The Poetic Doctrines of Wordsworth and Arnold: A Comparative Study of Critical Theories in the Nineteenth Century

Honesto F. Farol

Loyola University Chicago

1933

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THE POETIC DOCTRINES OF WORDSWORTH AND ARNOLD:
A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF CRITICAL THEORIES
IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

BY

HONESTO F. FAROL

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts
in
Loyola University
1933
VITA

HONESTO F. FAROL


B. S., Lewis Institute, Chicago, Illinois, June, 1932.
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The aim of this thesis is to investigate some of the poetic doctrines of Wordsworth and Arnold, as expressed in their prose and verse writings, and to show the similarities and dissimilarities of their theory. This project, I feel, has not been definitely treated in any work. Studies have been made separately on Wordsworth and Arnold concerning their theory of poetry, but, as yet, no attempt has been done to bring together, by comparison and contrast, their respective doctrines.

The course of the present study is limited to Wordsworth's Poetic Diction, his Doctrine of Man and Nature; and Arnold's Doctrine of Poetry as a Criticism of Life, and his Doctrine of Nature and Man. From my interpretation of these doctrines, I have endeavored to make a comparison and a contrast. The most important books and periodicals of English literature of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and most of the prose and verse writings of Wordsworth and Arnold have been examined. The material has been carefully sifted and any irrelevant matter has been
excluded. The accumulation of data points to the fact that the two poets of my study, though they seem closely related in their poetic doctrines, differ in many aspects.

I am conscious of the many defects, in respect of both treatment and expression, by which my discussions are marked, and I earnestly crave the indulgence of the reader for these deficiencies, which are inevitable in a Filipino student's handling of a foreign language.

The bibliography of this thesis lists only those works which I have found helpful in gathering the information for my study. There are certainly many other useful books and articles which students of Wordsworth and Arnold could well afford to read, but, within a thesis of so limited a scope as this, they had to be omitted.

My sincere and grateful thanks are due to Professor Morton D. Zabel, M. A., Ph. D., Head of the Department of English, Loyola University, for the kind interest he has taken in all my graduate studies in English, and the valuable help and suggestions he has extended to me in the preparation of this thesis.

I also owe a debt of gratitude from the authors
whose works are included in my bibliography.
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

William Wordsworth is generally allowed to have exercised a deeper and more permanent influence upon the literature and modes of thinking of his age, than any of the great poets who lived and wrote during the first quarter of the nineteenth century. In his long span of mortal years (April 7, 1777--April 23, 1850), events of vast and enduring importance shook the world, and the interpretation of life in books and the development of imagination underwent changes of its own.

Three parallel movements mark the period in the social, spiritual, and literary history of England. They are the governmental or social reform, the Oxford or Tractarian Movement in the church, and the Romantic movement in letters.

Years of political reaction throughout Europe followed the overthrow of Napoleon in 1815. On the day of Waterloo, England was farther from Parliamentary reform than it had been a century earlier because of this reaction to conservatism. However, the younger generation who had not come into actual contact with the bloody and insane methods of the "Terrorists" but
who had inherited the liberal ideas and romanticism of the early revolutionists, revived the causes of reform and became the leaders of the liberal movements which followed 1815.

These reforms consisted of political problems on the one hand and problems of existing social conditions on the other. To give all classes a share in the government was the purpose of reform in politics. A revision of the borough system was demanded by the industrial bourgeoisie which would establish proportionate representation. This was attained by the passage of the Reform Bill of 1832. The industrial cities now had representatives in Parliament to voice their demand for free trade. Continued phases of the liberal tendency in politics were the Chartist movement asking for real democracy, that is, a vote for every man, rich or poor; agitation for free trade and the Corn Law of 1842.

The Industrial Revolution which substituted new methods of labor for the old ones, by the introduction of machinery and the application of steam power, gave rise to many social problems. This revolutionary change produced almost incredible suffering and hardships and intense dissatisfaction among the working classes. The new problem inherited were: the enslavement of children
in factories; the crowding of people together in sordid slums; the low standard of wages; and the unsanitary housing conditions among the laboring classes.

In Religion, the Oxford or Tractarian Movement of 1833 and the year following, is one of the most significant of the romantic expression of the age. It began at Oxford among a small group of men: notably, Edward Pusey, J. Rose, John Keble, R. H. Froude and John Henry Newman. It began in reaction against the liberality of thought which had led attacks on the authority of the Church, and had attempted Parliamentary regulation of ecclesiastical revenues and benefices.¹

The "Tracts," as Newman wrote, were the growth of a new perception, and more and more Newman came to realize the derivative nature of Anglicanism and the untenability of its historical claim and a truer ideal of faith and practice.

The effect was electric. It aroused a nopopery agitation throughout England. It precipitated consternation and amazement at Oxford, and Newman, shortly

¹ See Jean Pauline Smith, The Aesthetic Nature of Tennyson (New York, 1920), p. 139
afterward, resigned the vicarage at St. Mary's and went to live a monastic life at Littlemore. Here, he gradually ended in increasing certainty of the true Church, the universality of the Catholic Church at Rome, its claims and its faith.

Finally, in October 9, 1845, the twenty years of his intellectual and religious experiences culminated with his reception into the Catholic Church. Newman was at once thrown into disfavor with the Anglican Church. The Apologia deals most intimately and historically with this movement. As Professor Barry said: "It depicts the Tractarians on the public stage in their habits as they lived."\(^2\)

In literature, the work of Wordsworth gives the romantic tendency its first great expression. It finds further expression in the poetry of Coleridge, and in the poetry and prose fiction of Scott, and was continued by Byron, Keats and Shelley in the next generation. An attitude of aloofness from actual life is the chief characteristic of the romantic tendency. It takes a different form with each of the writers named.

Wordsworth is interested in an ideal type of simple life to be developed by means of communion with nature.

The *Lyrical Ballads*, like the *Shepherd's Calendar*, marks the beginning of a new era in poetry, an era in which forces, hitherto in great part unrelated, were united in a prophetic vision of new aims and conditions of living. The professed purpose of this innovation was modest enough. "The majority of the following poems," said Wordsworth, "are to be considered as experiments."

But the poems announced by their authors as verbal experiments were far more remarkable for the conception of human nature on which they were founded than for the theory of poetry they set out to illustrate. Wordsworth defined poetry as "the history or science of feelings," and it was, in fact, as material of observation and understanding, rather than for the direct presentation in which poets had always delighted, that he and Coleridge chose, as the main subject-matter of their song, the elementary passions and emotion, those phases of consciousness which defy analysis because they were intertwined with the very roots of being.3

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study of the simple and universal elements of character, they were drawn, both by their conviction, that, through perception and feeling, men come most directly into contact with ultimate realities of existence, and by their supreme interest in realms of experience hitherto taken for granted rather than explored by poets. To Wordsworth, moreover, these simple and universal elements of character had a further significance as being constructive forces in the new social order for which he looked and of which the world stood in dire need.

Overwhelmed, like all thoughtful men of his generation, by the apparent moral failure of the Revolution, he turned with an intellectual ardor from the speculative theories on which it rested to those more fundamental realities which he came to believe justified his earlier hopes for humanity.

What Wordsworth did was to deal with themes that had been partially handled by his predecessors and contemporaries, in a larger and more devoted spirit, with wider amplitude of illustration, and with the steadfastness and persistency of a religious teacher. "Every great poet is a teacher," he said; "I wish to be considered as a teacher or as nothing." He is a teacher, or he is nothing. "To console the afflicted;
to add sunshine to daylight, by making the happy happier; to teach the young and the gracious of every age to see, to think, and feel, and, therefore, to become more actively and securely virtuous"⁴—that was his vocation.

This claim of Wordsworth—to be considered as a teacher or as nothing—was based almost as much upon the literary form of his work as on its philosophic qualities, and upon a theory of literary composition which he himself has stated and developed in his Prefaces with great fullness. What was that theory? Briefly put, it amounted to this: Wordsworth complained that the commonly accepted theory of poetry was both false and vicious. It had practically invented a dialect of its own, which was as far as possible removed from the ordinary dialect of the common people. It was artificial and stilted—not the language of ordinary life. Its spirit also was wholly wrong and mistaken; it had lost hold on Nature, because it did not know how to speak of her except in ancient rhetorical phrases. Wordsworth held that there was sufficient interest in common life

to inspire the noblest achievements of the poet, and
that Nature must be observed with unflinching fidelity
if she was to be described with truth or freshness. He
asks why should poetry be

"A history 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."

In this noble passage from the Recluse, the gist
of Wordsworth's peculiar view of poetry is to be found.
He announces a return to simplicity, to simple themes
and simple language, and teaches that in the simplest
sights of life and Nature there is sufficient inspi-
ration for the true poet. He speaks nothing more than
what we are, and is prepared to write nothing that is
not justified by the actual truth of things. With this
ideal, he contrasted the practices of his contemporaries,
and what did he find? In place of truth to life, he
found "frantic novels, sickly and stupid German Trage-
dies, and deluges of idle and extravagant stories in

5 Wordsworth, Recluse, ll. 804-09
verse."6 Corresponding to this departures from truths in substance was the departure from reality in style which is known as "poetic diction," and against this, he carried on a campaign by theory and practice. As Professor Morley says: "Wordsworth effected a wholesome deliverance when he attacked the artificial diction, the personifications, the allegories, the antitheses, the barren rhymes and monotonous metres, which the reigning taste had approved."7

Just as Wordsworth is an active exponent of the early democratic movement of the nineteenth century and the herald of the Romantic movement, Matthew Arnold stands as a representative thinker of the latter part of the century. During the greater portion of his life (December 24, 1822--April 15, 1888), he was in the thick of perpetual controversy, and he belonged to the group of strenuous workers who contributed to the "liberalizing" tendency in English politics and life. The rise of Romanticism which so powerfully affected

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Tennyson, and which found its fullest expression in Rossetti, Swinburne, and Morris, did not so much as touch Arnold. He trifles once with the Arthurian Legends in *Tristram and Iseult*, but unsuccessfully; perhaps, as Professor Dawson says, because "he had not the emotional abandonment nor the warmth of imagination of the romanticist." He approached in many ways nearer to the spirit of Wordsworth than any other recent poet. He has something of the same gravity and philosophic calm, though he is far enough removed from Wordsworth's religious serenity. In his general disapproval of modern life and opinion, he was forced in literary ideals much further back than Wordsworth. He drew his real inspiration from the great masters of antiquity.

An inquiry into the genesis of Arnold's view brings one round to an aspect of his mind. He complained that Carlyle, in perpetually preaching conduct to Englishmen, was carrying coals to Newcastle. Arnold prefers to say that it is now time to Hellenise English culture. Greek thought and French thought are to aid them in the process, and to give them for crude fixed-

ness and dogmatic strength and the flexibility of mind requisite to their harmonious development. Similarly, he finds the modern world at large infected with romantic favors, himself likewise smitten with the universal contagion. Therefore, he will practise and preach moderation, sanity, abnegation.

In the Preface to his poems of 1853, Arnold says: "In the sincere endeavour to learn and practice, amid the bewildering confusion of our times, what is sound and true in poetical art, I seemed to myself to find the only sure guidance, the only solid footing, among the ancients. They, at any rate, knew what they wanted in Art, and we do not." One can perfectly understand how a man of Arnold's temperament and culture should find his only sure footing among the ancients. The very lucidity and gravity of his mind inclined him, if early education and culture had not, to intense sympathy with the great classical authors. In the full stream of romanticism, Arnold stands immovable, turning his face away from modern methods of expression and vagaries of style, though those alone who, according

9 Ernest Rhys (ed.), Matthew Arnold's Poems (New York, 1908), p. 16
to him, knew what they wanted in art and found it. He, too, knew what he wanted in art and found it. He wanted verse as the best vehicle for his best thoughts. He had a message to utter, and he knew how to utter it with a certain sustained and stately music of phrase which was impressive. The spirit of the antique penetrates and elevates all his best poetry.

In Arnold's reconciliation of conventionality with fineness of spiritual temper lies the secret of his relation to his romantic predecessors and to the men of his own time. He accepts the actual, conventional life of the everyday world frankly and fully, as the earlier idealists had never quite done, and yet he retains a strain of other-worldliness inherited from the dreamers of former generation. Arnold's gospel of culture is an attempt to import into actual life something of the fine spiritual fervor of the Romanticists with none of the extravagance or the remoteness from fact of those "madmen."

Like Wordsworth, Arnold really gives to the imagination and the emotions the primacy of life; like Wordsworth he contends against formalists, system-makers, and all devotees of abstractions. It is by an
exquisite tact, rather than by logic, that Arnold in all doubtful matters decides between good and evil. He keeps to the concrete image; he is an appreciator of life, not a deducer of formulas or a demonstrator. He is continually concerned about what ought to be; he is not cynically content with the knowledge of what is. And yet, unlike Wordsworth, Arnold is in the world, and of it; he has given heed to the world-spirit's warning, "submit, submit;" he has "learned the Second Reverence, for things around."

Tempered as Arnold was by a deep sense of the beauty and nobleness of romantic and idealistic poetry, finely touched as he was into sympathy with the whole range of delicate intuitions, quivering sensibilities, and half-mystical aspirations that this poetry called into play, he yet came to regard its underlying conceptions of life as inadequate and misleading, and to feel the need of supplementing them by a surer and saner relation to the conventional world of common sense. The Romanticists, through Wordsworth, lamented that "the world is too much with us." Arnold shared their dislike of the world of dull routine, their fear of the world that enslaves to petty cares; yet he came more and more to distinguish between this world and
the great world of common experience, spread out generously in the lives of all men; more and more clearly, he realized that the true land of romance is in this region of everyday fact, or else is a mere mirage.

Poetry for Arnold always remain the most adequate and beautiful mode of speech possible to man; and this faith, which runs implicitly through all his writing, is plainly the outcome of a mood different from that of the ordinary man of the world. It is the expression of an emotional refinement and a spiritual sensitiveness that are, at least in part, his abiding inheritance from the Romanticists. This faith is the manifestation of the ideal element in his nature, which makes itself felt, even in his prose, as the inspirer of a kind of divine unrest.

Arnold makes of life an art rather than a science, and commits the conduct of it to an exquisite tact, rather than to reason or demonstration. The imaginative assimilation of all the best experience of the past—this he regards as the right training to develop true tact for the discernment of good and evil in all practical matters, where probability must be the guide of life. His own flare in matters of art and life was astonishingly keen, and yet he would have been the last
to exalt it as unerring. His faith is ultimately in the best instincts of the so-called remnant-- in the collective sense of the most cultivated, most delicately perceptive, most spiritually-minded people of the world. Through the combined intuitions of such men, sincerely aiming at perfection, truth, in all that pertains to the conduct of life, will be more and more nearly won. Because of his faith in sublimated worldly wisdom, Arnold is in sympathy with a democratic age. Arnold takes life as it offers itself and does his best with it. He sees and feels its crudeness and disorderliness; but he has faith in the instincts that civilized men have developed in common, and finds in the working of these instincts the continuous, if irregular, realization of the ideal.

Thus far, from my discussions above concerning Wordsworth and Arnold, it is seen that Wordsworth is the most comprehensive exponent of the democratic movement in early nineteenth century poetry, and Arnold is a representative thinker of the middle years of the century. I have indicated the importance of their works in relation to the events of the age, and, in the succeeding chapters that follow, I shall attempt to present in detail their respective poetic doctrines.
Later, their similarities and dissimilarities may be brought together into a comprehensive summary.
CHAPTER II

WORDS
WORTH'S DOCTRINE OF POETIC DICTION

When the Lyrical Ballads were first published, the larger and more difficult questions concerning the nature and methods of the poetic imagination were not mentioned in the Preface. Only one question is there conspicuous, a question of diction. In the "Advertisement to the First Edition" (1798), Wordsworth said:

"The majority of the following poems are to be considered as experiments. They were written chiefly with a view to ascertain how far the language of conversation in the middle and lower classes of society is adapted to the purposes of poetic pleasure." 10

This statement seems to be quite a correct and straightforward characterization of the language of most of his poems dealing with rustic life, which have not been lifted to a high emotional level. Wordsworth seeks to use in them the language of conversation, although he may be far from seizing the point of actual conversation. It is the language of conversation--not the higher language current in books of poetry, or used in obstruse intellectual discussions--that he wanted

to use. Moreover, he confines himself to the conversation of "the middle and lower classes of society," because the characters in his poems are mostly drawn from these classes, and it is their language, dealing with a narrow range of ideas such as can naturally be accommodated within the range of a rustic brain, that is constantly employed, both when they are the speakers and when the poet speaks in his own person.

