Morality in the Esthetics of Cardinal Newman

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MORALITY IN THE ESTHETICS OF CARDINAL NEWMAN

BY

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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM OF THE GOOD IN THE BEAUTIFUL

Like a vengeful angel stood the divine Plato at the portals of his Republic, dreadful in mien, banishing the poets and forbidding them to come again unless..."mimetic and dulcet poetry can show any reason for her existence in a well governed state."\(^1\) The sole reason for Poetry's existence should be the good of the soul. Plato's whole poetic being cried out against the exile, but in a stern act of renunciation even as men who have fallen in love, if they think that the love is not good for them, hard though it be, nevertheless refrain, so we, owing to the love of this kind of poetry inbred in us by our education...will gladly have the best case made out for her goodness and truth, but so long as she is unable to make good her defence we shall chant over to ourselves as we listen the reasons that we have given as a countercharm to her spell, to preserve us from slipping back into the childish loves of the multitude...\(^2\)

Plato's attitude toward Poetry, it is easily seen, was wholly ethical. He is a resolute Guardian, but not without pain in his heart.

Plato identified the Good with the Beautiful. That which

is a symbol of virtue is beautiful; that which is not, is ugly.  
But artists dissented and built themselves a Palace of Art with Beauty as god, but not as good. The question of morality in art thus had its beginning in ancient times, and the struggle between the advocates of both sides has been carried to our own day.

There have not lacked men for whom art has constituted the highest interest in life. When on the verge of death, however, preparing to face the Eternal Beauty, they renounced what they had worshipped and exalted, and embraced the Good as the ultimate Beauty. Boccaccio deplored his youthful licentiousness. And the delightful Chaucer, apologizing to the reader at the end of his Canterbury Tales, begs:

for the mercy of God, that ye preye for me that Crist have mercy on me and foryeve me my giltes;/ and namely of my translacions and enditynges of wordly vanitees, the whiche I revoke in my retracciouns:/ . . . the tales of Caunterbury, thilke that sownen into synne;/ . . . and many another book, if they were in my remembrance, and many a song and lecherous lay; that Crist for his grete mercy foryeve me the synne.  

In modern times, too, we see a young artist, Aubrey Beardsley, at the time when the esthetic movement of the nineteenth cen-
tury had reached a peak, "begging his friends to destroy his 'bawdy drawings'. 'By all that is holy, all obscene drawings,' he wrote, adding after his signature, 'in my death agony'."\(^5\)

Such capitulation is hardly universal in any age. The struggle continues. Today's literary output has moralists stamping, -- but not with the seal of approval. The modern artists' attitude, hardly a submissive one before the thunder of the moralist, can be represented thus:

David L. Cohn in the *Saturday Review of Literature*, January 30 (1943), finds that the editors of the women's magazines share with night-club proprietors a corrosive contempt for the intelligence of their customers. These are some of the principles of the editorial policy: (a) the housewife is an unhappy woman who cannot bear the shock of a lifelike ending to a story. . . . (c) Priggish but sex-starved, the housewife will appreciate genteelly libidinous stories.\(^6\)

And what can the moralist do in face of the following highly indicative declaration of principle? Prefixing the list of Pulitzer Prize Winners in Drama, Burns Mantle's note reads:

>'For the original American play performed in New York which shall best represent the educational value and power of the stage in raising the standard of good morals, good taste and good manners.' -- The will of Joseph Pulitzer, dated April 16, 1904.

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\(^6\) "News and Notes," *College English*, IV (1943), 443.
In 1929 the advisory board, which, according to the terms of the will, 'shall have the power in its discretion to suspend or to change any subject or subjects ... if in the judgment of the board such suspension, changes or substitutions shall be conducive to the public good,' decided to eliminate from the above paragraph relating to the prize-winning play the words 'in raising the standard of good morals, good taste and good manners.'

Comment on such an attitude would be more than superfluous.

It is Professor Osgood's opinion that the "old way (of criticism), concerned ... with ... good and bad, right and wrong, cannot avoid moral issues, though such issues have for some time been out of style, at least in criticism." They have been out of style; the new way has been prevalent, but the old way is not without its adherents: the spirit of Plato struggles yet against a would-be independent art.

Throughout the century-long debate, it was inevitable that the issue would become clouded; that extremists would appear in each camp, unsettling not only the adversary, but their own followers. The relationships of art and morality cannot be properly understood, therefore, until the moot question be defined and its component parts, and the parties involved, be distinguished from one another. In discussing

7 Burns Mantle, Best Plays of 1939-1940, Dodd, Mead and Co., New York, 1940, 479.
art and morality we involve ourselves in a twofold controversy. Two questions must be answered: must art point a moral? and, is art autonomous, i.e., is art independant of ethical considerations in our final appraisal of it? The first question admits of three possible relations of esthetic and moral values: "either they are identical or distinct, and if the latter, then esthetic values are either superior or subordinate to moral." The second question involves moral philosophy.

Devotees of various theories of estheticism have proposed either that beauty and goodness are identical, or that esthetic values are superior to the moral. The first of these was held by the Platonists among whom we can number Lord Shaftesbury. "The same spirit animated the contributions of George Berkeley, and to some degree those of Hutcheson and Hume." For Ruskin, too, art was "fundamentally moral, while morals are not only good and true but beautiful." A second form of estheticism interests us especially, because its modern rise was contemporaneous with Newman's life, and because its mark is deeply impressed on literary criticism and literary production today. It distinguishes moral from esthetic values, but subordinates the former to the latter as means to an end.

10 Ibid., 109-10.
11 Ibid., 107-08.
It makes esthetic values supreme.

Seeds of the modern esthetic movement sown earlier by Keats, took root in the middle of the nineteenth century in the Germ, Pre-Raphaelite journal of the Fifties; the culmination came with the Yellow Book of the "Romantic '90s."  

The aestheticism of Keats—especially that part which looked to the Middle Ages—found an expression in the formation, in 1848, of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, a band of artists, whose chief representative was Dante Gabriel Rossetti. In him Romanticism is dissociated from religious faith, while the trappings of the Middle Ages are appreciated for their aura of beauty, and religion itself is regarded primarily from an aesthetic point of view.  

The Brotherhood found a champion in none other than Ruskin himself, who, while holding a moralist's view of art, defended and helped in the new search for beauty, himself arousing a fresh interest in the beauty of the past in his volumes, Modern Painters. This "attempt of Ruskin, the Pre-Raphaelites, and Morris to recapture the Middle Ages by merely imitating its (sic) externals, by divorcing art from religion, accelerated the aesthetic movement."  

13 Loc. cit.
Two other men of note, while not patronizing Rossetti's group, also advanced the movement by variations of their own. Matthew Arnold, Professor of Poetry at Oxford, 1857-67, directly attacked the traditional religion. Religion is machinery which, though it has the same end as culture, falls short in that it develops not the whole man but only his moral faculties. Culture, in developing the entire man, goes beyond and is greater than, religion. We must prize above all things "the breath and finer spirit of knowledge" offered to us by poetry. In it our race... will find an ever surer and surer stay."\(^\text{14}\) Much in Arnold's teaching pointed the way to the man who became the master of the literary estheticism of England, Walter Pater.\(^\text{15}\) "In his scholarly retirement, the prophet of an esoteric faith, he teaches it with an intellectual and detached zeal."\(^\text{16}\) Like Arnold, Pater separated art from religion. Art became his religion.\(^\text{17}\)

Contemporary with Pater was Swinburne who also felt the influence of the Pre-Raphaelites; Swinburne who glorified the beautiful with a reckless and

^{16}\) Legouis and Cazamian, *loc. cit.*  
^{17}\) *Pick*, 8.
blasphemous ardour, which seemed to adore
it out of enmity to the useful gods. Through
him, and through other channels as well, the
French doctrine of art for art's sake was
creeping into England; Naturalism indeed, at
one point, coincided with that principle and
like it placed the artist's activity outside
of and above morals.\(^{18}\) (Italics mine.)

Pater had gathered around himself a brilliant group of
disciples. The most notable of these, Oscar Wilde, carried
his master's doctrine to a conclusion known as the \textit{fin de
siècle} movement. The Nineties became a time of escape from
the great materialism of the day, and from the outmoded social
conventions and outdated moral standards which the material-
istic sciences had been instrumental in antiquating.

The representative writers and artists
emphasized the modern determination to
escape from the deadening thraldom of materi-
alism and outworn conventions, and to live
life significantly -- keenly and beautifully,
personally and, if need be, daringly; to
win from it its fullest satisfactions, its
deepest and richest and most exhilarating
experiences.\(^{19}\)

Evolutionary science had undermined or at least unsettled
theology. Social sanctions and restrictions founded on
theology had disintegrated. Victorian standards of morality
had fallen.\(^ {20}\) No wonder the poet sought satisfaction in his

\(^{18}\) Legouis and Cazamian, \textit{loc. cit.}  
\(^{19}\) Le Gallienne, 291.  
\(^{20}\) \textit{Ibid.}, 123 ff.
emotions and sensations; abandoned religion for a personal art.

