & 2), and perhaps by a certain coldness of temperament...".<sup>6</sup> In my view it is just a question of insufficient experience in the earlier stage of his career.

To follow diachronically Arnold's own development one finds that in

the early stage the vision was not clear. In "Stagirius", written in 1844, Arnold sees the malaise of the age as the lack of the clarity of vision:

When the soul, growing clearer,  
Sees God no nearer;  
When the soul, mounting higher,  
To God comes no nigher,  
But the arch-fiend Pride  
Mounts at her side,  
Foiling her high emprise,  
Sealing her eagle eyes,  
And, when she fain would soar,  
Makes idols to adore.

... ..

From doubt, where all is double;  
Where wise men are not strong,  
Where comfort turns to trouble,  
Where just men suffer wrong;  
Where sorrow treads on joy,  
Where sweet things soonest cloy,  
Where faiths are built on dust,  
Where love is half mistrust,  
Hungry, and barren, and sharp as the sea -  
Oh! set us free.

(Poems, p. 45)

Despite the poetic weakness of the poem, its thought is profound. The thing worthy of notice is that the growth of knowledge did not bring man nearer to God, on the contrary it brought doubt: "where all is double". The poem though subjective is not by any means personal. On reading Saint-Marc Girardin's Cours de Littérature dramatique i (1843) in March 1848, Arnold observed that "le démon de Stagyre" paralleled the romantic malaise:

"...il y a eu une littérature qui a exprimé l'état de malaise et d'inquiétude que nous ressentons... la littérature des Pères de l'Église... voyons quel est le démon qui possède Stagyre ... c'est la tristesse, ou plutôt, c'est l'athumia... c'est le défaut d'énergie et de ressort, c'est l'abattement... c'est le néant de l'âme".

(Poems, p. 44)

If one tests this stage of Arnold's career by the four queries mentioned in the introduction: first, Focus: alienated from what? Second, Replacement: what

replaces, if anything? Thirdly, Mode: how is the alienation manifested? And finally, Agent: What is the agent of alienation? One will find that Arnold at this stage was concerned with the third and fourth questions only. In this poem Arnold pursues the problem of alienation through a number of its manifestations: beside doubt and lack of clarity of vision, there are the feelings of anguish, dullness, and apathy:

From the world's temptations,  
From tribulations,  
From that fierce anguish  
Wherein we languish,  
From that torpor deep  
Wherein we lie asleep,  
Heavy as death, cold as the grave,  
Save, oh! save.

(Poems, p. 44)

"Horatian Echo", written in 1847, marks a further stage in Arnold's earlier career as a poet. Here, Arnold expresses a lighthearted indifference to the events of the day:

Omit, omit, my simple friend,  
Still to enquire how parties tend,  
Or what we fix with foreign powers.  
If France and we are really friends,  
And what the Russian Czar intends,  
Is no concern of ours.

(Poems, p. 57)

However, stanzas 2 and 3 register the hopes and fears associated with the rising Chartist agitation in 1847:

Us not the daily quickening race  
Of the invading populace  
Shall draw to swell that shouldering herd.  
Mourn will we not your closing hour,  
Ye imbeciles in present power,  
Doomed, pompous, and absurd!

And let us bear, that they debate  
Of all the engine-work of state,  
Of commerce, laws, and policy,



The secrets of the world's machine,  
And what the rights of man may mean,  
With readier tongue than we.

(Poems, p. 58)

The events of 1848 caused Arnold to think more intensely about social and political problems than he had done before. When the Revolution broke out in France in February 1848, both Arnold and Clough were vastly excited - though Clough much more than Arnold. But Arnold seems to have qualified his excitement with some doubt. On this account he was accused of aloofness and detachment. J.A. Froude writes, in March 1849, to Clough:

I admire Matt - to a very great extent. Only I don't see what business he has to parade his calmness and lecture us on resignation when he has never known what a storm is, and doesn't know what he has to resign himself to - I think he only knows the shady side of nature out of books - still I think his versifying and generally his aesthetic power is quite wonderful...

(CL, p. 127)

Arnold adopted the philosophy of Bhagavad-Gita as a way to comprehend the events at that time. Aristotle writes in his Metaphysics: "There is no knowledge of things which are in a state of flux".<sup>7</sup> Things at that time were in a state of flux indeed. Arnold attempted to persuade Clough to read it and discover there the tranquilliser for his restless speculations: The Indians, says Arnold to him, distinguish between meditation or absorption - and knowledge. At that time, (March, 10, 1848) he writes in one of his letters:

What agitates me is this, if the new state of things succeeds in France, social changes are inevitable here and elsewhere, for no one looks on seeing his neighbour mending without asking himself if he cannot mend in the same way; but, without waiting for the result, the spectacle of France is likely to breed great agitation here, and such is the state of our masses that their movements now can only be brutal plundering and destroying. And if they wait, there is no one, as far as one sees, to train them to conquer, by their attitude and

superior conviction; the deep ignorance of the middle and upper classes, and their feebleness of vision becoming, if possible, daily more apparent.

(Letters, I, p. 5)

What Arnold was trying to discover in the Bhagavad-Gita was a disinterested way of evaluating the situation. The method of his discovery was, in one's view, the Hegelian logic: thesis (action), antithesis (thinking), and finally a synthesis (right thinking for right doing). The result was a series of poems in which he gives direct expression of his thought and feeling, either in reflective poems recommending stoic detachment, or in lyric poems expressing the pain and deprivation which the spirit of the time generates. In terms of number, the dominant genre is the sonnet, of which there are eleven. Of those, "To a Friend" and "Quiet Work" occupy positions of honour apart from the remaining nine. Both strike the stoic note which dominates the volume - 1849, as a whole.

In the sonnet, "To a Friend" (1848) Arnold says:

Who prop, thou ask'st, in these bad days, my mind?  
He much, the old man, who, clearest-souled of men,  
Saw The Wide Prospect, and the Asian Fen,  
And Tmolus hill, and Smyrna bay, though blind.  
Much he, whose friendship I not long since won,  
That halting slave, who in Nicopolis  
Taught Arrian, when Vespasian's brutal son  
Cleared Rome of what most shamed him. But be his  
My special thanks, whose even-balanced soul,  
From first youth tested up to extreme old age,  
Business could not make dull, nor passion wild;  
Who saw life stadily, and saw it whole;  
The mellow glory of the Attic stage,  
Singer of sweet Colonus, and its child.

(Poems, p. 105)

The sonnet, here, moves from the tortured syntax and diction of the opening line to the anxious mood of the auditor being addressed by the speaker, through an ascending series of statements praising in turn Homer, Epictetus, and Sophocles, in language that poetically expresses the balanced serenity

which the poem recommends.

In "Quiet Work" Arnold tries to effect a synthesis: to reconcile the conflicting claims of involvement and detachment. This is evident from his frequent insistence that man should try to learn from nature the lesson of quiet work:

One lesson, Nature, let me learn of thee,  
One lesson which in every wind is blown,  
One lesson of two duties kept at one  
Though the loud world proclaim their enmity -  
Of toil unsevered from tranquillity!  
Of labour, that in lasting fruit outgrows  
Far noisier schemes, accomplished in repose,  
Too great for haste, too high for rivalry!  
Yes, while on earth a thousand discords ring,  
Man's fitful uproar mingling with his toil,  
Still do thy sleepless ministers move on,  
Their glorious tasks in silence perfecting;  
Still working, blaming still our vain turmoil,  
Labourers that shall not fail, when man is gone.

(Poems, pp. 106-107)

Professors Kenneth Allott and Miriam Allott, in their comment on the sonnet, say "the contrast developed in the octet [sic] of 'Quiet Work' between the unity, silence, and enduringness of nature's 'ministers', and the multiplicity, noise and transiency of human life, is resolved in the elevated language of the sestet, with its subtle interplay of consonants, the even spread of the stress, the caesural variation, and the biblical echo of 'labourers'... The repetitions of 'still', and its emphatic syntactical inversion in the penultimate line, carry the dual association of quiet and enduringness, embodying in the language itself the central lesson of 'two duties kept at one' elicited from nature by the speaker" (K. Allott, ed., Matthew Arnold, p. 50).

Arnold, however, was not blind to the appalling condition of the masses and even of the economic theories that describe that state. In March 1, 1848, he says in a letter to Clough, "Don't you think the eternal relations<sup>8</sup> between labour and capital the Times twaddles so of have small existence for a

whole society that has resolved no longer to live by bread alone" (CL, pp. 68-69). In his sonnet "To a Republican Friend" (1848) Arnold, to this effect, writes:

If sadness at the long heart-wasting show  
Wherein earth's great ones are disquieted;  
If thoughts, not idle, while before me flow  
The armies of the homeless and unfed -  
If these are yours, if this is what you are,  
Then am I yours, and what you feel, I share.

(Poems, 102)

This shows too that towards the end of this first stage he began to put his finger on the right spot of the illness. He saw it not as class struggle (a common theme in his age) or the lack of freedom. But a faulty attitude towards life in general. People do not know how to live. They, being extremists, sacrifice many aspects of their nature. He saw, poetically what he expounded in his prose writing, that the middle class, which, "driven by its sense for the power of conduct, in the beginning of the seventeenth century entered... the prison of Puritanism, and had the key turned upon its spirit there for two hundred years. They did not know, good and earnest people as they were, that to the building up of human life there belong all those other powers also - the power of intellect and knowledge, the power of beauty, the power of social life and manners" ("Equality", CPW, VIII, p. 294). Thus he went on interpreting the middle class attitude to life in a series of poems of which the "Forsaken Mermaid" is a central one.

Though most critics have admired "The Forsaken Merman" ever since its publication in 1849, it had not received any lengthy study so as to show its implication. Professor Allott, for example, says that the poem is an example of poems in which Arnold managed "to rise above his self-consciousness to poetic expression as unimpeded as the best of Tennyson's".<sup>9</sup> Allan Roper, in his study which is mainly based on Fulweiler's, mistakenly says that "'The Forsaken Merman' records neither spiritual death nor moral resurrection, but only the inevitability of things" (Arnold's Poetic Landscape, Op. cit., p. 127).

None of the critics so far has observed the religious connotation of the poem. This fact seems to emanate from a wrong idea that Arnold did not use poetry as a vehicle for his religious ideas. To this effect Michael Thorpe writes: "Though Arnold became an important religious thinker in his day, he did not use poetry as a vehicle for his religious ideas. His religious thinking plays little part in his most memorable poetry, and is chiefly evident in such dry, abstract pieces... There was much reason in Arnold's religion, and poetry is not, on the whole, reason's place" (Op. cit. p. 81). The purpose of this study is to show that the poem is a rare example in which one of the most concrete religious doctrines is used as the basis of argument in poetry. The study shows that it is impossible to read the poem without being reminded of the Puritan doctrine of the calling and its consequences on the style of human life.

The doctrine of calling in its essence, as Max Weber puts it, is:

The valuation of the fulfilment of duty in worldly affairs as the highest form which the moral activity of the individual could assume. This it was which inevitably gave everyday worldly activity a religious significance, and which first created the conception of a calling in this sense. The conception of the calling thus brings out that central dogma

of all Protestant denominations which the Catholic division of ethical precepts into praecepta and consilia discards. The only way of living acceptably to God was not to surpass worldly morality in monastic asceticism, but solely through the fulfilment of the obligations imposed upon the individual by his position in the world. That was his calling.

(Op. cit., p. 80)

The consequences of this doctrine on the style of life were far reaching. To simplify a lot, it can be traced in the Puritan valuation of action and that negative attitude towards all sensuous culture. This rationalisation of conduct within this world, but for the sake of the world beyond, was one of the consequences of the concept of calling of ascetic Protestantism. This asceticism, as Weber puts it, "turned with all its force against one thing: the spontaneous enjoyment of life and all it had to offer. This is perhaps most characteristically brought out in the struggle over the Book of Sports which James and Charles I made into law expressly as a means of counteracting Puritanism, and which the latter ordered to be read from all the pulpits" (Ibid., p. 166).

In this poem Arnold retells the story he has chosen from Hans Anderson (via Mary Howitt's (1843) and George Borrow's (1826)) with the suppression of some original details and the invention of several new ones and shifting the emphasis from Greta or Agnete, as she is variously called, to the bereft husband and the father of children who are "wild with pain".

The song tells that Agnete wandered solitarily along the shore, when a merman rose up from the waves and decoyed her by his speeches. She followed him to the bottom of the sea, remained there seven years, and bore him seven children. One day, as she sat by the cradle, she heard the church bells sounding down to her in the depths of the sea, and a longing seized her heart to go to church. By her prayers and tears she induced the merman to conduct her to the upper world again, promising soon to return. He prayed her not to forget his children, more especially the little one in the cradle; stopped up her ears and her mouth, and then led her upwards to the sea-shore. When, however, she entered the church, all the holy images, as soon as they saw her, a

daughter of sin and from the depths of the sea, turned themselves round to the walls. She was affrighted, and would not return, although the little ones in her home below were weeping.

(Commentary, pp. 129-130)

This strong religious aspect of the story that suggests that the mother was right in leaving her husband and children in order to save her soul and eternal life must have attracted Arnold's attention.

This story might bring to the reader's mind Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, by far the most widely read book of the whole Puritan literature: In the description of Christian's attitude after he had realised that he was living in the City of Destruction and he had received the call to take up his pilgrimage to the Celestial city, wife and children cling to him, but stopping his ears with his fingers and crying, "life, eternal life," and then staggers forth across the fields.

The action of the poem begins with Margaret receiving her call:

She said: 'I must go, for my kinsfolk pray  
In the little grey church on the shore today.  
'Twill be Easter-time in the world - ah me!  
And I lose my poor soul, Merman! here with thee.'

(II. 56-59)

The religious accent is very clear: How is she to save her soul? That was only possible by proof in a specific type of conduct unmistakably different from the way of the natural man: It was common to all denominations that impulsive enjoyment of life, whether in the form of seigneurial sports, or the enjoyment of the dance-hall or the public-house of the common man, which leads away both from work in a calling and from religion, was as such the enemy of rational asceticism. Work was seen as the only activity of religious value.

The individual must work and produce in order to save himself. Work, however, is nothing general or abstract. Work is always concrete work,

that is, a specific kind of work in a specific kind of economic system.

To convey this connotation Arnold portrays Margaret at work, - at her wheel:

She sits at her wheel in the humming town,  
Singing most joyfully.  
Hark what she sings: 'O joy, O joy,  
For the humming street, and the child with its toy!  
For the priest, and the bell, and the holy well;  
For the wheel where I spun,  
And the blessed light of the sun!'  
And so she sings her fill,  
Singing most joyfully,  
Till the spindle drops from her hand,  
And the whizzing wheel stands still.

(II. 87-89)

Fulweiler has rightly observed that Arnold skillfully employs the present participles to increase the effect of incessant and mechanical activity.

"In the town there is monotonous and colourless whirring, whizzing, humming, murmuring, and praying behind walls and shut doors, and among grave stones.

In the sea there is colour, imagination, life, love, and the hidden mysterious meaning of the world".<sup>11</sup> The description of the town as "white-walled" makes it clear that white stands for purity and hence it recalls the term: Puritanism; while "walled" signifies the imprisonment and limitations imposed by the sentiment of religion. It is clear that the two images merge in Arnold's mind: it is a picture after all of a class that "entered ... the prison of Puritanism, and had the key turned upon its spirit there for two hundred years" (CPW, VIII, p. 294).

The Merman makes a call too: the call of Hellenism:

Call her once before you go -  
Call once yet!  
In a voice that she will know:  
'Margaret! Margaret!'  
Children's voices should be dear  
(Call once more) to a mother's ear;  
Children's voices, wild with pain -  
Surely she will come again!  
Call her once and come away;  
This way, this way!  
'Mother dear, we cannot stay!



The wild white horses foam and fret.'  
Margaret! Margaret!  
Come, dear children, come away down,  
Call no more!  
One last look at the white-walled town,  
And the little grey church on the windy shore,  
Then come down!

(II. 10-27)

The Merman's call is not powerful enough: Margaret is obeying her calling. The calling of dissenters that subscribes only work and the Bible:

Through the narrow paved street, where all was still,  
To the little grey church on the windy hill.  
From the church came a murmur of folk at their prayers,  
But we stood without in the cold blowing airs.  
We climbed on the graves, on the stones worn with rains,  
And we gazed up the aisle through the small leaded panes.  
'Margaret, hist! come quick, we are here!  
Dear heart,' I said, 'we are long alone;  
The sea grows stormy, the little ones moan.'  
But, ah, she gave me never a look,  
For her eyes were sealed to the holy book!  
Loud prays the priest; shut stands the door.  
Come away, children, call no more!  
Come away, come down, call no more!

(II. 70-84)

Man was, thus, dominated by the idea of work as the ultimate purpose of his life. In the context of this conception of religion, Puritanism values action. Goethe's remark in fact applied often enough to the Calvinist: "The man of action is always ruthless; no one has a conscience but an observer" (Weber, p. 151).

Arnold contrasts a life based on this type of ethic with the merman's free, colourful, lucid and magical world. The sea, in Arnold's poetry stands for freedom, beauty, love, and the deepest mysteries of life. The Merman's world is an open, timeless world. Paradoxically enough it stands too for moral responsibilities to others, as the care for family and children. The town, on the other hand, is a closed world of hard, confining objects, "the white walls of the town, the

narrow paved streets." It stands for imprisonment by convention, and monotonous, mechanical, incessant activity. It stands for faults which became more and more manifest as time went on; to the unprogressiveness of this spirit, to its stiffness, hardness, narrowness, prejudice, want of insight, want of amiability. In contrast to this, Arnold recommends the world of the Merman: pleasure in life, that love of clear thinking and of fearless discussion, that gay social temper, that ease and lightness, that gracious flexibility, which are in men's nature. "Art refreshes us," says Arnold, "art liberates us, precisely by carrying us into such a world, and enabling us to find pleasure there" ("An Old Playgoer at the Lyceum", CPW, X, p. 140).

Puritanism, in its historical development, takes its start through the elimination of magical and ritual elements of religion. The genuine Puritan even rejected all signs of religious ceremony at the grave and buried his nearest and dearest without song or ritual in order that no superstition should creep in. England, in Arnold's view, has given herself to this trend: a fit of Evangelical piety. By that she has forfeited her ancient heritage of poetic beauty and poetic truth and has given herself to the prayer book and the spinning wheel. The Puritans, says Weber, repudiated the Apocrypha as not inspired, consistently with their sharp distinction between things divine and things of the flesh. But among the Canonical books that of Job had all the more influence. The Oriental quietism, which appears in several of the finest verses of the Psalms and in the Proverbs, was interpreted away. It is not without significance that Arnold tries to restore this element.

Professor Miriam Allott, in her comment on the poem, has rightly observed that the movement between these two worlds is conveyed through the poem's rhythmical variations: "The movement of feeling, from the

wildness of the opening to the resigned melancholy of the close when the impossibility of reconciling the two worlds has to be accepted, is reflected in the rhythmical variations of the Merman's irregular chant, which is probably Arnold's finest individual melodic invention" (Matthew Arnold, (Ibid., p. 92). L. Gottfried, admiring Arnold's performance, says "'The Forsaken Merman'... seems to indicate that Arnold had studied the metrics of Christabel and the sea-imagery of The Rime of the Ancient Mariner".<sup>12</sup> Charles Kingsley writes, in 1849, "though it reminds us in subject of poor Hood's exquisite poem of 'Hero and Leander', and also of Tennyson's 'Merman and Mermaid', it surpasses them... in simple naturalness, and a certain barbaric wildness of meter and fancy, thoroughly appropriate to the subject".<sup>13</sup>

Arnold, in one's view, has succeeded in conveying his message to his age: the misunderstanding of religion and the impact of this misinterpretation on human life. The age did not miss that point. R. H. Hutton, in his comment on the poem, (April, 1872) says "'The Forsaken Merman' - a very delicate little poem of its kind - is again hardly in any sense a narrative - poem. It is a pretty fanciful song full of picture, of which the living pulse is the innocent childish heartlonging of a bewildered, instinctive, unmasterful love conscious of the existence of a rivalry in the claims of religious feelings into which it cannot enter, and yet full of painful yearning" (Ibid., p. 227).

One has so far spoken mainly of the Puritan distrust of feelings and love pervading the personality of the member of the middle class. This mistrust was rooted in the doubt concerning one's future after death. Almost no one stricken with this fear would be able to relax, enjoy life, and be indifferent as to what would happen afterwards. This has produced some other traits: hostility and resentment. Arnold has noticed this aspect. In Literature and Dogma he says:

When one thinks of the bitter and contentious temper of Puritanism - temper being, nevertheless, such a vast part of 'conduct' - and then thinks of St Theresa and her sweetness, her never-sleeping hatred of 'detraction', one is tempted almost to say, that there was more of Jesus in St Theresa's little finger than in John Knox's whole body. Protestantism has the method of Jesus with his secret too much left out of mind.

(CPW, p. 352)

This poetic vision was later substantiated in Arnold's demonstrative prose writings. Arnold's essays on "Equality" (1861) and "A Word about America" are two of the most perceptive statements of his social doctrine, touching upon the same ideas that will continue to occur in his writings. One might take them as a footnote to one's interpretation of that poem. For Arnold, in his analysis of the structure of society and especially of middle class, says: "Let us see how the civilisation of these classes appears to a Frenchman, who witnessed, in his own country, the considerable humanisation of these classes by equality. To such an observer our middle class divides itself into a serious portion and a gay or rowdy portion... With the gay or rowdy portion we need not much concern ourselves... the real strength of the English middle class is in its serious portion. And of this a Frenchman who was here some little time ago as the correspondent, I think, of the *Siècle* newspaper, ... writes as follows. He had been attending some of the Moody and Sankey meetings, and he says: 'To understand the success of Messrs Moody and Sankey, one must be familiar with English manners, one must know the mind deadening influence of a narrow Biblism, one must have experienced the sense of acute ennui; which the aspect and the frequentation of this great division of English society produce in others, the want of elasticity and the chronic ennui which characterise this class itself, petrified in a narrow Protestantism and in a perpetual reading of the Bible' ("Equality", CPW, VIII, pp. 293-94).

Arnold goes on and gives an example of middle class life: of the serious portion. The example he quotes from Miss Bird's book in which she describes the Chalmers family - a family with which, on her journey from Denver to the Rocky Mountains, she lodged for some time.

"'Oh (she says), what a hard, narrow life it is with which I am now in contact! A narrow and unattractive religion, which I believe still to be genuine, and an intense but narrow patriotism, are the only higher influences. Chalmers came from Illinois nine years ago. He is slightly intelligent, very opinionated, and wishes to be thought well-informed, which he is not. He belongs to the straitest sect of Reformed Presbyterians ... He considers himself a profound theologian, and by the pine logs at night discourses to me the mysteries of the eternal counsels and the divine decrees...