In the enlarged Preface to the Second Edition, Wordsworth represents the case in a rather different manner:

"The first Volume of these Poems has already been submitted to general perusal. It was published, as an experiment, which, I hoped, might be of some use to ascertain, how far, by fitting to metrical arrangement a selection of the real language of men in a state of vivid sensation, that sort of pleasure and that quantity of pleasure may be imparted, which a Poet may rationally endeavour to impart."¹¹

This change in the wording can hardly be considered as an improvement. Dr. Burney, who reviewed the Lyrical Ballads, criticizes the author's zeal "to give artificial rust to modern poetry."¹² For one thing, it

¹¹ Wordsworth's Prefaces and Essays on Poetry, p. 1
is quite clear that by the time when Wordsworth wrote the Preface to the Second Edition, he had grown much wiser and considerably more cautious, and was trying to give an appearance of philosophical precision to his statements. He was hedging round his more extreme pronouncements by conditions and qualifications in order to make them more tenable in the judgment of his critics. But in trying to be more philosophical in his statements, Wordsworth was courting another sort of danger-- he was replacing his clear and straightforward manner by one vaguer and more abstract kind.

"Language of conversation in the middle and lower classes of society" is direct and intelligible enough; it hits off with accuracy the exact language used in most poems of the Lyrical Ballads. "Real language of men" does not convey any very definite notion to the mind; and though this is subsequently expanded into a more intelligible form, "language really spoken by men," even this altered form does not make the situation quite clear. It seems to be colorless and general a statement to be of much use for practical guidance: "men" includes persons of all possible classes, and every possible shade and degree of culture; and this "real language of men," if divested of the peculiarities
belonging to the speech of different classes or localities, will be lacking in any marked distinction or individuality.

Language, considered both as vocabulary and turn of expression or style, varies according to variation of culture and refinement; there is a sufficiently wide gap between the speech of uneducated man and that of the educated to make each of them stand out as a different species, though there may be an identity with respect to many of the words and elements used in them. As Coleridge says: "Every man's language has, first, its individualities, secondly, the common properties of the class to which he belongs; and thirdly, words and phrases of universal use."13 The language of poetry, hitherto, had, without doubt, professed itself on the talk of the polished and refined man, and the best eighteenth-century poetry supplies an admirable illustration of the terse, colloquial idiom of the cultured man of the town applied to the purposes of poetry; so that even the best eighteenth-century poetry may be said, in a sense, to have used this

"real language of men." In fact, Professor Garrod says:

"We may suppose, indeed, that, if it had been asked of either Dryden or Pope, in what respects they conceived themselves principally to have improved the poetry of their country, either would have answered that he had laboured to supersede a conventional jargon by a diction 'near to the real language of men;' and that Pope at least would have pointed to the manner in which, both in his theory and in his practice, he had been at pains to commend a 'selection' of that language 'purified ... from all lasting causes of dislike or disgust'."

Wordsworth's Prefaces, therefore, could not have been the revolutionary manifestos that they are, if his intention had been merely to carry on this tradition in the matter of poetic language. His complaint was that the language of poetry had tended of late years to drift further away from actual speech, and to harden itself into a rigid stereotyped diction which would never be conceivably imagined on the lips of men, and was totally impervious to any genuine personal feeling. He imposed this sweeping condemnation on the whole of the eighteenth-century poetry, oblivious,

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perhaps, of the fact that the remark was more applicable to the descriptive landscape poetry of the period which was coming more and more into vogue, than to the characteristic expression of the typically Augustan mind in the best satiric and didactic poems of Dryden and Pope. It can, however, be said for Wordsworth, that during the latter half of the century, when the mantle of Dryden, Addison, and Pope had fallen upon Johnson and Gray, the Augustan mind had come to lose much of its edge and sparkle. The rich colloquial idiom, the closeness of the actual speech of men, which had given so much of raciness and savor to Augustan poetry at its best, had come to be swallowed up in the sentimental melancholy, rather pompously and affectedly expressed, in the poetry of the "romanticizing" group, and the heavy and ponderous moralizing of poets, like Dr. Johnson, who were loyally carrying on the old Augustan tradition. When Wordsworth illustrates the defects of eighteenth-century poetic diction and demonstrates its remoteness from, and incongruity with, the real speech of men, it is to the poetry of Gray and Johnson, instead of to that of Dryden and Pope, that he turns quite naturally and inevitably.

His second ground of complaint, though he does
not voice it forth so directly as the first, is that
poetry had tended to concentrate itself too exclusive-
ly on town-life, and had neglected almost completely
that rustic life to which he attaches such an importance
in a latter part of the Preface. 16 From this shifting
of the center of interest from the town to the country,
and almost complete preoccupation with rustic subjects,
it follows that, with Wordsworth, "the real language
of men" must have meant "the language of conversation
in the middle and lower classes of society"-- a fact
which he explicitly mentions in the Advertisement, but
which is subsequently dropped in the Preface, very
likely on the grounds of caution and prudence, in
favor of a more vague and general sort of expression.
As it was no part of Wordsworth's intention to revive
the Pope tradition in the matter of language, to re-
store the raciness and epigrammatic condensation that
marked the talk of the witty and clever man of the
town, in place of the turbid eloquence and affected
splendor of Gray, or the ponderous heaviness of the
Johnsonian diction, he should have stated explicitly

16
A. J. George, Ibid., pp. 7-8
in which direction his reforms were intended to be carried, and therefore should have stuck to his more candid and outspoken declaration in the Advertisement. The change in the language, though approvingly spoken of by some Wordsworthian critics as a sign of a greater critical acuteness on the part of the poet, seems to be an unmistakable step in a retrograde direction, and to entail a loss of courage and candor without any appreciable gain in philosophical breadth and soundness.

Then again, the philosophical instincts of Coleridge are up in arms against Wordsworth for his apparently unphilosophical use of the word "real," for which he recommends the substitution of the word ordinary or "lingua communis." As this so-called "real language" of Wordsworth tends to vary from place to place, according to the opportunities for culture and education which each may furnish, it cannot be taken to represent the fix bed-rock, or the irreducible, unalterable basis of human speech, swept clear of all latter accretions or additions. The use of the word merely betrays the hope of Wordsworth that such

a fixed bed-rock in the matter of language was attainable by the rather easy expedient of scraping off all subsequent additions made to the vocabulary under the prompting of the subtler or more refined needs of the cultured man.

The two most important changes introduced into the wording of the Prefaces are the addition of the expression "selection" and "in a state of vivid sensation," and I propose to discuss their implications.

Both these expressions show the growing conviction of Wordsworth that the actual speech of rustic people taken in its nakedness and seized without any change from the lips of talkers is not suited to the higher ends of poetry. This represents a return to sounder views: it means a partial weakening of his faith in the self-sufficiency of unaided rustic speech, and a recognition of what is due to the rarer atmosphere of poetry. But, on the other hand, these new expressions introduce an element of vagueness and ambiguity into the theory which was hitherto put forward with straightforwardness, and become a prolific source of dispute and controversy among the readers and critics of Wordsworth. In the first place, the
word "selection" brings forward an element of unknown potency into the theory, and thereby tends to impair its permanent value; one is left in suspense to decide as to how much of the total effect of any particular poem is to be ascribed to the virtues of "the real language of men," and how much is to be set down to the credit of the selective process. In actual practice, the word "selection" seems to have accomplished little enough, for, with the exception of a few poems, for example The Mad Mother, and The Forsaken Indian Woman, it seems to have left the language of conversation pretty much as it found it, and did not work any very appreciable changes or refinements in it. Professor Herford says:

"Wordsworth, in fact, with all his extreme advocacy of rustic speech, never appreciated the points at which it really approximates to poetry. From folklore he stood aloof; the rich idiomatic flavour of dialect even Burns had not taught him to explore; the pathos of Eliot he has, but it is never heightened by the native accent of want. In short, the speech of rustics is for him little more than the negative ideal of a speech purified from all that is artificial and trivial."\(^\text{18}\)

It is evident, therefore, that selection, where

it is successfully exercised, results rather in new imaginative creation achieved without any appreciable reference to its basis in the real language of men; and in other cases it is inoperative in raising the flatness of actual speech, and seems put forward more with a view to disarming the hostility of critics than for the sake of influencing actual poetic practice.

The phrase "in a state of vivid sensation," though the condition which it imposes does very little, as Coleridge demonstrates, to improve the resources of the real language of men and heighten its expressive powers,19 nevertheless testifies to a growing consciousness on Wordsworth's part as to the necessity of selecting really important and significant episodes from rustic life as subject-matter of poetry. Every common incident does not supply the passions and emotions which alone are fit materials for poetic treatment: only the feelings of men when moved by a worthy cause, of men in a state of passionate excitement, are befitting the dignity and high emotional level of poetry. The bald, flat talk of rustic people about

their ordinary everyday concerns can be but ill-attuned to its nobler music and haunting cadences. But here also Wordsworth's actual practice is hardly influenced as effectively as might be desired. Although in theory he lays down the desirability of the more impassioned experiences and feelings of rustic life, in his actual choice of incidents he seems hardly influenced by such a consideration. This is due, perhaps, to the fact that to him, imbued as he was with a strong sense of the passionate character of rustic life, a mere hint of passion, a mere suggestion of emotion, was quite sufficient to determine his choice of subject-matter, and the feeling that the hint could not be actually worked out, or that the latent vein of passion could not be made explicit, exercised but little influence upon him in restricting his field of choice. Thus, it is seen that there also, the addition of the qualifying phrase, though conferring a greater soundness on the theory, is scarcely effective in influencing the poet's practice, and this mainly on account of his persistent tendency to exaggerate the element of passion in rustic life.

It has been already noted that Wordsworth, in his
Preface, substitutes the phrase "real language of men" for the "language of conversation in the middle and lower classes of society" in the Advertisement. In justifying his stand, he remarks:

"Humble and rustic life was generally chosen, because, in that condition, the essential passions of the heart find a better soil in which they can attain their maturity, are less under restraint, and speak a plainer and more emphatic language; because in that condition of life our elementary feelings co-exist in a state of greater simplicity, and, consequently, may be more accurately contemplated, and more forcibly communicated; because the manners of rural life germinate from those elementary feelings, and, from the necessary character of rural occupations, are more easily comprehended, and are more durable; and, lastly, because in that condition the passions of men are incorporated with the beautiful and permanent forms of Nature. The language, too, of these men has been adopted (purified indeed from what appear to be its real defects, from all lasting and rational causes of dislike or disgust) because such men hourly communicate with the best objects from which the best part of language is originally derived; and because, from their rank in society and the sameness and narrow circle of their intercourse, being less under the influence of social vanity, they convey their feelings and notions in simple and unelaborated expressions." 20

This has the effect of reducing the whole controversy to a question of words merely, and minimizes the real and practical value of the alteration. Wordsworth might be talking of the "real language of men," possibly to

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20 Wordsworth's Prefaces and Essays on Poetry, p. 4
impart an appearance of philosophical dignity and breadth to the enunciation of his theory, but his subsequent language and conduct make it quite plain that, at heart, he is thinking of the "language of conversation in the middle and lower classes of society."

There is one standpoint, however, from which the change of language might possibly impress one as an improvement. When Wordsworth speaks of the majority of his poems in the first volume, as having been written "in the language of conversation in the middle and lower classes of society," he does not extend the remark to the entire body of poems in that volume. Evidently, the group of poems covered by such description must be that dealing with rustic life, in which either the poet himself or the rustic characters are the speakers. The description is obviously inapplicable to the other poems in the volume--those dealing with the poet's philosophy of Nature--such as Tintern Abbey, Lines Written in Early Spring, To My Sister, Expostulation and Reply, and The Tables Turned, which treat of rustic topics without any attempt to reproduce the actual speech of rustic people. It is quite conceivable that, with respect to
these latter poems also, Wordsworth claims an originality in the matter of language and freedom from the unnaturalness and bombast that marked the practice of the eighteenth-century poets. According to Wordsworth, they also were written in a language which bore upon it the stamp of reality, of an authentic record of the inner vision, and, as such, they were poles apart from even the most ambitious and philosophical poems of the eighteenth-century. If Wordsworth were called upon to devise one common designation for the language of both of these classes of poems, it is but quite natural to think that he would seize upon a point common to the two, and this common point would no doubt be found in the note of reality which is a prominent feature of the style of Wordsworth's writings. The title of "real language of men" could thus be claimed equally on behalf of the rustic poems, as well as of those dealing with the philosophy of Nature, though the one was written in a commonplace style, and the other rose to the highest flights of grandeur. It is from this standpoint that one can justify the poet's substitution of the phrase "real language of men" for the "language of conversation in
the middle and lower classes of society," as, in spite of its tendency to vagueness and abstraction, it may be taken to be the more comprehensive term of the two, embracing and covering, as it does, the two-fold note that can be distinguished in the style of Wordsworth in the *Lyrical Ballads.*

Coleridge, as was to be expected from his imperfect sympathy with Wordsworth's faith in rustic life, falls into the pardonable error of understanding the importance of the selective process. Frankly speaking, he does not believe in the virtues of "selection," and he possibly carries his skepticism too far. He conceives of "selection" as something calculated to neutralize the peculiarities of rustic speech, a somewhat covert and not very honest device of reducing it to the refined and cultured language that is the usual instrument of expression in poetry. He also disbelieves in the unity or real individuality of rustic speech; it is a thing liable to vary from place to place—and that on purely accidental grounds—and does not

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necessarily bear upon it the stamp of the rustic's occupations and pursuits, and of his deepest and most intimate feelings. He further speaks of it as a mere mutilated and imperfect instrument of expression, differing purely for the worse from the speech of the cultured man, marked off from it by the narrower range of its ideas as well as a greater tendency to inconsequence and discursiveness. On the whole, he is quite unwilling to ascribe any positive virtues to it; and, as such, is apt to look askance at the efficacy of selection, as applied to such a poor, meagre, halting form of speech. Finally, he brings matters to a close by denying that the language which will come into being after its purification from redundancies and provincialisms, and which Wordsworth has in view, can be attributed to rustics with any greater right "than the style of Hooker or Bacon to Tom Browne or Sir Roger L'Estrange."  

Coleridge, I feel, was unjust in all this. He was wrong in holding that rustic speech had no positive virtues of its own; still more perverse in his opinion

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that it was not possible to apply selection to rustic speech without destroying its peculiarity and covering it to the ordinary type of refined or cultured speech. There is, as a matter of fact, a sharp and pronounced individuality in the style of every great writer, though he draws upon a vocabulary that is common to all cultured people and to all his fellow-practitioners of the literary craft. If Coleridge's contention is true, then no style could possibly have retained its distinctive individuality.

The most scathing condemnation of Coleridge on this point has, perhaps, come from Professor Garrod.23 According to him, Wordsworth, while insisting on the use in poetry of the language spoken by men, was, at the same time, fully conscious of its defects and crudities, and was keenly alive to the necessity of an imaginative transfiguration being brought to bear upon it. But can it be honestly said that all this can be legitimately inferred from Wordsworth's language in the Preface? It seems to me that he studiously keeps out of sight this necessity of an imaginative

23 See Garrod, Wordsworth, pp. 163-5
idealization of the real speech of men, and, instead, glorifies actual speech of rustics to such an extent as to produce the impression that it stands very little in need of imaginative heightening. He even proceeds further than this, claiming for the actual speech of men in moments of passion, a degree of perfection which is but faintly reproduced in the language of poetry. As Wordsworth says:

"However exalted a notion we would wish to cherish of the character of a Poet, it is obvious, that while he describes and imitates passion, his employment is in some degree mechanical, compared with the freedom and power of real and substantial action and suffering."

From this statement it would seem to follow that the indebtedness is all on the side of poetry, and that the actual speech of men in its expression of strong emotions has nothing to gain from the refining or idealizing process of the poetic imagination. Poetry struggles to follow, and struggles ineffectually, where real passion has given the lead; and it tends to fall short, as all imitations are apt to do, of the original. If Wordsworth had admitted frankly and unequivocally the existence of a gulf between poetry and the actual

24 Wordsworth's Prefaces and Essays, p. 14
speech of man on which it is founded, and had actually realized in his poems that imaginative transfiguration of which his advocates speak, then it is quite certain that the controversy on the Prefaces would have raged neither as long nor so loud. Coleridge, therefore, with all his tendency to proceed to the opposite extreme, had, it must be admitted, some amount of justification in thinking that selection implied a more or less mechanical process of sifting or elimination and not a thoroughgoing imaginative transformation.

Thus, from the above discussion it is clear that what Wordsworth has in mind is "poetic diction" and nothing more. It is unfair to argue that he sets himself and peasant speech up against Shakespeare and other English authors, for his footnote to the very passage quoted on page twenty nine of this thesis reads: "It is worth while here to observe, that the affecting parts of Chaucer are almost always expressed in language pure and universally intelligible even to this day."25 Clearly, what he is doing is not opposing the "real language of men" to that of Shakespeare and Milton, but identifying these and opposing

25 A. J. George, Ibid., p. 5
them to the perversions of language which had been brought about by "poetic diction." Against these perversions, Wordsworth directs his arguments, which are based on the belief that the "real language of men" is the language of real men who speak it in its most unperverted, idiomatic form; and he cites, as a striking illustrations of this "real language," the language of the lower and middle classes and the great English poets. This is the "philosophic language" of which he speaks,26 because it is based on real experience and knowledge and is not the product of the "arbitrary and capricious habits of expression" which builds up a vocabulary that does not arise out of actual contact with reality. This is the "permanent language;" for both in the case of the unsophisticated person and in the case of the poet, it arises out of "repeated experience and regular feelings," and is shared alike by both classes.