The only thing that remained stable was the poet's own emotions and sensations. On these, then, the poet took his stand, seeking when he could a religious tradition which would give some pattern to the exploitation of his emotions and sensations. But what the poet was really after was freedom for his sensibility not a religious belief.21

(italics mine.)

From this outline of the esthetic movement in England we can perceive the essential features of the theory of art for art's sake as it was proposed and accepted by the moderns. The chief dogma is that art is absolutely autonomous, independent: art develops her own means to attain her own ends. And judged she must be solely by her own, not by ethical standards:

... art is absolutely free ... amenable to no higher law. ... art is a means to the realization of beauty.22

The essence ... is that beauty is made the supreme end and object of life and is erected into a religion.23

As the break of Protestants with the Catholic Church led to a multiplication of religious sects on a principle that allowed each man to practice his individual religion, so this divorce of art,—this worship of art for its own sake,—pro-

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22 Callahan, 112.
23 Pick, 5.
duced a chaos of personal ideals that destroyed objective standards, and played havoc with criticism. Following the principle of private interpretation, artists practiced their own individualistic rites of Beauty. It is very important that we emphasize this break of artists with the traditional. Henceforward the poet could

find little nourishment in the life of his time. From now on renunciation, rejection, and escape are the commonest attitudes among the poets: escape into words and a doctrine of the functionlessness of art, renunciation in the form of mysticism, estheticism, or 'private' art, rejection as pessimism or rebellion.24

Art became the fetish of schools of expression, and necessarily so, for a break with tradition leads to extreme individualism, and the destruction of objective norms of judgment.

The general effect in literature of the lack of any strong tradition is twofold: extreme individualism in views, and no accepted rules or opinions as to the limitations of the literary job. ... The two results are naturally concomitant. When one man's 'view of life' is as good as another's all the more enterprising spirits will naturally evolve their own; and where there is no custom to determine what the task of literature is, every writer will determine for himself, and the more enterprising will range as far afield as possible.25

The adultery of art has been disastrous. Art has been

24 Daiches, 8.
divorced from her rightful spouse, religion, and married polygamously to a score of effete philosophies. The misshapen offspring therefrom has shocked and dismayed the public as well as the critics. Perhaps shock was the desired effect. Nonetheless, it has caused those concerned for the purity of art to question and to denounce the theories behind modern literary production. It is with this background of the modern predicament in mind that the vital question of the place of morality in literature has here been investigated.

The main purpose of the thesis is to examine the opinions of Cardinal Newman regarding theories of art for art's sake, principally that theory which we have so briefly sketched, and to synthesize his arguments, bringing them into focus where their cogency and value can better be realized and appreciated. He is not set up as a champion of any school of thought. He is brought forward to champion his own ideas. Interest in him lies in this: that not only is he acknowledged as a great churchman and thinker of his day, but he is also recognized as a classic writer of the English language. What his judgment was, one might easily guess. But it is his reasons for his

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26 Religion here is not taken to mean any particular denomination. By it is meant that natural religion which is founded on the natural law, and without which morality as such has no meaning. It is one for all men, and its basis is the supremacy of the Supreme Being who is Creator, Legislator, Remunerator, and the Final Goal of all mankind.
opinions that this thesis proposes to investigate and to expose. That he practiced what he preached regarding literature no one will deny. His achievement in following his standards will add conviction to his reasons in setting them up.

Bibliographies on Newman were searched to discover whether any treatment had been given to this particular subject. To this day the Cardinal's literary powers rather than his literary criticism have been subjects of study. Critics, taking for granted that Newman advocated a strictly ethical view of literature, have been content with statement of that fact. Hence, no one has yet conducted an investigation similar to the one undertaken in this thesis. Sister Mary Aloisi Kiener, Stanley Williams, and J. C. Thirlwall have discussed his literary preferences but only with a view to showing his romantic leanings. In a small book treating Newman's chapter on literature in The Idea of a University, Father Gilbert Garraghan, S. J., has done no more than reprint the text together with a series of rhetorical studies, and studies in literary theory. His section on literature and morality is a translation of a part of Father Longhaye's discussion of the same problem in his Belles Lettres. Only a few crumbs of suggestion in the form of questions are thrown out regarding Newman's opinions on the matter.

Newman's fame is that of a scholar and literary genius.
Never did he set himself up as a literary critic or a philosopher of esthetics. As a consequence a systematic synthesis of his esthetic judgments had to be constructed from his works rather than be found ready to hand. When we speak of his esthetic judgments, however, it will have to be borne in mind that we speak mainly of his literary criticism. Musician though he was, and fond, too, of architecture and painting, Cardinal Newman's chief interest in the Fine Arts was literature. When speaking of art, therefore, we assume that the word here has a transfer value, and that literature is the signification given it by the reader. Surely, since literature is included among the Fine Arts, any general principles applied to them collectively will apply with equal force to literature when it is considered in itself. "Why may not that be true of literary composition which is true of painting, sculpture, architecture, and music?" asks Newman.27

The Idea of a University and the essay on Poetry with Reference to Aristotle's Poetics were found to contain the substance of Newman's position. Other of the Essays Critical and Historical, and the Historical Sketches also, contain pertinent criticisms. An occasional moral critique of literature is given in his Plain and Parochial Sermons, while his Letters, 27

Edited by Anne Mozley, the *Apologia*, and the testimony of his intimates as given by Wilfred Ward in *The Life*, indicate his literary preferences.

These and the other works of Newman were read with a view to gathering all of the Cardinal's literary criticism, but especially such as involved the problem of morality and literature. Relevant passages were noted under various headings, not with any preconceived plan of detail, but as they presented themselves, and with a view to organizing them according to a scheme which they themselves might suggest.

It was thought best, accordingly, to discuss first of all the moral philosopher's point of view, and this for two reasons. Newman viewed all things in relation to their final end. He was a moralist first, an artist second. It seems, moreover, that philosophy, however much it is scorned, comes before art: art is built upon and developed by the artist's philosophy of life, his standard of ultimate values. If the enjoyment of Beauty is his end in life, he will advocate one type of art for art's sake; if God is his ultimate goal, all his work will be aimed heavenward. On his philosophy of life depends his judgment as to whether, and to what extent, ethical considerations are to play a part in the final evaluation of his work. It is necessary, therefore, first of all
to establish the place of art in the whole scheme of human life: is the perfection of art man's highest purpose in life? or is art only one of life's complex parts, with a function proper to itself, but subordinate and subservient to a higher purpose?

After we have discussed Newman's idea of the importance of art in life, we shall examine his opinions regarding its function: how its operations relate to life, and what implications of morality are involved. Thirdly, if art is intimately connected with life, what is the specific function of the poet (whether he write in metre and rhyme or in prose)? Is the poet a vates? Must the poet, if he be a vates, be a man of stainless life? And lastly we ask, must the poet always speak of the good and the virtuous? Is his art better in proportion as he does propose virtue? If evil is admitted into his works, how must he deal with it? These are the problems that arise in discussing the relations of morality to literature. What were Newman's answers to these questions?
Before esthetic criticism of literature can assume any form or make any progress, an ultimate norm must be established which will constitute a point of reference from which and to which all things will flow. It is a standard which must be agreed upon by disputants else the argument will not be on common ground since each assumes that which the other denies. That norm will be a philosophy of life. The literary critic must turn philosopher. His criticism will be determined by his tenets on the meaning of life, and what place art has in the fulfillment of life.

Art is not philosophy. No one will deny that. But there are those who try to divorce art from any metaphysical consideration. In an age slowly emerging from Neo-classic rationalism, Joshua Reynolds protested against a growing romantic tendency in art and art criticism:

The general objection to the introduction of philosophy into the regions of taste, is that it checks and restrains the flights of imagination and gives that timidity, which an over-carefulness not to err or act contrary to reason is likely to produce. It is not so; fear is neither reason nor philosophy. The true spirit of philosophy, by giving knowledge, gives a manly confidence, and substitutes rational firmness in the place of vain
presumption.¹

Today, philosophy is cast off, outlawed:

This tendency (to outlaw philosophy) is exemplified in Charles Lalo, who is of the opinion that Esthetic must reject metaphysic. . . . Esthetic must proceed inductively and build up its conclusions by means of a disinterested reflexion on the results of criticism and history.²

Another opponent is he whom Irving Babbitt calls the "anti-humanist."