'Mrs Chalmers looks like one of the English poor women of our childhood - lean, clean, toothless, and speaks, like some of them, in a piping, discontented voice, which seems to convey a personal reproach. She is never idle for one moment, is severe and hard, and despises everything but work. She always speaks of me as this or that woman. The family consists of a grown-up son, a shiftless, melancholy-looking youth, who possibly pines for a wider life; a girl of sixteen, a sour repellent-looking creature, with as much manners as a pig; and three hard, unchildlike younger children. By the whole family all courtesy and gentleness of act or speech seem regarded as works of the flesh, if not of the devil. They knock over all one's things without apologising or picking them up, and when I thank them for anything they look grimly amazed. I wish I could show them a more excellent way. This hard greed, and the exclusive pursuit of gain, with the indifference to all which does not aid in its acquisition, are eating up family love and life throughout the West. I write this reluctantly and after a total

experience of nearly two years in the United States. Mrs Chalmers is cleanly in her person and dress, and the food, though poor, is clean. Work, work, work, is their day and their life. They are thoroughly ungenial. There is a married daughter across the river, just the same hard, loveless, moral, hard-working being as her mother. Each morning, soon after seven, when I have swept the cabin, the family come in for worship. Chalmers wails a psalm to the most doleful of dismal tunes; they read a chapter round, and he prays. Sunday was a dreadful day. The family kept the commandment literally, and did no work. Worship was conducted twice, and was rather longer than usual. The man attempted to read a well-worn copy of Boston's Fourfold State, but shortly fell asleep, and they only woke up for their meals. It was an awful day, and seemed as if it would never come to an end. You will now have some idea of my surroundings. It is a moral, hard, unloving, unlovely, unrelieved, unbeautiful, grinding life. These people live in a discomfort and lack of ease and refinement which seem only possible to people of British stock.'

14

"What is this," says Arnold, "but the hideousness, the immense ennui, of the life on which we have touched so often, the life of our serious British Philistine, our Murdstone; that life with its defective type of religion, its narrow range of intellect and knowledge, its stunted senses of beauty, its low standard of manners? Only it is this life at its simplest, rudimentary state" ("A Word about America", CPW, X, pp. 15-17).

Arnold, however, was not blind to middle class merits. For, as he says, by what they became, they gained, and the whole nation with them; they deepened and fixed for this nation the sense of conduct. But they created a type of life and manners, of which they themselves indeed are slow to recognise the faults, but which is fatally condemned by its hideousness, its immense ennui, and against which the instinct of self-preservation in humanity

rebels.

Partisans fight against facts, says Arnold, in vain. Mr Goldwin Smith, a writer of eloquence and power, although too prone to acerbity, is a partisan of the Puritans, and of the Nonconformists who are the special inheritors of the Puritan tradition. He angrily resents the imputation upon that Puritan type of life, by which the life of our serious middle class has been formed, that it was doomed to hideousness, to immense ennui. He protests that it had beauty, amenity, accomplishment. Let us go to facts:

Charles the First, who, with all his faults, had the just idea that art and letters are great civilisers, made, as you know, a famous collection of pictures - our first National Gallery. It was, I suppose, the best collection at that time north of the Alps. It contained nine Raphaels, eleven Correggios, twenty-eight Titians. What became of that collection? The journal of the House of Commons will tell you. These you see the Puritan Parliament disposing of this Whitehall or York House collection as follows:  
'Ordered, that all such pictures and statues there are without any superstition, shall be forthwith sold ...  
Ordered, that all such pictures there as have the representation of the Second Person in Trinity upon them, shall be forthwith burnt. Ordered, that all such pictures there as have the representation of the Virgin Mary upon them, shall be forthwith burnt.'

There, Arnold comments, we have the weak side of our parliamentary government and our serious middle class (CPW, VIII, pp. 294-95).

ii

The situation was further complicated: as a result of the individual's own anxiety about his fate, there developed a frantic activity to do something, and to be solely concerned about saving himself. Activity in this sense assumes a compulsive quality: the individual has to be active in order to overcome this feeling of doubt and powerlessness. This kind of effort and activity is not the

result of inner strength and self-confidence: it is a desperate escape from anxiety. Man needed only a philosophical frame to rationalise his activity.

Utilitarianism was that philosophical frame. It came on the scene as a social force in 1820's and 1830's and made a strong impact due to the fact that Evangelicalism, after all, had had from its beginning a large admixture of Utilitarianism. In addition to that, Utilitarian philosophy of self-interest, itself, - according to which all men were seeking a maximum realisation of their interests by means of a maximum utilization of t h e i r p o w e r had been reanimated by the spirit of Darwinism which envisaged the individual members of any given species competing against each other for the available resources - out of which competition the fittest individuals survived, perpetuated their kind and thus contributed to the betterment and evolution of their species.

This spirit was applied to every aspect in society: "We are already suffering," says Arnold (1870), "from an excessive development of the competitive system. No one denies that it has its advantages within reasonable limits; but few thoughtful people will deny that we have lately been pushing a sound principle to ridiculous extremes. Education, instead of consisting in a careful and systematic development of the faculties, is in danger of reducing itself to preparing children for a series of spasmodic efforts" ("Education and Competition", CPW, VI, p. 412).

To sum up: on the stage there were, says Arnold, two philosophical theories - the first, a peculiarly British form of Atheism, the second, a peculiarly British form of Quietism. "The great promoters of these philosophical theories are our newspapers, which, no less than our parliamentary representatives, may be said to act the part of guides and governors to us... The first-named melancholy doctrine [Atheism] is preached



in the Times with great clearness and force of style; indeed, it is well known, from the example of the post Lucretius and others, what great masters of style the atheistic doctrine has always counted among its promulgators".<sup>15</sup>

Arnold was not the only critic to have noticed the complexity of the situation. One may quote a passage from John Wesley who noticed it even before Arnold and his contemporaries. The passage shows that the leaders of these ascetic movements understood the seemingly paradoxical relationships which Arnold was trying to interpret:

I fear [says Wesley], wherever riches have increased, the essence of religion has decreased in the same proportion. Therefore I do not see how it is possible, in the nature of things, for any revival of true religion to continue long. For religion must necessarily produce both industry and frugality, and these cannot but produce riches. But as riches increase, so will pride, anger, and love of the world in all its branches. How then is it possible that Methodism, that is, a religion of the heart, though it flourishes now as a green bay tree, should continue in this state? For the Methodists in every place grow diligent and frugal; consequently they increase in goods. Hence they proportionately increase in pride, in anger, in the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, and the pride of life. So, although the form of religion remains, the spirit is swiftly vanishing away. Is there no way to prevent this - this continued decay of pure religion? We ought not to prevent people from being diligent and frugal; we must exhort all Christians to gain all they can and to save all they can; that is, in effect, to grow rich. 16

Arnold not only understood the situation and interpreted it but also went as far as to suggest a remedy for it: "We are often supposed, when we criticise by the help of culture some imperfect doing or other, to have in our eye some well-known rival plan of doing, which we want to serve and recommend" (Culture and Anarchy, CPW., V, 234). Max Weber has rightly observed that the most important opponent with which the spirit of individualism and self-interest, in the sense of a definite standard of life claiming ethical sanction, has had to struggle, was that type of attitude and reaction to new situations which we may designate as

traditionalism. This is precisely what Arnold was trying to do: to counteract the spirit of self-interest with a doctrine that embodies the opposite values: renouncement, quietism, or Stoicism.

Arnold's concept of Quietism has nothing to do at all with pessimism or melancholy. He actually defined it negatively when he contrasted it with the doctrine of Atheism - in other words, it has nothing to do with the deep sense of defeat of Lucretius and all that this name stands for. Art, as Olson puts it, "above all other things is potent to avert [the spirit of individualism and self-interest]... it inculcates moral attitudes; it determines our feelings towards characters of a certain kind for no other reason than that they are such characters."<sup>17</sup>

Arnold pursued, in his career as poet-critic, his mission of inculcating the values of Quietism through intellect. It is true that many of his poems are not doctrinal, but to the extent that any doctrine pervades his poetry, it is stoicism. For example the main theme behind "The Sick King in Bokhara", "Fragment of an Antigone", and "Fragment of Chorus of a 'Dejaneria'" is the exaltation of primal law over self-selected good and self-assertion. The first of these poems,<sup>18</sup> published in 1849, is complete in itself, and constitutes a very sophisticated attempt to project the spiritual and social problems of Victorian England in terms of a story with an oriental setting. It develops an anecdote which in Arnold's source - Alexander Burnes' Travels into Bokhara (1834), exemplifies "the rigour of the Mohammedan Law" in telling of the fate of a certain Moollah. It is concluded by the statement that "to this day verses commemorate the death of this unfortunate man, whom we must either pronounce a bigot or a madman" (Commentary, pp. 85-89).

Culler, in his comment on the poem, writes "Doubtless it was this phrase [either bigot or a madman] that made Arnold's hackles rise and led

him to reinterpret the story so that it would not appear that everyone who believed in the existence of absolute values was either a bigot or a madman... In Burnes' the crime of the Moollah was not specified. Arnold took the crime of cursing one's mother from another anecdote because that was an act which although it violated a religious taboo, could not really be said to have done any harm in the Utilitarian sense. And then, since this curse had not been motivated in Burnes, he added the detail of the drought and the man's burning fever to provide him with every extenuating circumstance. In this way he devised a fable which would illustrate, even more neatly than Dostoevsky's Crime and Punishment, the conflict between redemptive and sociological justice" (Imaginative Reason, pp. 105-6).

But there is an aspect that is neglected by almost all critics: Man's idea of God and the consequences of that concept on human life. Arnold knows that everything depends on Man's conception of God. From that concept a system of government as well as rulers can be generated. For example, the King here is likened to God:

'How canst thou, ere thou hear, discern  
If I speak folly? but a king,  
Whether a thing be great or small,  
Like Allah, hears and judges all.

(Poems, p. 78)

Naturally if one's concept of God <sup>/is of a</sup> being as arbitrary and merciless as Calvin's God, who destined part of mankind to eternal damnation without any justification or reason except that this act was an expression of God's power, one would be psychologically prepared to accept a tyrannical king. In the Calvinistic idea of God, the concept of the Father in Heaven of the New Testament, so human and understanding, is gone. His place has been taken by a transcendental being, beyond the reach of human understanding, who with His quite incomprehensible decrees has decided the fate of every

individual and regulated the tiniest details of the cosmos from eternity. God of Islam is like God of the Old Testament whom Calvin invoked: Deistic. There is no place for the very human cycle of sin, repentance, atonement, release, followed by renewed sin.

Closely connected with the Calvinistic concept of God is the theory of predestination: one of the corner-stones, perhaps the central doctrine of Calvin's whole system. The theory has one implication which should be explicitly mentioned here for its importance to the interpretation of the poem: the principle of the basic inequality of men. For Calvin there are two kinds of people - those who are saved and those who are destined to eternal damnation. Since this fate is determined before they are born and without their being able to change it by anything they do or do not in their lives, the equality of mankind is denied in principle. Men are created unequal. This principle implies also that there is no solidarity between men, since the one factor which is the strongest basis for human solidarity is denied: the equality of man's fate.

Arnold, rightly, does not accept Calvin's interpretation of this doctrine.<sup>19</sup> It is even one of the points on which he disagrees with Carlyle:

Carlyle preached the dignity of labour, the necessity of righteousness, the love of veracity, the hatred of shame. He is said by many to be a great teacher, a great helper for us, because he does so. But what is the due and eternal result of labour, veracity? - Happiness. And how are we drawn to them by one who, instead of making us feel that with them is happiness, tells us that perhaps we were predestined not to be happy but to be unhappy?

("Emerson", CPW, X, p. 183).

Arnold's interpretation of the crime <sup>/is</sup> as follows:

'Wherefore hear thou? Thou know'st, how fierce  
In these last days the sun hath burned;  
That the green water in the tanks  
Is to a putrid puddle turned;  
And the canal, which from the stream  
Of Samarcand is brought this way,  
Wastes, and runs thinner every day.

'Now I at nightfall had gone forth  
Alone, and in a darksome place  
Under some mulberry-trees I found  
A little pool; and in short space,  
With all water that was there  
I filled my pitcher, and stole home  
Unseen; and having drink to spare,  
I hid the can behind the door,  
And went up on the roof to sleep.

'But in the night, which was with wind  
And burning dust, again I creep  
Down, having fever, for a drink.

'Now meanwhile had my brethren found  
The water-pitcher, where it stood  
Behind the door upon the ground,  
And called my mother; and they all,  
As they were thirsty, and the night  
Most sultry, drained the pitcher there;  
That they sate with it, in my sight,  
Their lips still wet, when I came down.

'Now mark! I, being fevered, sick  
(Most unblest also), at that sight,  
Brake forth, and cursed them - dost thou hear?  
One was my mother - Now, do right!'

(Poems, p. 79)

These lines bring to the mind the spiritual aridity and the concern of the individual with his own personal salvation. Water is an appropriate image for faith ["Dover Beach"], in addition to that the word 'fever' is usually used by Arnold to describe action. In this poem one can clearly identify the traces of the influence of religious doctrines in the elementary forms of conduct and attitude towards life even where their authority as a dogma was on the decline. The poem actually shows that the form of religion remains but the spirit is vanishing away.

'Nay but, I swear, from this thy path  
I will not stir till I be judged!  
Then they who stood about the king  
Drew close together and conferred;  
Till that the king stood forth and said:

'Before the priests thou shalt be heard.'  
But when the Ulemas were met,  
And the thing heard, they doubted not;  
But sentenced him, as the law is,  
To die by stoning on the spot.

(Poems, p. 80)

It is not a secret that all religious movements in Victorian England placed the emphasis on those parts of the Old Testament which praise formal legality as a sign of conduct pleasing to God. They held the theory that the Mosaic Law [not unlike the Islamic Law] had only lost its validity through Christ in so far as it contained ceremonial or purely historical precepts applying only to the Jewish people, but that otherwise it had always been valid as an expression of the natural law, and must hence be retained. Arnold attacked this position very clearly in Culture and Anarchy:

"'He that keepeth the law, happy is he;' 'Blessed is the man that feareth the Eternal, that delighteth greatly in his commandments,' - that is the Hebrew notion of felicity; and, pursued with passion and tenacity, this notion would not let the Hebrew rest till, as is known, he had at last got out of the law a network of prescriptions to enwrap his whole life, to govern every moment of it, every impulse, every action".

(CPW., v. 165).

Arnold wanted to counteract this spirit with a more humane one:

The poem echoes recognisably phrases from the New Testament:

Now the king charged us secretly:  
'Stoned must he be, the law stands so.  
Yet, if he seek to fly, give way;  
Hinder him not, but let him go.'  
So saying, the king took a stone,  
And cast it softly; - but the man,  
With a great joy upon his face,  
Kneeled down, and cried not, neither ran.

(Poems, p. 80)

Arnold, in these lines, changes Burnes's description of how the king

"threw the first stone" into "cast it softly": an echo of the biblical phrase:

"He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone".<sup>20</sup>

Alan Roper interprets the poem in terms of class conflicts: the arbitrary division of society into haves and have-nots. "A division widened by the harshness of climate and terrain. The prevailing drought, plague, and poverty make of the haves, those who successfully exploit the labour of others to create for themselves cool sanctuaries" (Ibid., p.111). He sees that the Vizier's speech shows "the always latent reference of Bokhara to Victorian England. Bokhara with its commercial preoccupation, with its material and political aridity, is fully consonant with the familiar picture of the Victorian desert, the spiritual life stifled by economic individualism" (Ibid., p. 113).

The key word for the poem is "sick". The nature of its importance becomes obvious when we, says Roper, recall that physical disorder has long been an acceptable metaphor for spiritual malaise. The Vizier uses a metaphor which associates the physical conditions of Bokhara with its political and economic system:

And these all, labouring for a lord,  
Eat not the fruit of their own hands;  
Which is the heaviest of all plagues,  
To that man's mind, who understands.

As Paul wrote to Timothy: "The husbandman that laboureth must be first partaker of the fruit".<sup>21</sup>

On a different plane, there is another conflict going on - that which arises out of the contrast between the young king's humanitarian sympathy and the Vizier's cold assessment of the situation. The king is advised by his aged Vizier that his grief is unwise, for the man was nothing to him and, if he is to grieve for those unrelated to him, he will have no end of sorrow. Such an advice is better understood in the light of the later development of Calvinism where warnings against friendliness towards the

stranger, a cruel attitude towards the poor, and a general atmosphere of suspiciousness often appeared.<sup>22</sup>

But who, through all this length of time,  
Could bear the burden of his years,  
If he for strangers pained his heart  
Not less than those who merit tears?  
Fathers we must have, wife and child,  
And grievous is the grief for these;  
This pain alone, which must be borne,  
Makes the head white, and bows the knees.  
But other loads than this his own  
One man is not well made to bear.

(Poems, p. 81)

All over the world people are suffering from sickness, poverty, slavery, and war: "Wilt thou have pity on all these?"

In his note-book, Arnold writes: "Our concern for ourselves with other men ought only to be a result of our world-insight and objective prudence - and must not be confounded with our duty of self discipline and self-cultivation". Applying this to the present poem, one becomes aware that although on one level the poem is about ethical and social problems, on a second level it is about the poet. It is analogous to "The Strayed Reveller", and the young king is the type of the Romantic poet who projects himself into the sufferings of others, just as the Vizier is the type of the classical poet who remains detached, remote, and aloof. This, in one's opinion, shows to what extent Arnold's idea of poetry is closely connected with life.

For all the complexity of its thought, the poem does not appeal to many critics: G. Saintsbury, for instance, writes "Nor am I one of those who think very highly of the much longer 'Sick King in Bokhara'".<sup>23</sup> H.W. Paul says that the poem "is almost prosaic".<sup>24</sup> The poem, however, was well received in Arnold's time. R.H. Hutton, in his comment on the poem in 1870, wrote: "Of the poems which are called narrative, this is in my opinion



the only one, rightly so called, that is perfectly successful" (Dawson, p. 228). W.M. Rossetti, in his comment on Arnold's poetry, writes: "We know few poems the style of which is more unaffectedly without labour, and to the purpose, than this" (Ibid., p. 62). J.A. Froude writes: "'The Sick King in Bokhara" ... there was genuine insight into life and whatever is best and noblest in it - but along with this, there was often an elaborate obscurity" (Ibid., p. 86).

Though the poem does not rise, in its poeticality, to the level Arnold achieved in "Dover Beach" or "The Scholar Gipsy", it is in content, a step on the road to this standard. The poem is Arnold's experiment in the dramatic form too: it is a combination of narrative and dramatic forms, yet Arnold gives it a permanent place among the Narrative poems in 1869. In other words it is a step towards his ideal of the classical objectivity of Art he was to attempt in Merope, which is the subject of my discussion in the following pages.

## II

### The Second Stage (1850-1860)

Critics who are sympathetic with Arnold usually advise readers, who wish to become fond of Arnold's poetry, to postpone Merope - his last elaborate work, till they have acquired a decided taste for him. For the poem is generally regarded as an uninspired performance - perfunctory, cold, destitute of poetical beauty. To Arnold's contemporaries Merope came as a disappointment. The reviews, however, were not hostile. On the contrary, from the weeklies to the big quarterlies, the sentiment was regret: "Every reviewer applauded Arnold's commitment to literature, his

desire to improve the climate for poetry, and his dedication to a new medium of expression. What reviewers failed to credit him with, says Carl Dawson, "was a successful example and an adequate theory" (Critical Heritage, p. 16). Arthur Dudley, the reviewer in the Revue des deux Mondes,<sup>25</sup> had indicated that Arnold's real gifts were for prose, and had anticipated his shift to essays and prose works.

The poem is not lucky with our critics either. H. Paul, for instance, writes "It is the form without the spirit, the body without the soul" (Op. cit., p. 54). E.K. Chambers, to the same effect, says that "it is rather an academic exercise".<sup>26</sup> S.P. Sherman, in his comment on the poem says "If its production was a mistake, it was, however, a mistake that Arnold was doomed to make. The heavenly Muse was perhaps absent during its composition, but the critical spirit drove him to the task".<sup>26</sup> W.D. Anderson says "Possibly the chief service Merope can render is to put us on our guard against the common view of its author as a reliable interpreter of Sophocles and Athenian tragedy" (Op. cit., p.111). M. Thorpe, in his comment on the poem, says "like the historical plays of Tennyson, Swinburne and Browning, Merope is a dead imitation, devoid of the living 'affinity' between the past and the present which Arnold required in his 'Advertisement' of 1854... in Merope he had not only once again evaded his time, he had committed the far greater crime of suppressing his true poetic impulse in the interests of a restrictive theory" (Op. cit., p.64).

The purpose of this reading is to show that if the poem fails, it is because of the fact that Arnold was trying, not to evade his time as Thorpe argues but to meet the age with all its complexities and problems in one work. The poem in one's view is the bridge between the Greeks' use of myth and the contemporary works of O'Neill, Giraudoux, Anouilh, and specially Brecht. In its own way, Merope has some arresting virtues. At

least it shows the artist at work: perhaps one could learn from it Arnold's method of composition. To appreciate the poem one may ask two questions, Arnold, himself, asked in his comment on Hamlet: what world did Arnold resolve to place the poem's action and characters in? Do they admit of being placed there? - in other words, do they lend themselves to his resolve?

During the time of writing Merope Arnold wrote to a friend describing himself as "full of a tragedy of the time of the end of the Roman Republic - one of the most colossal times of the world, I think... it won't see the light, however, before 1857" (Letters, I, p. 49). It never saw the light - though Arnold explored the characteristics of those 'colossal times' in his essays as one has shown. During that time he was appointed as Professor of Poetry at Oxford. He wished to align theory with practice. Merope exemplifies that line with the greatest clearness: it is his attempt at the "grand style". Arnold's critics' most reasonable objection was that no true poetry could be written to a prescription, however admirable.

On July 25, 1857, he wrote to his sister, Mrs Forster: "I am well in the middle of my Merope, and please myself pretty well though between indolence and nervousness I am a bad worker. What I learn in studying Sophocles for my present purpose is, or seems to me, wonderful; so far exceeding all that one would learn in years' reading of him without such a purpose. And what a man! what works! I must read Merope to you. I think and hope it will have what Buddha called the 'character of Fixity' that true sign of the law" (Letters, I, p. 57). Again he writes to her "The poem [Merope] is a tragedy according to the celebrated definition which has not yet, so far as I know, given place to a better - 'Tragedy is the imitation of some action that is serious and entire and of proper magnitude, effecting through pity and fear the purification of these feelings

of the soul'" (Unpublished letters, p. 41).

"Generally speaking," says Arnold to his sister, K., "the history, topography and natural history of Merope are faithful - that is so far as anything about Greece from one who has not seen it can be faithful" (Ibid., p. 36). There is no point in disputing that: the note-book for November and December, 1856, shows him at Merope. In December he enters on his reading list Sophocles' Electra, Voltaire's Merope, Aeschylus's Choephorae, Goethe's Iphigenia, Alfieri's Merope, and Milton's Samson. His work lasted well into the following year, because in September he is still at Merope. His reading list for the year clearly shows his preparation, as Tinker and Lowry have observed, both for the play and for the preface. In January, for example, Goethe's Iphigenia, Milton's Samson, and Alfieri again appear on his list; in February, Voltaire's prefaces; in March, Grote's History of Greece; in May, Sophocles' Ajax and Alfieri. For June and the two following months there are no entries; but in September he is still hard at his task, reading The Woman of Trachis, Pausanias - on whom he drew, heavily for local colour - and Apollodorus; in October, Sophocles' Oedipus, Clinton on the ancient Greek poets, Callimachus, Fabricius on Sophocles, Rigault's Querelle des anciens et modernes, and Muller's History of Greek Literature; in November, Muller and Grote are continued, along with Aristotle's Poetics. In December, he again studies the Poetics and Voltaire's prefaces - doubtless in relation to his own introduction.