The second important pronouncement made by Wordsworth on the point of poetic diction is the one about the identity in point of language between prose and poetry. It is to be noted that as far as his determi-
nation to use the actual language of rustic people, with whatever of "selection" or modification, in the Lyrical Ballads is concerned, Wordsworth does not pretend to lay it down as a universal proposition applicable to all kinds of poetry. He frankly speaks of it as an experiment initiated by him for the first time, and with reference to only a certain class of topics, and has no intentions of extending this style to poetry dealing with other topics. Although behind this apparent moderation there is hidden a real conviction of the superiority of the new vein of poetry opened out by him, still it does not emerge often to the surface. The very idea of combating the prejudices of the reader springs from a growing sense of the poet as to the importance of the poems in which they are embodied; but it is only fair to observe that this claim is put forward not so much on the ground of style as on the new kinds of moral interests and relations which they tend to bring to light.27 This exaltation of the glories of rustic speech which he acclaims as the most permanent and philosophical

language on account of its expression of deep, heart-felt and regular feelings, does not urge him to plead for its extension beyond its natural boundaries.

In speaking of the style of the *Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth gives a little more detailed information over and above the fact that it is a "selection from the language of real life." He says that he has sedulously avoided personifications of abstract ideas and conventional poetic diction, and steadily cultivated the habit of accurate and faithful description in his poems—devices all calculated to purge poetic style of its extravagance and unreality and bring it nearer to the "real language of men." His achievements and avoidances are both conceived of as adding to the expressive power and fidelity to real life of the rustic language which he employs. But in spite of all these claims made on its behalf, and his persistent tendency to look upon it as a very truthful and delicate instrument of expression, Wordsworth does not openly raise rustic speech into an ideal style of poetry, or one of universal applicability either. So

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far a his remarks about rustic speech are concerned, practical application is beyond doubt of more importa

The second theory of Wordsworth, relating to identity in language between prose and poetry, stands on a far different footing. Here, Wordsworth claims to advance a theory of universal application, one which is intended to hold good of all kinds of poetry. At this stage of his Preface, the poet ceases to talk of his own poems alone, and soars into universal considerations as to the kind of language suitable for poetry in general. He begins by saying that he does not subscribe to the view that the language of poetry must, at all costs, differ from that of prose, even when the identity is attained without any sacrifice of special poetic beauties. He follows this up with the remark that poetry, even in its most inspired passages, uses a language in no wise differing from that of good and well-written prose, and quotes a Sonnet from Gray which he tries to maintain that the best lines are those in which the language of prose has been used. This leads on to a still broader generalization that "there neither is, nor can be, any
essential difference between the language of prose and that of metrical composition."29

The most important question for discussion here is whether, in affirming the identity between the language of poetry and that of prose, Wordsworth is merely referring to a question of vocabulary or of style as a whole, including order and arrangement. Unfortunately, Wordsworth's expressions are too vague to admit of a definite decision on the point. Coleridge's controversy is throughout based on the assumption that Wordsworth's meaning was to insist on a conformity to prose order and style on the part of poetry; for, as he actually remarks, to affirm this conformity only of the elements of style or the vocabulary is to offer a truism under the guise of a paradox, though this truism unquestionably came to suffer a temporary eclipse in the practice of the eighteenth-century poets.30 I propose to examine the question as to whether by language Wordsworth means vocabulary, or order and arrangement as well from the following

29 A. J. George, Ibid., pp. 8-13
points of view:

1. I shall, first of all, examine the context in which the theory is enunciated to find out whether that sheds any light on Wordsworth's real meaning.

2. I shall then subject the actual language of the Prefaces to as searching a scrutiny as possible, discussing, at the same time, the critical soundness and practical implication of the statement.

CONTEXT: An examination of the paragraph immediately preceding the enunciation of Wordsworth's theory of poetic diction has an important bearing on the question under discussion. Just before the enunciation of the theory, Wordsworth takes care to apprise the reader of "a few circumstances relating to the style of his poems," in order that he may know what the poet has really aimed at. He said that he has carefully avoided some of the habitual devices resorted to by poets, some of the traditional tricks of poetic style-- specially, personifications of abstract ideas-- on the ground of

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A. J. George, Op. cit., p. 8
securing conformity to the very language of man. He has also written with a steady eye on the subject, and cultivated precision on language and fidelity in the matter of observation. The natural effect of all of these "omissions and commissions" has been that the language of many of his poems is distinguishable from that of prose, and then Wordsworth sets himself to prove that, not merely in his poems but in all poetry generally, conformity to the language of prose is quite compatible with the highest effects of poetry.32

From the context it is quite clear that Wordsworth was discussing certain features of the style of his poems. His avoidances of personifications of abstract idea, as well as of what he designates as "conventional poetic diction," left him nothing but the bare, ordinary words of prose as instruments of expressions in his poems; and he naturally apprehends the wrath of his critics for his use of these commonplace, unadorned, prosaic words, and makes haste to show that these words are quite in their place in poetry. Moreover, as in the last paragraph he was

32 A. J. George, Ibid., pp. 8-11
dealing with the question of general style, it is but reasonable to believe that in the following paragraph he would pass on to a fresh aspect of the subject, namely: the question of vocabulary, instead of merely repeating himself. It is however, possible to urge, with almost equal plausibility, that even here Wordsworth is thinking of style as a whole, as the natural effect of denying himself the customary graces and adornments of poetic style would be to bring down the style of his poems to the level of prose, and this lowering of the level would naturally be resented by his critics.

The context, therefore, does not help us to Wordsworth's meaning, though the uncertainty here lies not between vocabulary and order, but between vocabulary and general style. The balance of possibility in this instance, however, seems to incline to the side of vocabulary as against style; for Wordsworth real contention is that the use of prose words does not, as a matter of fact, lead to any lowering of the poetic level, and that a mere sight of them tends to frighten the critics who have learned to associate poetry with a more gaudy kind of phrase-
ology. As Miss Maclean says:

"Wordsworth is careful to indicate that he is not primarily concerned either with verse or prose. These are terms representing formal distinctions, and he is careful to emphasise the formal distinctions, but gives us to understand that his chief concern is with the kind of writing (to be found in the regular rhythms which constitute verse and the irregular rhythms which constitute prose) whose differentia it is, not that the words are in regular rhythm or without regular rhythm, but that they have the power of bringing the subject of which they treat sub specie aeternitatis. This is what Wordsworth means by poetry. And this kind of writing is found either in verse or prose. Those who can write in this way are poets, whether they prefer to confine themselves to regular rhythm of verse or no."33

The critics, Wordsworth insinuates, do not take the trouble, or are not in a position, to ascertain if this apprehended lowering of level has really been brought to pass: their prejudices anticipate their mature judgment, and are up in arms against the simple homely words on the ground of the antecedent improbability of their serving as worthy custodians of the dignity of poetry.34 Professor Minto says:

"What Wordsworth really objected to was the habitual employment by poets of certain conventional figures of speech that had dropped out of the prose style, and had come to be regarded as the

exclusive colours of poetic diction. The expulsion of these conventionalities was all the revolution that he proposed in poetic style."

Much of the difficulty in interpreting Wordsworth's meaning in this topic consists in the fact that the language which he used is capable of either kind of interpretation, and thus does not go far enough towards the clearing up of the original obscurity. It is rather arbitrary to separate the question of style from that of vocabulary—a result which would ensue even if one accepts the view, favorable to Wordsworth's position, that he was referring merely to words. Vocabulary and style are so intimately interrelated that one is bound to lead upon the other, and it is almost impossible to treat either of them as a quite self-contained or absolutely independent question.

THE LANGUAGE OF THE PREFACE: There are three statements of Wordsworth that I propose to examine in this connection.

a. The first remark of Wordsworth is to the effect that "if in a Poem there should be found a series of lines, or even a single line, in

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which the language, though naturally arranged, and according to the strict laws of metre, does not differ from that of prose, there is a numerous class of critics, who, when they stumble upon these prosaisms ... imagine that they have made a notable discovery, and exult over the Poet as over a man ignorant of his own profession."

b. His next statement is that "not only the language of a large portion of every good poem, even the most elevated character, must necessarily, except with reference to the metre, in no respect differ from that of good prose, but likewise that some of the most interesting parts of the best poems will be found to be strictly the language of prose when prose is well written." This is sought to be illustrated from a Sonnet of Gray, in which Wordsworth tries to prove that the best lines are those in which the language of prose has been followed. From this single example, he passes to a rather bold generalization that

c. "there neither is, nor can be, any essential
difference between the language of prose and metrical composition.\textsuperscript{36}

a. Wordsworth begins with the remark that there are many critics who would condemn a poem, if only a series of lines or even a single line in it happens not to differ in its language from the language of prose, though natural arrangement and metrical laws have been conformed to. His real intention in this passage is to imply that some critics are so unreasonable as to condemn any conformity on the part of poetry in point of words or words and arrangement, even when this conformity is attained without any sacrifice of the special poetical effect. His words, however, are not as exhaustive or unequivocal as might be desired. Natural arrangement and conformity to metrical laws do not exhaust all possible kinds of poetic effect; and compliance with those conditions may involve the surrender of some subtler poetic grace lying deeper beyond the reach of metre and arrangement, hidden, perhaps, within the suggestion of words. Moreover, the ambiguity of the passage lie in the determination of the exact meaning of the term language. I shall

\textsuperscript{36} A. J. George, \textit{Op. cit.}, pp. 9-11
take language in its wider sense, including the prose choice as well as the prose order of words, and try to find out whether this leads to any difficult or untenable position in the interpretation of the passage as a whole.

The passage will come to mean: Some critics of poetry carry their antipathy to prose so far that they would object to even a single line in a poem which follows prose in the words and order, though this order constituted the most natural arrangement for the line, and the words and order, in their joint effect, satisfied all the laws of metre, namely, the distribution of the pauses and accents, including possibly the general rhythmic quality. Naturally arranged obviously means without a deviation from the most spontaneous and thus the most effective mode of arrangement, and, although arrangement according to prose order is not always the most natural arrangement of words in poetry, including, as it may, a sacrifice of metrical fitness and rhythmic harmony, and producing an effect of flatness which is felt to be out of keeping with the higher levels of poetry, yet there are occasions when the most effective arrangement, from the standpoint of both sense and
harmony, happens to coincide with prose order; and, in such cases, prose order is followed quite spontaneously, and not with any conscious thought or predetermination on the part of the poet, and as such should be treated as quite unexceptionable.

In the preceding paragraph I have assumed that language in the sentence under discussion covers words as well as order; but there is something in the sentence itself that countenances such a view without the necessity of any assumption on my part. The very condition inserted by the poet, "though naturally arranged and according to the laws of metre," seems to imply that Wordsworth is thinking not of vocabulary, and metrical laws, though reacting on the choice of words to a certain extent, are equally concerned with the order, or the general rhythmic flow of the line according to fixed laws of syllabic arrangement and accent-distribution. These conditions have, therefore, a more natural relation or affinity with the question of order than of vocabulary. Different conditions would no doubt have been inserted if the poet's intention had been to stress the words or elements of vocabulary exclusively.
Let us see how the passage stands if language is taken in the narrower sense of "words" only. In that case, Wordsworth might have possibly meant to convey that the objection of the critics was directed exclusively against the prosaic words when no other grounds of complaint remained, either on the score of arrangement, or on that of conformity to metrical laws. In other words, the critics were so unreasonable as to take exception to the words used by the poet, merely because they were simple and homely, identical with those which are in common in prose, though this identity was not followed by any awkwardness in their arrangement or in the manipulation of metre. In this case, awkwardness in arrangement and failure to conform to metrical needs must be considered as separate defects, independent of the question of vocabulary. Prose choice of words is, by itself, considered as defect, though the demands made by the other aspects of the poet's craft have been met quite successfully.

Thus, judged from this point of view, the objection of the critics is found to be quite reasonable. Natural arrangement and satisfaction of the
laws of metre are more or less formal and technical requisites of poetry, and may easily be found in company with a feeble soul or weak imaginative power in it. They may not always ensure the right choice of words; and when the general style is found to be prosaic, the effect is rightly attributed to the words. The fact that Wordsworth has fulfilled some conditions constitutes no defence for his neglect of a yet more vital condition. It is quite possible to hold that the condemnation of words in poetry, naturally arranged and metrically fit, which do not differ from those of prose, may rest on the ground of their feeble imaginative power, on grounds other than that of a blind craze for "poetic diction," which is the only possibility Wordsworth has in view in his horrified repudiation of such canon of criticism.37

b. The next statement of Wordsworth bearing on this point is to the effect that the language of a large portion of every good poem, even of the most elevated character, and of some parts of poems

specially informed of poetic quality is identical with the language of prose, when prose is good or well written. This sentence does not go far in clearing up the difficulty with which I am here concerned, and is not free from ambiguity. Wordsworth is, no doubt, careful to talk consistently of language, using it in all probability in the narrower sense of words or vocabulary to the exclusion of order and arrangement. All that he means to imply, then, is that occasions are not rare in which the words of ordinary prose are quite equal to producing the loftiest poetic effects, and are quite in their place even in the most inspired parts of poetry. This is a valuable truth— and not exactly a truism, as maintained by Coleridge—a truth that ran the risk of being ignored in the contemporary practice of poetry, and which, therefore, stood in need of re-affirmation, even if the statement is confined to a question of vocabulary only. Moreover, the statement in its present form— confined merely to an assertion of occasional identity between the words of prose and those of poetry— is perfectly

unexceptionable: a reference to the actual facts of poetry will prove it beyond doubt. It is only when a universal proposition is sought to be erected on the basis of this undoubted fact, and the identity extended to all cases that a flaw both in logic as also in respect of critical soundness creeps into the argument and makes the theory too plainly one-sided and unbalanced. Thus, it is to the transition to the generalization—"there neither is, nor can be, any essential difference between the language of prose and metrical composition"—that one reaches the weakest point in the enunciation of Wordsworth's theory. To say that some words are equally in their place in both prose and poetry is one thing; to assert that there cannot be any conceivable difference between the two in respect of words is entirely a different thing.

Here, again, let us try to find out whether the statement refers to words only or words and arrangement both. As was already anticipated, the statement can also be interpreted so as to take the language in the wider sense of order; there is nothing in the actual words of Wordsworth to invalidate such an
interpretation. He might as well be taken to mean that there are some occasions when the highest poetic effect are attained by a strict conformity to the words and order of prose.

c. It is only when one passes on the sweeping generalization that "there neither is, nor can be, any essential difference between the language of prose and metrical composition," that one feels the full measure of the untenability of the wider interpretation from the standpoint of critical soundness. If such an assertion of universal identity squares but little with facts in the case of words only, it betrays a still more hopeless cleavage with the actual practice of poets if taken to include order also.

The use of simple and homely words in a few lines of poetry, without any detriment to poetic effect, is not a very exacting condition to fulfill; but the handicap is considerably increased if one expects the poet to conform to prose order as well. One feels that there is a difference between the words of poetry and those of prose; nevertheless, one is reconciled to the assertion of Wordsworth with respect to identity in words between poetry and prose on the
ground that, in the practice of eighteenth-century poets, it was the difference that was over-emphasized, and that the assertion in question, therefore, represented a wholesome return to a neglected aspect of the truth. But if this assertion of identity is taken to include prose order also, then one instinctively feels that he is led up to a hopeless position. Poetry may often be content with homely words of prose and derive its most potent effects out of them; it may not therefore regret so keenly the curtailment of its freedom in respect of choice of words, since sufficient resources are still left at its disposal. But it can hardly survive the additional restriction about conformity to prose order, if this is laid down as a permanent and inviolable condition for its observance. Wordsworth could hardly have been so much blinded by his theory as to have failed to foresee the natural consequences of such a rigorous restriction. And hence, I must conclude that Wordsworth could not have seriously advanced such an untenable proposition.

striking at the very roots of metrical and rhymed poetry, as a universal truth, notwithstanding the assumption of Coleridge that such must have been his intention. When Wordsworth said, then, that between the language of poetry and that of prose there was and could be no difference, he had in his mind--not style or the "ordonnance" of language, as Coleridge said, but--mere words themselves.
CHAPTER III

WORDSWORTH'S DOCTRINE OF MAN AND NATURE

As a forerunner of The Prelude, Wordsworth's poem, *Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey, on Revisiting the Banks of the Wye During a Tour, July 13, 1798*, may be called a preliminary outline, or short summary of his doctrine of the three ages of man. As the title indicates, it was composed on the thirteenth day of July, 1798; and the occasion was a visit by Wordsworth and his sister, Dorothy, to the farm of John Thelwall, a revolutionist and poet, who retired to Lys Wen, Brecknockshire, Wales, in order to escape from the dangers and turmoil of London and politics. As Wordsworth marked the peaceful landscape and the "pastoral farms" of the beautiful Wye valley, he was reminded of his former visits to these same scenes in earlier years, specially of his visit of 1793, when he was yet but a youth who knew life but little or not at all.