If the humanist makes a plea for the literature of wisdom he is told by the anti-humanist that he speaks not as a literary critic but as a philosopher. The literary critic does not allow alien ethical considerations to intrude into the realm of art, holding as he does that beauty is its own excuse for being. High seriousness, according to President Neilson of Smith is something that may be left to divines; the poet should be satisfied if he attains intensity.³

Such lack of attention to, and appreciation of, the values of philosophy are not entirely unbemoaned today. There are those who see the necessity of more ultimate and objective norms.

Since literature is an art, and since it is the only art that directly represents human ideas, he (the literary scholar)

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² Callahan, 122.

will be driven to look more and more to philosophy for light on its content and light on its form. 4

What is lacking today . . . in poetry and literature generally, is a hierarchy of moral and aesthetic values such as might be derived from philosophy. Such hierarchy is . . . indispensable for . . . the writing of great literature. 5

We have marked the individualism which resulted from the separation of art and religion. Traditional standards were tossed aside either because they were worthless, misunderstood, or because the moderns had not the wisdom or courage to apply to them the complex problems of contemporaneous life. Detached from the past, and with no sight into the future, they lived in the present, seeking to evolve from their inner psychic selves new modes and new manners as guides to a new literature and life.

The post-war generation certainly feels that as a whole we cannot trust the traditions of the past; it most certainly realizes that we cannot rely on the continuity of the future; and thus embarrassed by this sense of detachment, we take counsel with ourselves, we turn to our own moods for guidance, and we explore our natures by the unaided light of our own experience. 6

6 Henry Routh, The Year's Work in English Studies, VII (1926), 281. Apropos of this break with tradition and the search for personal methods of art is the following citation taken from
In William Butler Yeats we find a figure of this age: he rejected tradition, despised the religion and philosophies of all times, searched out a personal solution to life, and expressed it in his poetry. The results of this lifetime endeavor are described by Professor Daiches:

Yeats's search for a complete and systematic symbolization of experience -- originating in his desire to compensate for a no longer tenable religious tradition -- finally led him to a highly abstract and artificial philosophy from which ordinary human values had almost completely disappeared. . . . For over fifty years he sought for a philosophy to replace a lost tradition, that he might write better and with more confidence; and in the end his system conquered him. In his enthusiasm for the pattern that he was to impose on experience he forgot about experience itself, so that while he retained his vigor he

Swift's *Battle of the Books*: "I hope you will . . . take warning, and consider duration and matter as well as method and art. You boast, indeed, of being obliged to no other creature, but of drawing and spinning out all for yourself—that is to say, if we may judge of liquor in the vessel by what issues out, you possess a good plentiful store of dirt and poison in your breast -- and though I would by no means lessen or disparage your genuine stock of either, yet, I doubt, you are somewhat obliged for an increase of both to a little foreign assistance. Your inherent portion of dirt does not fail of acquisitions by sweepings exhaled from below; and one insect furnishes you with a share of poison to destroy another. So that, in short, the question comes all to this: Whether is the nobler being of the two, that which by a lazy contemplation of four inches round, by an overweening pride, which feeding and engendering on itself turns all into excrement and venom, producing nothing at all but flybane, and a cobweb, or that which by an universal range, with long search, much study, true judgment, and distinction of things, brings home honey and wax."
almost lost his humility. In his last years, his poetry was impressive but a little uncanny: he had cast too cold an eye on life. 7

Cardinal Newman had foreseen and foretold what would happen when literary artists cast off a heritage of artistic principles and traditions. The artists, he said, would become "impatient of conventionalities, and, resolved to shake off a yoke which tames them down to the loss of individuality, they adopt no half measures, but indulge in novelties which offend against the genius of the language, and the true canons of taste." 8

Our times are frequently labelled an age of transition. Allowances are therefore made for faulty literary output on that score. The new generation has not yet "found" itself. It has not yet established a new and solid tradition. But for tradition, T. S. Eliot remarks, "Stability is obviously necessary." 9 The modern poets, having discarded a worn out tradition discovered that "the only thing that remained stable (1) was the poet's own emotions and sensations." 10 Men turned to

7 Daiches, 188-89.
9 Eliot, 20.
10 Daiches, 12.
the exploitation of these personal sensations and emotions, the stability of which each one knows by experience. Personal emotion, however, meant individual emotion, not such as might be termed universal among men. The loss of universality led to coteries, schools of expression, esoteric poetry. Literature became a technique based on individualistic talent.

How did writers use the experience they knew or could imagine? Obviously, no writer can attempt to put any of the material provided by the events of life into words without a principle of selection, and a principle of selection implies a standard of values. \[11\]

That standard must be universal and objective,-- such as afforded by a philosophy of positive ultimates. Personal emotions and sensations are but subjective. When they are constituted the norm, they become the standards of measure of a negative attitude that sweeps away the past entirely. If each new generation nourishes its own sentiments and despises the past, ancient or recent, the age of transition will be perpetuated indefinitely.

It is on a traditional standard of values, tried and proved that Cardinal Newman thoughtfully bases his literary criticism. He shunned the independent spirit of Descartes, who, though "the first of French philosophers, was too independent in his

inquiries to be correct in his conclusions. Individualism was a bane to Newman, who could at once exercise his original genius masterfully, air his personal theories bravely, but could submit graciously to the overruling voice of authority. The artist placed the world on Art's shoulders and swore she could bear it up. For Newman,

nature (the whole of created universe including man; indeed, with special emphasis on human nature) is too strong for art. . . . Private Judgment moves forward with the implements of this or that science, to do a work imperative indeed, but beyond its powers. It owns the need of general principles and constituent ideas by taking false ones. 13

Cardinal Newman summarily diagnosed the cause of the evils of modern literature as the lack of standards in criticism and art caused by an inadequate philosophy of life. The diversity of sciences and the growing complexities of life had thrown the world into confusion where it could no longer "see life steadily and see life whole." The unity of human life and human experience had been shattered. Alfred Noyes has noted in the twentieth century a condition of society that Newman, in the middle of the nineteenth, was keen enough to foresee:

12 The Idea, II, 328.
13 The Idea, I, 141. Science throughout the first part of The Idea is generally used by Newman to denote any font of knowledge,-- philosophy, the positive sciences, the arts. We have already seen the attempt of men to replace religion by poetry.
the fundamental cause of all the discords of the modern world, the chaos of thought in politics and religion, the confusion of standards in ethics, and the bewilderment of critical judgment in art and letters (where it is possible for diametrically opposite opinions to be held about almost any work produced in the last century). . . could probably be given in two sentences.

Our world is now so highly specialized that it grows more and more difficult for us to relate our particular fragments of the truth to the whole. On every side there is a war in progress -- not so much between falsehood and falsehood as between innumerable fragments of the truth; but when undue stress is laid upon a fragment of the truth, whether it be in the theories of psychoanalysis, of post-impressionism, of cubism, of conservatism . . . then men plunge headlong into error and sometimes into disaster; or, if it be a very small fragment of the truth, they may be whirled into the idiotic folly of certain eccentric movements in art and letters.14

The dilemma, if confusion be not a better word, was quite apparent to Newman in his day.

A philosophical comprehensiveness, an orderly expansiveness, an elastic constructiveness, men have lost them and cannot make out why. This is why: because they have lost the idea of unity: because they cut off the head of a living thing, and think it is perfect, all but the head. They think the head an extra, an accomplishment, the corona operis, not essential to the idea of the being under their hands.15

15 The Idea, I, 142-43.
Newman, however, does not stress the complexity of life as the cause of the turmoil. The responsibility for all the discord, chaos, and confusion lies in man; the fault, in that curse of unreformed mankind: Private Judgment -- the glory of the philosophy of individualism. Private judgment has undermined the traditional institutions, brought them down in ruins, tried to reconstruct, and failed in the attempt.

Ideas are the life of institutions, social, political, and literary: but the excesses of Private Judgment, in the prosecution of its multiform theories, have at length made men sick of a truth, which they recognized long after they were able to realize it. At the present day, they knock the life out of the institutions they have inherited, by their own alterations and adaptations. As to their creations, these are a sort of monster, with hands, feet, and trunk moulded respectively on distinct types. Their whole, if the word is to be used, is an accumulation from without, not the growth of a principle from within.16

Private judgment strives for a unity but is ever impeding and preventing it.

From the many voices crying 'Order' and 'Silence' noise and tumult follow. From the very multiplicity and diversity of the efforts after unity on every side, this practical age has thrown up the notion of it altogether.17

The cry for the steady vision of the wholeness of life

16 Ibid., 142.
17 Ibid., 141.
and the wholeness of man has its echoes in our days. "No culture," says Professor Daiches, "can be defended by those who have lost sight of the whole man." But lingering over the problem will not solve it. Deploiring the situation will not remedy it. How can that "old completeness of view, the old single-hearted synthesis which saw the complex world in its essential unity, saw it steadily and saw it whole, man as soul and body . . . the universe as a miracle with a single meaning," how can that view be restored?