At last the play came out with a long preface attached to it. It dwells upon three things: First, the physical arrangement of the earliest Greek stage, showing how, as the Greek theatre developed, it dictated the state of its drama: demanding broad and simple effects, a minimum of shades of tone or gesture, unity, and a balanced symmetry - in short, "distinctness and depth of impression". Secondly, the importance of choosing traditional

stories and following the tradition as closely as possible. Finally, the errors in dramaturgy made by his predecessors, Maffei, Voltaire, and Alfieri. But the most important thing is that he gives his intention in writing the play:

I desired to try, therefore, how much of the effectiveness of the Greek poetical forms I could retain in an English poem constructed under the conditions of these forms; of those forms, too, in their severest and most definite expression, in their application to dramatic poetry.

(CPW, I, p. 39).

Saintsbury, in his comment on the play, says: "It is rather curious that the story of Merope should have been so tempting as, to mention nothing else, Maffei's attempt in Italian, Voltaire's in French, and this of Mr Arnold in English, show it to have been to modern admirers and would-be practitioners of the Classical drama: and the curiosity is of a tell-tale kind" (Op. cit., p. 61). One would rather say that Arnold could not have chosen a better story so as to embody his ideas about his society: "The events on which the action of the drama turns belong to the period of transition from the heroic and fabulous to the human and historic age of Greece" (Poems, p. 400).

With minor variations, the story as generally dramatised is this: Merope, the widowed queen of the murdered Heraclid Cresphontes, has saved her youngest son from the murderer and usurper, Polyphontes, and sent him out of the country. When he has grown up, and has secretly returned to Messina to take vengeance, Polyphontes is pressing Merope to let bygones be bygones and marry him, so as to reconcile the jarring parties in the State. Aepytus, the son, to facilitate his reception, represents himself as a messenger charged to bring the news of his own death; and Merope, hearing this and believing the messenger to be also the assassin, obtains access to

the chamber where he is resting after his journey, and is about to murder her own sleeping son when he is saved by the inevitable anagnorisis. The party of Cresphontes is then secretly roused. Aepytus, at the sacrifice which the tyrant holds in honour of the news of his rival's death, snatches the sacrificial axe and kills Polyphontes himself.

It was a lost play of Euripides that served as the basis for Merope. The story bears certain resemblances to the Electra of Sophocles, especially, as Anderson has rightly observed, in its final developments, and Arnold takes this play as his model. In his comment on the play, Anderson says: "His choice of Sophoclean treatment for a Euripidean theme is another matter. The two Electra plays show how differently these poets could present the same story... The Electra was a singularly dangerous model. For contemporary critics of Greek tragedy it has proved the most difficult of Sophocles' works to interpret... Given these facts, one might expect Merope to be a pastiche. In a sense it is, since its materials derive at various times from all three of the great Athenian dramatists" (Op. cit., pp. 108-109).

Perhaps, Arnold's dilemma in composing this play would be clearly conceived if one compares the Oresteia of Aeschylus, the Electra of Sophocles and the Electra of Euripides. For it is clear that Arnold conceived his Merope with his mind running on all these works: In the Oresteia the emphasis is on the pollution of the house by the murder of Agamemnon; Electra greets Orestes not only as the cleanser but the unifier - the son who carries, through the bitter difficulties of the action, the loving kinship relations of a disrupted household. The insoluble difficulty is the need to cleanse and re-establish the house by its own norms, and the relation of the inevitable matricide to these norms and to other conceptions of justice. In Sophocles, the emphasis is much more on the personal feelings of Electra and Orestes, the motive of Clytemnestra's murder of Agamemnon is

in the same way personalised - it is not only a chain of events in the history of a house, but a compounded husband-murder and adultery; the reaction is then of a son and a daughter, as well as of an avenging and cleansing generation. In Euripides, the emphasis has again shifted: Electra is married to a farmer, and the vengeance and murder come as if from a different dimension, a tragedy necessarily but with a degree of bitterness and malignity breaking into an apparently settled life. Thus by trying to incorporate all these experiences Arnold ran the risk of having no character as well as the dilution of the dramatic intensity: a risk he sought to avoid by aiming at a Sophoclean tone. This meant concentrating on character, and he did so; but he failed to give his protagonists the inner strength that drives an Oedipus or an Antigone.

To take the most relevant example of all, the Electra who lives for vengeance is replaced by a Merope who doubts and hesitates and counts the forces of conscience. Her problem is choosing between Polyphontes' liberal pragmatic ethic of compromise and the older ethic of absolute values, in this case the primitive right of revenge or justice. In the first half of the play she is chiefly opposed to Polyphontes and in the second half to Aepytus, and the revolution in her views comes in the recognition scene.

The play does embody morality, to be sure. The ways in which it does so show how far Arnold had gone along his own path, ignoring not only Sophocles but Aristotle. His delicacy of feeling in setting aside the mythographer's tradition that Merope had married Polyphontes caused the introduction of a subplot: Polyphontes vainly courts his victim's widow. On other matters he sticks to tradition. He tells in the preface to Merope that tradition is "an unspeakable support" to the poet: "It gives him the feeling that he is treading on solid ground.... Its importance I feel

so strongly, that, were driven to invent in the false story told by Merope's son... of his own death, I could not satisfy myself until I discovered in Pausanias a tradition, which I took for my basis, of an Arcadian hunter drowned in the lake Stymphabus, down one of those singular Katabothra, or chasms in the limestone rock, so well known in Greece, in a manner similar to that in which Aepytyus is represented to have perished" (CPW, I, p. 53).

Aepytyus, on the other hand, embodies the older ethic of absolute values. He is confident that his plan of murder is righteous. These values assert that a crime must be atoned for no matter how much further suffering its atonement begets. So, his position is religious. But this raises a problem, which Arnold gives to the second chorus (because this tragic poem is, unfortunately, so little read, it is worth quoting the passage):

The most are bad, wise men have said  
Let the best rule, they say again.  
The best, then, to dominion hath the right.  
Rights unconceded and denied,  
Surely, if rights, may be by force asserted -  
May be, nay should, if for the general weal.  
The best, then, to the throne may carve his way,  
And strike opposers down,  
Free from all guilt of lawlessness,  
Or selfish lust of personal power;  
Bent only to serve virtue,  
Bent to diminish wrong.  
And truly, in this ill-ruled world,  
Well sometimes may the good desire  
To give to virtue her dominion due!  
Well may he long to interrupt  
The reign of folly, usurpation ever,  
Though fenced by sanction of a thousand years!  
Well thirst to drag the wrongful ruler down;  
Well purpose to pen back  
Into the narrow path of right  
The ignorant, headlong multitude,  
Who blindly follow, ever,  
Blind leaders, to their bane!  
But who can say, without a fear:  
That best, who ought to rule, am I;  
The mob, who ought to obey, are these;  
I the one righteous, they the many bad?  
Who, without check of conscience, can aver  
That he to power makes way by arms,



Sheds blood, impressions, banishes, attains,  
Commits all deeds the guilty oftenst do,  
Without a single guilty thought,  
Armed for right only and the general good?  
Therefore, with censure unallayed,  
Therefore, with unexcepting ban,  
Zeus and pure-thought Justice brand  
Imperious self-asserting violence;  
Sternly condemn the too bold man, who dares  
Elect himself Heaven's destined arm;  
And, knowing well man's inmost heart infirm,  
However noble the committer be,  
His grounds however specious shown,  
Turn with averted eyes from deeds of blood.

(Poems, pp. 415-416)

These lines echo Arnold's ideas about civilisation and the manifestations of progress. One of the manifestations of progress, according to Arnold, is "the love of liberty".

Polyphontes stands "upon the threshold of old age", afraid of becoming a tyrant, yet voicing a tyrant's threat in his final speech. Arnold makes his character a mixture of good and evil, and, in so doing, gave to his work a totally un-Greek character. In a Greek tragedy the values are relatively clear, and the effect depends upon the inevitable and foreshadowed working out of the catastrophe. But here the values are not clear, and the interest rather depends upon the working out of the problem, which side is right, Polyphontes or Aepytus. The theme of the play is the complexity of the moral situation and the difficulty in politics of choosing between a pragmatic and an absolutistic ethic. It seems that the absence of value judgement as far as action is concerned is precisely what Arnold meant: to see an action or a character from a multitude of points of view, each presented as neither more nor less valid than the rest. It is a discipline in disinterestedness. Such a method is considered as "Brecht's real originality".

In his opening speech, Polyphontes says:

Peace, peace is what I seek, and public calm;  
Endless extinction of unhappy hates,  
Union cemented for this nation's weal.

(Poems, p. 405)

His aim is good but what makes him pragmatic is his means to that end:  
he murdered his rival and thus violated a taboo. He, however, does not  
lack logic in defending himself:

Murder! - but what is murder?  
When a wretch  
For private gain or hatred takes a life,  
We call it murder, crush him, brand his name.  
But when for some great public cause, an arm  
Is, without love or hate, austere raised  
Against a power exempt from common checks,  
Dangerous to all, to be but thus annulled -  
Ranks any man with murder such an act?  
With grievous deeds, perhaps; with murder no!  
Find then such cause, the charge of murder falls -  
Be judge thyself if it abound not here.

(Poems, pp. 406-7)

His motive for the act is very significant too:

What we found here were tribes of fame obscure,  
Much turbulence, and little constancy,  
Precariously ruled by foreign lords  
From the Aeolian stock of Neleus sprung,  
A house once great, now dwindling in its sons.  
Such were the conquered, such the conquerors; who  
Had most thy husband's confidence? Consult  
His acts! the wife he chose was - full of virtues -  
But an Arcadian princess, more akin  
To his new subjects than to us; his friends  
Were the Messenian chiefs; the laws he framed  
Were aimed at their promotion, our decline.  
And, finally, this land, then half-subdued,  
Which from one central city's guarded seat  
As from a fastness in the rocks our scant  
Handful of Dorian conquerors might have curbed,  
He parcelled out in five confederate states,  
Sowing his victors thinly through them all,  
Mere prisoners, meant or not, among our foes.

(Poems, p. 407)

These lines echo the other great manifestation of progress: "The love

of equality".

Undoubtedly, immense inequality of conditions and property is a defeat to the instinct of expansion; it depresses and degrades the inferior masses. The common people is and must be, as Tocqueville said, more uncivilised in aristocratic countries than in any others. A thousand arguments may be discovered in favour of inequality, just as a thousand arguments may be discovered in favour of absolutism. And the one insuperable objection to inequality is the same as the one insuperable objection to absolutism: namely, that inequality, like absolutism, thwarts a vital instinct, and being thus against nature, is against our humanisation. On the one side, in fact, inequality harms by pampering; on the other, by vulgarising and depressing. A system founded on it is against nature, and on the long run breaks down.

(CPW, VIII, pp. 371-72)

In lines that, in one's view, are as good as that of Iago, he says:

I his chief kinsman, I his pioneer  
And champion to the throne, I honouring most  
Of men the line of Heracles, preferred  
The many of that lineage to the one;  
What his foes dared not, I, his lover dared;  
I at that altar, where mid shouting crowds  
He sacrificed, our ruin in his heart,  
To Zeus, before he struck his blow, struck mine -  
Struck once, and awed his mob, and saved this realm.  
Murder let others call this, if they will;  
I, self-defence and righteous execution.

(Poems, pp. 407-8)

Still he has his affection for the victim:

It needs no yearly offerings at his tomb  
To keep alive that memory in my heart -  
It lives, and, while I see the light, will live.

(Poems, p. 405)

Polyphontes might more successfully have been developed into the tragic centre-being of "twofold colour" as Merope puts it "I find worth in thee, and badness too... a two-fold colour reigns in all" - he is potentially a good tragic hero. But his conflict is developed too much vis.à.vis Merope, not within himself, and he is absent from the central scene,

where Aegyptus is discovered to Merope. Over his corpse, Merope makes a funeral speech in which she weighs his badness with his goodness:

Over thy corpse - triumph not, neither mourn,  
For I find worth in thee, and badness too.  
What mood of spirit, therefore, shall we call  
The true one of a man - what way of life  
His fixed condition and perpetual walk?  
None, since a twofold colour reigns in all.  
But thou, my son, study to make prevail  
One colour in thy life, the hue of truth;  
That justice, that sage order, not alone  
Natural vengeance, may maintain thine act,  
And make it stand indeed the will of Heaven.

(Poems, p. 443)

The content of the poem meets Arnold's demand that a subject should speak:

Of truth, of grandeur, beauty, love and hope,  
And melancholy fear subdued by faith,  
Of blessed consolations in distress,  
Of moral strength and intellectual power,  
Of joy in widest commonalty spread.

These lines can be said to describe the content of the poem except the quality of melancholy. Only once one hears the true full note of Arnoldian melancholy:

O Merope, how many noble thoughts,  
How many precious feelings of man's heart,  
How many loves, how many gratuities,  
Do twenty years wear out, and see expire!

(Poems, p. 406)

Concerning the poem's concept of Form one would not add much to what Arnold said in its preface. In the choruses he sought to make antistrophe match strophe, and devised lyric meters which he believed had an effect comparable with that of the Greek prototypes:

Some of the measures used in the choric songs of my tragedy are ordinary measures of English verse: others are not so; but it must not be supposed that these last are the reproduction of any Greek choric measures. So to adapt Greek measures to English verse is impossible: what I have

done is to try to follow rhythms which produced on my own feeling a similar impression to that produced on it by the rhythms of Greek choric poetry. In such an endeavour, when the ear is guided solely by its own feeling, there is I know, a continual risk of failure and of offence. I believe, however, that there are no existing English measures which produce the same effect on the ear, and therefore on the mind, as that produced by many measures indispensable to the nature of Greek lyric poetry. He, therefore, who would obtain certain effects obtained by that poetry, is driven to invent new measures, whether he will or no.

(CPW, I, pp. 62-63)

Arnold wrote a good deal to his family and to others in defence of it, and at one time attempted to get Helen Faucit to produce it on the stage. In the summer of 1859, he was in Paris associating with that circle of French critics whose praise was for him the final crown. He wrote to his wife on August 21: "Villemain brought out Merope, which he likes, naturally, more than the English do". As late as 1865 he still thought there was a certain solidity in its composition, which made it look as well as five years before. The poem, in my view, is interesting and a good example of the artist's sincerity and dedication to his art. It is, also, a fine example for the would-be-dramatist to emulate.

### III

#### The Third Stage (1860-1888)

The third phase in Arnold's development is characterised by its positiveness. After all, he was much more drastically brought face to face with the seamy side of life in England after he became an Inspector of Schools in 1851. From that time<sup>28</sup> signs of positiveness in his attitude to life began to appear. In a letter to Clough - 7 June, 1852,

he writes: "Still nothing can absolve us from the duty of doing all we can to keep alive our courage and activity" (CL, p. 132). And by the year 1861, it was not difficult to abstract specific reforms from such essays as "Democracy", "Equality", and "Falkland". However, it remains to be stressed that Arnold's ultimate significance does not lie in such matters.

Arnold, undoubtedly, has had periods of intense doubt and despair. As one has shown, the old order was breaking down. The new situation was bound to create a deep feeling of insecurity, powerlessness, doubt, aloneness, and anxiety. It is particularly important, here, to understand the significance of doubt and the attempts to silence it, because this is not only a problem concerning Arnold but it has remained one of the basic problems of modern man. Doubt is the starting-point of modern philosophy: it had a most powerful stimulus on the development of modern philosophy and science.

In point of theory, there are two types of doubt: rational and irrational. Rational doubt can be solved by rational answers: while the irrational one would not disappear as long as man does not overcome his isolation and as long as his place in the world has not become a meaningful one in terms of his human needs. In Arnold's case the change from doubt to certainty, far from being contradictory, has a causal relation. By understanding the nature of Arnold's doubt this change will look less surprising: his was a rational doubt which was rooted in the freedom of thinking and which dares to question established views. This rational doubt can be cured by rational answers and more knowledge. But there are some questions that are difficult to answer either philosophically or scientifically. among these are: Man's fate and the questions pertaining to the problems of the absolute Other (God). On this plane, Arnold's melancholy persists:

We, in some unknown Power's employ,  
Move on a rigorous line...

("Stanzas in Memory of the Author  
of 'Obermann'")

"Line" is similarly used in "Too Late" as a symbol of the predestination  
of the life course:

Each on his own strict line we move,  
And some find death ere they find love;  
So far apart their lives are thrown  
From the twin soul which halves their own.

Again he writes that the earth

Is on all sides o'ershadow'd by the high  
Uno'erleap'd Mountains of Necessity.

("To a Republican Friend - Contd.")

Man's freedom to act as well as to influence the course of the world is  
smaller than he thinks. Ideas of this category continued with Arnold as  
a permanent source of melancholy: the same with all great poets. For  
even if they speak in hopeful terms it is in the last analysis a sort of  
resignation: In la sua volontade a nostra pace.

Or Shakespeare's

... Men must endure  
Their going hence, even as their coming hither;  
Ripeness is all.

Arnold's vexation at the sort of unintelligent human behaviour that  
resulted in the great urban slums of Victorian Britain is another source  
of despair:

Our minds  
Are confused as the cries which we hear,  
Changing and shot as the sights which we see.  
And we say that repose has fled  
For ever the course of the river of Time.  
That cities will crowd to its edge  
In a blacker, incessanter line;  
That the din will be more on its banks,  
Denser the trade on its streams,  
Flatter the plain where it flows,  
Fiercer the sun overhead.

("Future", II. 55-56)

And of Man in the new situation, he writes in "A Summer Night",

For most men in a brazen prison live,  
Where, in the sun's hot eye,  
With heads bent o'er their toil, they languidly  
Their lives to some unmeaning task-work give,  
Dreaming of nought beyond their prison-wall.  
And as, year after year,  
Fresh products of their barren labour fall  
From their tired hands, and rest  
Never yet comes more near,  
Gloom settles slowly down over their breast...

This picture might look pessimistic, but in my view, it is not an utterly hopeless picture of man. It is worthy of notice that Arnold, in speaking about the situation of man on the social level, defines it in terms of opposites rather than negatives. According to laws of logic - The Law of Excluded Middle, there is middle ground between opposites (ex. hope and despair). According to the same law, there is no middle ground between a term and its negative (ex. hope and 'unhope').

Change was inevitable: new forces came into the stage of events.

J.H. Newman, in a letter to Arnold, says: "Of course the existence of the Communists makes the state of things now vastly different from what it was in the Middle Ages" (Unpublished Letters, [December, 1871], p. 61).

Arnold knows that. In one of his essays - "Equality," Arnold says that "The well-being of the many comes out more and more distinctly, in proportion as time goes on, as the object we must pursue. An individual or a class, concentrating their efforts upon their own well-being exclusively, do but beget troubles both for others and for themselves also. No individual life can be truly prosperous, passed as Obermann says, in the midst of men who suffer; passée au milieu des générations qui souffrent. To the noble soul, it cannot be happy; to the ignoble, it cannot be secure. Socialistic and communistic schemes have generally, however, a fatal defect; they are content with too low and material a standard of well-being. That instinct of



perfection, which is the master-power in humanity, always rebels at this, and frustrates the work. Many are to be made partakers of well-being, true; but the ideal of well-being is not to be, on that account, lowered and coarsened" (CPW, VIII, [1861], pp. 289-90).

Arnold's aim, as one has shown, is the humanisation of man: civilisation is the humanisation of man in society. To be humanised is to comply with the true law of our human nature : ..."To keep our measure, and to hold fast our end. To be humanised is to make progress towards this, our true and full humanity. And to be civilised is to make progress towards this in civil society; in that civil society 'without which,' says Burke, 'man could not by any possibility arrive at the perfection of which nature is capable, nor even make a remote and faint approach to it'. To be the most civilised of nations, therefore, is to be the nation which comes nearest to human perfection, in the state which that perfection essentially demands" (CPW, VIII, p. 286). He made it his task. To this effect Arnold says, in January, 1879:

What interests me is English civilisation; and our politics in their present state do not seem to me have much bearing upon that. English civilisation - the humanising, the bringing into one harmonious and truly humane life, of the whole body of English society - that is what interests me. I try to be a disinterested observer of all which really helps and hinders that. Certain hindrances seem to me to be present with us, and certain helps to be wanting to us. An isolated observer may easily be mistaken, and his observations greatly require the test which other minds can exert upon them.

("Ecce, Convertimur ad Gentes",  
CPW, IX, pp. 86-7)

Again, he writes to the same effect in "The Future of Liberalism" (1880):

And perhaps I may be allowed to compare myself with Cobbett so far as this: that whereas his politics were governed by a master-thought, the thought of the bad condition of the English labourer, so mine, too, are governed by a master-thought, by a different one from Cabbott's. The master-thought by which my politics are governed is rather this - the thought of the bad civilisation of the English middle class.

(CPW, IX, p. 137)

To concentrate on the English middle class is not surprising. In any society the spirit of the whole culture is determined by the spirit of those groups that are most powerful in that society. This is so partly because these groups have the power to control the educational system, schools, churches, press, theatre, and thereby to imbue the whole population with their own ideas; furthermore, these powerful groups carry so much prestige that the lower classes are more than ready to accept and imitate their values and to identify themselves psychologically. To this effect Arnold writes in July, 1881:

In England, too, power is passing away from the now governing class. The part to be taken in English life by the middle class is different from the part which the middle class has had to take hitherto - different, more public, more important. Other and greater functions devolve upon this class than of old; but its defective civilisation makes it unfit to discharge them. It comes to the new time and to its new duties, it comes to them, as its flatterers will never tell it, but as it must nevertheless bear to be told and well to consider - it comes to them with a defective type of religion, a narrow range of intellect and knowledge, a stunted sense of beauty, a low standard of manners.

(IX, p. 296)

Arnold, in his attempt to realise this aim, has come to two new ideas: first, that the most immediate issues in the question - how to live, are those that are most concrete. Second, the idea that all human values, as human emotions, are of social growth if not of social origin. Out of this conviction he says:

I have felt convinced that for the progress of our civilisation, here in England, three things were above all necessary:- a reduction of those immense inequalities of condition and property amongst us, of which our land-system is the base; a genuine municipal system; public schools for the middle classes.

(CPW, IX, p. 7)

Again he writes:

An acceleration of progress in the spread of ideas of this kind [common good], a decline of vitality in institutions where the opposite ideas were paramount, marks the close of a period.

(CPW, X, p. 238)

To begin with Arnold's idea of Equality, he argues in favour of it on the basis of "natural reason" and "practical experience":

For modern civilisation some approach to equality is necessary, and that an enormous inequality like ours is a hindrance to our civilisation.... If our inequality is really unfavourable to our civilisation, sooner or later this will be perceived generally, and our inequality will be abated. It will be abated by some measure far beyond the scope of our present politics, whether by the adoption of the French law of bequest, which now prevails so widely upon the continent, or as Mr Mill thought preferable, by fixing the maximum of property which any one individual may take by bequest or inheritance, or in some other manner. But this is not likely to come in our time, nor, is it to be desired that such a change should come while we are yet ill prepared for it.

(CPW, IX, pp. 11-12)

This is Arnold's social idea:

The great men of culture are those who have a passion for diffusing, for making prevail, for carrying from one end of society to the other, the best knowledge, the best ideas of their time; who laboured to divest knowledge of all that was harsh, uncouth, difficult, abstract, professional, exclusive; to humanise it, to make it efficient outside the clique of the cultivated and learned, yet still remaining the best knowledge and thought of the time, and a true source, therefore, of sweetness and light.