"Five years have passed, five summers, with the length Of five long winters,"

the poem begins; and in the interval he has seen and experienced much. He writes as one who has come to
man's estate; and as his mind runs back in reminis-
cence over the intervening five years and beyond to
childhood, he remembers what he was then as contrasted
with what he is now, and he contemplates the strange
ways by which in this "unintelligible world," his
mind has become what it is. Then, he presents the
history of his mind's development, as it were; divided
into three distinct stages or periods, each marked
by its distinct attitude to the universe of man and
Nature. Writing as he does from the standpoint of
experience which produced the poem, he contrasts his
present period with the period of life in which he
was five years before,⁴⁰ and gives a characterization
of an earlier age. The first part of the poem fur-
nishes us with a theory of the process by which it
was produced,⁴¹ an aspect of the subject which is
resumed later.⁴² Upon this follows an address to his
sister, Dorothy, who is in the period of youth, but
who will also attain to the culminating age of maturi-
ty through the inevitable processes of life and

⁴⁰ Wordsworth, Tintern Abbey, ll. 66-103
⁴¹ Ibid., ll. 23-50
⁴² Ibid., ll. 103-12
rational living, the whole concluding with the declaration that even though he be much changed in the course of his life, he brings to Nature a love which is warmer and holier than the ecstatic devotion of his youth.

Wordsworth characterizes the three periods in the following way: (1) Childhood, or Boyhood, has its coarser pleasures, as contrasted with the "pure mind" of maturity and its "glad animal movements." This is the unreflecting period of life, when there is no conscious reaction to experience and Nature.

(2) The second period is Youth, which is marked by mental as well as bodily activity, by "aching joys" and dizzy raptures. As contrasted with the stage at which he has arrived, this period is marked by the direct emotional responses to life, like "appetite" to food, by "passion," by "feeling," by "love," without any transition into "thought." (3) The third stage is the period of thought, Maturity. In this age the immediate joy is gone; but as an

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43 Ibid., ll. 112-60
44 Ibid., ll. 74-75
45 Ibid., ll. 76-84
"abundant recompense" comes the deeper and more profound outlook on life, with "thought," which alone satisfies. And what is the wisdom which this "thought" teaches him? That man is the center of the universe, the "mind of man" is the culminating point of the "something" which is "interfused" in the universe "and rolls through all things." To this height he has come; but the true optimism of the poem is that what is true of him may be true of all. The wisdom of maturity allows him to see that all "thinking things, all objects of all thought," are impelled towards higher things, and, as has been indicated above, he is certain that his sister, Dorothy, whose "wild eyes" remind him of his own "past existence," that is, his period of youth, will also reach the culminating period of maturity, by inevitable process of life.46

Thus, Wordsworth clearly announces as the source of his belief in the integrity of mind as the ground of his hope, a scheme of individual mental development in three stages, or ages, each one of which is

46 Ibid., 11. 90-113
linked with the other in a causal connection. This scheme, he says, represents the facts of his own development; it represents the facts of his sister's development, so far as she has come down life's way; and it represents the general laws of growth of every individual mind. In the poet's own words, the periods may be characterized as follows: (1) Childhood, or Boyhood, is the age of "sensation;" (2) Youth is the age of "feeling;" and (3) Maturity, or the period of the After Years, is the age of "thought." Each age has its own integrity and at the same time the earlier is essential to the development of the later. In the light of this philosophy, Wordsworth found comfort for the loss of the immediate joy of boyhood and youth; for, in accordance with this theory, it is the general law of life that the vividness of sensation and feeling should die away with the coming of maturity, and it is equally the law of life that thought, intellect, the philosophic mind, which are the compensations of maturity, should be attained only in the last stage of development.

This is Wordsworth's first formulation of his doctrine. It is characterized by brevity; but the
evidence that he believed it to be fundamental is best shown in the fact that from the year 1798 on to 1820, in prose and in poetry, he developed the theory repeatedly, basing upon it his most fundamental arguments regarding life and poetry; making it the foundation of his great poems, The Prelude and The Excursion; and from it deriving his famous distinction between Fancy and Imagination.

With the completion of the new edition of the Lyrical Ballads and its prose explanation in the Preface, in 1800, Wordsworth was ready to heed Coleridge's request to go on with the great philosophical poem; and it is significant that the first endeavors to proceed with this great poem took on the form of the development of the doctrine of the three ages of man-- the work done in 1800 being what is now the first two books of The Prelude. These first two books of The Prelude deal with the first of the three periods, and so his discussions of the three ages are subordinated to his reminiscences of

47 See Cris'topher Wordsworth, Memoirs of William Wordsworth (London, 1851), vol. 1, p. 159
childhood and youth; but one can plainly see that the doctrine of the three ages is none the less the foundation on which the interpretation of his childhood experiences rest.

In the first book, by a series of instances, he presents characteristic incidents in his boyhood, such as bathing, skating, card-playing, trapping, and placid events of an ordinary childhood. In addition, he gives examples of experiences of other kinds, fears and pains, as the incident of the stolen boat, illustrating the strange diversity of experience which makes up the boy's life and yet develops into the harmonious calm which is the man's. His enunciation of the principle is of primary importance:

"Dust as we are, the immortal spirit grows Like harmony in music; there is a dark Inscrutable workmanship that reconciles Discordant elements, makes them cling together In one society. How strange that all The terrors, pains, and early miseries, Regrets, vexations, lassitudes interfused Within my mind, should e'er have borne a part And that a needful part, in making up The calm existence that is mine when I Am worthy of myself."

Childhood is the time of sensations, when pure

experiences are being impressed on the young mind; the time of "vulgar joy," and "giddy bliss." All these are not forgotten, save that now and then "chance collisions and quaint accidents," the joy, or bliss, or fear, all of which have that "visionary" quality on which the poet frequently lays stress, combine with the "collateral" objects with which they are associated, become fixed in the mind and remain there until the occasion arises which calls them forth from their hiding place, glorified and raised into the finer mental forms of youth and manhood. Through them, the scenes with which they were first associated, even though they are bright, or beautiful, or majestic, become more habitually dear to the adult and so become fastened to the affections.  

The whole book is a marvelous picture of the "visionary" quality of commonplace childhood experiences, of the mental activity of the child in its self-concentration, of those "dumb yearnings, hidden appetites" which are the characteristic of the child, and which must have their food. It dwells upon that strange vividness of

experience, and gives a detailed pictures of

"Those hallowed and pure motions of the sense, Which seem, in their simplicity, to own An intellectual charm." 50

In sensation, the child rests. Wordsworth shows that this period of life is vital to the succeeding periods if they are to come to their own fruition; for sensation is the prerequisite of all higher mental forms.

The second book of The Prelude deals more particularly with the period of youth, but correlates it with the other ages. Here, he speaks of the "winning forms of Nature" as being "collaterally" attached to his experience; he speaks of the "incidental charms" which first attached his heart to rural objects; and explains that up to the time of youth Nature was but "secondary." But now that youth had come, Nature was "sought for her own sake." 51 "A plastic power abode" with him; and under the influences of his strong feelings his own enjoyments were transferred "to inorganic nature." Under the stress of his feelings, he "coerced" all things into activity, and observed affinities between things which were the pure product

50  Ibid., Book I, ll. 551-53
51  Ibid., Book II, ll. 201-03
of his active mind. The mind of youth is active with the activity of feeling, as the mind of childhood is active with the activity of sensation.

In the eighth book of *The Prelude*, which is devoted to the problem of the transition from youth to maturity, or as Wordsworth expresses it, "Love of Nature leading to Love of Man," he clearly indicates the progress which he describes in terms of the three ages. He is describing his mature mind in detail, specially the relation of man and Nature to his own consciousness, when he turns aside from his discussion to remind Coleridge that his attitude towards Nature and man is the result of a process. That process is marked by three stages: (1) The first was an "unripe time," Childhood, in which Nature was "secondary" to his own pursuits and animal activities. (2) This was followed by a second stage, when Nature, "prized for her own sake," became his joy, in which man held a place "subordinate to her." Man was but an occasional delight, an accidental grace, "his hour being not yet come."\(^{52}\) (3) This was followed by a third period, in

\(^{52}\) *Ibid.*, Book VIII, ll. 340-64
which Nature became subordinate to man, "when not less than two and twenty summers had been told," as the poet tells with definiteness. Putting this definite date with the other specific dates furnished, one learns that childhood lasts from the first consciousness, at about five or six, to ten, and thus youth extends from ten to twenty three; at which point maturity begins.53

At the close of the eighth book of The Prelude, Wordsworth states that he has brought his life up to the third age, and that in the remainder of the poem he will deal at length with the coming and consummation of this culminating period. I shall consider only books twelve and thirteen, which give in summary form the history of his imagination in the third stage of life. During Childhood and Youth, the powers of the mind are held "in absolute dominion" by the senses, specially by the "bodily eye," the most despotic of our senses; and are not equipped with a regulating faculty which

"summons all the senses each
To counteract the other, and ourselves,
And make them all, and the objects with
which all
Are conversant, subservient in their turn
To the great ends of Liberty and Power."54

As yet not endowed with the great regulative principle of the Imagination, the youthful poet's activity of mind was directed to the externals of things, insatiably seeking for delights:

"I roamed from hill to hill, from rock to rock,
Still craving combinations of new forms,
New pleasure, wider empire for the sight,
Proud of her own endowments, and rejoiced
To lay the inner faculties asleep."55

But with the coming of maturity, Imagination freed him; and he stood in Nature's presence, "a creative soul."56 He was no longer dominated by Nature, but stood above her, a free being who could recombine her into the free forms of art. This is the time of full maturity and the creative Imagination.

From the foregoing discussions, I believe I have shown that Wordsworth's doctrine of the three ages of

54 Ibid., Book XII, 11. 135-39
55 Ibid., Book XII, 11. 143-47
56 Ibid., Book XII, 11. 206-07
man is a real doctrine, and not an external manner of classifying his experiences. To summarize, it is to be marked, that (1) each of the ages is regarded as being distinct from one another—a distinction consistently maintained throughout the whole extent of his best productive period; (2) that the ages are causally related to one another; and (3) that they represent the manner in which every normal mind develops.

Wordsworth's doctrine of Nature is of primary importance for the proper understanding of his poetry and criticism, because it forms an essential part of the whole body of his writings, which permeates not only The Excursion, The Prelude, and the prose Prefaces and Essays, but also Tintern Abbey, The Cuckoo, Michael, Peele Castle, Resoultion and Independence, Lines Written in Early Spring, Expostulation and Reply, and the Ode on Intimations of Immortality. I mention specimens of diverse classes of his work, for I wish to make clear that, so far as the doctrine of Nature is concerned, Wordsworth has not put his doctrines into one set of poems and his poetry another. However, while it is true that Nature is of great importance in
the poetry and prose of Wordsworth and permeates the whole body of his work, it is equally true that his doctrine of Nature is strictly subordinate to another and much more fundamental, comprehensive, and complex one, of which it is a part, and a necessary part; but only a part. In other words, his doctrine of Nature is only one aspect of his doctrine of the development of the individual mind, according to the scheme of the three ages of man.

"On Man, on Nature, and on Human Life,
Musing in solitude, I oft perceive
Fair train of imagery before me rise,
Accompanied by feelings of delight
Pure, or with no unpleasing sadness mixed;
And I am conscious of affecting thoughts
And dear remembrances, whose presence soothes
Or elevates the mind, intent to weigh
The good and evil of our mortal state.

... my voice proclaims
How exquisitely the individual Mind
(And the progressive powers perhaps no less
Of the whole species) to the external world
Is fitted: - and how exquisitely, too--
Theme this but little heard of among men--
The external World is fitted to the Mind;
And the creation (by no lower name
Can it be called) which they with blended might
Accomplish: - this is our high argument."57

These lines make it as clear as possible, I think,

57 Wordsworth, The Recluse, ll. 755-63, 816-25
that Wordsworth's chief interest is the human mind, the problems of knowledge and consciousness, and the relations between character and conduct, for that is what is meant by the fitting of the individual mind to the World and of the World to the Mind. And this deliberate statement is in entire keeping with his Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads* of 1800, in which he states his purpose as follows:

"The principal object then which I proposed to myself in these Poems was to make incidents of common life interesting by tracing in them, truly though not ostentatiously, the primary laws of our nature: chiefly as far as regards the manner in which we associate ideas in a state of excitement. ... But speaking in less general language, it is to follow the fluxes and refluxes of the mind when agitated by the great and simple affections of our nature. This object I have endeavoured in these short essays to attain by various means." 58

In the Preface to *The Excursion* and in the Preface to the *Collected Poems of 1815*, he said:

"My guiding wish was, that the small pieces of which these volumes consist, thus discriminated, might be regarded under two-fold view; as composing an entire work within themselves, and as adjuncts to the philosophical Poem, *The Recluse.* This arrangement has long presented itself habitually to my mind." 59

59 *Ibid.*, pp. 43-44
That the held the same opinions regarding his poetic method much later in life is seen from a letter written to Crabb Robinson, in 1853. A reviewer in the Examiner had stated that Wordsworth was superior in "dealing with nature" as opposed to his "treatment of human life." In reply, the poet explicitly says:

"In my treatment of the intellectual instincts, affections, and passions of mankind, I am nobly distinguished by having drawn out into notice the points in which they resemble each other, in preference to dwelling ... upon those in which they differ. If my writings are to last, it will, I myself believe, be mainly owing to this characteristic. They will please for the single cause, 'That we have of us one human heart.'

From the foregoing quotations there is an abundance of evidence that in intention the whole body of Wordsworth's poetry, the short poems as well as the long poems, is philosophic in content; and hence, its interest lies in the problem of psychology and philosophy. The problem of Nature is not approached directly as a distinct and separate question, but always in connection with the problem of the development of the mind. The question of Nature is always

60 W. A. Knight (ed.), Letters of the Wordsworth Family from 1787 to 1855 (London, 1907), vol. iii, pp. 73-75
a part of the question of the development of the individual mind, and the varying attitudes of the mind toward Nature, or the more general reactions towards Nature, as the mark of the mind's development. More explicitly, Wordsworth deals with Nature in terms of his own peculiar theory of the development of the mind; that is, in terms of the three ages of man. It is essential to keep this in mind, and to realize that Wordsworth is dealing with the problem of mental development for only then can one see that he describes his relationships to Nature at each period of life, and that what he holds true of one period he does not regard as true of the others. This is of particular importance in dealing with the attitude of his mind to Nature during youth. He gives a great deal of space to it; and as a result, those who have read his statements without sufficient care, or, under the influence of some particular theory, have attributed to the poet final opinions regarding his attitude which he expressly assigns to his youth and which he clearly characterizes as not being those of his maturity.

In his description of the three periods of man's life, Wordsworth habitually regards the first two as
being most closely related to external Nature and to each other, as has been noted above. They are both marked by a lack of self-consciousness and by absorption in sensation. They are differentiated, however, in that the child is wholly unconscious and passive, and of the child it is specially and characteristically true that

"The eye-- it cannot choose but see;
We cannot bid the ear be still;
Our bodies feel, where'er they be,
Against or with our will."61

All unknown to the infant, the education of the senses proceeds, and through those "blind impulses of deeper birth" and those "dumb yearnings, hidden appetites" which are characteristics of childhood, and which "must have their food" the soul is impelled towards physical and mental connections with the world of senses and experience. The first two books of The Prelude are a detailed account of Childhood; and anyone who would know the "visionary" quality which dwelt upon all those "hallowed and pure notions of the sense," must study these books in detail. Youth is closely related to external Nature, but in an

61 Wordsworth, Expostulation and Reply, 11. 13-16
entirely different way. At this period, the soul becomes active in its relationships with the world of sense in a great variety of ways, some of which Wordsworth describes in considerable detail. First, in the poet's own case, from the age of ten to the age of twenty-three, he developed the capacity for describing and noting with accuracy "that infinite variety of natural appearances which had been noticed by the poets of any age or country," so far as he was acquainted with them; and so he developed a power to see and to note. This power was developed specially toward the latter period of youth, when he was an undergraduate at St. John's College, Cambridge, as he makes clear in his account of the ivy-clad ash tree in the college garden.62

He often observed objects such as this and learned to observe with accuracy. As Professor Beatty says,

"like Meridith, he was acquiring the 'disciplined habit to see', a habit which he never lost in his later years, the habit of writing 'with his eye on the object', and stating the simple truth; a habit which gives to all his poetry the characteristics noted by Coleridge in the early poem, The Female Vagrant: 'the fine

[62 See The Prelude, Book VI, ll. 76-85]
balance of truth in observing, with the imaginative faculty in modifying the objects observed.\footnote{63}

With this power of observation went a love for observing places famous for their natural beauty and picturesqueness, and in response to this impulse he visited many places in the north of England, in Wales, and in France and Switzerland.\footnote{64}

This power of observation and this desire to see had one great defect in the period of youth: the poet's world was one in which all things were in disunity. He was under the domination of the senses, and of those less "pure forms" of mental activity which are related to the immediate sensations, and the only unity of his world was that which is supplied by the eye:

\footnote{65}

\begin{quote}
"the bodily eye

Amid my strongest workings evermore
Was searching out the lines of difference
As they lie hid in all external forms,
Near or remote, minute or vast; an eye
Which, from a tree, a stone, a withered leaf,
To the broad ocean and azure heavens
Spangled with kindred multitudes of stars,
Could find no surface where its powers might sleep;
Which spake perpetual logic to my soul,
And by an unrelenting agency
Did bind my feelings even as in a chain."
\end{quote}

\footnote{63} Arthur Beatty, \textit{Op cit.}, pp. 137-8
\footnote{64} The \textit{Prelude}, Book VI, ll. 190-726
\footnote{65} \textit{Ibid.}, Book III, ll. 155-66
But this connection in his world was not accepted as a matter of course, for the poet felt the need of unity. This unity he found in one department of his knowledge—in geometry—for he tells us that here he first found relief for a mind "beset with images," that is with particular experiences. It was his first insight into the ordered world of intelligence and imagination:

"Mighty is the charm
Of those abstractions to a mind beset
With images, and haunted by herself,
And specially delightful unto me
Was that clear synthesis built aloft
So gracefully; even that when it appeared
Not more than a mere plaything, or a toy
To sense embodied: not the thing it is
In verity, an independent world,
Created out of pure intelligence."