How has that vision been destroyed? It was destroyed when the very foundation was taken from life: when the true final end of man was denied. Newman painfully observed the gradual separation of religion from life as well as from literature in the face of the positivistic sciences gaining influence on a growing materialistic world. At first religious principles were relegated strictly to what was conceived as their proper sphere. But oh! the beautiful consistency of the human reason! Religion, which had been accused of encroaching illegitimately on the sciences and arts was soon subjected to criticism based upon principles peculiar to an upstart science, and Poetry began to assume functions belonging rightfully to theology.

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19 Noyes, 311.
To reinstate an outcast theology as Queen of the Sciences is Newman's purpose in the first part of The Idea of a University. One must not jump at conclusions, however. To make Theology Queen is not to crown her official busybody in every province of human enterprise. An excellent ruler, she allows a certain autonomy to the arts and sciences. This autonomy she respects and honors as long as it does not exceed its bounds and assume prideful powers that tend to the ruin of the beautiful unity of the kingdom of man. In truth, Newman deprecates "any jealous ecclesiastical supervision of scientific investigations, or any narrowing of the conception of literature. . . literature had its own natural and independent sphere. . . literature was to be the literature of nations . . . not of one religion." And this attitude is verified in his criticism of Addison. "Addison became to Newman . . . the supreme example of the folly of regarding literature as the precise product of a church, a university, or a system. For, classicist as he was, Addison's immortality depends not on university or church, but on experience of life."

The independence granted to art must be exactly defined,

21 Cf. The Idea, I, Discourses III and IV.
and the dominion of theology more carefully explained. The
temptation of the artistic writer, and for that matter, of any
man engrossed in, and fascinated by, a particular truth, to
make cultivation of that truth the sum of his existence and the
measure of all things, is great and often irresistible. Newman,
who knew the psychology of man, could diagnose the sin, its
occasion, and its cause. The sin of devotees of literature has
been that of replacing religion with poetry. The autonomy of
art does not exclude religious principles from intruding in
order to preserve the true unity of human experience, and even
to save art herself from disgrace.

"Religion is the foundation of art, says Rodin."24 Those
who violently deny religion any consideration in the treatment
of literature not only contradict themselves in their lectures
and publications; they do more.25 In destroying the supremacy
of religion they bring about that very disunion in life which
is the bane of human existence and of art.

The assemblage of sciences, which together
make up Universal Knowledge, is . . . a
system and may be said to be in equilibrio
as long as all its portions are secured to
it. Take away one of them, and that one so
important in the catalogue as Theology, and
disorder and ruin at once ensue. There is
no middle state between an equilibrium and

24 Fulton Sheen, Old Errors and New Labels, Century Co., New
York, 1931; 134.
chaotic confusion; one science is ever pressing upon another, unless kept in check; and the only guarantee of Truth is the cultivation of them all.26

What is taken from theology is assumed by other departments of human activity. They take up the job reserved to religion,—as a child would take up the dangerous work of a grown man,—to their own destruction, and to the destruction of the whole.

I may take as an instance the cultivation of the Fine Arts... These high ministers of the Beautiful and the Noble, are, it is plain, especial attendants and handmaids of Religion; but it is equally plain that they are apt to forget their place, and unless restrained with a firm hand, instead of being servants, will aim at becoming principals.27

Man will ever fashion himself new gods when the old gods have been destroyed. The poet will evolve his own -- not religion -- but mythology or set of symbols, once he has declared the uselessness of religion.28 It will be based on a philosophy as vague (perhaps even to himself; certainly mysterious to others) as the Eleusinian mysteries were obscure to the uninitiated. Abandoning Christian beliefs, he will go back to the old paganism "of the days of Pliny and Statius, and Juvenal. . . . of poetry singing dead songs on dead themes with the most

26 Ibid., 136.
27 Ibid., 112.
28 Cf. Daiches, Poetry and the Modern World, the two chapters on W. B. Yeats, a perfect example of the private-world builder.
polished and artistic vocalization . . . ; a most shining Paganism indeed -- as putrescence also shines."²⁹ And what Newman wrote of painting can surely be applied to literature:

Put out of sight the severe teaching of Catholicism in the schools of painting . . . and in no long time you have had, the hierarchy of the Church, the Anchorite and Virgin-Martyr . . . the Mother of God, the Crucifix, the Eternal Trinity, supplanted by a sort of pagan mythology in the guise of sacred names, by a creation indeed of high genius, of intense and dazzling and soul-absorbing beauty, in which, however, there was nothing which subserved the cause of religion, nothing, on the other hand, which did not directly or indirectly minister to corrupt nature and the powers of darkness.³⁰

We have but to witness the ministering to corrupt nature. The simplest sights and sounds have been perverted from their end: to give God glory. The poets have fulfilled the threat which Francis Thompson saw hovering over his England: they have made of poetry "a dancing girl, and of art a pandar."³¹ Today,

The familiar sights and sounds of our fields . . . do not call for any immediate sensation . . . they cannot be rendered by the violence which is sometimes mistaken for new vigor in modern verse. They cannot be conveyed by decorating the cadences of Wordsworth with crudities borrowed from the gutter, even though those crudities startle the professors out of their sleep, or strike a

²⁹ Francis Thompson, Works, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1913, III, 50.
³⁰ The Idea, I, 113-14.
³¹ Loc. cit.
certain type of modern woman as 'amusing' or even make schoolboys snigger with the same delight as they might find in the same kind of thing chalked upon a wall. . . . Mr. Barry Pain once pointed out that nothing is easier than to rouse a sensation of disgust. An untrained dog can do that in any civilized house. 32

It is important to note here, that Cardinal Newman is not merely defending a Catholic theology, or the Catholic religion, when he deplores the infidelity of the day. What he means by religion is a natural theology based on human reason. He disavows any originality in proclaiming the centrality of the concept of God in human life. The idea has had a wide reception. "It is not the sudden birth of a crisis. . . . It is not the fashion of a season. . . ." 33 It has been an idea universal as to time, place, people. In our own countries, "it occupies our language, it meets us at every turn in our literature, it is the secret assumption, too axiomatic to be distinctly professed, of all our writers." 34

You track it across the continent, you pursue it into former ages. When was the world without it? have the systems of Atheism or Pantheism . . . prevailed in the literature of nations, or in respect of formation or completion, to compare with that of Monotheism? We find it in old Greece, and even in Rome, as well as in Judaea and the East.

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32 Noyes, 151.
33 The Idea, I, 98.
34 Ibid., 99.
We find it in popular literature . . . in poetry, as a positive and settled teaching, differing not at all in the appearance it presents whether in Protestant England, or in schismatical Russia, or in the Mahometan populations, or in the Catholic Church. 35

The presence of God in the world, moral, intellectual, social, political, is inescapable. Man with all his rich endowments of intellect, his genius, poetic imagination, sagacity, wisdom, is from God. God pervades all things. "He is with the heathen dramatist in his denunciation of injustice and tyranny, and his auguries of divine vengeance upon crime. Even on the unseemly legends of a popular mythology He casts His shadow, and is dimly discerned in the ode or the epic." 36 His influence is seen and told in every human activity, literature not excepted. Robert Louis Stevenson "describes the height of art as a solemn music: 'Enter God!' and 'Ah, but you know until a man can write that 'Enter God' he has achieved no art, none." 37 Of that "Enter God," Newman was ever mindful.

This mindfulness of the supremacy of God was the focal point of Newman's thought. He accepted the traditional philosophy that viewed the whole of life as a unity; that saw the cause of that unity in the tendency of all things heavenward

35 Loc. cit.
36 Ibid., 94-97 passim.
37 Noyes, 315.
whence all things had come. To him the sciences and the arts are not in conflict but in harmony. While each has its proper function, and pursues its ends without interference or help from the others, all work together toward a single end: the beatitude of man, temporal and spiritual. None in itself constitutes that beatitude. Certainly not literature, poetry. When art subserves the highest good in man, the spiritual, and gives promise of the Beatific Vision, art has reached its heights.

Conflict comes only when short-sighted man destroys the peace by setting up the standards of a particular science or art as the norm of all human life. When man rejects religion and sets poetry in her place he allows an unnatural encroachment, and opens the way to the ravages of private judgment, which, destroying the whole and wholesome view of life, disfigures the beauty of Poetry herself. Art cannot be for art's sake. Art is for life's sake, and in its final analysis is to be weighed in the balance of truth and morality.

We must understand that the importance of the arts is bound up with the importance of life, that art means something only because human life means something, and the forces which produce suffering and death on the physical level also produce corruption in art. We do not need to divide man into a political and an aesthetic animal, and that is fortunate, for few could survive the operation.
No culture can be defended by those who have lost sight of the whole man.  