(Culture and Anarchy, CPW., V, 113)

As for the second point - a genuine municipal system, it arises from Arnold's conviction that the principal transforming force at work in Western society is the movement towards democracy. In his first published essay on a political topic, England and the Italian Question (1859), he describes the time as one "when the masses of the European population begin more and more to make their voice heard respecting their country's affairs ... when sovereigns and statesmen must more and more listen to this voice, can less and less act without taking it into account" (CPW, I, p. 81).

But still thinks that the masses are yet ill prepared for it:

For the peasant, moreover, for the agricultural labourer, municipal life is a first and invaluable stage in political education, more helpful by far... than the exercise of the parliamentary franchise.

(IX, pp. 12-13)

But,

The difficulty for democracy is, how to find and keep high ideals. The individuals who compose it are, the bulk of them, persons who need to follow an ideal, not to set one; and one ideal of greatness, high feeling, and fine culture, which an aristocracy once supplied to them, they love by the very fact of ceasing to be a lower order and becoming a democracy. Nations are not truly great solely because the individuals composing them are numerous, free, and active; but they are great when these numbers, this freedom, and this activity are employed in the service of an ideal higher than that of an ordinary man, taken by himself. Our society is probably destined to become much more democratic; who or what will give a high tone to the nation then? That is the grave question.

("Democracy", CPW, II, pp. 17-18)

Arnold's answer to this question is the State as defined by Burke:

"Do not suffer yourselves, then, to be misled by declamations against the state, against bureacracy, centralisation, socialism, and all the rest of it. The State is just what Burke very well called it, long before M. Gambetta: the nation in its collective character. To use the State is simply to use co-operation of a superior kind" (IX, pp. 15-16). Arnold wished to make the State, as he puts it in a letter to Fontanès, "the organ of the best self and highest reason of the community, rather than to reduce the State to insignificance, and to cultivate, in fact, the American ideal" (Letters, II, p. 150). In another letter to Fontanès, Arnold says: "I suppose your thoughts, in France, must turn a good deal upon the over-meddling of the State, and upon the need of developing more the action of individuals. With us the mischief has, I am convinced, been the other way. The State has not enough shown a spirit of initiative, and individuals have

too much thought that it sufficed if they acted with entire liberty...  
action at once so resolute and so unintelligent" (Ibid., pp. 149-50).

Arnold was convinced that the affairs of a country tend to be  
more democratic everyday, like England, will be taken up by the middle  
classes who are still unprepared for the new responsibilities. Hence,  
comes his insistence on the last point - schools for middle class: How  
are, asks Arnold, they to be made avail Well, schools are something.  
Schools are not everything; and even public schools, when you get them,  
may be far from perfect. Our public elementary schools are far from perfect.

But they throw into circulation year by year among the  
working classes - and here is the greatest merit of Mr  
Forster's Act - a number of young minds trained and intelligent,  
such as you never got previously; and this must tell in  
the long run. Our public secondary schools, when we get them,  
may be far from perfect. But they will throw into circulation  
year by year, among the middle classes, a number of young  
people with minds instructed and enlarged as they never are  
now, when their schools are, both socially and intellectually,  
the most inadequate that fall to the lot of any middle class  
among the civilised nations of Europe. And the improvement  
so wrought must tell in the end, and will gradually fit the  
middle classes to understand better themselves and the world,  
and to take their proper place, and to grasp and treat real  
politics - politics far other than their politics of Dissent,  
when seem to me quite played out. This will be a work of  
time. Do not suppose that a great change of this kind is to  
be effected off hand. But we may make a beginning for it at  
once, and a good beginning, by public schools for the middle  
classes.

("Ecce Convertimur ad Gentes", CPW,  
IX, pp. 17-18)

Arnold's "great desire", as he says to his sister Fan, "in education is  
to get a few good books universally taught and read" (Letters, II, p. 142).

With the passage of time, Arnold came to learn the sense of the  
slowness and of the natural growth of things, of their gradual evolution  
out of small beginnings: the sense that is expressed by Joseph de Maistre's  
maxim: "Aucune grande chose n'eut de grands commencements" - (Nothing  
great ever began great). To this effect he writes to M.E. Grant Duff, MP:

I more and more learn the extreme slowness of things, and that though we are all disposed to think that everything will change in our lifetime, it will not. Perhaps we shall end our days in the tail of a return current of popular religion, both ritual and dogmatic.

(Ibid., p. 161)

Time, however, did not fail Arnold. He lived to see a marked change in the Time-Spirit: the growing desire for amusement and pleasure. At that time [March, 1881] he wrote to M. Fontanès: "The growing desire, throughout the community, for amusement and pleasure, the wonderful relaxation, in the middle class, of the old strictness as to theatres, dancing, and such things, are features which alarm many people; but they have their good side. They belong to this revolution of which I speak. The awakening demand for beauty, a demand so little made in this country for the last century and more, is another sign of this revolution, and a clearly favourable sign of it" (Letters, II, p. 140).

Arnold's strong conviction that art and letters are great civilisers of nations as well as the two main landmarks by which one can assign to nations their place in the history of human intellect, made him to choose the state of the theatre to gauge the development in the time spirit:

We are at the end of a period, and we have to deal with the facts and symptoms of a new period on which we are entering; and prominent among these fresh facts and symptoms is the irresistibility of the theatre (p. 79)...I see the emancipated youth of both sexes delighting in it [modern drama of Paris]; the new and clever newspapers, which push on the work of emancipation and serve as devoted missionaries of the gospel of the life of Paris and of the ideal of the average sensual man, delighting in it. And in this condition of affairs I see the middle class beginning to arrive at the theatre again after an abstention of two centuries and more; arriving eager and curious, but a little bewildered.

("The French Play in London",  
CPW, IX, p. 81)

Arnold, in choosing theatre to measure the progress in the Time-Spirit,

was right: the correlation between the flourishing of theatre and epochs of civilisation is, historically, an established fact [ex. Athens and the Elizabethan age]. Theatre promotes, as well as flourishes in, the growth of a tolerant spirit; that spirit which is the offspring of an enlarged knowledge; a spirit patient of adversities of habits and opinions. It is, above all, an art whose essence is the dialogue technique: where two or more than one point of view are presented. This develops the people's critical spirit; the objective search for the law of things; to judge and choose by the rule of reason, not by the impulse of prejudice or caprice. The dialogue technique, because of its capacity of presenting an argument with complete disinterestedness, was used not only by philosophers [Plato and Hume] but also scientists [Galileo]. Arnold used to think in these terms:

We [says Arnold] know how the Elizabethan theatre had its cause in an ardent zest for life and living, a bold and large curiosity, a desire for a fuller, richer existence, pervading this nation at large, as they pervaded other nations, after the long mediaeval time of obstruction and restraint. But we know, too, how the great middle class of this nation, alarmed at grave symptoms which showed themselves in the new movement, drew back, made choice for its spirit to live at one point, instead of living, or trying to live, at many; entered, as I have so often said, the prison of Puritanism, and had the key turned upon its spirit there for two hundred years. Our middle class forsook the theatre.

(IX, p. 79)

The English theatre reflected no more the aspiration of a great community for a fuller and richer sense of human existence:

We have no modern drama. Our vast society is not at present homogeneous enough for this - not sufficiently united, even any large portion of it, in a common view of life, a common ideal, capable of serving as basis for a modern English drama.

(Ibid., p. 78)

To sum up. Arnold in the first stage [ up to 1849 ] of his development has concerned himself with the manifestations of the phenomenon of alienation. In this stage, his poetry portrays states of loneliness, confusion, separateness, and incompleteness: "habits, ties, and associations [that] are broken". It shows emotions of loss, pain, grief, death, 'the transience of both glory and happiness, the abiding pathos of young death; the manifold sorrow of man; the pathetic vicissitude of man; the inward petrification caused by grief too deep for tears'; and, above all, the 'feeling of depression, the feeling of ennui'.

In the second stage [1850-1860], though overlapping with the first one, Arnold concerns himself with the why of things as well as the what of the first stage: the breakdown of faith as a result of a narrow and defective conception of religion; and the growth of the city that produced what is now described as 'the great urban slums of Victorian Britain'.

"For [says Arnold] without the knowledge of why, of the grounds or reasons of things, there is no possibility of not being deceived'. How countless are the deceived and deceiving from this cause! Nay, and the fanatics of the what, the neglectors of the why, are not unfrequently men of genius; they have the temperament which influences, which prevails, which acts magnetically upon men. So we have the Philistine of genius in religion - Luther, the Philistine of genius in politics - Cromwell; the Philistine in genius in Literature - Bunyan".

("Falkland", CPW, VIII, p. 206)

Finally, the third stage of Arnold's development [1860-1886] is characterised by its positiveness. In it he addresses himself to the question: what replaces this situation? But Arnold, by addressing himself to the why of things, ran the risk of jeopardising the balance between the affective and cognitive aspects of his nature: there is much reasoning involved in the why of things. Thus gradually the poetic instinct gave way to the critical one and consequently poetry to demonstrative prose writing. "From this time [1867] forward [Arnold] writes very little verse but is increasingly



widely known for his controversial social and religious writings" (Poems, p. XX). The most important work, in my opinion, of this stage is Culture and Anarchy, with which the rest of this chapter is concerned.

Culture and Anarchy among Arnold's prose writings is like his "Dover Beach" or "The Scholar-Gipsy" among his poetical works: both bring together Arnold's lines of thought on God, nature and human life. It grew directly out of the political restlessness of England in the mid-nineteenth century, a restlessness that came in part from the rapid industrialisation of the country with its consequent depression of the working class, and that brought the country, as many people believed, to the brink of revolution. Contrary to what many readers suggest, Arnold argued from a definite stance: his idea of perfection: "What we want is a fuller harmonious development of our humanity, a free play of thought upon our routine notions, spontaneity of consciousness" (Culture and Anarchy, CPW., V, 191). Arnold's search for authority in human affairs, his search for a central organising thesis for life, a holistic principle around which all sides of life can be organised, is based on this concept of the perfection: a harmonious development of man's humanity and his society. He arrived at the idea of perfection through his idea of history and that of human nature.

For Arnold, the course of history is not mysterious, but neat and orderly, now one thing and now another, according to time and place. There are epochs of "expansion" or "Hellenism" and of "Concentration" or "Hebraism". "Hellenism", the urgent need in Arnold's own time, would have been in the Dark Ages unsound at that particular moment of man's development. Different virtues and different measures require to be insisted on in different countries.

No doubt, mankind makes in general its progress in a fashion which gives at one time full swing to one of these groups of instincts, at another time to the other; and man's faculties are so intertwined, that when his moral side, or the current of forces which we call Hebraism, is uppermost, this side will manage somehow to provide, or appear to provide, satisfaction for his intellectual needs; and when his intellectual side, and the current of force which we call Hellenism, is uppermost, this again will provide, or appear to provide, satisfaction for man's moral needs. But sooner or later it becomes manifest that when the two sides of humanity proceed in this fashion of alternate preponderance, and not of mutual understanding and balance, the side which is uppermost does not really provide in a satisfactory manner for the needs of the side which is undermost, and a state of confusion is, sooner or later, the result. The Hellenic half of our nature, bearing rule, makes a sort of provision for the Hebrew half, but it turns out to be an inadequate provision; and again the Hebrew half of our nature, bearing rule, makes a sort of provision for the Hellenic half, but this, too, turns out to be an inadequate provision. The true and smooth order of humanity's development is not reached in either way.

(Culture and Anarchy, CPW., V, 177).

Arnold has a doctrine of human nature which is the counterpart of this doctrine of history. Man, like the world itself and its history, is a complex of different elements which are readily brought together into a simple and natural unity. These are the facts not at all recondite, very far from it, touched upon above. We set ourselves to enumerate the powers which go to the building of human life, and say that they are the power of conduct, the power of intellect and knowledge, the power of beauty, and the power of social life and manners. Human nature is built up by these powers; we have the need for them all. In close analysis of these powers, one finds that they are but Hellenism, whose governing idea is spontaneity of consciousness; and Hebraism, whose governing idea is strictness of conscience. One might call this Arnold's discovery of the law of human development.

Arnold takes his concept of perfection and tests the prevailing schools of thought, institutions, social and religious, against this concept. To

this effect he writes: "We are often supposed, when we criticise by the help of culture some imperfect doing, or other, to have in our eye some well-known rival plan of doing, which we want to serve and recommend" (CPW.,V,234). "Culture tends always thus to deal with the men of a system, disciples, of a school; with men like Comte or, the late Mr Buckle, or Mr Mill" (Ibid., p.111). "In the same way let us judge the religious organisations which we see all around us" (Ibid., p.102):

And all we have been saying and indeed any glance at the world around us, shows that with us, with the most respectable and strongest part of us, the ruling force is now, and long has been, a Puritan force - the care for fire and strength, strictness of conscience, Hebraism, rather than the care for sweetness and light, spontaneity of consciousness, Hellenism (p. 179). Puritanism was perhaps necessary to develop the moral fibre of the English race, nonconformity to break the yoke of ecclesiastical domination over men's minds and to prepare the way for freedom of thought in the distant future; still culture points out that the harmonious perfection of generations of Puritans and nonconformists has been, in consequence, sacrificed (p.105). The Puritan's ideal of perfection remains narrow and inadequate (p.103). What, now, can be the reason of this undeniable provincialism of the English Puritans and Protestant nonconformists(- provincialism which has two main types - a bitter type and a smug type - but which in both its types is vulgarising, and thwarts the full perfection of our humanity? Men of genius and character are born and reared in this medium as in any other. From the faults of the mass such men will always be comparatively free, and they will always excite our interest; yet in this medium they seem to have a special difficulty in breaking through what bounds them, and in developing their totality (p.238). I say that when our religious organisations - which I admit to express the most considerable effort after perfection that our race has yet made- land us in no better result than this, it is high time to examine carefully their idea of perfection, to see whether it does not leave out of account sides and forces of human nature which we might turn to great use; whether it would not be more operative if it were more complete (p.104)

For the Comtists, Arnold puts two rhetorical questions, in his work "Schools and Universities on the Continent", which come close to what is to be considered the starting-point of his argument against them in Culture and Anarchy. "Who will deny that England has life and progress? but who will also

deny that her course begins to show signs of uncertainty and embarrassment?" Arnold, here, is clearly defending Hellenism, but with emphasis on its superiority to the kind of individuality so strongly advocated by Mill. "Freedom [says Arnold] was one of those things which we thus worshipped in itself, without enough regarding the ends for which freedom is to be desired" (Ibid., p.177). This brings his argument to the problem of the relation of the individual as well as closer to the notion of the State of which he says:

We have not the notion, so familiar on the Continent and to antiquity, of the State - the nation in its collective and corporate character, entrusted with stringent powers for the general advantage, and controlling individual wills in the name of an interest wider than that of individuals. We say, what is very true, that this notion is often made instrumental to tyranny; we say that a State is in reality made up of the individuals who compose it. (CWP., V,117).

Against the notion of State, Arnold tests the three classes - the aristocracy, the middle class and the working class:

Our leading class is an aristocracy, and no aristocracy likes the notion of a State-authority greater than itself, with a stringent administrative machinery superseding the decorative inutilities of lord-lieutenancy, deputy-lieutenancy, and the posse comitatûs, which are all in its own hands (pp.117-18). Our middle class, the great representative of trade and dissent, with its maxims of every man for himself in business, every man for himself in religion, dreads a powerful administration which might somehow interfere with it (Ibid.,118). The working-class... according to our definition (must) go with the Philistines, because it is its class and its class instinct which it seeks to affirm, its ordinary self, not its best self; and it is a machinery, an industrial machinery, and power and pre-eminence and other external goods, which fill its thoughts, and not an inward perfection (Ibid., p. 143).

The guide which Arnold offers to his countrymen for escape from their difficulties is culture; in one of its essential meanings culture is for him the knowledge of the best that has been thought and said; in this best the Nicomachean Ethics has a high place; and it is to the Ethics that Arnold turns for the method of social analysis:

The whole scope of the essay [Culture and Anarchy] is to recommend culture as the great help out of our present difficulties; culture being a pursuit of our total perfection by means of getting to know, on all the matters which must 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, 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.

(Ibid., pp.233-34)

'Culture, which is the study of perfection, leads us... to conceive of true human perfection as a harmonious perfection, developing all sides of our humanity; and as a general perfection, developing all parts of our society.' At this time we see 'the tendency in us to Hebraise, as we call it; that is, to sacrifice all other sides of our being to the religious side. This tendency has its cause in the divine beauty and grandeur of religion, and bears affecting testimony to them. But we have seen that it has dangers for us, we have seen that it lends to a narrow and twisted growth of our religious side itself, and to a failure in perfection (p. 111).

Now the force which we have so much neglected, Hellenism, may be liable to fail in moral strength and earnestness, but by the law of its nature - the very same law which makes it sometimes deficient in intensity when intensity is required - it opposes itself to the notion of cutting our being in two, of attributing to one part the dignity of dealing with the one thing needful, and leaving the other part to take its chance, which is the bane of Hebraism. Essential in Hellenism is the impulse to the development of the whole man, to connecting and harmonising all parts of him, perfecting all, leaving none to take their chance.

The characteristic bent of Hellenism, as has been said, is to find the intelligible law of things, to see them in true nature and as they really are.

(Ibid., p. 184).

Therefore, the true business of the friends of culture now is, to dissipate this notion of Hebraism and any other sort of fetish, to

spread the belief in right reason and to allow their thought and consciousness to play on their stock notions and habits disinterestedly and freely to get men to try, in preference to staunchly acting with imperfect knowledge, to obtain some sounder basis of knowledge on which to act:

The sheer desire to see things as they are, natural and proper in an intelligent being, appears as the ground of it [Culture]. There is a view in which all the love of our neighbour, the impulses towards action, help, and beneficence, the desire for removing human error, clearing human confusion, and diminishing human misery, the noble aspiration to leave the world better and happier than we found it - motives eminently such as are called social - come in as part of the grounds of culture, and the main and pre-eminent part.

(Ibid., p. 91)

What accounts for his power as intellectual deliverer of his age, in Culture and Anarchy, however, is not his philosophic position but his strategies - his skill, as a man of letters, in marshalling the devices of language so as to vivify ideas and to permeate the minds of their readers with them. The work falls in the category of rhetoric: meaning plus style, what plus how. Through the medium of rhetoric he mediates a view of the world as well as a habit of mind. Let us see how this is done.

His method was to persuade his enemies into discussion and then to use irony to show that their position is absurd. Thus he writes to his mother, in October, 1863, saying: "It is very animating to think that one at last has a chance of getting at the English public. Such a public as it is, and such a work as one wants to do with it! Partly nature, partly time and study, have also by this time taught me thoroughly the precious truth that everything turns upon one's exercising the power of persuasion, of charm; that without this all fury, energy, reasoning power, acquirement, are thrown away and only render their owner more miserable. Even in one's

ridicule one must preserve a sweetness and good-humour" (Letters, I, p.201).

Many of Arnold's opponents went unaware into his trap. Among them were Harrison, Sedgwick and above all the dissenting middle class: "Now I have [says Arnold] to do a sort of pendant to 'Culture and its Enemies', to be called 'Anarchy and Authority'... It will amuse me to do it, as I have many things to say; and Harrison, Sedgwick, and others, who have replied to my first paper, have given me golden opportunities" (Letters, I, p. 376). Again he writes to his mother saying "There are many attacks and answers about my lecture, but the great thing is to drag the dissenting middle class into the great public arena of life and discussion, and not let it remain in its isolation. All its faults come from that isolation" (Letters, [June 1867], I, p.368).

Once his enemies took the bait and went into 'the public arena of life and discussion' Arnold starts to use his whip of irony as the most effective means. "For my part," he wrote on December 5, 1867, "I see more and more what an effective weapon, in a confused, loud-talking, clap-trap country like this, where every writer and speaker to the public tends to say rather more than he means, is irony, or according to the strict meaning of the original Greek work, the saying rather less than one means. The main effect I have had on the mass of noisy clap-trap and inert prejudice which chokes us has been, I can see, by the use of this weapon."

Of the weapon of irony Professor J. Holloway writes:

Outright condemnation of essentials tends to sound indignant, partial condemnation of details to sound mildly disapproving, plain description to sound detached, praise to sound admiring. These are no more than tendencies, but they are tendencies strong enough to be inconvenient to writers who, for example, particularly desire not to sound indignant or benignant; and irony is a means whereby a writer may say something in a tone that normally would be inappropriate to it... Quintilian says that to write ironically is to praise by blaming, or to blame by praising; of which two the last, of course is the commoner. This is a method which Arnold uses fairly often... (CX) Mr Gladstone is

'that attractive and ever-victorious rhetorician' 29

It might be helpful to put Arnold's method of ridicule in a historical perspective. In neo-classical comedy the writer, as Bergson has observed, uses ridicule to protect the common ideals of society. He takes for granted many data, common to himself and his hearers, both with regard to the material in which he works with and with regard to the moral standard which he and they are equally supposed to accept. The writer and his readers find source of amusement in the weakness or eccentricities of individuals which make them unable to live up to the standards whose validity they do not deny. Arnold's mission is rather different. His aim is, seriously or by means of ridicule, to make his readers aware that what they accept as standard is a mere machinery and not rational. It is a matter of custom; the object of his criticism is not the frailty of human flesh and blood which will not let men live up to the standards they acknowledge, it is rather the tendency of the man in his age to go on living in outworn formulae, pushing them to extremes, dealing solemnly with 'musical banks whose values' are no longer operative.

It is against the aridity of the aristocracies, the narrowmindedness of the middle class and the worn-out clap-trap of the newspapers, that Arnold, up to the end of his life, waged a ceaseless war, but with special emphasis upon the middle class, philistines as he called them. Arnold, in short, attacks the average, self-satisfied, practical Englishman, who is proud of his great industrial life, satisfied with education, obedient to the great daily press, complacent in his accumulating wealth, disregarding beauty, blind to the necessary for the application of intelligence to



private and public conduct, ignorant of the judgement of the outside world, all self-bound in his material pursuits and considerations. He criticises the other two classes as well, but, relatively, his criticisms of the upper class and of the working class are light and genial compared to the fire which he opens upon the middle class.

Matthew Arnold knows his opponent very well. Culture and Anarchy, for example, begins with a review of those who have disagreed with him: Mr Bright, The Daily Telegraph, Frederic Harrison and many others. "My Countrymen" begins similarly with: The Saturday Review, Mr Bazley (M.P. for Manchester), Mr Miall, The Daily Telegraph, The Daily News, Mr Lowe, John Bright, The Morning Star, they are all there marshalled against Arnold by himself. In "Equality", Arnold begins with his opponents - Disraeli, Erskine May, Gladstone, Froude, Lowe, Sir William Molesworth. All of them, as one might have noticed, are influential policy-makers in public affairs. So tact and prudence are needed. This tact and prudence take the form, in Arnold's practice, of disinterestedness: it is a frame of mind. Arnold associates it with the state of aloofness, detachment, and solitude. It is a habit of mind by which one is to see with detached eyes the object as in itself it really is. Another name for disinterestedness, as Miller puts it, "is irony, the stylistic pose which separates itself from what it describes, and, holding it at a distance, hollows it out with subtle mockery.... Irony, like the stance of disinterestedness, is for Arnold a way of not being swallowed up by the world".<sup>30</sup> In this way irony could be defined as a mode of argument with two aspects dissociative and associative. The dissociation type is that which the author uses whenever he speaks about himself. In its most general sense, this type of argument separates, analyse, and makes distinctions among various ideas and phenomena by methods of a fortiori (arguing from an accepted conclusion to an even more

evident one), a contrario (arguing from an accepted conclusion to the rejection of its contrary), and the argument of authority (Arnold quotes, his quotation is introduced at the crucial stage, and his authority constitutes the rock of his argument ) <sup>/of this method of argument</sup> . Three examples will be sufficient: Arnold's accounts of the State, of Civilisation and of Human Nature.