This was the first means of producing unity in his disrupted world; but another more important one existed in the very constitution of his youthful mind. He tells us that when he attained maturity he discovered that he had "two natures," which he had learned "to keep in wholesome separation," the one that feels and the other that observes.67 This important

66 Ibid., Book VI, ll. 158-67
67 Ibid., Book XIV, ll. 344-47
fact he did not know in youth; and he mingled ob-
jective and subjective, transferring his own feelings
to the objects of Nature and making his feelings a
part of them. It was his own world, for he made it;
and he himself was in all he saw. It was a deeply
seated habit, and from this habit "nothing was safe."69

These "cravings" led him to compare the fox-glove,
dismantled of all its flowers but one, to some vagrant
mother; and to imagine the glistening rock to be the
shield suspended over the tomb of some ancient knight,
or the entrance to some magic cave, built by the fair-
ies of the rock, and to fancy that the woodman, dying
of disease, was suffering from the pangs of disappointed
love, while the smoke from the charcoal pile was
feigned to be the image of his ghost or spirit about
to take its flight.70

This was the "wilfulness of fancy and conceit,"
whic "beautified Nature and her objects" by "fictions,"
very frequently of a melancholy nature.71 As he says,

68 Ibid., Book III, ll. 127-43
69 Ibid., Book VIII, ll. 377-91
70 Ibid., Book VIII, ll. 392-458
71 Ibid., Book VIII, ll. 370-75
"understanding sleeps in order that fancy may dream;" for this was the period of youth, and the understanding and the imagination slept, waking but faithfully from time time.72

Thus, the mind, in its activity of youth, asserts its independence and active power, rising superior to mere sense-impressions, even though the world which it creates is not a true one. For Fancy deals only with the superficialities of things and with mere "extrinsic" passion and feelings. But, none the less, amid this world, which is not based on truth but on fancy, he was "mounting now to such community with the highest truth"73 by the natural means afforded to youth, that is, by analogies; and through these he is on the way to Truth by the shortest route allowed to youth. Reason and Imagination slept as yet; but their slumbers became less deep; and their awakening became more frequent as he approached his wonderful twenty-third year. He was becoming human-hearted, his reason was developing, life was schooling

72 Ibid., Book III, ll. 257-58
73 Ibid., Book III, ll. 122-23
him by sending him to France, by detaining him in London, until the time came for Reason and Imagination to exert their full directive power. His world was his own, but not one which conformed to objective reality; yet it stood as proof of his own self-activity and superiority to Nature. But the time was soon to arrive when his world becomes the real world of all of us, being founded on simple truth, when Nature, Reason, and Imagination are one. Then, his world was harmonized and unified; then, and not until then, could he "see into the life of things."

But in this description of his youthful mind he is careful to state that this activity is not the same as that vague, unreal wash and surge of the feelings and the senses that is seen in the "paradoxical reveries of Rousseau." He makes it perfectly clear that the connection which he makes in youth between the various elements of consciousness are not those of the truth and reality of the external world. On the reality of the feelings that have been developed by Imagination, the youthful mind engrafts far-fetched shapes, by the power of wilful Fancy; and to these shapes it connects human passions. The result
is that the fox-glove is connected with the vagrant mother, the cave with fairies, the glistening rock with the shield of some ancient knight, and all those connections which in no way represent objective truth. But, while this is true, Wordsworth maintains that the elements were true; the objects were real; and, by virtue of this reality endured in consciousness, furnishing the material on which the adult Imagination might work in after years and so express "highest truth." 74

The transition in the life of man from youth to maturity is signalized in the sub-title of the eighth book of The Prelude: "Love of Nature leading to Love of Man;" and the processes by which this is accomplished are detailed in this and the succeeding book of this poem. In childhood, Nature was "secondary" to his "own pursuits and animal activities, and all their trivial pleasures." Then, with youth, Nature became prized "for her own sake" and became his joy, to the exclusion of man, "until two-and-twenty summers had been told," "his hour being not yet come." 75

74 Ibid., Book XIII, ll. 426-37
75 Ibid., Book VIII, ll. 340-56
At the end of the book, he tells Coleridge that he has brought the story of his life down to the beginning of Maturity, and that he will narrate the consummation of maturity in the books that are to follow.76 This promise he proceeds to keep; and in the twelfth book he expounds at some length the peculiarities of the third age, as contrasted with those of youth. Youth is marked by great activity;77 but this thraldom was to be changed. By those hidden operations of life, Liberty and Power were achieved by the mind through the means employed by Nature, to cause the senses each to counteract the other and themselves. Nature was no longer the prime mover of the soul. Imagination and Intellect became the guiding forces, and he now stood in Nature's presence, contemplating her, a sensitive being, a creative soul.78 Now it was that Nature, which had been destined to remain so long foremost in his affections, fell back into the second place, pleased to become a handmaid to a nobler one.

76 Ibid., Book VIII, ll. 678-86
77 Ibid., Book XII, ll. 140-48
78 Ibid., Book XII, ll. 205-07
than herself: that is, to Imagination. To this conclusion he came at maturity, by the "progressive powers" of life, through which the mind is fitted to the World.

It follows logically from this that Wordsworth should hold the opinion that the love of Nature is an intermediate step, and a necessary one, if the individual is to attain the "purer mind" of maturity. Thus, in maturity, the emotions are intellectualized and rationalized. It follows that in Wordsworth there is not that dwelling upon the sentiments and emotions, such as is found in Rousseau; nor is there any of that distrust of intellect. The passages which have been interpreted above show that he has in mind false knowledge, or reasonings which are based on unreal knowledge, as can be seen in his criticism of the "false secondary power by which we multiply distinctions;" for the poet explains that such false knowledge breaks up the unity of reality, and establishes "puny boundaries" and "multiplies

79 Ibid., Book XIV, ll. 189-92
80 Ibid., Book II, ll. 215-19
distinctions," not in accordance with observed realities, but out of unreal knowledge which in no way corresponds to external truth. Such a procedure comes from deficiency of reason or imagination, which is "duped by shows, enslaved by words, corrupted by mistaken delicacy and false refinement," "not having attended with care to the reports of the senses, and therefore deficient grossly in the rudiments of its own power," and so takes its departure from the side of "Truth, its original parent." To truth, which gave him a universe of knowledge based on higher activities than those of sense, he had been brought, and his was the universe of mind, including the activities of sense, but transcending and regulating them. This higher universe is apprehended by the reason and by the imagination; and it sees the "active principle" which at once makes up the unity of the universe and assures to the mind that sees it, unity with itself, the freedom of the universe, "Perfect contentment, Unity entire."81

81 Wordsworth, The Excursion, Book IX, ll. 1-26; see also The Recluse, ll. 142-51
Thus, the function of Nature, according to Wordsworth, is to furnish us with the materials of a true knowledge, and the education of man is to adjust his relations to her so that she becomes the helper, and the usurper, of a power and place which she should not possess. But she is the necessary aid to the attainment of Imagination and right reason; and the function of Imagination and right reason, when they are attained, is to view her in due proportion to the whole of life and knowledge. As Professor Garrod says, "on the side of Nature, Wordsworth finds the highest and deepest truth in the pure report of the senses, unspoiled by reason."82 From the very dawn of Man's existence, Nature is in close relation to him, building and fashioning his soul. She builds and shapes human personality by operating especially through Man's emotional nature, and pre-eminently through the moral emotions. She is a moral guide and a teacher to Man. By her interventions, through her visitations of soft alarm or through a minstry more palpable, she counsels, inspires, and

impels man to right living. She teaches and exemplifies the virtues, and warns against the vices. From her, he learns more concerning good and evil than from all human teachers. Nature can and does reveal truths to the intellect, and also to the higher spiritual nature of Man. She grants insight into the life of things, vouchsafing a much more profound conception of Reality than is to be gained by the analytical methods of science. She discloses her inner life or spirit to the reverent inquirer. To the communing, sympathetic mind, she furnishes a still deeper revelation to the soul—visions of God, and of the Spirit's eternal destiny.
CHAPTER IV

ARNOLD'S DOCTRINE OF POETRY AS A CRITICISM OF LIFE

It is the highest praise that Arnold can find for Sophocles, "the mellow glory of the Attic Stage," that endowed with "even-balanced soul," he saw life steadily and saw it whole; as it is the highest praise that he can find for Goethe that he was strong "with a spirit free from mists and sane and clear." Such sentences as these bring one directly upon the enduring purpose, the fixed and central aim, of Arnold's intellectual self-discipline. To see life steadily, and to see it whole; to preserve his mental and moral balance in the face of the most urgent and perplexing external conditions; to keep the atmosphere of his thought unobstructed by prejudices, premature judgments, figments of fancy, tricks of feeling, delusion of sense—such from first to last remained the dominant ideal of Arnold's entire career. The pursuit of such an ideal might mean the unlearning of

83 Matthew Arnold, To a Friend, ll. 9-13
84 Arnold, Stanzas in Memory of the Author of "Obermann," ll. 61-62
much, the resignation of much;\textsuperscript{85} it might force upon the unready shoulders a burden of heavy thought too great to be borne; facile and comfortable doctrines of the older faith might in consequence have to be replaced by new conceptions which for the time being might well seem hard, gloomy, and unimpairing; but it was no business of the earnest truth-seeker to pause and count the cost of his undertaking. Reality must be had at any cost. Without reality there could be no salvation.

Here, then, is the first point to be noted. In Arnold one has to do with a man who will play no tricks upon himself, cherish no illusion, tolerate no special pleading-- with a man whose prime business is with fact, and whose first question in regard to any new development of theory or practice will be, not is it pleasant, or comfortable, or easy, but is it true, is it right? As he says in his discourse on "Bishop Butler and the Zeitgeist," "things are what they are, and the consequences of them will be what they will be; why, then, should we desire to be

\textsuperscript{85} See Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse, stanza 13
deceived?" "In that compromising sentence is surely the right and satisfactory maxim for both individuals and nations."86 In that uncompromising sentence, ceratainly, lay the key to Arnold's intellectual position.

What, then, was Arnold's controlling purpose in his verse writing, as well as in his prose? What was the work that he wanted to do for the English people? How did he formulate his doctrine of poetry as a criticism of life? In trying to answer these ques­tions, it will be well first to have recourse to stray phrases in Arnold's writings; these phrases will give incidental glimpses, from different points of view, of his central ideal; later, their fragmen­tary suggestions may be brought together into some­thing like a comprehensive formula.

In the lectures On the Study of Celtic Literature, Arnold points out in closing that it has been his aim to lead Englishmen "to reunite themselves with their better mind and with the world through con­—

86 Arnold, Essays on Church and Religion (London, 1877), p. 237
science;" that he has sought to help them "conquer the hard unintelligence, which was just then their bane; to supple and reduce it by culture, by a growth in the variety, fullness, and sweetness of their spiritual life."87 In the Preface to his first volume of Essays, he explains that he is trying "to pull out a few more stops in that powerful but at present somewhat narrow-toned organ, the modern Englishmen."88 In Culture and Anarchy, he says that his object is to convince men of the value of "culture;" to incite them to the pursuit of "perfection;" to help "make reason and the will of God prevail." And again in the same work he declares that he is striving to intensify throughout England "the impulse to the development of the whole man, to connecting and harmonizing all parts of him, perfecting all, leaving none to take their chance."89

These phrases give hints of the prevailing

88 . Essays in Criticism (First and second series complete, New York, n.d.), p. vi
89 . Culture and Anarchy (New York, 1923), pp. xxxii-xxxiii
intention with which Arnold writes. They may well be supplemented by a series of phrases in which he finds fault with life as it actually exists in England, with the individual Englishman as he encounters him from day to day; these phrases, through their critical implications, also reveal the purpose that is always present in Arnold's mind, when he addresses his countrymen. "Provinciality," Arnold points out as a widely prevalent and injurious characteristic of English literature; it argues a lack of centrality, carelessness of ideal excellence, undue devotion to relatively unimportant matters. In religion he takes special exception to the "loss of totality" that results from sectarianism; this is the penalty, Arnold contends, that the Nonconformist pays for his hostility to the established church; in his pursuit of his own special enthusiasm, the Nonconformist becomes "a wild ass alone by himself." 90

From all these brief quotations, this much, at least, is plain: that what Arnold is continually

90 Arnold, Culture and Anarchy, pp. 16-19
recommending is the complete development of the human type, and that what he is condemning is the departure from some finely conceived ideal of human excellence— from some scheme of human nature in which all its powers have full harmonious play. The various phrases that have been quoted imply, as Arnold's continual purpose in his prose-writings, the recommendation of this ideal of human excellence and the illustration of the evils that result from its neglect. The significance and the scope of this purpose will become clearer, however, if one considers some imperfect ideals which Arnold finds operative in place of this absolute ideal, and notes their misleading and de-praving effects.

One such partial ideal is the worship of the excessively practical and the relentlessly utilitarian as the only things in life worth while. England is a prevailingly practical nation, and the age is a prevailingly practical age; the unregenerate product of this nation and age is the "Philistine," (the middle class) and against the Philistine Arnold never wearies of inveighing. The Philistine is the swag­gering enemy of the children of light, of the chosen
people, of those who love art and ideas disinterestedly. The Philistine cares only for business, for developing the material resources of the country—building bridges, making railways, and establishing plants. The machinery of life—its material organization—monopolizes all his attention. He judges of life by the outside, and is careless of things of the spirit. Against men of this class, Arnold cannot show himself too cynically severe; they are pitiful distortions; the practical instincts have usurped, and have destroyed the symmetry and integrity of human type. The senses and the will to live are monopolizing, and determine all the man's energy toward utilitarian ends. Society is in serious danger unless men of this class can be touched with a sense of their short-comings; made aware of the larger values of life; made pervious to ideas; brought to recognize the importance of the things of the mind and spirit.91

Another partial ideal, the prevalence of which Arnold laments, is the narrowly and unintelligent

91 Arnold, Culture and Anarchy, pp. 62-63
religious ideal. The middle class Englishman is, ac-
cording to Arnold, a natural Hebraist; he is pre-
occupied with conduct and careless about things of
the mind; he is negligent of beauty and abstract truth,
of all those interest in life which had for the Greek
of old, and still have for the modern man of "Hel-
lenistic" temper, such inalienable charm. The Puritan-
ism of the seventeenth century was the almost un-
restricted expression of the Hebraistic temper, and
from the conceptions of life that were then wrought
out, the middle classes in England have never wholly
escaped. The Puritans looked out upon life with a
narrow vision, recognized only a few of its varied
interests, and provoked the needs of only a part of
man's nature. Yet, their theories and conceptions of
life-- theories and conceptions that were limited in
the first place by the age in which they originated,
and in the second place by a Hebraistic lack of sensi-
tiveness to the manifold charm of beauty and knowledge--
these limited theories and conceptions have imposed
themselves constrainingly on many generations of
Englishmen. Today they remain, in all their narrow-
ness and with an ever increasing disproportion to
existing conditions, the most influential guiding principles of large masses of men. Such men spend their lives in a round of petty religious meetings and employments. They think all truth is summed up in their little cut and dried Biblical interpretations. New truth is uninteresting or dangerous. To Arnold, this whole view of life seems sadly mistaken, and the men who hold it seem fantastic distortions of the authentic human type.92

Still another kind of deformity arises when the intellect grows self-assertive and develops overweeningly. To this kind of distortion the modern man of science is specially prone; his exclusive study of material facts leads to crude, unregenerate strength of intellect, and leaves him careless of the value truth may have for the spirit, and of its glimmering suggestions of beauty. The philosopher and the scholar, too, are in danger of over-intellectualism. The devotee of a system of thought is apt to lose touch with the real values of life, and, in his exorbitant desire for unity and thoroughness of

92 Ibid., pp. 89-103
organization, he misses the free play of vital forces that gives to life its manifold charms, its infinite variety, and its ultimate reality. Bentham and Comte are considered by Arnold as examples of the evil effects of this rabid pursuit of system. As he says, "culture is always assigning to system-makers and systems a smaller share in the bent of human destiny than their friends like."\textsuperscript{93} Over-intellectualism, then, like the development of any other power, leads to disproportion and disorder.