It was the whole man that Newman kept ever in his view; but he regarded man's faculties with a care proportionate to their importance. God, his philosophy and faith told him, is man's highest good, and that which militates against that good must be repressed: ethical considerations must play their part in the final analysis of a work of literature.

CHAPTER III
LITERATURE AND LIFE

Though literature, as Newman has it, must in its final appraisal be weighed in the balance of truth and morality, -- judged, that is, not as though it were the ultimate of life, but subject to a higher standard, -- yet it has its own natural sphere in which it can claim autonomy. Before determining that autonomy or defining that subjection, it will be necessary to examine more exactly the function of literature as Newman conceived it. The primary consideration must be given to his definition of literature. From knowledge of its essence, we will conclude to knowledge of its operation. Judging by its activity or function, what implications would Newman draw regarding the relationship of literature to morality in his criticism?

Newman defines literature as "thoughts expressed in language."¹ "Literature expresses, not objective truth ... but subjective; not things but thoughts."² He clarifies this latter statement by distinguishing literature from the sciences.

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¹ The Idea, II., 293.
² Ibid., 291.
which employ language to express truths which "even were there no individual men in the whole world to know them or to talk about them, would exist still."³ Art, then, is not merely objective representation; nor is Beauty merely that which is. Beauty is not merely perceived; it gives pleasure to the beholder, and his personal expression of his delight is "objectivized" in his art. In other words, the thoughts of literature are the personal thoughts of the author; those of science are symbols rather than literature, not to say language. Every study which "makes use of words as mere vehicles of things . . . (is scientific) and is thereby withdrawn from the province of literature."⁴ History, ethics, theology, however, can be called literature if they are not "divested of the philosophy, the skill, or the party and personal feelings of the particular writer."⁴ Literature, then, does not use words as mere symbols, but as personal expressions employing the wealth of the language: phraseology, idiom, style, composition, rhythm, eloquence.⁴ Literature is personal thought expressed in language peculiar to the spirit of the writer.

"Thought and speech are inseparable from each other."⁵

Literature is synonomous with neither composition, nor style

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³ Ibid., 292.
⁴ Ibid., 293.
⁵ Ibid., 286.
nor fine writing, nor studied and artificial writing. It is not "mainly a matter of conceits, fancies, and prettiness, decked out in choice words." 6 "The art of composition is merely accessory to the poetical talent . . . (Although) no essential part of poetry, (it is) . . . indispensable to its exhibition." 7 The poet must have words at his command, but should use them "not in order that his diction may attract, but that the language may be subjected to him." 8 The elaboration of composition for its own sake, Pope's great fault, makes a man no more worthy of poetic praise than a tasteful cabinet maker. 9 On the other hand, -- "When we separate light and illumination, life and motion, the convex and the concave . . . then it will be possible for thought to tread speech underfoot, and hope to do without it." 10

The emphasis placed on style tends to degrade literature, to make of it a "dancing girl." "The mere dealer in words cares little or nothing for the subject he is embellishing, but

6 John H. Newman, Essays Critical and Historical, Longmans, Green and Co., London, 1897, I, 24. As technique in employment of words is subordinate to thought, so is technique of plot less important in drama (Aristotle notwithstanding) than keen and intense poetic vision. Inspiration comes first and above all. Technique is an artificial and negative excellence. Cf. 7-8.
7 Ibid., 25.
8 The Idea, II, 293.
9 Loc. cit.
10 Ibid., 301.
but can paint and guild anything whatever to order.11 Since the subjects of literature, of the fine arts, are "quarried out of man's moral, social, and feeling nature . . . (and) under control (more or less strict) of the . . . moral reason," 12 the poet with a conscience as facile as his pen distorts life, and, in consequence, his art. He abuses his talent; he falls into the habit of "uttering fine sentiments . . . as a matter of course, or a kind of elegant display . . . (He uses) words which have a light meaning, or a bad one. All these things (are) . . . hurtful to seriousness of character." 13 More, he gives to literature the reputation among men of being "a mere art or trick of words." 14 From its very definition, "thoughts expressed in language," literature calls for a wholesome and true, an honest and sincere, presentation of the poet's personal view of life.

That literature bears a close relation to life, Newman accepts as an established fact. Whatever men may claim the function of literature to be, its influence in the formation and the development of human civilization has been unmistakably tremendous. Civilization may be said to have had its beginning with the poet.

11 Ibid., 301.
12 The Idea, I, 277.
14 The Idea, II, 287.
Historically speaking... First we have the 'virum pietate gravem' whose word 'rules' the spirits and soothes the breasts of the multitude; -- or the warrior; -- or the mythologist and bard; -- then follow... the dynasty and constitution. Such is the history of society; it begins in the poet, and ends in the policeman.15

In the opening discourse of the second part of the Idea, Newman delineates his concept of the growth of western civilization: the development of the Mediterranean world, and its achievement toward natural perfection. Looking at the case with an historical eye, he finds that this civilization "has its common principles, and views, and teaching, and especially its books, which have more or less been given from the earliest times, and are in fact, in equal esteem and respect, in equal use now, as they were when they were received in the beginning."16 The classics have provided the subjects of thought and the studies with which man has occupied and developed himself intellectually. They have been a stimulus to his moral growth.

The great tradition rolled on accumulating more genius. As civilization advanced, new peoples emerged with distinct characteristics partially molded by, and to a great extent, embodied in, their literature. Its literature became the voice

16 The Idea, II, 272-73.
And like music, it has seized upon the public mind . . .; and . . . is no longer a mere letter, printed in books, and shut up in libraries, but it is a living voice which has gone forth in its expressions and its sentiments into the world of men, which speaks to us . . . and dictates when we put pen to paper.\textsuperscript{17}

"There is a saying, 'Give me the framing of a nation's proverbs, and others may frame its laws;' and its proverbs are the product of its literature."\textsuperscript{18}

That the literature of a nation has tremendous influence on the social, intellectual, and spiritual lives of a people, no one can sanely deny. It follows, then, that in proportion as its literature is ennobling, a people will be spiritually great. Realizing this, Newman deplored an English literature that was Protestant.\textsuperscript{19} A Protestant literature, however, was the lesser evil when he turned his eyes to the French and

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 326.
\textsuperscript{19} \textit{The Idea}, II, 326-27. Religious controversy is not the issue here. What is relevant in this criticism of English literature is that, having been an Anglican for forty-four years, Newman knew the moral and intellectual weakness of that creed as well as the weakness of the other protesting bodies. He saw the disasters that had befallen and would befall the sects in an unbelieving, scientific world. He saw Anglicans shaken in their faith, and in their reason, uncertain, while the Church of England stood helplessly by, arguing illogically and exhorting ineffectually.
Italian, "tainted with licentiousness, or defaced by infidelity or scepticism." 20

As a nation grows and reaches the fullest development of its powers, its language, too, is molded and shaped to perfection by the skill of native genius. The classics are written. A tradition is formed. The perfection of the classic authors, whatever the intrinsic merits or defects of their works, has one notable effect on the writers who follow after them. Newman recognizes the dangers to the new writers who come after the classical period. The language has been formed in earlier years when the "licence of speech unfettered by precedents, the novelty of the work, the state of society, and the absence of criticism, enable an author to write with spirit and freshness." 21 The stimulus to new writers is thereby taken away. The nation has become accustomed to useful expressions or combinations of words. Criticism gains sway and reins in the free genius of the new aspirants to literary honors. Language becomes stereotyped, far less elastic. Men may conform to established standards, but they can also strive to overthrow them, and attempt something of their own. Artists "become impatient of conventionalities, and, resolved to shake off the yoke which tames them down to the loss of individuality, they adopt no half

20 Ibid., 327-28.
21 Ibid., 337.
measures but indulge in novelties which offend against the genius of the language, and the true canons of taste." 22

Nor is rebellion confined to one sphere of activity. Revolt against literary canons is often synchronous with revolt against the moral law. Men's intellects prefer liberty to truth; man's "heart cherishes a leaning toward licence of thought and speech in comparison with restraint." 23 In this revolt individual spirits assert themselves. The established laws of order and taste fall into disrepute. With no standards to which to adhere, the artist, revelling in his liberty, makes Art according to his own personal ideals. The fervor of his rebellion together with his devotion to his vocation tend to blind him to all else but art, and the fact that he is a priest of Beauty.

If literature, as Newman expresses it, is the voice of the nation, the author, however much his soul is rapt in ecstasy with beauty, must be conscious of his moral responsibility to his people. A writer, however, does not consciously set about to form a national literature. His immediate aim as an artist is the exercise of his art: a painful pleasure to the true artist, and a delight to the discerning reader. It is pertinent, therefore, to ask more specific answer to the question:

22 Ibid., 336.
23 Ibid., 329-30.
What is the function of literature? In examining the function of literature, the intention of the writer and the purpose of the reader in going to books must be investigated.