(i) 'The State - but what is the State? cry many... The full force of the term, the State... no one will master without going a little deeply... but it is possible to give in very plain language an account of it sufficient for all practical purposes. The State is properly just what Burke called it - the nation in its collective and corporate character. The State is the representative acting-power of the nation...' (ii) 'What do we mean by civilised?... we will try to answer. Civilisation is the humanisation of man in society. To be humanised is to comply with the true law of our human nature... Says Lucan 'to keep our measure, and to hold fast our end, and to follow Nature'... to make progress towards this, our true and full humanity. And to be civilised is to make progress towards this in civil society'. (iii) 'When we talk of... full humanity, we think of an advance, not along one line only, but several... The power of intellect and science, the power of beauty, the power of social life and manners... the power of conduct is another great element'.

The other type of argument that is associated with irony is associative arguments which Arnold uses in speaking about his opponents. This type of argument transfers the adherence from the premisses to the conclusion, for example, the act-person association enables Arnold to pass from the fact that an act is silly to the consequence that the agent is a foolish person. This is how Arnold takes up the case made out for the deceased Wife's Sister Bill:

Why must ideas on this topic (the deceased wife's sister bill) have to be incubated for years in that nest of spicery, as the divine Shakespeare says, the mind of Mr T. Chambers, before they can rule the world? For my part, my resolve is formed. This great question shall henceforth be seriously taken up in Fleet Street. As a sop to those toothless old Cerberuses, the bishops, who impotently exhibit still the passions, as Nick's French friends say, of another age, we will accord the continuance of the prohibition which forbids a man to marry his grandmother. But in other directions there shall be freedom. Mr Chambers' admirable bill for enabling a woman to marry her sister's husband will doubtless pass triumphantly through Committee tonight, amidst the cheers of the Ladies' gallery. The Liberal party must supplement that bill by two others: one enabling people to marry their brother's and sister's children, the other enabling a man to marry his brother's wife.

(Friendship's Garland, CPW,  
V, p. 318).

The argument, as one sees, takes the form of the reductio ad absurdum.

Having in mind Arnold's main task in Culture and Anarchy - "our main business of the present moment is not so much to work away at certain crude reforms...as to create... a frame of mind out of which the schemes of really fruitful reforms may with time grow" (Holloway, p. 203), the work can be approached from the perspective of Professor Holloway's argument in The Victorian Sage. He suggests that, through the forms of his arguments Arnold does something to develop our notion of his opponents, as well as of himself.

Of the forms of argument Professor Holloway writes:

Perhaps the two forms of argument most distinctive of Arnold are distinguo arguments which keep the reader sensitised to his unrelaxing circumspection, and concessive [my italics] arguments which emphasise his modesty.' 'Let us distinguish,' replied the envious foreigners (who here are speaking for Arnold himself) 'Let us distinguish. We named three powers... which go to spread... rational human life... Your middle class, we agreed, has the first... But this only brings us a certain way...' In A French Eton he [Arnold] distinguishes the quite contrasting needs of schools providing for the different classes of society: those for the aristocracy need 'the notion of a sort of republican fellowship, the practice of a plain life in common, the habit of self-help;' while those for the middle classes need training in 'largeness of

soul and personal dignity', and those for the lower, in 'feeling, gentleness, humanity'.

(pp. 211-12)

And of Concessive argument he says:

Concession in argument necessarily does little to advance the proof for one's own case... 'We ought to have no difficulty in conceding to Mr Sidgwick that... fire and strength... has its high value as well as culture', 'Hellenism... has its dangers, as has been fully granted', 'there are many things to be said on behalf of this exclusive attention of ours to liberty'. Sometimes [says Holloway] the concession is 'placed' as it were, by a subsequent distinguo argument: 'the final aim of both Hellenism and Hebraism... is no doubt the same: man's perfection or salvation... still, they pursue this aim by very different courses... so long as we do not forget that both... are profound and admirable... we can hardly insist too strongly on the divergence of line and of operation by which they proceed'. Sometimes, too, Arnold does something explicit to relate the concession he makes to his tone, and to our conception of himself: 'it is impossible that all these remonstrances and reproofs should not affect me, and I shall try my very best... to profit by the objections I have heard and read'.

(Ibid., pp. 212-213)

One might say here that the substantial significance of the concession is virtually nil - Arnold gives no hint of what it is he is disposed to agree with.

One might add too that Arnold uses the argumentum ad hominem [speaking against the man rather than the issue] which is a part of rhetorical argument. This is evident when Arnold manages to give a slight stress of scornful intonations to names like Clutterbuck, or Cobbe, or Dodd, or Cattle, and seems gently to conduct the wearers of these names to a place outside the pale of humanity. Sometimes he uses it merely by repeating the name oftener than is necessary, as if it were something essentially absurd in the owner of such a name daring to hold opinions on things of moment. In all this Arnold tries to show that the ugliness of the name is but somehow an index of its bearer's opinions.

The desire to have distinctive names for whatever he is discussing is a feature of much of Arnold's work. Arnold's personality behind his selection and presentation of these phrases, and behind their calm and genial reiteration, is clear enough to be ignored. One sees his opponents in the catch-phrases themselves, a little more clearly and a little more disastrously each time. Stung by his repeated ridicule of its enormous circulation and bombastic style, it (The Daily Telegraph) sought with laborious irony to represent Arnold as equating the preservation of the Welsh language with the achievement of 'Geist'. And Arnold himself it depicted as 'the high-priest of the kid-gloved persuasion' who had a mission to perform: 'to preach the gospel of urbanity and to wage war against emphasis'".<sup>31</sup>

Arnold was aware of the effectiveness of that technique and the power of his style. To this effect he wrote on the 5th of February 1868 to his mother saying "I am glad you like the second part of my disquisition. I think Barbarian will stick; but as a very charming Barbarianess, Lady Portsmouth, expresses a great desire to make my acquaintance, I daresay the race will bear no notice. In fact, the one arm they feel and respect is irony, as I have often said; whereas the Puritan middle class, at whom I have launched so much, are partly too good, partly too gross, to feel it" (Letters, I, p. 387). Again, when on August 14, 1867, the Daily Telegraph alluded to 'sweetness and light' in a leading article on the new Reform Law and on August 15 spoke of 'philistinism' in a leading article on lower middle-class education, Arnold wrote to his mother, "Hardly a day passes without the Telegraph having some fling at me - but generally in a way that is not at all vicious'. 'The merit of terms of this sort is that they fix in people's minds the things to which they refer".

In Friendship's Garland, Arnold, as Professor Holloway has rightly

observed, uses the same device to escape the awkward tone implied by what he wants to say. This is a very lengthy work discrediting the opinions of others; and in the main it proceeds by methods of irony. Here it is the mythical Prussian, Arminius von Thunder-den-Trorekh, who delivers Arnold's attack direct. And Arnold, speaking in his own person, writes:

In confidence I will own to you that he makes himself intensely disagreeable. He has the harsh, arrogant Prussian way of turning up his nose at things and laying down the law about them; and though, as a lover of intellect, I admire him, and, as a seeker of truth, I value his frankness, yet, as an Englishman, and a member of what the Daily Telegraph calls 'the Imperial race', I feel so uncomfortable under it, that I want, through your kindness, to call to my aid the great British public, which never loses heart and has always a bold front and a rough word ready for its assailants.

(Victorian Sage, p. 238)

Arminius himself is a likeable figure, with his pink face and blue eyes, his shaggy blond hair, his blue pilot-coat, and pipe belching interminable smoke. But although his personality may be likeable, it is very different from Arnold's and he can do, says Professor Holloway, what would be disastrous for Arnold himself. Arminius and his creator go down to Reigate by rail, and in the carriage is, as Arnold calls him, 'one of our representative industrial men (something in the bottle way)'. When the manufacturer begins to talk politics, Arnold tries to soothe the conversation with 'a few sentences taken from Mr Gladstone's advice to the Rumanians'. But - 'the dolt! The dunderhead! His ignorance of the situation, his ignorance of Germany, his ignorance of what makes nations great, his ignorance of what makes life worth living, his ignorance of everything except bottles - those infernal bottles!' - that is Arminius's comment. On another occasion, Arnold 'runs' to appease him with a 'powerful letter' by Mr Goldwin Smith, published in the Daily News, and 'pronouncing in favour of the Prussian alliance...' "At last I have

got what will please you", cries he. But Arminius only gives a sardonic smile, and puts it all down ungraciously to the Prussian needle-gun. 'Your precious Telegraph,' he says bluntly; and of The Times, 'that astonishing paper!' Arnold contrasts Arminius and himself directly: "You make me look rather a fool, Arminius" I began, 'by what you primed me with...' 'I dare say you looked a fool,' says my Prussian boor, 'but what did I tell you?' "Even Arminius himself is made to emphasise just the contrast Arnold wishes us to see. 'I have a regard for this Mr Matthew Arnold, but I have taken his measure... Again and again I have seen him anxiously ruminating over what his adversary has happened to say against his ideas; and when I tell him (if the idea were mine) that his adversary is a dummkopf, and that he must stand up to him firm and square, he begins to smile, and tells me that what is probably passing through his adversary's mind is so and so."

\* \* \*

Arnold did not stop, as this chapter has shown, at the what. He explored the why of things and suggested productive solutions for the relationship of individuals with the world: his active solidarity with all men and his spontaneous activity: love and work. So far this chapter has dealt with "general life" - work. The next chapter will explore in some detail Arnold's idea of "love". For without love there would be no morality, or as Shelley puts it: 'The great secret of moral<sup>s</sup> is love'.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> G. Watson, "Arnold and the Victorian Mind", REL, 8 (1967), 36.

<sup>2</sup> G. Carnall, "Matthew Arnold's 'Great Critical Effort'", Essays in Criticism, 8 (July, 1958), 256-68.

- 3 Eliot, who owes a lot to Arnold, writes in The Sacred Wood p. 1, that Arnold is less a critic than a propagandist for criticism.
- 4 P.J. Keating, "Arnold's Social and Political Thought", in Matthew Arnold ed. K. Allott (London: Bell & Son, 1975), pp. 223-24.
- 5 There are at least four other ways in which misinterpretation is very common. R. Robinson, in his book: Plato's Earlier Dialectic, says the first of them is (1) mosaic interpretation, or the habit of laying any amount of weight on an isolated text or single sentence without determining whether it is a passing remark or a settled part of one's author's thinking, whether it is made for a special purpose or is intended to be generally valid, and so on. (2) Far more common and far more devastating is misinterpretation by abstraction. One's author mentions X; and X appears to be a case of Y; and on the strength of that one says that one's author was well aware of Y. (3) Closely related to the above is misinterpretation by inference. One's author says P, and P implies q; therefore he meant q. The conclusion does not follow. (4) The misinterpretation of going beyond a thinker's last word, of ascribing to him not merely all the steps he took in a certain direction but the next step also, which in reality was first made by a subsequent generation.
- 6 K. Allott, "Matthew Arnold's Reading list in Three Early Diaries", Victorian Studies, Vol. 2 (March, 1959), 254-66.
- 7 Quoted by Antony Flew, An Introduction to Western Philosophy (Op. cit.,) p. 46.
- 8 By studying these relations Marx arrived at his ideas of man's unhappiness and alienation: It is the exploitation of man by man. "If he [worker] is related to the product," says Marx, "of his labour, his objectified labour, as to an 'alien', hostile, powerful and independent object, he is related in such a way that another alien, hostile, powerful and independent man is the lord of this object. If he is related to his own activity as unfree activity, than he is related to it as activity in the service, and under the domination, coercion and yoke, of another man" (Quoted by P. Masterson, Atheism and Alienation, pp. 90-91.
- 9 K. Allott, "Unpublished Lecture", quoted by M. Allott in "Arnold the Poet", Matthew Arnold (Op. cit.,), p. 92.
- 10 Bunyan was a strict Calvinistic Baptist. Of him Arnold says "The right definition of Luther, as of our own Bunyan, is that he is a philistine of genius" (CPW, III, p. 364).
- 11 H.W. Fulweiler, "Matthew Arnold: The Metamorphosis of a Merman", Victorian Poetry, Vol. 1 (1963), 211.
- 12 L. Gottfried, Matthew Arnold and the Romantics (London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1963), p. 155.



- 13 Carl Dawson, Matthew Arnold: the Poetry: The Critical Heritage (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973), p. 42.
- 14 In a comment on a similar occasion Arnold says "No doubt to a large division of English society... that sort of dinner and discussion, and, indeed, the whole manner of life and conversation here suggested... will seem both natural and amiable, and such as to meet the needs of man as a religious and social creature" (CPW, VIII, p. 297).
- 15 Matthew Arnold, Culture and Anarchy, CPW., V, 156.
- 16 Southey, Life of Wesley, chap. xxix (second American edition, II, p. 308).  
Quoted by Weber (Op. cit., p. 175).
- 17 Elder Olson, On Value Judgements in the Arts (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1971), p. 228.
- 18 The other two poems are dealt with in the chapter on the "Poetic Process".
- 19 In one's view the concept of predestination implies Man's free will. For, though the outcome may be predestined, Man is free to choose the road to that outcome. The milestones on the road is success in worldly affairs. Perhaps to make this interpretation clearer one may contrast the idea of predestination with that of predetermination where everything is predetermined beforehand, hence there is no use to bother about choice for whatever is chosen is predetermined.
- 20 John 8:7.
- 21 II Timothy 2:6.
- 22 Cf. Max Weber, Op. cit., p. 102; Tawney, Op. cit., p. 190; Ranulf, Op. cit., p. 66 ff; E. Fromm, Op. cit., p. 83.
- 23 G. Saintsbury, Matthew Arnold (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood, 1899), p. 15.
- 24 H.W. Paul, Matthew Arnold (London: Macmillan & Co., 1902), p. 26.
- 25 Arthur Dudley, "Matthew Arnold and Alexander Smith", Revue des deux Mondes (September, 1854), 1136.
- 26 E.K. Chambers, Matthew Arnold (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1947), p. 58.
- 27 Stuart P. Sherman, Matthew Arnold (Hamden - Connecticut: Archon, 1968), p. 120.
- 28 F.G. Walcott in his study The Origin of Culture and Anarchy (1970) traces the development of Arnold's social thought to the insights gained through his professional tasks.

- 29 John Holloway, The Victorian Sage (London: Macmillan & Co., 1953), p. 235.
- 30 J. Hillis Miller, "Matthew Arnold", in Matthew Arnold, edited by David J. Delaura (London: Prentice-Hall International, 1973), pp. 26-27.
- 31 Sidney M.B. Coulling, "The Evolution of Culture and Anarchy", Studies in Philology, 60 (1963), 638.

## CHAPTER IX

### On Human Life

#### The Emotions

As it has been observed in the last chapter, it was common to all denominations that impulsive enjoyment of life, whether in the forms of seigneurial sports, or the enjoyment of the dance-hall or the public-house of the common man, which leads away both from work in a calling and from religion, was as such the enemy of rational asceticism. That sort of national asceticism must necessarily produce riches. But whenever riches have increased, the essence of religion has decreased in the same proportion. This would be replaced by hard greed, and the exclusive pursuit of gain, with the indifference to all which does not aid in its acquisition. This would eat up the sentiment of love. Arnold sums up the situation as follows:

"In an epoch of dissolution and transformation, such as that on which we are now entered, habits, ties, and associations are inevitably broken up, the action of individuals becomes more distinct, the shortcomings, errors, heats, disputes, which necessarily attend individual action, are brought into greater prominence."

("Preface to *Essays in Criticism*", CPW., III, 288).

At stake is the sentiment of love and in turn ideas like the "common good" and "justice". For justice is but love distributed. This chapter attempts to show Arnold's poetic interpretation of the sentiment of love in the Victorian England.

I

Love as a concept enters philosophy through religion, particularly when the origin of the world is expressed as an act of procreation or the Creator is conceived of as loving his creation either as a whole or in part (i.e., the human race). Yet, ironically enough, it suffered at the hands of moralists more than anything else. Thinkers as well as philosophers, being aware of the importance of the sentiment of love, intervened to save it, and made the concept of love a subject for philosophic meditation in regard to ethical problems: Love, as one of the most powerful of human impulses, is seen to be much in need of control, especially if man as rational being is to be able to use his rational capacities. Much of the ethical writing on love is designed to suggest some means whereby the pleasures and other values of loving may be pursued without entailing the supposed evils of intemperate sexuality.

Love, in its essence, is a desire to be related to the world outside oneself, the need to avoid aloneness: the necessity to unite with other living beings, to be related to them, is an imperative need on which man's well-being depends. But with the sharp juxtaposition of religion and sexuality alienation crept in. This sharp distinction is expressed, in ancient times, in the distinction between two Aphrodites - a transient, earthy love of body and an enduring heavenly love of soul. Or the distinction which is vaguely recognised in Christian thinking between Christian love: Agape, and the sensual love: Eros. Agape is spontaneous and uncaused; it is aroused and directed without regard to human merit; rather than flowing toward goodness it creates goodness. It is, in short, theocentric. Eros is rooted in sexuality and physical passion. It is worthy of notice that this

sort of distinction is more clearly emphasised in times that have a deistic concept of God and monistic concept of authority. Under a pantheistic concept of God and pluralistic concept of authority, there is no such distinction. That is why one finds that in certain epochs, and under Christianity, love is not seen as a power that destroys man's reason, as the seventeenth century thinkers used to believe, but rather as an emotional attitude that can be voluntarily produced. It is praised in the First Epistle to the Corinthians and the First Epistle of John (I John 4:16-20) and also in the Psalm (91:14).

i

In the Middle Ages, the ecstatic loss of self that accompanies sexual love was assumed to be one of the features of the beatific vision. It is apparent in mystical literature that erotic language is especially effective in communicating mystical experience, and the similarities between religion and sexual ecstasy are manifest in, for example, the Song of Solomon. Tolerance to the sexual life of man went even further to prostitution as a necessary evil (St Augustine, De Ordine II.iv.12). Thomas Aquinas reasoned that God allows it "lest certain goods be lost or certain greater evils be incurred" (Summa Theologica ii.2, Q.10. a.11).

The tolerance towards love, with all its aspects, continued till the end of the first half of the sixteenth-century. For example, when the civil courts in England, in 1533, took jurisdiction over sex sins and changed some formally into crimes, they were far more punitive than the church courts had ever thought of being. From that time onward, writers chose to treat love Platonically as an intellectual, nonsexual, or even

anti-sexual phenomenon. Marsilio Ficino, who first used the term 'Platonic love', and others after him, limit the concept of love to an intellectual love between friends based on the individual's love of God: the appetite, which follows senses other than sight, hearing, and thought, is not love, but lust or frenzy. Ficino's man, like Pico's and later Bruno's, is torn by a dual impulse - his soul wishes to obey now the 'good demon', now the 'bad demon' of Plato's Symposium. "Ficino, Pico, Bruno and many others in the Renaissance," says John C. Nelson, "declare that man's soul hovers on the horizon of the spiritual and material worlds, ready to obey either of its contrary impulses." <sup>1</sup>

In the seventeenth-century there came the shift of sensibility. The central generative concept of that phenomenon is the division between mind and body. A corollary of this thesis is the autonomy of the external world from its perceiver. In Christian thinking the union of body and soul was seen as an unnatural state imposed upon man as an evil or as a punishment for previous error. Descartes, on the surface, seems to disagree with this idea. But a trace of the idea that this union is responsible for sin, persists in his doctrine. Only it is not matter itself which is immediately regarded as evil; what Descartes tries to do is to explain the origin of divergence from the good psychologically, by a reference to the interaction of mind and body. The middle term which helps him out here is found in the emotions.

Emotions, according to Descartes, are states at once of body and of soul, based on the interaction of the two. They do not proceed from the soul, as the older philosophers thought: they are originally affections of the body which are propagated to the soul through the animal spirits. Hence the soul's attitude towards them is passive, for which reason they are called passions [passions de l'âme]. Clear knowledge is disturbed by

them, so that we desire that which is not desirable.<sup>2</sup> Thus Descartes obtains a twofold interpretation, intellectual and emotional for the correlated ideas of the moral and the immoral. The moral coincides with clear knowledge and with the supremacy of the will over the emotions. Similarly, the immoral is identical with obscure knowledge and with the slavery of will to the emotions. The conclusion these views give is that all disturbance of knowledge comes from the emotions. In other words, "the Cartesian theory regarded sin as the effect of obscured knowledge, which is necessarily involved in the finite nature of man".<sup>3</sup>

One's next task is to follow out the results of the Cartesian theory in the field of religion, now that the above sketch has attempted to show its philosophical foundations. One will show the impact of these ideas on the human character in the nineteenth-century with special emphasis on man's attitude to joie de vivre. This chapter may thus perhaps in a modest way form a contribution to the understanding of the manner in which ideas become effective forces in history.

The religious life of the individual in the seventeenth century was directed solely towards a transcendental end - salvation. But precisely for that reason it was thoroughly rationalised in this world and dominated entirely by the aim to add to the glory of God on earth. "Never," says Weber, "has the precept omnia in majorem dei gloriam been taken with more bitter seriousness. Only a life guided by constant thought could achieve conquest over the state of nature. Descartes's Cogito ergo sum was taken over by the contemporary Puritans with this ethical reinterpretation."<sup>4</sup> This sort of asceticism turned with all its force against one thing: the spontaneous enjoyment of life and all it had to offer. Love is permitted only in marriage and only as a means willed by God for the increase of His glory according to the commandment, "Be fruitful and multiply".

In order to understand the connection between the fundamental religious ideas of ascetic Protestantism and its maxims for everyday conduct, it is necessary to examine with special care such writings as have evidently been derived from ministerial practice which were in fact only the most extreme form of that exclusive trust in God and preaching the corruption of everything pertaining to the flesh and emotion. These maxims "come out for instance in the strikingly frequent repetition, especially in the English Puritan literature, of warning against any trust in the aid of friendship of men. Baxter, for instance, counsels deep distrust of even one's closest friend, and Bailey directly exhorts to trust no one and to say nothing compromising to anyone: Only God should be your confidant".<sup>5</sup>

Waste of time is thus the first and in principle the deadliest of sins. The span of human life is infinitely short and precious to make sure of one's own election. Loss of time through sociability, idle talk, luxury, even more sleep than is necessary for health, six to at most eight hours, is worthy of absolute moral condemnation. Time is infinitely valuable because every hour lost is lost to labour for the glory of God. Inactive contemplation is also valueless, or even directly reprehensible if it is at the expense of one's daily work. The moral conduct of the average man was thus deprived of its planless and unsystematic character and subjected to a consistent method<sup>6</sup> for conduct as a whole. Max Weber sums up the situation as follows:

To put it in our terms: The Puritan, like every rational type of asceticism, tried to enable a man to maintain and act upon his constant motives, especially those which it taught him itself, against the emotions. In this formal psychological sense of the term it tried to make him into a personality. Contrary to many popular ideas, the end of this asceticism was to be able to lead an alert, intelligent life: the most urgent task was the destruction of spontaneous,



impulsive enjoyment, the most important means was to bring order into the conduct of its adherents... On this methodical control over the whole man rests the enormous expansive power of both, especially the ability of Calvinism as against Lutheranism to defend the cause of Protestantism as the Church militant.