Such being some of the partial ideals against which Arnold warns his readers, what account does he give of that perfect human type in all its integrity, in terms of which he criticizes these mental disorders or deformities? To attempt an exact definition of this type would, perhaps, be a bit difficult, and, with his usual sureness of taste, Arnold has avoided the experiment. But in many passages he has recorded clearly enough his notion of the powers in man that are essential to his humanity, and that all be duly recognized and developed, if man is to attain in its full

\textsuperscript{93} Ibid., p. 27
scope what nature offers him. A representative passage may be quoted from the lectures on Literature and Science:

"When we set ourselves to enumerate the powers which go to the building up 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, he (Professor Huxley) can hardly deny that this scheme (natural knowledge), though drawn in rough and plain lines enough, and not pretending to scientific exactness, does yet give a fairly true representation of the matter. Human nature is built up of these powers; we have the need for them all. When we have rightly made and adjusted the claims for them all, we shall then be in a fair way for getting soberness and righteousness with wisdom."

These same ideas are presented under a somewhat different aspect and with a somewhat different terminology in the first chapter of Culture and Anarchy:

"The great aim of culture (is) the aim of setting ourselves to ascertain what perfection is and to make it prevail." Culture seeks

"the determination of this question through all the voices of human experience which have been heard upon it, -- of art, science, poetry, philosophy, history, as well as of religion, -- in order to give a greater fullness and certainty

94 Arnold, Discourses in America (New York, 1924), pp. 101-2
to its solution. ... Religion says: 'The Kingdom of God is within you;' and culture, in like manner, places human perfection in an internal condition, in the growth and predominance of our humanity proper, as distinguished from our animality. It places it in the ever-increasing efficacy and in the general harmonious expansion of those gifts of thought and feeling which make the peculiar dignity, wealth, and happiness of human nature. ... It is in making endless additions to itself, in the endless expansion of its powers, in endless growth in wisdom and beauty, that the spirit of human race finds its ideal. To reach this ideal, culture is an indispensable aid, and that is the true value of culture."95

Arnold was never weary of preaching the eternally needful truth that satisfaction and sufficiency must be found within and not without, that man is his own best friend, and that what he cannot give to his life by thought and effort concentrated upon its harmonious development, on one else and nothing external can possibly give. He insisted upon the absolute worth of the self: not to copy others slavishly, not to bewail the fate which has set his course in one direction rather than another, not to be the drifting creature of circumstances, but to work out his own proper destiny, to overcome adventitious obstacles, and so

95 Arnold, Culture and Anarchy, pp. 8-9
to realize his true self. This is the thought which runs through his poem, Self-Dependence, beginning with the lament,

"Weary of myself, and sick of asking What I am, and what I ought to be, At the vessel's prow I stand, which bears me Forwards, forwards, o'er the starlit sea,"

and ending with the strain of triumphant assurance:

"O air-born Voice! long since severely clear, A cry like thine in my own heart I hear. 'Resolve to be thyself: and know, that he Who finds himself, loses his misery."96

"Find thyself!" That is part of the duty and part of the secret. But he who does not seek will never find himself, and with time for every other quest one has no time for the quest nearest to hand.

In such passages as those quoted above, Arnold comes as near as he ever comes to defining the perfect human type. He does not profess to define it universally and in abstract terms, does not even describe concretely for men of his own time and nation the precise equipoise of powers essential to perfection. Yet, he names these powers, suggests the ends toward which they must, by their joint working, contribute
and illustrates through examples the evil effects of the preponderance or absence of one and another. Finally, in the course of his many discussions, he describes in detail the method by which the delicate adjustment of these rival powers may be secured in the typical man; suggests who is to be the judge of the conflicting claims of these powers, and indicates the process by which this judge may most persuasively lay his opinions before those whom he wishes to influence. The method for the attainment of the perfect type is culture; the censor of defective types and the judge of the rival claims of the cooperant powers is the critic; and the process by which this judge clarifies his own ideas and enforces his opinions on others is criticism.97

I am now at the center of Arnold's theory of life and hold the key-word to his system of belief. His reasons for attaching to the work of the critic the importance he palpably attached to it are at once apparent. Criticism is the method by which the perfect type of human nature is at any moment to be

97 Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, pp. 157-65
apprehended and kept in uncontaminate clearness of outline before the popular imagination. The ideal critic is the man of nicest discernment in matters intellectual, moral, aesthetic, social; of perfect equipoise of powers; of delicately pervasive sympathy; of imaginative insight; who grasps comprehensively the whole life of his time; who feels its vital tendencies and is intimately aware of its most insistent preoccupations; who also keeps his orientation toward the unchanging norms of human endeavor, and who is thus able to note and set forth the imperfections in existing types of human nature and to urge persuasively a return in essential particulars to the normal type. The function of criticism, then, is the vindication of the ideal human type against perverting influences, and Arnold's prose writings will, for the most part, be found to have inspired in one form or another by a single purpose: the correction of excess in some human activity and the restoration of that activity to its proper place among the powers that make up the ideal human type.

Culture and Anarchy (1869) was the first of Arnold's books to illustrate adequately this far-
reaching conception of criticism. His special topic is, in this case, social conditions in England. Politicians, he urges, whose profession it is to deal with social questions, are engrossed in practical matters and biased by party considerations; they lack the detachment and breadth of view to see the questions at issue in their true relations to abstract standards of right and wrong. They mistake means for ends, machinery for the results that machinery is meant to secure; they lose all sense of values and exalt temporary measures into matters of sacred import. What is needed to correct these absurd misapprehensions is the free play of critical intelligence. The critic must examine social conditions dispassionately; he must determine what is essentially wrong in the inner lives of the various classes of men around him and so reveal the real sources of those social evils which politicians are trying to remedy by external re-adjustments and temporary measures.

This is just the task that Arnold undertakes in *Culture and Anarchy*. He sets himself to consider English society in its length and breadth with a view to discovering what is its essential constitution,
what are the typical classes that enter into it, and what are the characteristics of these classes. So far as concerns classification, he ultimately accepts, it is true, as adequate to his purpose, the traditional division of English society into upper, middle, and lower classes. But he then goes on to give an analysis of each of these classes that is novel, penetrating, in the highest degree, stimulating. He takes a typical member of each class and describes him in detail, intellectually, morally, socially; he points out his sources of strength and his sources of weakness. He compares him as a type with the abstract ideal of human excellence and notes wherein his powers fall short or exceed. He indicates the reaction upon the social and political life of the nation of these various defects and excesses, their inevitable influence in producing social misadjustment and friction. Finally, he urges that the one remedy that will correct these errant social types and bring them nearer to the perfect human type is culture, increase in vital knowledge.98

The details of Arnold's application of this

98 Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, pp. 59-88
conception of culture as a remedy for the social evils of the time, one may follow out for himself in Culture and Anarchy. One point in Arnold's conception, however, is to be noted forwith; it is a crucial point in its influence on his theorizings. By culture, he means increase of knowledge; yes, but he means something more; culture is, for Arnold, not merely an intellectual matter. Culture is the best knowledge made operative and dynamic in life and character. Knowledge must be vitalized; it must be intimately conscious of the whole range of human interests; it must ultimately subserve the whole nature of man. Continually, then, as Arnold is pleading for the spread of ideas, for increase of light, for the acceptance on the part of his fellow-countrymen of new knowledge from the most diverse sources, he is as keenly alive as one to the dangers of over-intellectualism. The undue development of the intellectual powers is as injurious to the individual as any other form of deviation from the perfect human type.

Enough has now been said to illustrate Arnold's conception of culture and of its value as a specific against all the ills that society is heir to. Culture
is vital knowledge and the critic is its fosterer and guardian; culture and criticism work together for the preservation of the integrity of the human type against all the disasters that threaten it from the storm and stress of modern life. Politics, religion, scholarship, science, each has its special danger for the individual; each seize upon him, subdues him relentlessly to the need of the moment and the requirements of some particular function, and converts him often into a mere distorted fragment of humanity. Against this tyranny of the moment, against the specializing and materializing trend of modern life, criticism offers a powerful safeguard.

From the foregoing discussions it is evident that Arnold's conception of the nature and function of criticism makes intelligible and justifies his doctrine of poetry as a criticism of life. In his essay on "The Study of Poetry," Arnold says:

"In poetry, as a criticism of life under the conditions fixed for such a criticism by the laws of poetic truth and poetic beauty, the spirit of our race will find, ... as time goes on and as other helps fail, its consolation and stay."99

99 Arnold, Essays in Criticism, p. 281
Arnold was never weary of insisting that poetry is to be rightly held as a profoundly earnest, important, and enduring thing, and that it is to poetry that mankind will more and more have to turn "to interpret life for us, to console, to sustain us." Poetry, for him, was "nothing less than the most perfect speech of man, that in which he comes nearest to being able to utter the truth." Such was his theory of the meaning and obligations of poetry, and his own practice was consistently in harmony with it. Poetry should be characterized by the "noble and profound application of ideas to life;" it should be moral in the largest and deepest sense of that uncertain term; it should deal directly with life; and it should be based on sound and substantial subject-matter.

To this account of poetry--as a criticism of life--it has been objected that criticism is an intellectual process, while poetry is primarily an affair of the imagination and the heart; and that to

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100 Ibid., p. 280
101 Ibid., p. 346
102 Ibid., p. 352
103 Ibid., pp. 353-56
regard poetry as a criticism of life is to take a view of poetry that tends to convert it into mere rhetorical moralizing; the decorative expression in rhythmical language of abstract truth about life. This misinterpretation of Arnold's meaning becomes impossible, if the foregoing discussions of his theory of criticism be borne in mind. Criticism is the determination and the representation of the original, of the ideal. Moreover, it is not a determination of the original formally and theoretically, through speculation or the enumeration of abstract qualities. The process to be used in criticism is a vital process of appreciation, in which the critic, sensitive to the whole value of human life, to the appeal of art and of conduct and of manners as well as of abstract truth, feels his way to a synthetic grasp upon what is ideally best and portrays this concretely and persuasively for the popular imagination. Such an appreciator of life, if he produces beauty in verse, if he embody his vision of the ideal in metre, will be a poet. In other words,

104 See J. M. Robertson, Modern Humanists Reconsidered (London, 1927), pp. 106-12
the poet is the appreciator of human life who sees in it most sensitively, inclusively, and penetratingly what is original and evokes his vision before others through rhythm and rhyme. In this sense, poetry can hardly be denied to be a criticism of life; it is the winning portrayal of the ideal of human life, as this ideal shapes itself in the mind of the poet. The great poet, according to Arnold, is the typically sensitive, penetrative, and suggestive appreciator of life, who calls to his aid, to make his appreciation as resonant and persuasive as possible, as potent as possible over man's minds and hearts, all the emotional and imaginative resources of language—rhythm, figures, allegory, symbolism—whatever will enable him to impose his appreciation of life upon others and to insinuate into their souls his sense of the relative values of human acts, characters, and passions; whatever will help him to make more overweeningly beautiful and insistently eloquent his vision of beauty and truth. In this sense, the poet is the limiting ideal of the appreciative critic, and poetry is the ultimate criticism of life—the finest portrayal each age can attain to of what seems to it in life
most significant and delightful. 105

A glance through the volumes of Arnold's essays renders it clear that his selection of a poet or a prose-writer for discussion was usually made with a view to putting before the English people some desirable trait of character for their imitation, some temperamental excellence that they are lacking in, some mode of belief that they neglect, some habit of thought that they need to cultivate. Joubert is studied and portrayed because of his single-hearted love of light, the purity of his disinterested devotion to truth, the fine distinction of his thought, and the freedom of his spirit from the sordid stains of worldly life. Heine is a typical leader in the war of emancipation, the arch-enemy of Philistinism, and the light-hearted, indomitable foe of prejudice and hypocrisy. Maurice and Eugenie de Guerin are winning examples of the spiritual distinction that modern Romanism can induce in timely-happy souls. Of the importance for modern England of emphasis on all these qualities of mind and heart, Arnold was securely

105 See H. W. Garrod, Poetry and the Criticism of Life (Cambridge, 1931), pp. 3-22
convinced. He turns to them, as Professor Walker says, "not because he thinks them better than the writers of his own country, but because he thinks more good will come, both to himself and to England, from an investigation of what is foreign and unfamiliar, than from an examination of writings illustrating merits and charged with our own defects."106

With Arnold's doctrine of the indissoluble connection between the highest poetic excellence and essential nobleness of subject-matter, probably, only the most irreconcilable advocates of art for art's sake would quarrel. So loyal an adherent of art as Walter Pater suggests a test of poetic greatness substantially the same as with Arnold's. Pater says:

"It is on the quality of the matter it informs or controls, its compass, its variety, its alliance to great ends, or the depth of the note of revolt, or the largeness of hope in it, that the greatness of literary art depends, as The Divine Comedy, Paradise Lost, Les Miserables, The English Bible, are great art."107

This may be taken as merely a different phrasing of


Arnold’s principle that the "greatness of a poet lies in his powerful and beautiful application of ideas to life-- to the question: How to live." Surely, then, one is not at liberty to press any objection to Arnold's general theory of poetry as a criticism of life on the ground of its being over-ethical.

There remains, nevertheless, the question of emphasis. In the application to special cases of this test of essential worth, either the critic may be constitutionally biased in favor of a somewhat restricted range of definite ideas about life, or even when he is fairly hospitable toward various moral idioms, he may still be so intent upon making ethical distinctions as to fail to give their due to the purely artistic qualities of poetry. It is in this latter way that Arnold is most apt to offend. The emphasis in the discussions of Wordsworth, Shelley, Byron, Keats, Gray, and Milton is prevalingly on the ethical characteristics of each poet; and the reader carries away from an essay a vital conception of the play of moral energy and of spiritual passion in the poet's

108 Arnold, Essays in Criticism, p. 353
verse rather than an impression of his peculiar adum-
bration of beauty, the delicate color modulations on
the surface of his image of life.

It must, however, be borne in mind that Arnold
has specially admitted the incompleteness of his
doctrine of poetry as a criticism of life; this criti-
cism, he has expressly added, must be made in con-
formity "to laws of poetic truth and poetic beauty."
"The profound criticism of life," characteristic of
"the few supreme masters," must exhibit itself "in
indissoluble connection with the laws of poetic truth
and beauty."109 Is there, then, any account to be
found in Arnold of these laws observance of which
secures poetic beauty and truth? Is there any special
description of the ways in which poetic beauty and
truth manifest themselves, of the formal characteristics
to be found in poetry where poetic beauty and truth
are present? Does Arnold either suggest the methods
the poet must follow to attain these qualities or
classify the various subordinate effects through which
poetic beauty and truth invariably reveal their

109 Arnold, Ibid., p. 303
presence? The most pertinent parts of his writings to search for some declaration on these points are the lectures on *Translating Homer*, and the second series of his essays which deal chiefly with the study of poetry. Here, if anywhere, one ought to find registration of beliefs as regards the precise nature and source of beauty and truth.

Throughout all these writings, which run a considerable period of time, Arnold makes fairly consistent use of half a dozen categories for his analyses of poetic effects. These categories are substance and matter, style and manner, diction and movement. Of the substance of really great poetry, one learns repeatedly that it must be made of ideas of profound significance "on Man, on Nature, and on Human life." 110 This is, however, merely the prescription already noted above that poetry, to reach the highest excellence, must contain a penetrating and ennobling criticism of life. In the essay on Byron, however, there is something formally added to this requisition of "truth and seriousness of substance and matter;"

besides these, "felicity and perfection of diction and manner, as these are exhibited in the best poets, are what constitute a criticism of life made in conformity with the laws of poetic truth and poetic beauty." There must, then, be felicity and perfection of diction and manner in poetry of the highest order; these terms are somewhat vague, but serve, at least, to guide one in his analytic way. In the essay on "The Study of Poetry," there is still further progress made in the description of poetic excellence.

Arnold says:

"To the style and manner of the best poetry, their special character, their accent is given by their diction, and, even yet more, by their movement. And though we distinguish between the two characters, the two accents, of superiority (namely, between the superiority that comes from substance and the superiority that comes from style), "yet they are nevertheless vitally connected one with the other. The superior character of truth and seriousness, in the matter and substance of the best poetry, is inseparable from the superiority of diction and movement marking its style and manner. The two superiorities are closely related, and are in steadfast proportion one to the other. So far as high poetic truth and seriousness are wanting to a poet's matter and substance, so far also, we may be sure, will a high poetic stamp of diction and movement be wanting to his style and manner."112

111 Ibid., p. 376
112 Ibid., p. 290
That there is this intimate and necessary union between a poet's mode of conceiving life and his manner of poetic expression is hardly disputable. The image of life in a poet's mind is simply the outside world transformed by the complex of sensations and thoughts and emotions peculiar to the poet; and this image inevitably frames for itself a visible and audible expression that delicately utters its individual character—distills that character subtly through word and sentence, rhythm and metaphor, image and figure of speech, and through their integration into a vital work of art. Moreover, the poet's style is itself, in general, the product of the same personality which determines his image of life, and must, therefore, be like his image of life delicately marked with the marking of his play of thought and feeling and fancy. The close correspondence, then, between the poet's subject-matter and his manner of style is indubitable. The part of Arnold's conclusion or the point in his method that is regrettable is the exclusive stress that he throws on this dependence of style upon worth of substance. He converts style into a mere function of the moral quality of a poet's
thought about life, and fails to furnish any delicately studied categories for the appreciation of poetic style apart from its moral implications.