Literature, it has been noted, is the personal expression of personal thoughts. It is the expression of the author's own reactions to the world about him,—the seen and the unseen world.

The throng and succession of ideas, thoughts, feelings, imaginations, aspirations, which pass through him...which are so original in him...his judgments upon life...the exercises of his wit, of his humour, of his depth, of his sagacity...does he image forth, to all does he give utterance, in a corresponding language which is...the faithful expression of his intense personality.24

These thoughts are of great visions, of rich visions which the poet25 has before him, and which he aims at expressing in a

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24 Ibid., 292-93.
25 The word poet is used here in a loose sense (and generally throughout the thesis except where the meaning in context evidences otherwise), and refers rather to the author with poetic talent which even writers of prose exhibit, and which the greatest orators and essayists have in rich abundance. Newman speaks of the novelist poetizing, and the following quotation indicates that he would have called any master of language a poet. He is himself an example of a prose poet.

"That pomp of language, that full and tuneful diction, that felicitousness in the choice, and exquisiteness in the collocation of words, which to prosaic writers seems artificial, is nothing else but the mere habit and way of a lofty intellect. Aristotle, in his sketch of the magnanimous man, tells us that his voice is deep, his motions slow, and his stature commanding. In like manner, the elo-
manner adequate to the thing of which he speaks.26

The literary artist is no mediocre pedlar of second-rate ideas. His mind is full of the eternal values of the forms of beauty which are the materials of his thoughts.27 He "feels a natural sympathy with everything great and splendid in the physical and moral world . . . ; (he) speaks the language of dignity, emotion, and refinement."28 It is Beauty that the poet wishes to express, -- to the full capacity of his powers. Poetry is the gift of moving the affections through the imagination, and its object is the beautiful.29

The poet has as his object the beautiful. The beautiful, however, when its cultus becomes the object of man's whole-souled worship, becomes dangerous. Literature as an art is the expression of the beautiful. Does the contemplation or ex-

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cution of a great intellect is great. His language expresses, not only his great thoughts, but his great self. Certainly he might use fewer words than he uses; but he fertilizes his simplest ideas, and germinates into a multitude of details, and prolongs the march of his sentences and sweeps round to the full diapason of his harmony, as if κυδείς στάσεως, rejoicing in his own vigour, and richness of resource. . . . Really it is a sort of fulness of heart, parallel to that which makes the merry boy whistle as he walks, or the strong man, like the smith in the novel, flourish his club when there is no one to fight with."

The Idea, II, 296.

26 Ibid., 301.
28 Loc. cit.
29 Ibid., 29.
pression of the beautiful constitute man's highest beatitude in
life? Once more the question arises, is art for art's sake
only?

If the artist were to take for the final end
of his activity, that is to say for beatitude,
the end of his art or the beauty of his work,
he would be, purely and simply, an idolater.
It is therefore absolutely necessary for the
artist, qua man, to work for something other
than his work, something better beloved. God
is infinitely more loveable than art.30

That is the answer of one of the foremost scholastic philosophers
living today. Newman would agree with him: he would have liter­
ture be the handmaid of religion:

These high ministers of the Beautiful and
the Noble, are, it is plain, especial atten­
dants and handmaids of Religion; but it is
equally plain that they are apt to forget
their place, and unless restrained with a
firm hand, instead of being servants, will
aim at becoming principles.31

In this connection M. Maritain quotes the testimony of
Baudelaire, whose essay on The Pagan School "vividly describes
what an error it is for man to address himself to art as his
supreme end." The poet concludes:

The uncontrolled appetite for form impels
the artist to monstrous, unknown disorders.
Absorbed by the fierce passion for whatever
is beautiful, comic, pretty, or picturesque,
for there are degrees, ideas of what is

30 Jacques Maritain, Art and Scholasticism, translated by J. F.
31 The Idea, I, 112.
right and true disappear; the frenzied passion for art is a cancer which eats everything else. And as the definite absence of what is right and true in art is tantamount to the absence of art, the man fades away completely: excessive specialisation of a faculty ends in nothing. . . . The folly of art is on a par with the abuse of the mind. The creation of one or the other of these two supremacies begets stupidity, hardness of heart and unbounded pride and egoism.32

All this was no less apparent to Newman whose lifetime concern for the salvation of souls hardly clouded his insight into the things of literature. What the professed litterateur criticized, the ordained clergyman detected also. Newman saw the cult of beauty degrade into an indulgence of sensuality. The freedom of the artist was a liberty to exploit his emotions and sensations. Without restraints he descended into a base sensuality. To Newman the consequence was not only apparent, it was natural: "One of the most miserable, yet natural characteristics of . . . the love of the Beautiful, is its connexion with sensuality. This will most obviously take place through the medium of the Fine Arts."33 Instead of worshipping the true Incarnate Lord, the artist pours forth his heart on dust and ashes.34 The eternal beauty lying hidden "deep down things" is not probed and discovered. Beauty becomes that

32 Maritain, 218.
33 The Idea, I, 437.
34 Ibid., 438.
which thrills and quickens the senses of man.

Poetry, be it remembered, has been offered as a substitute for religion. The esthetic sense of Beauty, the correct and cultured taste, becomes the norm of man's activity in place of conscience.

It is maintained that the Beautiful and the Virtuous mean the same thing, and are convertible terms. Accordingly Conscience is found out to be but slavish; and a fine taste, an exquisite sense of the decorous, the graceful, and the appropriate, this is to be our true guide for ordering our mind and our conduct, and bringing the whole man into shape.

These are sophisms...35

If beautifulness makes a thing right, then nothing graceful and pleasant can be wrong! Since there is no abstract idea that cannot be embellished and dressed up to appear pleasant and graceful, it follows that anything whatsoever is permissible. Men being what they are, the love of the beautiful turns out to be nothing else but the self-indulgence of sensual animal cravings.36

While the writer does express his visions of the beautiful, beauty, nonetheless, is not its own excuse for being. In the abstract, we might separate art, beauty, literature (poetry), from prudence, yet "things are not content to be in

36 Ibid., 84-85.
fact just what we contemplate them in the abstract, and nothing more; they require something more than themselves, sometimes as necessary conditions of their being, sometimes for their well-being."

In this case, poetry requires the standards of morality.

While the poet goes to literature as an outlet for his thoughts and inspirations, he is not totally oblivious of the audience he is going to reach. In considering the function of literature in regard to this audience we will momentarily abstract from the poet. We must determine why people go to literature, and having determined their objectives, we ask whether literature without morality can fulfill their seekings satisfactorily. Can literature that is said to be beautiful, but that offends the consciences of good men, satisfy the purposes for which men go to it?

C. Alphonso Smith, former professor at the United States Naval Academy, when he entitled his book, What Can Literature Do for Me? asked a question the answer to which most people (especially in this day of the popular novel) unconsciously give in their escape from the routine and heat and misery of the day. For Newman, literature provides a solace for the mind broken by the disappointments and sufferings of actual

life. 38 "It brings us into a new world -- a world of overpowering interest, of the sublimest views, and the tenderest and purest feelings." 39 By the power of words, "the secrets of the heart are brought to light, pain of soul is relieved, hidden grief is carried off, sympathy conveyed, counsel imparted, experience recorded, and wisdom perpetuated." 40

Flight from this material world must not, however, be to an ideal world whose spiritual values cannot afford the solace and strength needed by the weary soul. As Francis Thompson says: "(Poetry) sought mainly to provoke waning emotion ... is a sterile luxury; sought mainly to stimulate crescent emotion, a pernicious luxury." 41 Newman, too, has high ideals of the function of literature. "It was to him food or air rather than scenery which he could look at and pass on, where he did not need to stay. This was ... especially so with poetry." 42 He surrendered himself more or less completely to its charms, for "it demands as its primary condition, that we should not put ourselves above the objects in which it resides, but at their feet; that we should feel them to be above and beyond us, that we should look up to them." 43

38 Loc. cit.
39 Ibid., 23.
40 The Idea, II, 307-08.
42 Wilfred Ward, II, 355.
Such esteem must be guarded! Literature is a grand tonic to life, but its efficaciousness can scarcely be realized unless by "the utterance of a right moral feeling, seeking a purity and truth which this world will not give." This

In addition to its cathartic effect, and its offer of a refuge, literature is, quite naturally, an educator of man: "the classics . . . have ever been the instruments of education which the civilized orbis terrarum has adopted." The classics are the best means "to strengthen, refine, and enrich the intellectual powers." Poetry is not purely an emotional exercise, not a mere appeal to the sensitive and imaginative faculties of man. It aims at the highest in man: his intellect and will. "Its essence is impassioned, imaginative reason, and the higher kinds of it . . . are to an apprehensive capacity some of the most masterly and profound lessons of severe thought."