(pp. 119-20)

One has indicated the steps by which this situation came into existence. It remains to estimate the price paid for it. Sebastian Frank struck the central characteristic of this type of religion when he saw the significance of the Reformation in the fact that now every christian had to be a monk all his life. The Puritan's self-awareness and capacity to reflect upon his nature and destiny might inherently impair or at least modify his capacity for direct animal, childlike enjoyment of living. The question is: what did happen to these energies when they were not effectively discharged? One answer is that they would be experienced as anxiety which would transform itself into a sort of action and ambition (See Tristram and Iseult).

ii

As is always the case in the history of ideas, ancient beliefs do not die, they survive and take on new forms. This is as true of the idea of love as it is of other ideas. For though no one believes any longer in the myth of the two Aphrodites as anthropomorphic deities each of whom is accompanied by a special Eros, the distinction between the two still persists as a contrast between love and duty, or carnal and spiritual love. This sort of distinction could be found in stories of ambivalent love which are characteristic ones in nineteenth-century literature. Rousseau's Confessions

had laid the ground for the understanding of that emotional ambivalence: and from Pushkin to Clough and Arnold, poets tell of lovers separated not by difficult circumstances but by the inability of the man to understand the true tendency of his heart. The result was that man, though he desires love, could not love as deeply as he desires. Arnold, in his poem "Destiny", interprets this situation as follows:

Why each is striving, from of old,  
To love more deeply than he can?  
Still would be true, yet still grows cold?  
- Ask of the Powers that sport with man!  
They yok'd in him, for endless strife,  
A heart of ice, a soul of fire,  
And hurl'd him on the Field of life,  
An aimless unallay'd Desire.

And in "A Summer Night", Arnold says:

Hast thou then still the old unquiet breast,  
Which neither deadens into rest,  
Nor ever feels the fiery glow  
That whirls the spirit from itself away,  
But fluctuates to and fro,  
Never by passion quite possessed  
And never quite benumb'd by the world's sway?

Arnold, like Spinoza in his Ethics, emphasises man's need of perfection - the fulfilment of both his intellectual and emotional powers which are not existentially separate. He argued, very casually and very late in time, in favour of the average sensual man or to use his own phrase: l'homme sensuel moyen. But he did not push that argument very far, otherwise he would have been accused of corrupting the youth of Athens. Of the average sensual man Arnold says that he "has his very advantageous qualities. He has his gaiety, quickness, sentiment, sociability, rationality. He has his horror of sour strictness, false restraint, hypocrisy, obscurantism, cretinism, and the rest of it" ("Numbers", CPW, X, p. 158). "And, of course, the play and working of these qualities is altered by their being no longer in combination with a dose of German seriousness, but left to

work by themselves. Left to work by themselves, they give us what we call the homme sensuel moyen, the average sensual man. The highest art, the art which by its height, depth, and gravity possesses religiousness - such as the Greeks had, the art of Pindar and Phidias; such as the Italians had, the art of Dante and Michelangelo - this art, with the training which it gives and the standard which it sets up, the French have never had" (Ibid., pp. 157-58).

Arnold, before prescribing the medicine, has studied very carefully the character of English people as thus:

Among the Germans, Protestantism has been carried on into rationalism and science. The English hold a middle place between the Germans and Welsh; their religion has the exterior forms and apparatus of a rationalism, so far their Germanic nature carries them; but long before they get to science, their feeling, their Celtic element catches them, and turns their religion all towards piety and unction. So English Protestantism has the outside appearance of an intellectual system, and the inside reality of an emotional system: this gives it its tenacity and force, for what is held with the ardent attachment of feeling is believed to have at the same time the scientific proof of reason.

("On the Study of Celtic Literature",  
CPW, III, pp. 355-56)

Arnold's cure for this situation is a French model of l'homme sensuel moyen:

France is l'homme sensuel moyen, the average sensual man; Paris is the city of l'homme sensuel moyen. This has an attraction for all of us. We all have in us this homme sensuel, the man of the wishes of the flesh and of the current thoughts; but we develop him under checks and doubts, and unsystematically and often grossly. France, on the other hand, develops him confidently and harmoniously. She makes the most of him, because she knows what she is about and keeps in a mean, as her climate is in a mean, and her situation. She does not develop him with madness, into a monstrosity, as the Italy of the Renaissance did; she develops him equally and systematically. And hence she does not shock people with him but attracts them; she names herself the France of tact and measure, good sense, logic. In a way, this is true. As she develops the senses, the apparent self, all round in good faith, without misgivings, without violence, she has much reasonableness and clearness in all her notions and arrangements; a sort of balance even in conduct; as much art and science, and it is not a little, as goes with the ideal of

l'homme sensuel moyen. And from her ideal of the average sensual man France has deduced her famous gospel of the Rights of Man, which she preaches with such an infinite growing and self-admiration. France takes 'the wishes of the flesh and of the current thoughts' for a man's rights; and human happiness, and the perfection of society, she places in everybody's being enabled to gratify these wishes, to get these rights, as equally as possible and as much as possible.

(CPW, VI, pp. 390-91)

French theatre is the expression of that ideal. It, for Arnold, represents the life of the senses developing themselves all round without misgiving; a life confident, fair and free, with fireworks of fine emotions, grand passions, and devotedness - or rather, perhaps, we should say dévouement - lighting it up when necessary...

I see our community turning to the theatre with eagerness, and finding the English theatre without organisation, or purpose, or dignity, and no modern English drama at all except a fanatical one. And then I see the French company from the chief theatre of Paris showing themselves to us in London - a society of actors admirable in organisation, purpose, and dignity, with a modern drama not fanatic at all, but corresponding with fidelity to a very palpable and powerful ideal, the ideal of the life of the homme sensuel moyen in Paris, his beautiful city. I see in England a materialised upper class, sensible of the nullity of our own modern drama, impatient of the state of false constraint and of blank to which the Puritanism of our middle class has brought our stage and much of our life, delighting in such drama as the modern drama of Paris. I see the emancipated youth of both sexes delighting in it; the new and clever newspapers, which push on the work of emancipation and serve as devoted missionaries of the gospel of the life of Paris and of the ideal of the average sensual man, delighting in it. And in this condition of affairs I see the middle class beginning to arrive at the theatre again after an abstention of two centuries and more; arriving eager and curious, but a little bewildered.

("The French Play in London", CPW, IX, pp. 77-78, 81)

But the fact remains that to think is one thing and to accommodate one's feelings to that way of thinking is something else. In other words, Arnold may have stepped beyond the cultural frame of his age, but in questions of feelings he is the son of his own time. This state of ambivalence is revealed

in one of his letters to Clough (September, 23, 1849): "What I must tell you is that I have never yet succeeded in any one great occasion in consciously mastering myself: I can go thro: the imaginary process of mastering myself and see the whole affair as it would then stand, but at the critical point I am too apt to hoist up the mainsail to the wind and let her drive" (LC, p. 110). This was written in the middle of his love experience to whom the rest of this chapter is devoted.

Arnold's love poems fall into three groups: those relating to Marguerite, those relating to Frances Lucy Wightman whom he later married, and a semidramatic seminarrative poem that combines these two love experiences - Tristram and Iseult.

## II

### i. Switzerland Series

Arnold grouped the poems that take Marguerite as a subject under the heading - Switzerland. That Marguerite is an actual person is a fact that is definitely proved by the letters Arnold wrote to Clough around that time. On 29 September 1848 he wrote from the Bath of Leuk: "Tomorrow I repass the Gemmi and get to Thun: linger one day at the Hotel Bellevue for the sake of the blue eyes of one of its inmates: and then proceed by slow stages down the Rhine to Cologne, thence to Amiens and Boulogne and England". However, the evidences are not enough to make an inference about her exact personality or social status.

From the above evidence, I shall take Marguerite as a real woman in the life of Arnold.<sup>7</sup> Among the readers who hold that view are Tinker and

Lowry who write: "acquaintance with Arnold's method of composition inevitably leads the student to inquire after sources and the facts which lie at the root of the poems, for it was not Arnold's way to dispense with facts as a point of departure, however much purely imaginary material might be added later" (Commentary, pp. 155-156). Arnold's attitude towards such a matter may be found in his essay on "Dante and Beatrice", where, in spite of the fact that Dante's Beatrice is more etherised and spiritualised than Marguerite, Arnold did not hesitate in affirming that there was a real Beatrice.

There are nine poems which are written around Marguerite - all but one names her in text or title: The complete series would be as follows: (1) "A Memory-Picture", (2) "Meeting", (3) "A Dream", (4) "Parting", (5) "A Farewell", (6) "Isolation-to Marguerite", (7) "To Marguerite-Continued", (9) "The Terrace at Berne". Eight of them were gradually issued from 1849 to 1857; "The Terrace at Berne", which appeared in 1867, was presumably an epilogue, written after an interval of ten years. All nine, at one time or another, found a place in the group: Switzerland. Two, "A Memory Picture" and "A Dream", are now separated from the rest, and put among the Early Poems. Setting aside the two lighter pieces, "A Memory-Picture" and "A Dream", the seven poems present an almost plotted sequence with a definite progression through which Arnold moves towards a clearer and clearer understanding of the situation. The series, as Arnold himself left them, is put as follows:

- i. "Meeting" ("The Lake", 1852, 1853, 1854, 1857, 1864)
- ii. "Parting" (1852, 1853, 1854, 1857, 1869)
- iii. "A Farewell" (1852, 1854, 1857, 1869)
- iv. "Isolation. To Marguerite" ("We were apart") (1857, 1869)
- v. "To Marguerite-Continued" ("Yes! in the Sea") (1852, 1853, 1854, 1857, 1869)
- vi. "Absence" (1852, 1853, 1854, 1857, 1869)
- vii. "The Terrace at Berne" (1867, 1869)

In "Meeting", the first poem of the series, Marguerite makes her first appearance. One learns that Arnold had met her the summer before and is now seeing her again;<sup>8</sup>

Again I see my bliss at hand,  
The town, the lake are here;  
My Marguerite smiles upon the strand,  
Unaltered with the year.

(Poems, p. 116)

I know that graceful figure fair,  
That cheek of languid hue;  
I know that soft, enkerchiefed hair,  
And those sweet eyes of blue.

(Poems, p. 116)

But from the very beginning she represents for him a dilemma of choice: all for love or all for duty. The last choice wins:

Again I spring to make my choice;  
Again in tones of ire  
I hear a God's tremendous voice:  
'Be counselled, and retire.'

However, stanza 4 seems to suggest that he does not feel the dilemma very keenly:

Ye guiding Powers who join and part,  
What would ye have with me?  
Ah, warn some more ambitious heart,  
And let the peaceful be!

(Ibid., p. 117)

In "Parting", a companion piece to "Meeting", Arnold gives an expression to the tendency in the period which Kristian Smidt points to as he speaks of the Victorian poet's desire "to expand his personality by identifying himself as closely as possible with humanity".<sup>9</sup> It was in fact a characteristic desire of the Victorians to establish abiding human relationships, which often reflected their need for warmth, certainty and consolation

in face of the isolation engendered by the uncomfortable discoveries of the scientists . But, as Arnold puts it,

And what heart knows another?  
Ah! who knows his own?

Arnold, in this poem, assumes a characteristically Arnoldian stance: as in "Dover Beach", he is at a window looking out confronting the world beyond. The poem is divided into two parts and a conclusion.

The first part develops, with vividly contrasting imagery, the theme of hopeless separation. Here, they are suddenly in Autumn: the holiday season is over, love is threatened by winter:

Ye storm-winds of Autumn!  
Who rush by, who shake  
The window, and ruffle  
The gleam-lighted lake;  
Who cross to the hill-side  
Thin-sprinkled with farms,  
Where the high woods strip sadly  
Their yellowing arms -  
Ye are bound for the mountains!  
Ah! with you let me go  
Where your cold, distant barrier,  
The vast range of snow,  
Through the loose clouds lifts dimly  
Its white peaks in air -  
How deep is their stillness!  
Ah, would I were there!

These lines stand in sharp contrast with the smooth pentameter couplets where the voice of Marguerite breaks in:

But on the stairs what voice is this I hear,  
Buoyant as morning, and as morning clear?  
Say, has some wet bird-haunted English lawn  
Lent it the music of its trees at dawn?  
Or was it from some sun-flecked mountain-brook  
That the sweet voice its upland clearness took?

This shift, coupled with the poem's metrical changes, as Allott has rightly observed, 'represents Arnold's wavering between the desire to give free play to emotion ('storm-winds of Autumn') and the desire for peace' as well as fixity (stillness of the 'white peaks in air'). Arnold realising that



his pursuit is hopeless, turns to Nature which, to him, brings freshness and openness of heart:

To thee only God granted  
A heart ever new -  
To all always open,  
To all always true.

(Poems, p. 120)

In the next poem of the series, "A Farewell", one finds Arnold again split between his desire to love and his knowledge of the absurdity of such a desire. In this poem Arnold shows a philosophic-elegiac strain for which he is to become well known. The theme is a reflection upon what divides him from Marguerite:

I blame thee not! - this heart, I know,  
To be long loved was never framed,  
For something in its depths doth glow  
Too strange, too restless, too untamed.

And women - things that live and move  
Mined by the fever of the soul -  
They seek to find in those they love  
Stern strength, and promise of control.

They ask not kindness, gentle ways  
These they themselves have tried and known;  
They ask a soul which never sways  
With the blind gusts that shake their own.

I too have felt the load I bore  
In a too strong emotion's sway;  
I too have wished, no woman more,  
This starting, feverish heart away.

I too have longed for trenchant force,  
And will like a dividing spear;  
Have praised the keen, unscrupulous course,  
Which knows no doubt, which feels no fear.

The poem culminates with some hope that in the future they might be able to achieve their hopes and find fulfilment in love:

Yet we shall one day gain, life past  
Clear prospect o'er our being's whole;  
Shall see ourselves, and learn at last  
Our true affinities of soul.

We shall not then deny a course  
To every thought the mass ignore;  
We shall not then call hardness force,  
Nor lightness wisdom any more.

Then, in the eternal Father's smile,  
Our soothed, encouraged souls will dare  
To seem as free from pride and guile,  
As good, as generous, as they are.

(Poems, pp. 126-128)

The two poems that mark the climax of the Switzerland group most amply, and with great intensity, are "Isolation: to Marguerite" and "To Marguerite-Continued". In the first, the poet is left with his deep sense of isolation which he takes as a law of existence for himself and his generation. It is important to note that he is talking about his own generation as far as this point is concerned. As he turns away, with that typical Victorian consciousness of his own nature and vocation, he comes to the realisation that his own lot in life is a sterner style of life than that of his alluring dream:

Farewell! - and thou, thou lonely heart,  
Which never yet without remorse  
Even for a moment didst depart  
From thy remote and sphered course  
To haunt the place where passions reign -  
Back to thy solitude again!

Back! with the conscious thrill of shame  
Which Luna felt, that summer-night,  
Flash through her pure immortal frame,  
When she forsook the starry height  
To hang over Endymion's sleep  
Upon the pine-grown Latmian steep.

Yet she, chaste queen, had never proved  
How vain a thing is mortal love,  
Wandering in Heaven, far removed.  
But thou hast long had place to prove  
This truth - to prove, and make thine own:  
'Thou hast been, shalt be, art, alone.'

Then, the poem concludes with the following wistful reference to the experience,

Of happier men - for they, at least,  
Have dreamed two human hearts might blend  
In one, and were through faith released  
From isolation without end  
Prolonged; nor knew, although not less  
Alone than thou, their loneliness.

(Poems, p. 122)

In the course of his reshufflings of Switzerland series, Arnold finally linked "Isolation. To Marguerite" to the poem, which most readers<sup>10</sup> have rightly thought to be Arnold's finest achievement - "To Marguerite-Continued". The poem, in fact, is a continuation of Arnold's reflection on the loneliness of man and on the powerlessness of thought to overcome it: The subject of the poem is human life in general. To this effect Professor K. Tillotson writes:

The exclusion of 'I' and 'you'... points its impersonality; in this it is unique in the series. 'The unplumb'd, salt, estranging sea' belongs nearly as much, and as little, to Arnold and Clough, Arnold and his sister, even possibly to Arnold and Fancy-Lucy, as to Arnold and Marguerite; quotations from the letters and other poems near in date show that the inevitability of estrangement was playing upon his mind from more than one direction (RES, *ibid.*, p. 360).

Thus the theme of the impossibility of true love is emblematical of cultural and historical transition of which the first half of the nineteenth century is an example.

Yes! in the sea of life enisled,  
With echoing straits between us thrown,  
Dotting the shoreless watery wild,  
We mortal millions live alone.  
The islands feel the enclaspings flow,  
And then their endless bounds they know.

But when the moon their hollows lights,  
And they are swept by balms of spring,  
And in their glens, on starry nights,  
The nightingales divinely sing;  
And lovely notes, from shore to shore,  
Across the sounds and channels pour -

Oh! then a longing like despair  
Is to their farthest caverns sent;  
For surely once, they feel, we were  
Parts of a single continent!  
Now round us spreads the water plain -  
Oh might our marges meet again!

Then comes the most revealing statement of reason behind the situation:

Who ordered, that their longing's fire  
Should be, as soon as kindled, cooled?  
Who renders vain their deep desire?-  
A God, a God their severance ruled!  
And bade betwixt their shores to be  
The unplumbed, salt, estranging sea.

(Poems, pp. 124-25)

"A God" referred to in this way is an ambiguous figure. This confirms my point in the prologue to this part: that man's concept of God determines his own intellectual and emotional activities, in other words, his entire life.

In "Absence", which in all editions of the poems served as one of the concluding poems, Arnold's growing away from Marguerite is seen as a struggle towards the light, where passion is seen as a dark storm:

I struggle towards the light; and ye,  
Once - longed - for storms of love!  
If with the light ye cannot be,  
I bear that ye remove.

However, the final admission of ambivalence, as R. Stange has rightly observed, saves the poem from being a manifesto of intolerable moral superiority (Op. cit., p. 246).

I struggle towards the light - but oh,  
While yet the night is chill,  
Upon time's barren, stormy flow,  
Stay with me, Marguerite, still!

(Poems, p. 139)

Finally, "The Terrace at Berne" rightly serves as a concluding poem for the series, Switzerland. Arnold revisited the place ten years after

the love affair with Marguerite was over. Looking out from the terrace of his hotel at Thun, Arnold reflects on what may have happened to Marguerite in the intervening years:

Ah, shall I see thee, while a flush  
Of startled pleasure floods thy brow,  
Quick through the oleanders brush,  
And clap thy hands, and cry: 'Tis thou!

Or hast thou long since wandered back,  
Daughter of France! to France, thy home;  
And flitted down the flowery track  
Where feet like thine too lightly come?

Doth riotous laughter now replace  
Thy smile; and rouge, with stony glare,  
Thy cheek's soft hue; and fluttering lace  
The kerchief that enwound thy hair?

Or is it over? - art thou dead?  
Dead! - and no warning shiver ran  
Across my heart, to say thy thread  
Of life was cut, and closed thy span!

Could from earth's ways that figure slight  
Be lost, and I not feel 'twas so?  
Of that fresh voice the gay delight  
Fail from earth's air, and I not know?

Or shall I find thee still, but changed,  
But not the Marguerite of thy prime?  
With all thy being re-arranged,  
Passed through the crucible of time;

With spirit vanished, beauty waned,  
And hardly yet a glance, a tone,  
A gesture - anything - retained  
Of all that was my Marguerite's own?

I will not know! For wherefore try,  
To things by mortal course that live,  
A shadow durability,  
For which they were not meant, to give?

Like driftwood spars, which meet and pass  
Upon the boundless ocean-plain,  
So on the seas of life, alas!  
Man meets man meets, and quits again.

I knew it when my life was young;  
I feel it still, now youth is o'er.  
- The mists are on the mountain hung,  
And Marguerite I shall see no more.

To sum up. The poetic theme of Marguerite's love is isolation - the emotional isolation that separates two souls: the woman is the gay, romantic life of Paris and of Switzerland - la femme sensuelle moyenne; the man is in the austere service of Faith. The whole affair is a failure because neither of them is sufficiently moved. From the earliest stage of the affair, Arnold was evidently fearful lest submission to her spell would deprive him of the power of self-direction and lead him astray amidst the dizzying cross-currents of the senses. The Yale Manuscript carries an entry for the year 1849 indicative of Arnold's intention to write a poem on the refusal of limitation by the sentiment of love.

The story ends as Arnold had foreseen. Professor Garrod rightly thinks that Arnold's "colder academic character and training may well have been the chief alienating influence".<sup>11</sup> Arnold, followed, as Sir Edmund Chambers puts it, the practical way of life:

Certainly the parting with a blue eyed girl became for Matthew Arnold something more than itself, a parting with the whole world of passionate romance which he put behind him. The Marguerite poems are not merely poems of isolation, but of renunciation, of self-dedication... He turned back to his 'sphered course', to the rigorous teachers who had seized his youth... and incidentally to the routine, which he often (in the beginning) found irksome, of the Education office. 12

But after the affair was over, it was still difficult to forget. In January 1851, the year of his marriage, Arnold wrote to his sister K: "The aimless and unsettled, but also open and liberal state of our youth we must perhaps all leave and take refuge in our morality and character; but with most of us it is a melancholy passage from which we emerge shorn of so many beams that we are almost tempted to quarrel with the law of nature which imposes on us" (Letters, I, p. 14).

ii. Faded Leaves

In sharp contrast to the Switzerland series, Faded Leaves sequence has no such complicated publishing history. All the poems except "Separation", which was first published in 1855, appear in the 1852 volume. Opinion is divided as to whether the Faded Leaves poems also refer to Marguerite or to Frances Lucy, who became his wife on 10 June 1851. Mrs Sells, for example, follows Professor Hale in regarding all the poems as referring to Marguerite, but the members of Arnold's family have always been confident that these poems, like "Calais Sands", were inspired by the poet's passion for Miss Wightman. Indeed, since Professor K. Allott published the earliest version of the first poem in the series, "The River", and showed that the river there is the Thames and not the Aar, one knows that the poem is hers.

That the two series, Switzerland and Faded Leaves, refer to two different women is a fact, for the physical descriptions of the two women are different: Marguerite's eyes are blue, her smile 'sweet' but 'arch', her hair 'soft, ash-coloured', the latter lover's eyes are 'blue-grey', her hair 'soft brown', her eyes are 'arch' and her mouth 'mocking'. Another contrast could be found in the fact that, says M. Thorpe, "The Switzerland sequence, as we have seen, gives us both the romantic conflict and the poet's 'quarrel with himself', hardly separable from each other, whereas the Faded Leaves poems have a single thread throughout, of love thwarted, anxious, doubtfully requited by turns; above all, in the latter case, the poet has no divided feelings about the value of this love" (Op. cit., p. 39). So, Faded Leaves as a group are emotionally less intense and poetically less impressive than Switzerland ones. They express a more conventional, and

more domesticated love. The lyric impulse in this sequence has a purer single line than that in the Marguerite's poems.