Take, for example, the judgments passed in The Study of Poetry upon various poets; in every instance, the estimate of the poet's style turns upon the quality of his thought about life. Is it Chaucer whose right to be ranked as a classical is mooted? He cannot be ranked as a classic because "the substance of his poetry" has not "high seriousness." Is it Burns whose relative rank is being fixed? Burns, through lack of "absolute sincerity," falls short of "high seriousness," and hence is not to be placed among the classics.113 And thus, continually with Arnold, effects of style are merged into moral qualities, and one gains little insight into the refinements of poetical manner except as these derive directly from the poet's moral consciousness. The categories of style and manner, diction and movement, are everywhere subordinated to the categories of substance and matter, are treated as almost wholly derivative. "Felicity and perfection of diction and

113 Ibid., pp. 292-306
manner, "wherever they are admittedly present, are usually explained as the direct result of the poet's lofty conception of life.

Thus, from the above discussions it is to be noted that Arnold ostensibly admits that poetry, to be of the highest excellence, must, in addition to containing a criticism of life of profound significance, conform to the laws of poetic beauty and truth. He accepts as necessary categories for the appreciation of poetic excellence, style and manner, diction and movement. Yet, his most important general assertion about these latter purely formal determination of poetry is that they are inseparably connected with substance and matter; similarly, whenever he discusses artistic effects, he is apt to find them interesting simply as serving to interpret the artist's prevailing mood toward life; and even where he escapes for the moment from his ethical interest and appreciates with imaginative delicacy the individual quality of a poem or a poet's style, he is nearly always found, sooner or later, explaining this quality as originating in the poet's peculiar "ethos."
CHAPTER V

ARNOLD'S DOCTRINE OF NATURE AND MAN

In his treatment of Nature, Arnold comes as a close follower of Wordsworth, to the inspiration, and specially to the "healing power" of whose poetry, he more than once bore emphatic testimony.

"He spoke, and loos'd 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 return'd: for there was shed On spirits that had long been dead, Spirits dried up and closely-furl'd. The freshness of the early world."

In these lines, Arnold indicates the particular nature of the influence he realized had been exercised over his life by him whom he speaks in The Youth of Nature "as a priest to us all of the wonder and bloom of the world." With Wordsworth as his guide, then, Arnold sought in Nature a temporary refuge from the "doubts, disputes, distractions, fears," of his own "iron time;" and in communion with her, he found not

only relief, but also a soothing, consoling, and up-lifting power. Nature is grander than man, he says; and even when paying tribute to Wordsworth he makes her say:

"The singer was less than his themes, Life, and Emotion, and I."115

In the poem from which these lines are quoted, and its companion piece, The Youth of Man, Arnold confesses his faith more explicitly. Nature is calm and eternal, the ordinary life of man, transient and futile. One's only hope of salvation, of the peace which Arnold held to be the true end of life, lies in learning her large, impersonal harmonies.

Wordsworthian though Arnold professed himself, the voice that lends to the "solemn hills" has a far grimmer message than that delivered by Wordsworth. There is no gusto or exultation in it. In Tintern Abbey, Wordsworth perceived in Nature a divine and consoling spirit, a moral guide and teacher. When Arnold attributes personality to the non-human forces of the universe, he seldom speaks of Nature flat-teringly. To him she is enigmatic, a "dark-browed

115 Ibid., "The Youth of Nature," 11. 89-90
sphinx," a cruel, or rather indifferent spectator, mocking the vain fever of man's small activities. Thus, he says in his sonnet:

"'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."116

As these lines indicate, Arnold was emphatically not a Nature-worshiper in the Wordsworthian sense. His Scholar-Gipsy and his Thyrsis show him keenly sensitive to pastoral beauty, it is true, but his feeling for Nature's more winsome aspects is nearer to that of Keats in the odes and to that of the Greek idyllists than that of Wordsworth. He is deeply penetrated with the sentiment of the forests, the rocks of the Alpine heights, the noble meadow-lands

116 Ibid., "To an Independent Preacher."
or the mystic sun-sets seen in the neighborhood of Oxford; and he renders with charming delicacy and suggestiveness the impressions which he has received from woods and rivers and flowering fields. The emotion which pervades these pieces is, however, a relatively simple and sensuous delight in the consoling loveliness of the external features of rural life— a loveliness sufficient for an hour to make the scholar forget his books, and to free the thinker from the pain of thought. The emotion is modified in each case, not by the heightening of mystical communion but by a return to Arnold's habitual world of thought and morality.

Some aspects of the natural world he thought exemplary and edifying, particularly the march of the stars in their courses, and the silent swinging of the earth through its lonely course around the sun. To speak of the exemplary and edifying aspects of Nature is, on the whole, more characteristic of Arnold than to speak of her consoling loveliness. There is little or nothing mystical for him in the sweet influence of the stars. It is simply that the planetary and stellar motions appear to him matchless
patterns of quiet eternal activity. Illustrations may be found in *A Summer Night*, *Self-Dependence*, and in *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 tranquility;  
Of labor, that in lasting fruit outgrows  
For noisier schemes, accomplished in response,  
Too great for haste, too high for rivalry.  
Yes, while on earth a thousand discords ring,  
Man's senseless uproar mingling with his toil,  
Still do thy quiet ministers move on,  
Their glorious tasks in silence perfecting;  
Still working, blaming still our vain turmoil,  
Laborers that shall not fail, when man is gone."117

It is to be noted that in Arnold's case, the so-called moral indifference of Nature to man's joys and sufferings, instead of jarring upon the feelings or disturbing the mind, becomes an additional influence in turning his spirit towards Nature. What others gird against as the inscrutable, unresponsive insensibility, the inflexible regularity, of cosmic things, he on the contrary find, not oppressive or overwhelming, but full of subtle stimulus and meaning. An appeal, direct, potent, irresistible, is made by them to the largely-

117 Ibid., *Quiet Work*
developed stoical element in his own character. To emulate Nature in this respect--to possess one's own soul in quietude, despite the storm and turmoil, the conflicts and alarms outside--thus becomes one of his moral ideals. In Nature he seemed to find not only the calmness and repose for which he yearned, but also a majestic serenity and composure in admirable contrast with the fret and fume, the hurry and worry of his epoch.

In the Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse, Arnold finds himself in a "showery twilight gray," a visitor "to the Carthusians' world-famed home;" and one notices at once that Arnold's interest in the old forms and faiths of the Middle Ages is something different from the interest of Rossetti. Medieval catholicism appealed to the great Pre-Raphaelite master upon the imaginative or aesthetic side; he loved it for its beauty, its warmth, its picturesqueness, its romantic associations. Arnold, on the other hand, was preoccupied with and absorbed in the purely religious element--the faith and hope out of which it had so long stood as a visible and palpable symbol. He expressly lingers over every detail of the austerity of
the ascetic life upon which he has so suddenly come out of the tumultuous and restless activity of his own modern world. His quick eye pierces to the heart of this strange, alien life; he is thrown inward upon himself at the magnetic touch of a faith which, no matter how meaninglessly hideous and grotesque and perverted may now seem its embodiments, was once full of vital and saving value. Then it is that he directly questions himself, asking what he can have to do in such a "living tomb." Is not his presence there itself conclusive evidence of his want of loyalty to those "rigorous teachers" who had seized his youth, and at whose behest he had long ago "so much unlearnt, so much resigned?" But he answers with an emphatic NO. He is interested in the monastery and its inmates as a Greek might have been interested when he lighted unexpectedly upon a "fallen Runic stone":- for both were faiths, and both were gone. And then come the solemn and impressive stanzas in which Arnold deliberately defines his position:

"Wandering between two worlds, one dead,
The other powerless to be borne,
With nowhere yet to rest my head,
Like these, on earth I wait forlorn,"
Their faith, my tears, the world deride--
I come to shed them at their side."118

Why, then, does Arnold linger among the shadows and traditions of the old Carthusian monastery--he, skeptic of the later times, for whom the beliefs and aspirations of the Middle Ages are dead beyond all possibility of resuscitation? It is because he is seeking vainly for the spiritual comfort which all the while he knows he can never find, either in the old creed, because he has outgrown it, or in the new thought, because he has not yet emotionally appropriated it. After all that has been accomplished in the past, the pangs that tortured men remain as an inheritance to their sons; and neither by the "haughty scorn" of Byron, nor by the "lovely wail" of Shelley, nor by the stern, sad moralizing of Senancour, has the world been enriched with the means of lasting hope and salvation. Hence, though the poet may cling to some faith in the future, his thought concerning his own generation rises but little above the dull level of absolute despair.

118

Ibid., Stanzas from the Grand Chartreuse, stanza 15
To Arnold, human life, in its higher developments, presented itself as a stern and strenuous affair. The many might choose to abandon themselves, like fools of chance, to the current of outward circumstance, and trust to fate to bring them safely through; for

"Most men eddy about
Here and there— eat and drink
Chatter, and love, and hate,
Gather and squander, are raised
Aloft, are hurl'd in the dust,
Striving blindly, achieving,
Nothing; and then they die."\(^{119}\)

Arnold, however, belonged to those others— the small minority—

"Whom a thirst
Ardent, unquenchable, fires,
Not with the crowd to be spent,
Not without aim to go round,
In an eddy of purposeless dust,
Effort unmeaning and vain."\(^{120}\)

But the path of advance to which the select few— the remnant, as distinguished from the majority— thus stand self-committed, is one that leads through dangers and difficulties without number— "a long, steep journey." To "strain on" with "frowning foreheads" and "lips sternly compress'd"\(^{121}\) fighting inch by inch

\(^{119}\) Arnold, Rugby Chapel, ll. 60-66
\(^{120}\) Ibid., ll. 73-78
\(^{121}\) Ibid., ll. 79-116
through the darkness and the tempest, often without friend or companion on the perilous road-- such is the only way to reach the goal.

Arnold makes no attempt to lighten the burden of life-- it is here and one must bear it; all he can offer to do is to show him how to strengthen himself, that he may carry it manfully, and without childish complaint. That man's course of self-discipline must needs be fraught with infinite pain and trial; that it will always be easy for him to fail and difficult to succeed; that every step he takes forward and upward will be the result of labors accomplished "with aching hands and bleeding feet"¹₂²-- with such declarations does Arnold come to him and strive to rouse him from the careless self-complacency of the average man of the world.

This problem of individual existence, of conduct, becomes all the more arduous and complicated because of the danger of extremes. Most men may accept without protest the "brazen prison" in which their lives are confined, giving all their energies to "some

¹₂² Arnold, Morality, l. 7
unmeaning task-work" and dying at last "unfreed, having seen nothing, still unblest." From such stultifying conditions a few impatiently escape; and of such few, some setting forth upon "the wide ocean of life anew" lose their hold of reality altogether, care not how there may prevail "Despotic on that sea Trade-winds which cross it from eternity," and thus "standing for some false, impossible shore" of aspiration or fancy, make shipwreck of themselves, and perish, miserable and unavailing. Thus the terrible question:

"Is there no life, save these alone? Madman or slave, must man be one?"

Hemmed in on all sides as in this earth "whereon we dream" by the high "uno'erleap'd Mountains of Necessity," we are sooner or later made to realize that "Limits we did not set, Condition all we do"

and that with all our boasted freedom, our spiritual yearnings, our rhetorical and conventional phraseology,

123 Arnold, A Summer Night, ll. 34-75
124 To a Republican Friend (Second Sonnet), ll. 5-7
125 Empedocles on Etna, Act. I., Scene 2
it must ever remain profoundly true that

"To tunes we did not call our being must keep chime."\(^{126}\)

There, perhaps, lies the central crux for those who scorn to remain contented inmates of the brazen prison wherein most men pass their days. Men are chained fast to stern facts, and the danger is lest they should wear themselves out with futile strivings for the impossible. Their margin of possible endeavor is narrower than they deem; yet, by the frank acceptance of their limitations and the careful economy and direction of their powers, they will be privileged to discover

"How fair a lot to fill
Is left to each man still."\(^{127}\)

Thus, Arnold comes to man with his word of quiet but lofty encouragement:

"But thou, because thou hear'st
   Men scoff at Heaven and Fate,
   Because the Gods thou fear'st
   Fail to make blest thy state
Tremblest, and wilt not dare to trust the joys there are!

\(^{126}\) Empedocles on Etna, Act. I, Scene 2
\(^{127}\) A Summer Night, ll. 91-92
"I say: Fear not! Life still
Leaves human efforts scope,
But since life teems with ill,
Nurse no extravagant hope:
Because thou must not dream, thou need'st not
then despair."

His doctrine of poetry on man owes its quality, its
deeply affecting quality, to the power with which it
expresses a spirit conscious that it is fighting, not
a losing battle, but a battle against the world, in
which the victory can, at best, be only hardly won.
There is always something that does live; and in that
cause of it, repeatedly, Arnold rallies his powers--
"if that fails, fight as we will, we die!"

It is, therefore, in aiding the individual man
towards the solution of the doubly-complex problem
of his life that the world's great system of morality
have been of the highest service. In his essay on
"Marcus Aurelius," Arnold himself states the matter:

"The object of systems of morality is to
take possession of human life, to save it from
being abandoned to passion or allowed to drift
at hazard, to give it happiness by establishing
it in the practice of virtue. ... In its un-
inspired as well as in its inspired moments,
in its days of languor and gloom as well as
in its days of sunshine and energy, human life

Empedocles on Etna, Loc. cit.
has thus always a clue to follow, and may always be making way towards its goal.\textsuperscript{129}

In the passage just quoted above, Arnold lays stress upon life's uninspired moments, upon the days of langour and gloom through which the strongest must necessarily be called upon to pass. Even then, he asserts, man may still have his clue to follow, may still make headway towards his goal. He throws him back everywhere upon the element of personal character, he raises him above the seemingly fatal influence of chance and circumstance; points within for the ultimate secret of strength and success; and insists that in the performance of duty itself lies his one certain path-- not to what the world calls happiness; to that he can claim no right; but to the fine satisfaction which belongs to the feeling of steady manhood, and his sense of superiority to those environing forces which constantly do battle against the soul.

\textsuperscript{129} Arnold, \textit{Essays in Criticism}, p. 253
CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

SIMILARITIES AND DISSIMILARITIES

My discussions of some of the poetic doctrines of Wordsworth and Arnold in the foregoing chapters show that these two poets of the nineteenth century, while closely related in their views of poetry, differed in method and in spirit.

Wordsworth, in his doctrine of "Poetic Diction," was not opposing the real language of men to that of Shakespeare and Milton, but identifying these and opposing them to the perversions of language which had been brought about by poetic diction. Against these perversions, Wordsworth directs his arguments, which are based on the belief that the real language of men is the language of real men who spoke it in its most unperverted, idiomatic form; and he cites, as a striking illustrations of this "real language," the language of the lower and middle classes and the great English poets. He called this the philosophic language, because it is based on real experience and knowledge and is not the product of the arbitrary and capricious habits of expression which builds up a vocabulary that does
not arise out of actual contact with reality. It is a permanent language, because, both in the case of the unsophisticated person and in the case of the poet, it arises out of repeated experience and regular feelings, and is shared alike by both classes.

Like Wordsworth, Arnold really gives to the imagination and the emotions the primacy of life; like Wordsworth he contends against formalists, system-makers, and all devotees of abstractions. It is by an exquisite tact, rather than by logic, that Arnold in all doubtful matters decides between good and evil. He keeps to the concrete image; he is an appreciator of life, not a deducer of formulas or a demonstrator. He is continually concerned about what ought to be; he is not cynically content with the knowledge of what is.

Turning next to Wordsworth's own intention, it may be urged that in attributing an extreme antipathy to prose to critics of the age, he had a purpose of his own, which may well hold good, even though it may be proved that he misrepresented the attitude and opinion of the critics. Wordsworth's own object must have been to draw attention to the extreme and unwarrantable suspicion against the introduction into
poetry of anything pertaining to prose, prevalent among the poets and critics of the age, with a view to maintaining that there is greater room for prose structure, including words and order, in poetry than critics were prepared to allow. It might be quite true that Wordsworth might have exaggerated the perversity of the critics and imagined an antagonism on their part to prose order, when no such antagonism really existed; but this does not absolutely disprove the possibility that the ideal which he himself wanted to inculcate related to a conformity to prose order on that part of poetry, though he was less an advocate of a revolutionary change and more in accordance with orthodox usage than he was aware of. It is possible that Wordsworth was impelled to enunciate his ideas of reform by abuses in the contemporary practice of poetry, and these abuses referred more to diction than arrangement.