To divide the faculties of man in the speculative realm may be well enough indeed. All acts of man, however, are of the whole man. "After all, man is not a reasoning animal; he is a seeing, feeling, contemplating, acting animal." The

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44 Newman, Essays Critical and Historical, I, 10.
45 The Idea, II, 273.
46 Ibid., 279.
47 The Idea, I, 277.
appeal of literature must be to the whole man. If there is appeal directed to one faculty to the exclusion or to the detriments of another, that poetry is not great poetry, and, what is still more deplorable, not only is the unity of the whole man, and the wholesomeness of the unified faculties destroyed, but poetry herself is defaced. Unless "seriousness of character" also is strengthened and beautified, literature has failed in its purpose to ennoble man. In a sense, then, good and beauty are not identical in extension: they do not embrace the same number of objects. The good is superior, and while beauty need not professedly aim at enhancing the moral character of man, yet, if she goes contrary to his highest interests, she soils the soul of man with a filth intangible, but real and terrible. She then deserves the name of pandar.
CHAPTER IV
THE POET'S MORALITY

"We cannot apprehend a work of literature except as a manifestation of the rhythm of the soul of the man who created it. If we stop short of that our understanding is incomplete."¹ The problem of the writer's morality naturally links up with any discussion of the nature and the function of literature. For if it is maintained that the work must treat of life wholesomely, the question arises, what of the author? Can a dissolute, lecherous, profligate man write beautiful, inspiring literature? Can we call him a poet? Further light can be thrown upon the question of art for art's sake if we inquire into the mystery of the poet. Has he no more purpose than self-expression? the exploitation of his own emotions and sensations? Are poets "professional ministers of excitement who are . . . paid in money and smiles for doing what the spectators would be ashamed of doing in their own persons even if they had the power of doing it?"²

The ancient Greeks maintained that the poets were inspired

1 J. Middleton Murray, quoted by Pick, 138.
2 John Lockhart, quoted by Thomas Carlyle, Essay on Burns, edited by C.H. Hanson, Ginn and Co., Boston, 1897, 47.
by the gods.

Pindar ... does not hesitate to subordinate those claims (of art) to natural genius and divine inspiration. Democritus speaks out in no uncertain terms in favour of a theory of direct revelation. Socrates tells us in the Apology that men write poetry, 'not by wisdom but by a sort of genius and inspiration.'

Plato himself, in The Phaedrus, advocates an identical doctrine. A "kind of possession and madness comes from the Muses. This takes hold upon a gentle and pure soul, arouses it and inspires it to songs and other poetry, and thus by adorning countless deeds of the ancients educates later generations."  

The critic of the vates theory, influenced by the modern tendencies to emphasize technique as art, and going even so far as to distinguish and separate thought from expression, -- what is said from how it is said, -- might deny any prophetic office to the poet. *Ποιεῖν*, he will say, means to do; but *vates* is to see. Hence there seems to be no connection between the office of seer and the operation of the poet. The answer to this difficulty is that the "song of the poets was considered inspired no less than their seeing. The Latin word *Vates* expresses both the senses in which inspiration was attributed to

3 Hetherington, 3.
the poets." Such, too, is Newman's understanding of the poet:

according to the well-known line, 'facit indignatio versus'; not the words alone, but even the rhythm, the metre, the verse, will be the contemporaneous offspring of the emotion or imagination which possesses him. 'Poeta nascitur, non fit,' says the proverb; and this is in numerous instances true of his poems, as well of himself. They are born, not framed; they are a strain rather than a composition; and their perfection is the monument, not so much of his skill as of his power.

Euripides' chorus sings: "The Muses shall for me be twined forever with the graces." And Horace:

\begin{verbatim}
carmina non prius
audit Musarum sacerdos
virginibus puerisque canto.
\end{verbatim}

Add to this the warning and the memento given by Father Hetherington:

We must not forget that a technical study of this or any art may become mere 'criticism' and leave almost untouched the poetry that lies hidden behind the technical mastery. There is more to the Parthenon than pyramidal corrections and rules for the corner triglyph; more, too, than the texture of the marble and the sculptured frieze. In much the same way in tragedy, behind the stage-craft, the mastery of language, the plot, the very characters, there lies hid the elusive vision of the poet, that will yield itself only to the

5 Hetherington, 58.
6 The Idea, II, 295-96.
8 Odes III, 1. This and the selection from Euripides were used by Father Hetherington to illustrate his point.
sympathetic reader who allows the poem to conjure up for him the world of the poet's vision.9

Poetry, in other words, is not a mere manner with words however ingenious. It is the effusion of a great soul inspired by divine visions, in language no less spontaneous and rich than the thought that it clothes.10

In a materialistic world, where spiritual values are simply denied, where sensist philosophies dig in the field of psychology, where discoveries about "delirium, somnambulism, hallucination, offer a more profitable field of experiment for the psychology of the individual than the normal state,"11 it is no wonder that men disclaim for poetry any "participation in divineness." Too many modern writers are too concerned with dry brain cells and the functioning of the nervous system. Composition has become the conscious response to observed physiological stimuli.

Due to a misinterpretation of Aristotle's silence on the subject of inspiration, there has been a conflict between Romanticism and a rationalizing pseudo-Classicism that frowned

9 Hetherington, 15.
10 What is said of Poetry is said also of prose. Newman: "And this is true of prose as well as of verse in its degree." These words follow immediately on those employed above. The Idea, II, 296.
11 Babbitt, 15-16.
upon any enthusiasm,—divine indwelling. The poets of the Nineties and of the twentieth century scorned the wisdom and the reason of the Neo-Classicists, indeed, the traditional wisdom of all ages; but they made a fetish of form. They kept the freedom of emotion and sensation of the Romantics, but denied any public function or responsibility.

The 1890's saw a shift in the poet's conception of his own function from that of a public figure to a private one. If Tennyson had been asked what he conceived his duty to the public to be, he would have had a ready, and a positive answer. But to the poets of the Rhymers' Club the question would hardly have made sense; they would have shaken their heads and replied that the poet had no such duty, that his only duty was to 'art,' which meant, of course, that his only duty was to himself.

The poets made little of the communicative aspect (though the immediate answer to an elementary question on the nature of language would tell them that the purpose of language is to communicate), and stressed self-expression. They had no new spirit to infuse into poetry. "They simply wanted to sit in a corner and express themselves, and if that shocked the public, so much the better." Poetry became a personal catharsis which the poet allowed others to witness if they would. It is a foible of human nature to pretend to scorn attention while

12 Hetherington, 7-8.
14 Ibid., 15.
zealously courting it.

The Imagist doctrine emphasized technique; the Imagists had no higher aspirations than a camera, their sole and simple aim being the "rendering of the material facts of life, without comment and in exact language."15 This rendition "is poetry, and ... poetry is the only important thing in life."15 They were "one of the first groups who endeavoured to solve the problems faced by art in a world of dissolving values by concentrating on technique."16

The novelists, too, subordinated communication to technique. In the post-Victorian days,

literary communication had reached such a degree of subtlety and sophistication that it became possible to compensate for lack of community of belief by new techniques in expression. ... New developments in psychology arrived very opportunely and encouraged writers to beg the question of value by confining their world to the limits of an individual mind and assessing value solely in terms of the consciousness of that mind.17

The laurel crown of the poet held more significance for Newman than for modern technicians of poetry. His concept of the dignity and responsibility of the literary artist was

16 Daiches, Poetry and the Modern World, 76.
founded both on historical fact and on a priori conceptions of the significance of the poetic gift and the poetic talent.