The order of the poems in Faded Leaves is apparently chronological: "The River", "Too Late", "Calais Sands", "On the Rhine". All were composed in August-September, 1850. But "Longing" was composed a little later.

In "The River", which begins the series, Arnold is not ambivalent in his attitude towards love:

My pent-up tears oppress my brain,  
My heart is swollen with love unsaid.  
Ah, let me weep, and tell my pain,  
And on thy shoulder rest my head!

This is actually the verbal expression of the sense of fulfilment in love, and this is all that Arnold asks for:

Before I die - before the soul,  
Which now is mine, must re-attain  
Immunity from my control,  
And wander round the world again;

Before this teased o'erlaboured heart  
For ever leaves its vain employ,  
Dead to its deep habitual smart,  
And dead to hopes of future joy.

(Poems, pp. 231-32)

In "Too Late", the second poem in the series, Arnold observes that:

Each on his own strict line we move,  
And some find death ere they find love;  
So far apart their lives are thrown  
From the twin soul which halves their own.

And sometimes, by still harder fate,  
The lovers meet, but meet too late.  
- Thy heart is mine! - True, true! ah, true!  
- Then, love, thy hand! - Ah no! adieu!

(Poems, p. 232)

"Calais Sands", the third poem in the series, is a favourite with most critics ever since its publication. Isidore G. Ascher, in a review of



Arnold's poetry published in St James's Magazine (1868) wrote:

When Mr Arnold descends to love lyrics, he can be as gay and sparkling as a troubadour, and as musical as the author of The Irish Melodies. The poem called 'Calais Sands' is quite a gem in this way. Its beauties are not loosely strung, nor set at random; it is like all our author's compositions - studied, elegant, and chaste. Of course we should like the glow of earnestness, the fervour of passion, the warmth of spontaneousness in a love lyric; but the absence of these things still does not detract from the beauty of 'Calais Sands', which has its own qualities to recommend.

(C. Dawson, The Critical Heritage,  
p. 190)

In the last two poems, "On the Rhine" and "Longing", there is a slight rise of feeling: Arnold manages to end the series on a note of faint and wistful hope just reflecting on the hard realities of life:

Vain is the effort to forget.  
Some day I shall be cold, I know,  
As is the eternal moonlit snow  
Of the high Alps, to which I go -  
But ah, not yet, not yet!

For the moment he wishes to banish this type of thought and rest mindlessly in the gaze of his beloved's 'deep soft eyes':

Awhile let me with thought have done.  
And as this brimmed unwrinkled Rhine,  
And that far purple mountain-line,  
Lie sweetly in the look divine  
Of the slow-sinking sun;

So let me lie, and, calm as they,  
Let beam upon my inward view  
Those eyes of deep, soft, lucent hue -  
Eyes too expressive to be blue,  
Too lovely to be grey,

Ah, Quiet, all things feel thy balm!  
Those blue hills too, this river's flow,  
Were restless once, but long ago.  
Tamed is their turbulent youthful glow;  
Their joy is in their calm.

(Poems, pp. 235-36)

In the last poem of the series, "Longing", Arnold begs his beloved to come to him in his dreams so that by day he will be well again:

For then the night will more than pay  
The hopeless longing of the day.

... ..

Come now, and let me dream it truth;  
And part my hair, and kiss my brow,  
And say: My love! why sufferest thou?

(Poems, p. 236)

### iii. Tristram and Iseult

On reflecting on his own love experience, Arnold must have realised that there is a difference between the two types of love associated with the two women involved: one which is tantalising, vivid, and marked by the intensity of feelings [this is the type of love associated with Marguerite], and another type of love which is steady, quiet, calm, and offers fixity without the excitement of passion [this is the type of love associated with Francis Lucy Wightman]. It is clear, too, that he must have seen his life as a pendulum that swings between these two types of love:

There were two Iseults who did sway  
Each her hour of Tristram's day;  
But one possessed his waning time,  
The other his resplendent prime...

To mention one small possible link, the arrival of Iseult of Ireland is heralded by the lines: "What voices these on the clear night-air? / What lights in the court - what steps on the stair?" (I.372-73). The lover in "Parting" (September, 1849) asks: "But on the stairs what voice is this I hear, / Buoyant as morning, as a morning clear?"

One can say that the poem, on the internal evidences only, shows that

Arnold is a kind of Tristram at the apex of love triangle, with Marguerite as a kind of Irish Iseult and Mrs Arnold as Iseult of white hands. The form of the poem as half-dramatic, half-narrative shows that it is but the combination of the two series of love: Switzerland and Faded Leaves. For it is to be noted that the first series has a dramatic movement in each poem, the second series is straight in its address. In other words they represent three different lyrical phases.

The comments on Tristram and Iseult, if often unfavourable,<sup>13</sup> are extensive. J.A. Froude says, in Westminster Review (1854), "Among the best of the new poems is 'Tristram and Iseult'. It is unlucky that so many of the subjects should be so unfamiliar to English readers, but it is their own fault if they do not know the 'Morte d'Arthur'" (The Critical Heritage, p. 89). But readers in the thirties of this century have put the emphasis on the autobiographical significance of the poem: E.K. Chambers, in 1932, detects the Marguerite affair in the theme of the poem. H.W. Garrod calls the 1852 volume Marguerite's book, Tristram and Iseult in particular, as a tale of separated lovers, being written for her. F.L. Lucas sees in the poem Arnold's struggle of renunciation, the triumph of his puritanism. And what emerges from the poem for L. Trilling is not the suffering of any of its three characters, but the despair of the poet himself. Bonnerot finds exact biographical parallels: Tristram is Arnold, Iseult of Ireland is Marguerite, Iseult of Brittany is Lucy Wightman. Iseult of Ireland represents youth, passionate love, and the lyric impulse in Arnold's poetry. Iseult of Brittany represents domesticity, Arnold prosaic life, and the suppression of his lyric impulse.

Among modern English-speaking poets Arnold is the pioneer in treating the tragic romance of Tristram and Iseult. Historically, the legend originated in the late eighth-century Pictish Kingdom in Scotland, whence it

may be traced through Welsh, Cornish, and Breton sources to two poets of the late twelfth century: the Frenchman, Beroul, and the Anglo-Norman, Thomas. Beroul's Tristram lacks the conclusion, but Thomas's does not. From Thomas' Tristram a condensed version, Sir Tristram, was composed in middle English a century later. "This latter romance, whose conclusion is lacking because," as J.R. Russ has found out, "a final leaf or two are missing from the manuscript, is the only treatment of the poem in middle English outside Malory."<sup>14</sup> Sir Walter Scott edited the manuscript in 1804 and added his own short conclusion, which does not materially depart from the facts of Thomas' version:

The dying Tristram's message was to display a white sail on his return from Cornwall if Iseult of Ireland had agreed to come to his master's aid, and a black sail if she had refused. Iseult of Brittany had overheard this arrangement for a signaling device, and when asked by Tristram what the colour of the returning ships' sail was, she lied in replying that it was black. Tristram died of grief almost immediately, and Iseult of Ireland, arriving too late for a final meeting, threw herself upon his corpse and died too.

Arnold does not know that ending. In a letter (5 November, 1852) to Herbert Hill, he writes:

I read the story of Tristram and Iseult some years ago at Thun in an article in a French Review on the romance literature: I had never met with it before, and it fastened upon me: when I got back to England I looked at the Morte d'Arthur and took what I could, but the poem was in the main formed, and I could not well disturb it. 15

The story that Arnold came across occurs in a paragraph of Theodore de la Villemarque's article for the Revue de Paris of 1841 on "Les Poemes gallois et les romans de la Table Ronde" which recounts how Tristram was sent by his uncle, King Mark of Cornwall, to bring home from Ireland 'La Belle Yseult' to be the King's bride; how he and Iseult drank together the love-potion which made them fall passionately in love; and how though Iseult married Mark and Tristram eventually married another Iseult -

Iseult of Brittany - this love remained at the centre of their lives. Arnold's poem is based on this selective use of La Villemarque with some additional details from Malory, especially from Books VIII-IX and Book XII, which Malory calls the First and Second Books of Tristram. In all, it has been found that Arnold must have consulted five sources of the story but only used three of them. For in addition to what one has mentioned, Arnold used Vulgate Merlin which he consulted after his return to England.

Tennyson once said that when he used an old legend he made sure that there was something modern about his interpretation. Having this in mind as a common Victorian practice, one is looking for Arnold's interpretation of the Victorian sensibility. So it would be very helpful to see Arnold's own recasting of the work's spirit and meaning.

Part I. The poem from the point of view of form, is Arnold's most adventurous and original one. The most notable feature of this in part one, is the impression it gives of intense stylisation: an effect which is produced by both metre and the method of narration. For instead of telling a consecutive story, Arnold chooses to begin just before the crisis and to bring in the past by way of flashbacks: in the opening scene the delirious Tristram, near death and watched over by his silent wife, is longing for his first love, Iseult of Ireland. This method, flashbacks, was the source of the complaint about the lack of clarity in the story line.

Contrast is another aspect in Arnold's treatment of the legend: a balanced opposition, a contrast between two kinds of love. To contrive this, Arnold has to make some changes: In the narratives which Arnold has consulted, Iseult of Brittany is quite insignificant: in Malory, for example, she barely appears, and when she does, her one salient action is wicked: she betrays Tristram at the end by lying to him about the arrival

of the other Iseult, and thus hastens his death. Arnold introduces her first and elaborately emphasises the pathos of her position. He dresses her in silk, gives her golden ringlets but 'sunk and pale' cheeks, and describes her as a lonely orphan, 'a sweet flower': 'the sweetest Christian soul alive' with a 'fragile loveliness'.

Who is this snowdrop by the sea?  
I know her by her mildness rare,  
Her snow-white hands, her golden hair,  
I know her by rich silk dress,  
And her fragile loveliness -  
The sweetest Christian soul alive,  
Iseult of Brittany.

(I.49-55)

Towards the end of this part, the narrator tells that Tristram, being unable to find fulfilment in love, turned to domesticity for peace, seeking it in,

the quiet hours  
Pass'd among these heaths of ours  
By the grey Atlantic sea;  
Hours, if not of ecstasy,  
From violent anguish surely free!

(I.229-233)

But such a state would not last for long: Tristram is entirely disabled from living a family life. He tries to find relief, which from a psychological point of view is correct, by joining his fellow knights in chivalrous adventures, fighting with Arthur and the Roman emperor against the heathen Saxons:

There's many a gay knight where he goes  
Will help him to forget his care;  
The march, the leaguer, Heaven's blithe air,  
The neighing steeds, the ringing blows -  
Sick pining comes not where these are.

(I.256-260)

But still, there is no escape, for everywhere Tristram sees the form of

Iseult of Ireland 'glide through the crossing spears' (I,241).

Arnold, also, adds two children, nowhere mentioned in any other version, for the sake of the domestic touch in part one of the poem and in preparation for part three. His characterisation of the Irish Iseult as proud and petulant is likewise his own, to point the contrast with her long-suffering rival.

Part II. The portion of the poem that troubled Arnold most was this part. "I am by no means satisfied with 'Tristram' in the second part myself", Arnold writes to Hill. Desiring to expand this portion of the story, and departing widely from the traditional treatment of the death of the lovers, Arnold was thrown back upon his own resources. For the meeting of the lovers at Tristram's deathbed is his own invention. Most readers are dissatisfied with this part too: K. Allott, for example, says that Arnold "had little talent for direct dramatisation, and the choice of trochaic rhythm for the rhymed dialogue was perhaps an unsuccessful attempt to distance and to give an air of ritual to the scene" (Poems, p. 208). However, the part opens with lines that shows Arnold's understanding of human nature:

Tristram:                 Raise the light, my page! that I may see her  
                              Thou art come at last, then, haughty Queen!  
                              Long I've waited, long I've fought my fever;  
                              Late thou comest, cruel thou hast been.

Iseult of Ireland: Blame me not, poor sufferer! that I tarried;  
                              Bound I was, I could not break the bond.  
                              Chide not with the past, but feel the present!  
                              I am here - we meet - I hold thy hand.

(II. 1-8)

At the end of this part, Arnold introduces a passage that shows his concept of the triad relation between life, time and art. The passage describes, in the narrator's eyes, the flapping tapestry on the wall of the room where the dead lovers lie:

And on the arras wrought you see  
A stately Huntsman, clad in green,  
And round him a fresh forest scene  
On that clear forest-knoll he stays,  
With his pack round him, and delays.  
He stares and stares, with troubled face...

(II, 152-157)

"The arras," say Linker and Lowry in their comment on the poem, "... represents the youthful Tristram hunting the boar." It is of course not found in any preceding version of the Tristram legend. It may well have been suggested to the poet, consciously or unconsciously, by Byron's lines in The Siege of Corinth, in which Francesca appears before Alps on the eve of the battle... (lines 62)ff). This passage we know to have been a favourite with Arnold, since he later incorporated it, together with the incident of which it is a part, in his 'Selection from Byron' in the Golden Treasury Series (1881). Hunter and hound also figure on the tapestry in 'The Eve of St. Agnes' and in Tennyson's 'Palace of Art'... ( Commentary, pp. 114-115).

In Part III, Arnold gives two factors that could destroy man's appreciation of normal life. It is, strangely enough, not pain or suffering:

... it is not sorrow, as I hear,  
Not suffering, which shuts up eye and ear  
To all that has delighted them before,  
And lets us be what we were once no more.  
No, we may suffer deeply, yet retain  
Power to be moved and soothed, for all our pain,  
By what of old pleased us, and will again.

(III, 112-118)

But,

... 'tis the gradual furnace of the world,  
In whose hot air our spirits are upcurled  
Until they crumble, or else grow like steel -  
Which kills in us the bloom, the youth, the spring -  
Which leaves the fierce necessity to feel,  
But takes away the power - this can avail,  
By drying up our joy in everything,  
To make our former pleasures all seem stale.

(III, 119-126)



It is to be noted that the 'furnace of the world' is not a cosmic phenomenon, but it is what man builds for himself just by being obsessed with one single thought: action or love:

This, or some tyrannous single thought, some fit  
Of passion, which subdues our souls to it,  
Till for its sake alone we live and move -  
Call it ambition, or remorse, or love -  
This too can change us wholly, and make seem  
All which we did before, shadow and dream.

(III, 127-132)

Arnold, then, gives his interpretation of what happens if one gives himself entirely to passion:

... it angers me to see  
How this fool passion gulls men potently;  
Being, in truth, but a diseased unrest,  
And an unnatural overheat at best.  
How they are full of languor and distress  
Not having it; which when they do possess,  
They straightway are burnt up with fume and care,  
And spent their lives in posting here and there  
Where this plague drives them; and have little ease,  
Are furious with themselves, and hard to please.

(III, 133-42)

Similarly, men who give themselves to action are ambitious by nature. They are hard to please and their souls grow like steel: this kills in them the capacity to feel, in other words, it dries up their 'joy for everything':

Like that bald Caesar, the famed Roman wight,  
Who wept at reading of a Grecian knight  
Who made a name at younger years than he;  
Or that renowned mirror of chivalry,  
Prince Alexander, Philip's peerless son,  
Who carried the great war from Macedon  
Into the Soudan's realm, and thundered on  
To die at thirty-five in Babylon.

(III, 143-150)

In part three too, Iseult, on 'one bright winter's day,' relates to her children the story of Merlin and Vivian. The real source is, as Tinker

and Lowry have pointed out, another essay by La Villemarque in the Revue de Paris, "Visite au Tombeau de Merlin". But though Arnold followed the outlines of the narrative: he completely altered the implications of the tale.

Since the story of Merlin and Vivian is not directly connected with the story of Tristram, it has perplexed many readers. Herbert Hill was the first to give air to his dissatisfaction. Arnold, in his attempt to clarify the matter, wrote to him "... the story of Merlin<sup>of</sup> which I am particularly fond, was brought in on purpose to relieve the poem which would else I thought have ended too sadly: but perhaps the new element introduced is too much."<sup>16</sup> Arnold, by closing with this story of fatal love, has managed to comment obliquely on his main story. For Merlin is to be equated roughly to Tristram, and Vivian to Iseult of Ireland, despite Vivian's faithlessness. The downfall of Merlin represents the Puritan's attitude to passion and the untrustworthiness of women. Technically, the device is one which Arnold used several times: for instance, in "The Scholar-Gipsy" and "Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse" which are concluded by symbolic statements of the poem's main theme in the form of a new episode that parallels the central action of the poem and emphasises its meaning.

The poem shows as well a double movement in opposition: for while the life movement of Tristram and Iseult of Ireland, in the poem, comes to a close, there is another movement opening up simultaneously. Arnold conveys this message by the symbol of children which is his invention: In Part I, the children are asleep. In Part III, they are wide awake under a winter sun, gathering stones on the dormant heath. Children have always been the storehouse of hope for Arnold. He worked for them as inspector of schools and reformer of the system of education. They are, for Arnold, the generation that will carry the torch of the war of liberation. Thus he addresses them in "A French Eton":

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 who, with all your faults, have neither the aridity of aristocracies, nor the narrow-mindedness of middle classes, you, whose power of simple enthusiasm is your gift, will not comprehend how progress towards man's best perfection - the adoring and ennobling of his spirit - should have been reluctantly undertaken; how it should have been for years and years retarded by barren commonplaces ... 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; nothing of the outcry they had to encounter; of the fierce protestations of life from policies which were dead and did not know it, and the shrill querulous upbraiding from publicists in their dotage. 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; towards that unattainable but irresistible lode-star, gazed after with earnest longing, and invoked with bitter tears; the longing of thousands of hearts, the tears of many generations.

Perhaps the conclusion that would best establish the unity and coherence of all the aspects in this part is by quoting Arnold himself:

The Sea of Faith  
Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore  
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furled.  
But now I only hear  
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,  
Retreating, to the breath  
Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear  
And naked shingles of the world.  
Ah, love, let us be true  
To one another! for the world, which seems  
To lie before us like a land of dreams,  
So various, so beautiful, so new,  
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,  
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain.

("Dover Beach," Poems, p. 242)

Two questions pose themselves here: first, why is love the answer to the problem of faith? Second, did the Victorians succeed? In the present chapter I offered my answer to the second question. Concerning the first, as I have observed before, the loss of faith by itself makes

the individual an isolated being, and his relationship to the world becomes distinct and distrustful. He becomes an isolated atom, and then his doubt concerning himself and the meaning of life thwarts his life.

Arnold does not deny that his age was rich in ideas and knowledge: it was an age "So various, so beautiful, so new," but "Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light, / Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain."

This brings to one's mind some lines of Socrates:

'I want to know,' asks Socrates, 'whether any one of us would consent to live, having wisdom and mind and knowledge and memory of all things, but having no sense of pleasure or pain, and wholly unaffected by these and the like feelings?'

(Philebus, 21d.)

This question is substantially the same as that which is presented in dramatic form in the tragedy of Faust, and the answer given by Arnold harmonises also with Plato's as well as Goethe's conception. Mind is not the ultimate good, and the life of thought is not happiness: "Mind is the spell which governs earth and heaven." Love is one of the ways in which man could overcome the terror of aloneness without sacrificing the integrity of his self.

If the individual overcomes the basic doubt concerning himself and his place in life, if he is related to the world by embracing it in the act of spontaneous living, he, according to Arnold, gains happiness. The problem is to discover the meaning of life, to determine the principles which can co-ordinate all its acts. For Arnold the central question of life is how to live? Arnold addressed himself to this question and made it his life's career by taking as his chief subject the difficulties of his fellow-men in understanding the age they live in, and proposing a method of reintegration. One can find no better words to sum up Arnold's achievement than his own lines on Goethe:

He took the suffering human race,  
He read each wound, each weakness clear;  
And struck his finger on the place,  
And said: Thou ailest here, and here!  
He look'd on Europe's dying hour  
Of fitful dream and feverish power;  
His eye plung'd down the weltering strife,  
The turmoil of expiring life --  
He said: The end is everywhere,  
Art still has truth, take refuge there!  
And he was happy, if to know  
Causes of things, and far below  
His feet to see the lurid flow  
Of terror, and insane distress,  
And headlong fate, be happiness.

#### NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> John C. Nelson, Renaissance Theory of Love (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), p. 84.
- <sup>2</sup> Les passions de l'ame, especially parts i and ii. Also Discourses on Method, iii and iv.
- <sup>3</sup> Wilhelm Wundt, Ethical System (London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1897), p.91.
- <sup>4</sup> Quoted from Charnoch's Self-examination, p. 172 by Max Weber, The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism (Op. cit.), p. 118.
- <sup>5</sup> Baily, Praxis Pietatis (Leipzig, 1724), p. 187. See also P.J.Spencer, who adopts a similar stance in, Theologische Bedunken (Halle, 1712). Quoted by Weber (Ibid.,) p. 106.
- <sup>6</sup> It is no accident that the name of Methodists stuck to the participants in the last great revival of Puritan ideas in the eighteenth century just as the term Precisians, which has the same meaning, was applied to their spiritual ancestors in the seventeenth century.
- <sup>7</sup> G.R. Stange, in Matthew Arnold: the Poet as Humanist (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), sees the poems as an exercise in the craftsmanship of poetry and nothing more: "The comparison of Arnold's love poems with the Liedensykles is principally useful in suggesting that Switzerland is not so much a record of the poet's amatory experience as it is an exercise in conventionalised literary form" (p. 224).

- <sup>8</sup> There is a hint of the existence of some prearrangement of this meeting in the words attributed to Marguerite in "A Memory Picture", where she light-heartedly says that: "Some day next year, I shall be, / Entering heedless, kiss'd by thee".
- <sup>9</sup> K. Smidt, "Points of View in Victorian Poetry", English Studies Vol. 38 (1957), 9.
- <sup>10</sup> K. Tillotson, in her article "'Yes: in the Sea of life,'" The Review of English Studies 3 (1952), has called it "the finest and perhaps indeed the greatest of Arnold's lyrics."
- <sup>11</sup> Quoted by Iris E. Sells, Matthew Arnold and France (Cambridge: Columbia University Press, 1935), p. 293.
- <sup>12</sup> Quoted by Paull F. Baum, Ten Studies in the Poetry of Matthew Arnold (Op. cit.), p. 75.
- <sup>13</sup> Even the best and most appreciative recent readers have oversimplified the intellectual subtlety of the work, concluding that its formal complexity is artistically false. Alan H. Roper, for example, writes that the poem is "a rejection of passion on the basis of what it brings to man... Indeed, so concerned was Arnold to make his point that he was willing to sacrifice his poem's artistic unity for its sake". See "The Moral Landscape of Arnold's Poetry," PMLA, 77 (June, 1962), 295. W. Stacy Johnson, in The Voices of Matthew Arnold (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1961), details many beauties of the poem which have never before been pointed out, but also finds that it displays "some characteristic weakness" (p. 95).
- <sup>14</sup> Jon R. Huss, "A Possible Source for the Death Scene in Arnold's *Tristram and Iseult*", Victorian Poetry, 9 (1971), 337.
- <sup>15</sup> Printed by R.E.C. Houghton, TLS, 19 May, 1932.
- <sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 368. Quoted in Commentary, p. 124.

## CHAPTER X

### Epilogue

The true is its own becoming, the circle  
that presupposes its end as its aim and  
thus has it for its beginning.

- Hegel

The common end of all narrative, nay, of  
all Poems is ... to make those events,  
which in real or imagined History move  
on in a strait line, assume to our  
understanding a circular motion - the  
snake with its Tail in its Mouth.