Arnold, while expressing himself somewhat vague on this topic, made fairly consistent use of half a dozen categories for his analyses of poetic effects. One of these categories is diction and movement. In his essay on "Byron," he formally added to his re-
quisition of "truth and seriousness of substance and manner" "felicity and perfection of diction and manner, as these are exhibited in the best poets," which were made in conformity with the laws of poetic truth and poetic beauty. He contended that the image of life in a poet's mind is simply the outside world transformed by the complex of sensations and thoughts and emotions peculiar to the poet; and this image inevitably frames for itself a visible and audible expression that delicately utters its individual character. In general, the poet's choice of expression is itself a product of the same personality which determines his image of life, and must therefore be like his image of life delicately marked with the markings of his play of thought and feeling and fancy. "Felicity and perfection of diction and manner," wherever they are admittedly present, are usually explained as the direct result of the poet's lofty conception of life. It is the substance of poetry that Arnold was chiefly anxious to handle, while the form is left with incidental analysis.

In treating of Man's life, Wordsworth holds that Man may be found at his best where his life is most
simple-- where the conventionalities, customs, and institutions of society have not rendered it artificial and complex, and where he pursues his vocation close to Nature's heart. That is, among rural folk one may find human nature in its essential, universal, elemental life, better than elsewhere. And when he does read it, despite all of the mental, moral, and spiritual infirmity disclosed, he finds that fundamentally humanity has worth. The inner nature is good; and Man's potentialities are such that, under proper conditions, they will unfold to his credit, and he will achieve a worthy destiny under God.

Men are not isolated personal units. They exist as members of a spiritual kingdom, all possessed of moral natures, and subject to the same moral law. In this lies the fundamental oneness of the race, and the ultimate ground of the obligations of Man's humanity to Man. And, since Man is a moral being, no order of society is permissible that treats him as a tool--a mere means to an end. There is a native equality belonging to him by virtue of his essential constitution as moral, and this must be preserved at all costs.

Wordsworth holds that life is worth living.
Despite its manifold evils, life itself is good. The evils themselves may prove stepping-stones to good. Suffering is a means to an ethical end. Through it, virtues are developed which strengthen and adorn the soul. Furthermore, Man is not alone in the world, nor alone in his sufferings. The resources of Divine Providence are at the command of the human soul in every condition of human need. Faith in God, in duty, and in a glorious destiny for the worthy, with its varied vicissitudes, and its large portion of physical and mental suffering.

In contrast with Wordsworth, Arnold is either very austere or very pessimistic in his treatment of Man's life. If the feeling is moral, the predominant impression is of austerity; if it is intellectual, the predominant impression is of sadness. He was not insensible to the charm of life, but he feels it in his senses only to deny it in his mind. For instance:

"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."
This is the contradiction of sense and thought, the voice of a regret grounded in the intellect— for if it were vital and grounded in the emotions it would become despair; the creed of illusion and futility in life, which is the characteristic note of Arnold, and the reason of his acceptance by many minds. The one thing about life which he most insists on is its isolation, its individuality. In the series called "Switzerland," this is the substance of the whole; and the doctrine is stated with an intensity and power, with an amplitude and prolongation, that set these poems apart as the most remarkable of all of his lyrics. From a poet so deeply impressed with this aspect of existence, and unable to find its remedy or its counterpart in the harmony of life, no joyful or hopeful word can be expected, and none is found.

Arnold also dwells on the futility of life. Though he bids one strive and work, and points to the example of the strong whom he has known, yet one feels that his voice rings more true when he writes of Obermann than in any other of the elegiac poems. In such a verse as the "Summer Night," again the genuineness of the mood is indubitable. In "The Sick King
in Bokhara," the dramatic expression of his genius, futility is the very center of his action. The fact that so much of his poetry seems to take its motive from the sinking of Christian faith has set him among the skeptic or agnostic poets, and the main movement which he believed he had expressed was doubtless that in which agnosticism was a leading element. The unbelief of the third quarter of the nineteenth century was certainly a controlling influence over him, and in a man mainly intellectual by nature, it could not well have been otherwise.

On the modern side, the example of Wordsworth was most formative, and it is common to describe Arnold as a Wordsworthian. In his contemplative attitude to Nature, and in his habitual recourse to her, Arnold was; but both Nature herself as she appeared to him, and his mood in her presence, were very different from Wordsworth's conception and emotion. Arnold finds in Nature a refuge from life, an escape; but Wordsworth, in going into the hills for poetical communion, passed from a less to a fuller and deeper life, and obtained an inspiration, and was seeking the goal of all his being. Wordsworth's mind was possessed of the belief
that Nature is endowed with conscious life; he seems to regard all things as permeated by one universal Spiritual Presence.

In the method of approach, too, as well as in the character of the experience, there is a profound difference between the two poets. Arnold sees with the outward rather than the inward eye. He is pictorial in a way that Wordsworth seldom is; he uses much more, and gives a group or a scene with the externality of a painter. He resembles in method with Tennyson rather than Wordsworth, and has more direct analogy with the Greek manner than with the modern and emotional schools. The method is objective, often minute, and always carefully composed, in the artistic sense of the word. The description of the river Oxus at the end of Sohrab and Rustum, for example, though faintly charged with suggested and allegoric meaning, is a noble close to the poem which ends in it. The scale is large, and Arnold was fond of a broad landscape, of mountains, and prospects over the land; but one cannot fancy Wordsworth writing it. As Wordsworth gained more insight in Nature, he conceived of joyousness as being a part of her essential life. It became his faith
"that every flower enjoys the air it breathes," and not only every flower, but trees and birds, and even inanimate objects. The heart of Nature is a joyous heart. Her whole being throbs with pleasure. So, too, Arnold's charming scene of the English garden in *Thyrsis* is far from Wordsworth's manner:

> "So, some tempestuous morn in early June, When the year's primal burst of bloom is o'er, Before the roses and the longest day— When garden-walks, and all the grassy floor, With blossoms, red and white, of fallen May, And chestnut-flowers are strewn— So have I heard the cuckoo's parting cry, From the wet field, through the vext garden-trees, Come with the volleying rain and tossing breeze: The bloom is gone, and with the bloom go I!"

This is a picture that could be framed: how different from Wordsworth's wandering voice in *Tintern Abbey*!

The object of the illustration is to show that Arnold's nature-pictures are not only consciously artistic, with an arrangement that approaches artifice, but that he is interested through his eye primarily and not, like Wordsworth, through his emotions.

If there is this difference betweenArnold and Wordsworth in method, a greater difference in spirit

131
Arnold, *Thyrsis*, ll. 51-60
is to be anticipated. It is a fixed gulf. In Nature, Wordsworth found the one spirit's "plastic stress," and a near and intimate revelation to the soul of truths that were his greatest joy and support in existence. From the very dawn of Man's existence, Wordsworth holds that Nature is in close relation to him, building and fashioning his soul. She builds and shapes human personality by operating especially through Man's emotional nature, and pre-eminenty through the moral emotions. One of her principal offices is that of a moral teacher and guide to Man. From his childhood she performs this task, disciplining by her interventions. She counsels, inspires, and impels him to right living. She teaches and exemplifies the virtues, and warns against the vices. From her one learns more concerning good and evil than from all human teachers. She, therefore, serves as an ideal of pattern for Man. Arnold, on the other hand, finds there is no inhabitancy of Nature, no such streaming forth from the fountain heads of being; but the secret frame of Nature is filled only with the darkness, the melancholy, the waiting endurance that is projected from himself:
"Yet, Fausta, the mute turf we tread,
The solemn hills around us spread,
The stream that falls incessantly,
The strange-scrawl'd rocks, the lonely sky,
If I might lend their life a voice
Seem to bear rather than rejoice."

Compare this with Wordsworth's "Stanzas on Peele Castle," and the important reservations that must be borne in mind in describing Arnold as a Wordsworthian will become clearer.

Arnold values Nature in his verse as a relief from thought, as a beautiful and half-physical diversion, as a scale of being so vast and mysterious as to reduce the pettiness of human life to nothingness. Such a poet may describe natural scenes well, and obtain, by means of them, contrast to human conditions and decorative beauty; but he does not penetrate Nature or interpret what her significance is in the human spirit, as the more emotional poet has done. With Wordsworth, it was rapturous vision, profound intuition, intense and sublime passion, deep ethical conviction, reverent and affectionate communion, heavenly illumination. It was not merely an intellectual proposition to be subs-

132
Arnold, Resignation, ll. 263-68
cribed to, nor a conviction born of logical processes in reflecting upon Nature, nor even a religious conviction as such, but it was a powerful experience, the chief elements of which were vision, intuition, belief, communion, inspiration, love and moral resolve.

Arnold's doctrine of poetry as a criticism of life is closely related to Wordsworth's conception of the origin and purpose of poetry. In the Advertisement to the *Lyrical Ballads* of 1798, Wordsworth asks his readers to judge the poems by just one standard. They must not be repelled by strangeness and awkwardness in the book; they must "ask themselves if it contains a natural delineation of human passions, human characters, and human incidents." If they find this true, then, "they should consent to be pleased in spite of that most dreadful enemy to our pleasures, our own pre-established codes of decision."³³³ In order to realize the revolutionary nature of Wordsworth's principles, and to connect it with that of Arnold's, one must note the nature of the theory of poetry and imagination to which Wordsworth was opposed. I shall note in particular

his theory of the origin and purpose of poetry.

The common attitude to the imagination, expounded by Richard Price, Hume, and Hartley, which connected the faculty with the lower and less intellectual process of the mind, and opposed it to the rational, was unsatisfactory to Wordsworth. Knowing in his own heart the power of poetry, and at the same time, feeling that he had arrived at the stage of maturity and reason, Wordsworth steadfastly refused to recognize any power of the mind as the source of poetry any less regal than reason itself. Accordingly, he insisted that the purpose of poetry is the presentation of the incidents of common life, showing "the manner in which our feelings and ideas are associated in a state of excitement." The sources of excitement are "the great and simple affections of our nature"—the material and paternal passion, death, the fraternal passion, and some of the "less impassioned feelings."134

When Wordsworth speaks of the proper subject of poetry, he does not speak of feeling as being opposed to thought and intellect. In his Prefaces he says:

"All good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings; but though this be true, Poems to which any value can be attached were never produced on any variety of subjects but by a man who, being possessed of more than usual organic sensibility, had also thought long and deeply. For our continued influxes of feelings are modified and directed by our thoughts, which are indeed the representatives of all our past feelings."135

If the above statement is true, it follows that the power which produce poetry can be no lower power than the intellect, for though it deals with feeling, these influxes of feelings are a product of thought and intellect. Hence, Imagination is the counterpart of Intellect. The two powers are partners, but the Imagination is the dominant one, for it represents the life of thought; it represents life in being; it "is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge; it is the impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all Science. It is the first and last of all knowledge; it is as immortal as the heart of man."136

Such being the case, how is poetry produced? Wordsworth answers this question in the Preface of

135 A. J. George, Ibid., pp. 5-6
136 Ibid., pp. 18-19
1800. "The grand elementary principle of pleasure" must always be kept in mind by the poet, for this is the ultimate end of poetry and of life, and cannot be neglected by the poet. Taking for granted that the only feeling, or emotion, that is worthy of being presented aesthetically, or capable of being so presented, is the feeling which arises out of thought and its associated feeling in a poem. According to his explanation of the working of association, one can begin either with the thought and evoke its associated feeling, or he can begin with the feeling and evoke its associated thought. In poetry, the second process is always followed. At this point, his statement begins:

"I have said that Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquility: the emotion is contemplated till by a species of reaction, the tranquility gradually disappears, and an emotion, kindred to that which was before the subject of contemplation, is gradually produced, does itself actually exist in the mind. In this mood successful composition generally begins, and in a mood similar to this it is carried on; but the emotion, of whatever kind, and in whatever degree, from various causes, is qualified by various pleasures, so that in describing any passions whatsoever, which are voluntarily described, the mind will, upon the whole, be in a state of enjoyment." 137

137 Ibid., pp. 25-26
Taking this passage with that quoted immediately above, one finds that he has supplementary statements. Wordsworth lays down the principle that all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings, and that these feelings are those deeper feelings which have connections with thought. He is careful to say that thought does not cause these emotions to overflow, maintaining that they overflow spontaneously, or from forces that are not governed by purpose or will. Such is the stuff of poetry, which origin is answered in the passage just quoted. Poetry takes its origin in those feelings, or emotions, which are recollected in tranquility. In other words, poetry does not begin in immediate experience, but in recollected experience. Thus, poetry is based on a union of feeling and reason, working in harmony with the chief end of man, pleasure and well-being: in other words, poetry is the result of the activity of the Imagination.

If Wordsworth's conception of the origin and purpose of poetry be borne in mind, it would not be difficult to see that, when Arnold describes poetry as a criticism of life, he is a close Wordsworthian. Like Wordsworth he insisted that poetry is to be rightly
held as a profoundly earnest, important, and enduring thing, and that it is to poetry that mankind will more and more have to turn "to interpret life for us, to console, to sustain us." Poetry should be characterized by the "noble and profound application of ideas to life;" it should deal directly with life. The poet is the appreciator of human life who sees in it most sensitively, inclusively, and penetratingly what is original and evokes his vision before others through rhythm and rhyme. In this sense, poetry can hardly be denied to be a criticism of life; it is the winning portrayal of the ideal of human life, as this ideal shapes itself in the mind of the poet. This may be taken as merely a different phrasing of Wordsworth's principle that "poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings recollected in tranquility," working in harmony with the chief end of men, pleasure and well-being. Wordsworth's powerful application to his subject, of ideas "on Man, on Nature, and on Human life" is, according to Arnold, "that powerful and beautiful application of ideas to life,—to the question: How to live." In Arnold's view, poetry interpreted life, because, by attaching its emotion
to the idea rather than to the fact, it conserves the one thing permanent in a phantasmagoria of illusions.

To bring together, then, the result of my investigation, as regards the importance of Wordsworth and Arnold as poets of the nineteenth century: On Wordsworth's exact position in the galaxy of sovereign poets, a deep difference of estimate still divides even the most excellent judges. Nobody now dreams of placing him so low as the Edinburgh Reviewers did, nor so high as Southey placed him. Coleridge deliberately placed Wordsworth "nearest of all modern writers to Shakespeare and Milton, yet in a kind perfectly un-borrowed and his own."\footnote{138} Arnold declares his firm belief that the poetical performance of Wordsworth is, after that of Shakespeare and Milton, undoubtedly the most considerable in the English language from the Elizabethan age to the nineteenth century--Spenser, Dryden, Pope, Gray, Goldsmith, Cowper, Burns, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley, Keats--"Wordsworth's name deserves to stand, and will finally stand, above them all."\footnote{139}

\footnote{138} Coleridge, \textit{Biographia Literaria}, p. 302
\footnote{139} Arnold, \textit{Essays in Criticism}, p. 348
To Swinburne, on the contrary, all these estimates savors of monstrous and intolerable exaggeration.

Whatever definition of poetry one fixes upon, I feel that there are great tracts in Wordsworth which can be called poetry. His claim on an eminence above his contemporaries is his direct appeal to will and conduct. He strived not only to move the sympathies of the heart, but to enlarge the understanding; he exalted and widened the spiritual vision, with the aim of leading one towards firmer and austerer self-control. Thought is, on the whole, predominant over feeling in his verse. His special gift, his lasting contribution, lies in the extraordinary strenuousness, sincerity, and insight with which he first idealizes and glorifies the vast universe, and then makes of it, not a theatre on which men play their parts, but an animate presence, intermingling with works, pouring its companionable spirit, and "breathing grandeur upon the very humblest face of human life." He saw Nature truly, he saw her as she is, and with his own eyes. He went to the realities of human life for his inspiration. His secret of bringing the infinite into common life, as he evokes it out of common life, has the
skill to lead one, so long as he yields himself to 
his influence, into inner moods of settled peace, to 
touch "the depth and not the tumult of the soul," to 
give him quietness, strength, steadfastness, and purpose, 
whether to do or to endure.

Matthew Arnold is one of the poets who will repay 
study as well as reading. He has not the splendor of 
the great world-masters of poetry; but he has the 
virtues of sweetness, simplicity, directness, the power 
of appealing at the same time to the heart and the head, 
reasonableness and sanity combined with profound 
imaginative insight. His intellectual cast of mind 
makes him sometimes didactic in passages which would 
have lent themselves better to prose; his pre-conceived 
ideas of art sometimes render him stilted and barren. 
But he felt as only the great poets feel, so that for 
the most part his theories were enlisted as they should 
be in the cause of his art, and there is a balance 
and proportion in his best works. He was always 
scholarly; but he was always lucid and direct. To study 
him is to learn the value of words, to see how the ut-
most possible effect may be obtained from the just, 
fine use of language. The trite and the obvious he
detested; one cannot afford to shrink from his subtle
ties of meaning, for it is not the business of the
poet to leave anything to the intelligence of the
reader. Yet, he is never tortuous, never fantastic.
"To see life steadily and see it whole"-- in that now
hackneyed phrase is to be found the explanation of
the consistancy in his poetry, in his criticism, and
in his life.
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The thesis "The Poetic Doctrines of Wordsworth and Arnold: A Comparative Study of Critical Theories in the Nineteenth Century," written by Honesto F. Farol, has been accepted by the Graduate School of Loyola University, with reference to form, and by the readers whose names appear below, with reference to content. It is, therefore, accepted as a partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree conferred.

James J. Young  January, 1934

Morton D. Zabel, Ph.D.  January, 1934