- Coleridge

Though the Muse be gone away,  
Though she move not earth to-day,  
Souls, erewhile who caught her word,  
Ah! still harp on what they heard.

M. Arnold

What we call the beginning is often the end  
And to make an end is to make a beginning.  
The end is where we start from...  
We shall not cease from exploration  
And the end of all our exploring  
Will be to arrive where we started  
And know the place for the first time.

T.S. Eliot

In July of 1867, Arnold published his New Poems. From that time forward, Arnold wrote very little verse but was increasingly widely known for his controversial social and religious writings. Almost without exception, the memorable poems of this volume could be called elegiac, either in the customary sense, as celebrations of the dead - such as "Rugby Chapel", "Stanzas from Carnac", "A Southern Night", "Haworth Churchyard", "Heine's Grave", and "Westminster Abbey", or they are elegiac in a wider sense: serious meditation upon the fate of man who feels the cross-currents of history in a period of transition - such are "Stanzas from the Grand Chartreuse", which Arnold himself does designate as elegiac, and "Dover Beach", which he places among his lyric poems.

The most appropriate poem to begin with is "Dover Beach", for the following reasons: first, almost everything that one has been saying is drawn together and summarised in this poem - it connects the fate of the individual with society and religion: It is

The thread which binds it all in one  
And not its separate parts alone.

Second, it bridges the years between 1852 and 1867: it was conceived early and written as well as published late. The occasion of the poem is Arnold's short stay with his wife at Dover during their honeymoon in 1851. "It is generally thought that it must have been composed, in the main, in the early 1850's: a pencilled draft of lines 1-28 exists on the back of a sheet containing notes for 'Empedocles'" (Thorpe, Matthew Arnold, pp. 87-88). Anyhow, at whatever point he finished it, it was a poem Arnold lived with for a long time.

"Dover Beach" consists of four sections and opens out both in space and time to reach across Europe to the Aegean Sea and ancient Greece. The first section gives the setting (1-14):



The sea is calm to-night.  
The tide is full, the moon lies fair  
Upon the straits; on the French coast the light  
Gleams and is gone; the cliffs of England stand,  
Glimmering and vast, out in the tranquil bay.  
Come to the window, sweet is the night-air!  
Only, from the long line of spray  
Where the sea meets the moon-blanch'd land,  
Listen! you hear the grating roar  
Of pebbles which the waves draw back, and fling,  
At their return, up the high strand,  
Begin, and cease, and then again begin,  
With tremulous cadence slow, and bring  
The eternal note of sadness in.

(Poems, pp. 240-41)

J.D. Jump, in his comment on these lines, says: "Examining these lines more closely, we can cite 'grating roar' as admirably conveying the two distinguishable but inseparable sounds made by waves breaking on shingle; we can acknowledge the almost physical stress given to the verbs 'draw back' [long vowels] and 'fling' [short vowel]; we can analyse up to a point the combination of syntactical and metrical means by which the ebbing and flowing motion of the waves is made actual."<sup>1</sup> The sea-rhythm reflects the world's rhythm in general and also of the poet's soul. "And with the word 'listen' at the beginning of line 9, we," says Murray Krieger, "are to be shocked out of our happy lethargy even as the poet is shocked out of his. The sharp trochaic foot and the long caesura which follows re-enforce this emphasis."<sup>2</sup> The word 'listen' makes the poem dramatic, for although there is only one speaker, there are two characters: the speaker and the woman he addresses as his love.

The second section invokes Sophocles as a poet who witnessed, like Arnold, in his own time a period of transition:

Sophocles long ago  
Heard it on the Aegean, and it brought  
Into his mind the turbid ebb and flow  
Of human misery; we  
Find also in the sound a thought,  
Hearing it by this distant northern sea.

(15-20)

In the first section, Arnold moves the reader from the sense of sight to that of hearing. In this second section of the poem, the movement is repeated but in terms of human history - from the present to the past. A historical idea which Arnold must have taken from his father who held a cyclical theory of history, according to which nations pass through various phases of progression till, if they evolve correctly, they achieve the ideal society. A nation, if it wishes to profit by the course of history, must be capable of catching its tide at the full: "we, standing for a few years on the shore of time, can scarcely tell whether the particular movement which we witness is according to or against the general tendency of the whole period" (T. Arnold's Christian Life, p. vi).

Arnold, by bringing in the character of Sophocles, made critics search for a verbal parallel from Sophocles' plays. Trilling, for instance, says that "when Arnold speaks of Sophocles hearing the roar of the pebbles on the beach under the receding wave and of its having brought 'into his mind the turbid ebb and flow/ Of human misery', he is almost certainly making reference to the opening of the third chorus of Sophocles' *Antigone*".<sup>3</sup> P.F. Baum, as if anticipating Trilling's remark, says:

As illustration that the note is eternal Arnold instances Sophocles, his favourite tragic poet. This same wash of the sea against the shore had made the same impression on Sophocles: it had reminded him, even as it reminds us in the north, of 'the turbid ebb and flow of human misery'. Here one must be cautious. Arnold does not say that Sophocles compared the vicissitudes of life to the ebb and flow of the Aegean tides, nor has anyone ever found in the seven extant plays or in the numerous fragments any such comparison; nor was Sophocles likely to have made such a comparison, because there is little tide in the Aegean. The alleged parallels simply do not meet the case; they are irrelevant.

(Ten Studies, p. 88)

And more recently, Culler writes that "To Sophocles in the classical age

it spoke in a humanistic sense, of the turbid ebb and flow of a purely human misery. But to Arnold in the waning of the Christian age it speaks in a religious sense, of the slow withdrawal of the Sea of Faith" (The Imaginative Reason, p. 40). In my view, Arnold instances Sophocles because he witnessed a transitional period in human history. It was a passage from an immanent concept of God to a time where the Platonic idea of god as an "absolute other" began to assert itself. To be more accurate, it was a period like that of the second half of the sixteenth-century.

The third section of the poem (lines 21-28) extends the parallel between the Sea of Faith and the sea at Dover:

The Sea of Faith  
Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore  
lay like the folds of a bright girdle furled.  
But now I only hear  
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,  
Retreating, to the breath  
Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear  
And naked shingles of the world.

Thus, by the allegorisation of the retreating waters into a "Sea of Faith", the poem moves from sight to sound and finally from sound to thought.

In the fourth section (29-37), there is only one resource suggested:

Ah, love, let us be true  
To one another! for the world, which seems  
To lie before us like a land of dreams,  
So various, so beautiful, so new,  
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,  
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;  
And we are here as on a darkling plain  
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,  
Where ignorant armies clash by night.

"By two routes, then, through nature and through history," says Culler, "the poem has brought us to the reality of the darkling plain. For this is where the reader is finally placed, not in any religion of nature, which is an illusion, or of Christianity, which is gone - not, indeed, in any world which 'seems' to lie before us like a 'land of dreams', but here in

this harsh, bitter actuality of our... present" (pp. 40-41). The image of the ignorant armies with which the poem ends has attracted much attention, and efforts have been made to find the inspiration for it in Arnold's reading. The likeliest possibility is the account of the battle of Epipolae given by Thucydides in his History of the Peloponnesian War (Book VII, Chapters 43-44).

Readers have sometimes complained that the imagery of the poem is not unified, that there is no sea in the last section and no darkling plain in the first. In fact, the poem's unity is achieved by a consistent distinction between sound and sight imagery. The poem itself moves from light to darkness, paralleling its thematic movement as a whole from faith to disillusionment, from past to present.

Formally, the poem is a lyric consisting of four unequal verse paragraphs irregularly rhymed. Lines vary between two and five stresses, but more than half the lines are five-stressed. P.F. Baum notes that the variations in rhythm, irregularity of line-lengths, and the interweaving of shorter and longer lines produces something of the effect of waves breaking and retreating, of 'ebb and flow', and that the fourth section is 'the most regular and goes some think like the octave of a sonnet: abba oddc, plus the last rime, c, repeated with a kind of coda effect' (pp. 94-95). The poem brilliantly fuses narrative and drama, and the traditional mode of reflection. With the possible exception of "The Waste Land", no other poem of the nineteenth or the twentieth century depicts the alienation of modern man as does "Dover Beach". It will remain notable as an authentic expression of Victorian sensibility.

As the proverb goes, light comes after the darkest hour, so after the darkling plain situation, there emerged a relatively clearer pattern of the spiritual state of England. The reason is that Arnold, by this time, has

put the problem of faith in its historical context. This does not undercut the value of his previous interpretation. On the contrary, it is an objective diagnosis of the situation, to do away with it or to dismiss it as a subjective analysis of Arnold's own personal dilemma is to miss the point. So, one can say, for instance, that Empedocles on Etna is a synchronic analysis of the spiritual state - the state of faith in the mid-nineteenth century; "Dover Beach" and "Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse" are representative of the transitional state of faith, the new element here is the more or less historical perspective; and finally, a diachronic analysis of the problem of faith in general and the role of the poet-philosopher in that stage in his "Obermann Once More", and "Rugby Chapel" respectively.

The date of composition of "Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse" is unknown. However, it must be between the 7th of September 1851, the date of Arnold's honeymoon visit to the place, and March 1855, the date of its publication. But from some inaccuracies about the service (lines 40-42), one can suggest the idea that the poem was composed around 1855. This, in itself, poses a question: why did Arnold choose to write about it after this lapse of time? What is the significance of the place itself? There is a historical significance.

The Carthusian Order, an austere sect, was founded by St Bruno of Cologne in 1084. The eleventh century was, in many ways, similar to the seventeenth century where, as Arnold puts it, man entered the prison of puritanism and had the key turned upon its spirit there for two hundred years. It was a time marked by a strong religious mania: many various ascetic orders were founded by reformers. Romuald, an ascetic hermit, founded the Camaldolese Order in 1012, the Carthusians, who never ceased to be austere, were founded in 1084. And in 1098, the Cistercian Order was founded, and in 1113 it was joined by St Bernard.

The Time-Spirit favoured this trend of asceticism. It was an environment in which ideas like that of St Peter Damian could thrive well [he is the author of a treatise On Divine Omnipotence, which maintained that God can do things contrary to the law of contradiction, and can undo the past. It sounds like the Calvinistic concept of grace]. The eleventh century witnessed, like the beginning of the seventeenth century, an intellectual revival - Anselm, Roscelin, Peter Damian, and Berenger of Tours, who is interesting as being something of a rationalist. All were monks connected with the reform movement.

In the last quarter of the thirteenth century, not unlike the end of the eighteenth century, the Middle Ages reached a culmination. The Pope definitely triumphed over the Emperor: the rise of free cities is what proved of most ultimate importance in this long struggle. The power of the city grew as a result, too, of economic progress, and it became a source of new political forms. But the beginning of the fourteenth century, not unlike the beginning of the nineteenth century, brought, as B. Russell has rightly observed, a dissolution of institutions and philosophies. Wycliffe (ca. 1320-84) illustrates, by his life and doctrine, the diminished authority of the papacy, in the nineteenth century it is the Bible's authority itself.

Having this background in mind, the Grande Chartreuse is, then, the symbol of a thought and an ascetic set of beliefs that are no longer possible -

For rigorous teachers seized my youth,  
And purged its faith, and trimmed its fire,  
Showed me the high, white star of Truth,  
There bade me gaze, and there aspire.  
Even now their whispers pierce the gloom:  
What dost thou in this living tomb?

Forgive me, masters of the mind!  
At whose behest I long ago  
So much unlearnt, so much resigned -  
I come not here to be your foe!  
I seek these anchorites, not in ruth,  
To curse and to deny your truth;

Not as their friend, or child, I speak!  
But as, on some far northern strand,  
Thinking of his own Gods, a Greek  
In pity and mournful awe might stand  
Before some fallen Runic stone -  
For both were faiths, and both are gone.

(Poems, p. 288)

The doom of the Old has long been pronounced, and it is irrevocable;  
but the New appears not in its stead, and man is

Wandering between two worlds, one dead,  
The other powerless to be born,  
With nowhere yet to rest my head,  
Like these, on earth I wait forlorn.

And towards the end of the poem, Arnold brings in a note of heavily  
qualified hope:

Years hence, perhaps, may dawn an age,  
More fortunate, alas! than we,  
Which without hardness will be sage,  
And gay without frivolity.  
Sons of the world, oh, speed those years;  
But, while we wait, allow our tears!

(Poems, p. 292)

Just as years later, he will have Senancour offer, in a vision, 'Hope to  
a world new-made'.

"Obermann Once More" is a companion piece, a re-echo of those closing  
reflections in the 'Grande Chartreuse'. It was accorded the place of honour  
at the end of New Poems: It is Arnold's poetic exposition of the spiritual  
history of man. As the first line suggests, it must have been composed  
near the date of its publication, 1865-66. In this poem Arnold reviews the  
world's history in optimistic terms which he puts into the mouth of Obermann.

The world of the nineteenth century is compared to the Roman world just before the birth of Christ, when life seems to have lost all significance:

'Perceiv'st thou not the change of day?  
Ah! Carry back thy ken,  
What, some two thousand years! Survey  
The world as it was then!

'Like ours it looked in outward air.  
Its head was clear and true,  
Sumptuous its clothing, rich its fare,  
No pause its action knew;

'Stout was its arm, each thew and bone  
Seemed puissant and alive -  
But, ah! its heart, its heart was stone,  
And so it could not thrive!

(Poems, pp. 522-23)

These lines are a development of a rough outline contained in the Yale Manuscript:

The Roman world perished for having disobeyed reason and nature. The infancy of the world was renewed with all its illusion but infancy and its illusion must for ever be transitory, and we are again in the place of the Roman world, our illusions past, debtors to the service of reason and nature.

O let us beware how we again are false to them: we shall perish, and the world will be renewed: but we shall leave the same question to be solved by a future age.

I cannot conceal from myself the objection which really wounds and perplexes me from the religious side is that the service of reason is freezing to feeling, chilling to the religious moods. And feeling and the religious mood are eternally the deepest being of man, the ground of all joy and greatness for him.

(Commentary, p. 270)

Then came the birth of Christianity and its effect on Rome: Christ's gospel of love was an inspiring reality,



'Ay, ages long endured his span  
Of life - 'tis true received -  
That gracious Child, that thorn-crowned Man!  
- He lived while we believed.

'While we believed, on earth he went,  
And open stood his grave.  
Men called from chamber, church, and tent;  
And Christ was by to save.

But the saving quality of Christianity faded:

'Now he is dead! Far hence he lies  
In the lorn Syrian town;  
And on his grave, with shining eyes,  
The Syrian stars look down.

'In vain men still, with hoping new,  
Regard his death-place dumb,  
And say the stone is not yet to,  
And wait for words to come.

... ..

'But slow that tide of common thought,  
Which bathed our life, retired;  
Slow, slow the old world wore to nought,  
And pulse by pulse expired.

'Its frame yet stood without a breach  
When blood and warmth were fled;  
And still it spake its wonted speech -  
But every word was dead.

(Poems, pp. 526-28)

Then Arnold follows a very logical argument: If man is

Unduped of fancy, henceforth man  
Must labour! - must resign  
His all too human creeds, and scan  
Simply the way divine.

The next movement deals with the French Revolution -

'And oh, we cried, that on this corpse  
Might fall a freshning storm!  
Rive its dry bones, and with new force  
A new-sprung world inform!

'- Down came the storm! O'er France it passed  
In sheets of scathing fire;  
All Europe felt that fiery blast,  
And shook as it rushed by her.

But it lost its unifying fire and disintegrated:

"That glow of central fire is done  
Which with its fusing flame  
Knit all your parts, and kept you one -  
But ye, ye are the same!

... ..

"The millions suffer still, and grieve,  
And what can helpers heal  
With old-world cures men half believe  
For woes they wholly feel?"

(Poems, p. 529)

Now, the time of destruction has passed and a new hour has come. A new sun has risen and Obermann bids the poet to reject despair and solitude:

'The world's great order dawns in sheen,  
After long darkness rude,  
Divinelier imaged, clearer seen,  
With happier zeal pursued.'

The type of logic behind this poem is not dissimilar to the hypothesis one has expounded in the prologue to this part of the thesis: the movement of history as a huge pendulum that moves between two poles. In "Obermann Once More", it is alternating between epochs of scepticism and others of faith. With this procedure, Arnold distinguishes four different historical epochs: the pagan world in the first century B.C., the new age of faith initiated by Christ; the gradual withdrawal of faith during the modern period; and the new order that is now about to be born. Arnold's point is to draw the parallel between the first age and the third and between the second and the fourth.

With this spirit, Arnold wrote one of his most memorable poems:

"Rugby Chapel". On Arnold's own testimony, it was written as a reply to a criticism of Dr Arnold, for after the appearance of the volume in 1867 which contains the poem, Arnold wrote to his mother (August 8, 1867):

I knew, my dearest mother, that the Rugby Chapel Poem would give you pleasure: often and often it had been in my mind to say it to you, and I have foreborn because my own saying of things does not please me. It was Fitzjames Stephen's thesis, maintained in the Edinburgh Review, of Papa's being a narrow bustling fanatic, which moved me first to the poem. I think I have done something to fix the true legend about Papa, as those who knew him best feel it ought to run: and this is much -

(CL, Appendix I, p. 164)

The whole poem seems to echo themes of Dr Arnold's Rugby sermons, remembered or read, and in the latter half the religious tone and the character of the man are heightened by parallels with Moses' leading the Israelites through the wilderness. But the poem is of interest to the reader for the light it throws on Arnold's own concept of the would-be-deliverer of his age. To this effect he writes to his mother (November 18, 1865): "But this is just what makes him great - that he was not only a good man saving his soul by righteousness, but that he carried so many others with him in his hand, and saved them... along with himself... [and] papa's greatness consists in his bringing such a torrent of freshness into religion by placing history and politics in connection with it" (Letters, I, p. 311).

Arnold is always charged with the accusation being an alienated poet who disowned his cultural heritage as British - "unEnglish in his tastes and that he invariably condemned everything that was characteristically British".<sup>4</sup> Yet some more lines of Arnold's writings might be helpful to clear up the real stance of Arnold. It is worthy of notice that Arnold is the first to use English as a medium for his lectures at Oxford. He has been aware of his country's achievement and was proud of it. "A Pole", says Arnold, "does not descend by becoming a Russian, or an Irishman by

becoming an Englishman. But an Englishman, with his country's history behind him, descends and deteriorates by becoming anything but an Englishman" ("The Italian Question", CPW, I, p. 73).

Let an Englishman [says Arnold]... sincerely ask himself what it is which would make it intolerable to his feelings to pass, or to see any part of his country pass, under foreign dominion. He will find that it is the sense of self-esteem generated by knowing the figure which his nation makes in history; by considering the achievements of his nation in war, government, arts, literature, or industry (Ibid., p. 71).

In answering the charge of alienation, I quote Arnold himself from lines on Socrates, for they represent my view of Arnold and his attitude towards society:

And I suppose it was despair at this sort of thing, in his own time and commonwealth, which makes Socrates say, when he was reproached for standing aloof from politics, that in his own opinion, by taking the line he did, he was the only true politician of men then living. Socrates saw that the thing most needful was 'to dispose the people to a better sense of their condition', and that the actual politicians never did it. And serious people at the present day may well be inclined, though they have no Socrates to help them, at any rate to stand aside, as he did, from the movement of our prominent politicians and journalists, and of the rank and file who appear to follow, but who really do offerest direct them:- to stand aside, and to try whether they cannot bring themselves, at all events, to a better sense of their own condition and of the condition of the people and things around them.

("The Incompatibles", IX, p. 268)

Arnold follows that line without any attempt, unlike Socrates, at self-assertion in the face of his age's institutionalised authoritarian discipline: religious, civil, or academic. "I mean," Arnold writes to his mother (February 16, 1864), "to deliver the middle class out of the hand of their Dissenting ministers. The mere difficulty of the task is itself rather an additional incentive to undertake it" (Letters, I, p. 227). In another place he writes: "after all, my present business is... to exhort my countrymen to ... an attractive form of civilisation. And if one's countrymen insist upon it, that found to be sweet and attractive their form

of civilisation is, or, if not, ought to be, then we who think differently must labour diligently to follow Burke's injunction, and to 'dispose people to a better sense of their condition' (Ibid., p. 285).

And how did Arnold, that deliverer and dissolvent of old institutions proceed in his task of dissolution, of liberation of the middle class from the old routine? At the beginning he tried to secure the ear of his society by influencing men of letters. After that he tried to influence the people who direct the affairs in his country. Time has not refuted Arnold's well-known words to his mother (June 5, 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 became conscious to themselves of what that movement of mind is, and interested in the literary productions which reflect it. 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.

(Letters, II, p. 9)

We do not know Arnold unless we feel the spirit which goes through his work as a whole. Simply speaking, it is the sentiment of the ideal life, which is none other than man's normal life. The normal life whose ruling thoughts, on the personal level, are love, work, and knowledge. And on the social level, the ruling thoughts are justice, liberty and virtue. They are the same, for they lead to each other: "For to arrive at a full and right conception of things, to know one's self and the world - which is knowledge; then to act firmly and manfully on that knowledge - which is virtue; this is the native, the indestructible impulse of the spirit of man" ("Ecce, Convertimur ad Gentes", CPW, IX, pp. 4-5). The interrelationship of love and justice is generally accepted for "love and justice are the same, for justice is love distributed nothing else." <sup>5</sup> The more we study him, the

more these ruling ideas will be ours, and the higher will be our esteem for the power of his mind, the width of his interests, the largeness of his knowledge, the freshness, fearlessness, and strength of his judgements.

However, he is not one of these saints who arrived at perfect sweetness and calm, steeped in ecstasy; there is something indomitable in him, which he governs indeed, but which chafes, which gives that impression of profound melancholy. That is because he felt the anxieties, doubts, and pessimisms that gnaw underneath the superstructure of Victorian optimism. Arnold did not succumb in spite of his own miseries: the death of his children while they are young and his awareness that he inherited his father's heart troubles. From these miseries he was preserved by that quality in him which this word expresses - his inborn, his constant amenity. We see him wise, just, self-governed, tender, thankful, blameless; yet with all this there is in the depths of that strong nature a struggle, an inquietude, an ennui, which endures to the end, and which leaves the reader with that impression of melancholy. He lived till the year 1888. On the 15th of April in that year he died, as most men would wish to die, suddenly, without pain, and at the height of his fame, at the age of sixty-six.

#### NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> J.D. Jump, Matthew Arnold (London and New York: Longman, 1955). Quoted from Critics on Matthew Arnold (ed.) Jacqueline Letham (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1973), pp. 36-7.
- <sup>2</sup> Murray Krieger, "'Dover Beach' and the Tragic Sense of Eternal Recurrence," University of Kansas City Review, 23 (October, 1956), 73-79. Quoted from Matthew Arnold (ed.) Jonathan Middlebrook (Columbus: Ohio, The Charlis Merrill Company, 1970), p. 18.
- <sup>3</sup> L. Trilling, The Experience of Literature (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1967). Quoted from J. Middlebrook's (*Ibid.*), pp. 13-14).
- <sup>4</sup> Sir W. Raleigh, Some Authors (Oxford, 1923), p. 305.

- <sup>5</sup> Luther J. Binkley, "Situation Ethics Versus Rule Ethics," in Ethical Issues (ed.) William R. Durland and William H. Bruening (California: Mayfield P.C., 1975), p. 41.

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