Steeped as he was in ancient literature and in the classics of modern nations, well-versed in historical lore, he could not but be impressed by the influence of wielders of the pen. "The world was to have certain intellectual teachers, and no others; Homer and Aristotle, with the poets and philosophers who circle round them, were to be the schoolmasters of all generations."\(^{18}\) The tradition of the poet as vates might be said to have begun with "'a sort of literary canonization' of immortal Homer who was invested with the office of forming the young mind of Greece to noble thoughts and bold deeds."\(^{19}\) Testimony of the ancients revealed the high regard in which the poets were held; they taught, it was said, the science of life better than the Stoic and Academic, inculcating the "majestic lessons concerning duty and religion, justice and providence."\(^{20}\)

Nor were the classics of the ancients jettisoned in the Christian era. Their powers as instruments of education were utilized in the Middle Ages to the fullest: Horace and Virgil were supreme; Statius, Ovid, Livy, Sallust, Cicero enjoyed a place in the curriculum, and, "after the revival of literature

\(^{18}\) The Idea, II, 276.
\(^{19}\) Ibid., 274.
\(^{20}\) Ibid., 275.
in the commencement of the modern era . . . Cicero, Virgil, and Horace." In Newman's own England:

Milton . . . and Bunyan . . . exerted an influence superior to Shakespeare himself, whose great mind did not condescend to the direct inculcation of a private or sectarian creed. Their phrases, their sentiments, are household words of the nation . . . Such is the magical eloquence of their compositions . . . that I really shall not be far from the mark in saying of them, and this is true of Shakespeare also, that the ordinary run of men find it very difficult to determine, in respect to the proverbs, instances, maxims, and half sentences, which are in the nation's mouth, which, and how much, is from the Bible, and how much from the authors I have mentioned. 22

Every true poet exercises some such function: he "expresses what all feel, but all cannot say; and his sayings pass into proverbs among his people, and his phrases become household words and idioms of their daily speech, which is tesselated with the rich fragments of his language." 23

The ancient Greeks saw the poet as participating in something divine: in a vision of divine things. Newman, too, calls art a revelation, a direct gift of God, not only to the Christians, but to the pagans as well:

All true art comes from revelation (to speak

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21 Ibid., 277.
generally), I do think, but not necessarily through the Jewish Dispensation. The Fathers look upon Paganism as preserving tradition too: e.g. the Sibyls. It seems to me a very contracted view, and not borne out by facts to trace Plato's glowing thoughts on the religious rites of Paganism to Judaism. 24

Nor was this sentiment a mere momentary, enthusiastic exhalation of a fine poetic spirit. The poet, to Newman, was ever inspired. He had "great or rich visions before him." 25 Homer, Pindar, Shakespeare, Dryden, Scott, were inspired with their subjects. "It is the fire within the author's breast which overflows in the torrent of his burning, irresistible eloquence." 26

The poetical talent is a gift not only of vision but of expression. A great author is one "who has something to say -- and knows how to say it." 27 Newman, indeed, stresses the power of expression as the poet's characteristic gift, always keeping in mind, however, the inseparability of thought and language. The poet is "master of a two-fold logos, the thought and the word, distinct, but inseparable from each other." 28 The two are fused within him.

If then, he concludes, the power of speech is so great a

25 The Idea, II, 301.
26 Ibid., 295.
27 Ibid., 306.
28 Loc. cit.
gift that it is considered by many philosophers to be of divine origin; if the power of words is potent to make them become the solace and refuge and instructors of mankind; if the power of authors is so strong that it can mold nations into a unity,—if such men are the spokesmen and prophets of human frailty,—how much should we not honor and revere literature, ever striving to imbibe its spirit, striving to become masters of its secrets that we too may become in our own measure, ministers of its great benefits. 29

Such estimation of the poet and his gift would be strange did it not hasten the critic to the conclusion that the poet should be endowed with a character of "high seriousness." Cardinal Newman does not miss the vital and necessary connection of the work with the poet's own soul. The author's style is the image of his mind. "The elocution of a great intellect is great. His language expresses not only his great thoughts but his great self. . . . His mental attitude and bearing, the beauty of his moral countenance . . . are imaged in the tenderness or energy or richness of his language." 30 Even the rhythm, the metre, the verse, will be the offspring of his emotional and imaginative nature. The perfection of the whole is not so

29 Ibid., 307-08.
30 Ibid., 295.
much the monument of his skill as of his powers. But can beauty have power if she be not good and true? Can poetic talent be great in a soul that is not concerned for the good and the true?

To this latter question Newman answers, no. He requires for the poetic talent that it be the "originality of right moral feeling."

When originality is found apart from good sense . . . it shows itself in paradox and rashness of sentiment, and eccentricity of outward conduct. Poetry . . . cannot be separated from its good sense, or taste, as it is called, which is one of its elements. It is originality energizing in the world of beauty; the originality of grace, purity, refinement, and good feeling . . . Poetry is ultimately founded on correct moral perception . . . ; where there is no sound principle in exercise there will be no poetry; and . . . on the whole (originality being granted) in proportion to the standard of a writer's moral character will his compositions vary in poetical excellence. (Italics mine.)

The chief characteristics of a writer according to Newman's notes on writing sermons should be: sincerity, simplicity, humility. "A man should be in earnest, by which I mean he should write not for the sake of writing, but to bring out his thoughts." Eloquence for its own fine sake is not the aim of

31 Ibid., 296.
33 Ward, II, 335.
composition. The writer should keep his idea in view, and should write sentences over and over again till he has expressed his meaning accurately, forcibly, and in a few words. He should aim at being understood. . . . Ornament and amplification will come spontaneously in due time, but he should never seek them. Humility, which is a great Christian virtue, has a place in literary composition. . . . He who is ambitious will never write well, but he who tries to say simply what he feels, what religion demands, what faith teaches . . . will be eloquent without intending it, and will write better English than if he made a study of English literature. 34

Though these notes are directed to the preacher, they are not without the highest value to the writer of any of the types of literature. They express "Newman's own feeling as to the most effective way of imparting truth." 35 Elsewhere in criticizing the faults of writers, he notes how their moral imperfections are revealed in their works. Those who consider composition as a trick or trade show a lack of simplicity and sincerity. Their sentiments become artificial, and they tend to make their readers' such. 36 They treat fine writing as a superimposed ornament to thought. They make it a luxury to be "indulged in by those who have time and inclination for such vanities." 37

Cannot an evil character, then, be called a poet? Are not

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34 Ibid., 335-36.
35 Ibid., 335.
36 Newman, Parochial and Plain Sermons, II, 374.
37 The Idea, II, 294.
there men of dissolute lives who are acclaimed as such? In so far as a man is evil he cannot produce a work of beauty. A moral malady disorders the inward sight and taste. Shocking imaginations against things supernatural and sacred are diseases of the soul. True, a poet need not display virtuous and religious feeling, but "a right moral state of heart is the formal and scientific condition of a poetical mind." Note, however, his distinctions:

Nor does it follow from our position that every poet must in fact be a man of consistent and practical principle; except so far as good feeling commonly produces or results from good practice. Burns was a man of inconsistent life; still, it is known, of much really sound principle at bottom. Thus his acknowledged poetical talent is in nowise inconsistent with the truth of our doctrine, which will refer the beauty which exists in his compositions to the remains of a virtuous and diviner nature within him.

The theory holds true even if it be proved that a depraved man may write a poem. For frames of mind short of the virtuous will produce a poetry that is limited and partial. Even in this case, nevertheless, the poetry of a vicious mind will be debased and inconsistent. It will be poetry only because some trace or shadow of holy truth remains in it. "On the other hand, a right moral feeling places the mind in the very center

38 Newman, Parochial and Plain Sermons, I, 17.
of that circle from which all the rays have their origin and
range; whereas minds otherwise placed command but a portion of
the whole circuit of poetry. This narrowing of the poet's
command is likewise noted by Irving Babbitt:

Anyone who admits reality only in what derives from the dust, whether in a cricket or a Dante, must, from the point of view of the religious or the humanistic realist, be prepared to make substantial sacrifices. In the first place, he must sacrifice the depth and subtlety that arise from the recognition in some form of the duality of man's nature. For the interest that may arise from the portrayal of the conflict between a law of the spirit and a law of the members, the inordinate interest in sex for its own sake promoted by most of the so-called realists is a rather shabby substitute. A merely naturalistic realism also involves the sacrifice of beauty in almost any sense of that elusive term. Closely related to this sacrifice is the sacrifice of delicacy, elevation, and distinction. The very word realism has come to connote the opposite of these qualities.

The great vocation of the poet and the divineness of his gift require that he cultivate not Beauty alone, but hand in hand with her, moral goodness. In proportion as moral beauty takes possession of the poet's soul will he be able to capture the glory of the universe. The breadth and power of his faculties will be given increase, and he will see more clearly, sense more keenly, and sing in the most varied tunes his fullest and richest songs.

41 Ibid., 22.
42 Babbitt, 217-18.
CHAPTER V

MORALITY IN LITERARY CONTENT

If literature is so vitally connected with life, and if the poet must assume a moral responsibility in addition to an artistic duty, -- for, be it remembered, art falls when morality decays, -- the next inquiry concerned with the content of literature involves a threefold question. What is the esthetic value of morality? Must the poet, if he is a vates, point a moral? How shall evil be portrayed?

By the esthetic value of good morals we mean the power which goodness itself has to arouse the noble emotions in the souls of men. Goodness here is not synonymous with those sentimental or religious feelings of piety which properly belong to man himself. It means the objective morality of things in general, -- the accord of acts, circumstances, objects, with a divinely constituted norm: namely, human nature in its full compass; that is, the relations of a man toward God and toward all other creatures, and the order and law of his own members and faculties, physical and spiritual. More especially do we consider the relations of man to God as embodied in religion.

The last chapter saw Newman espousing the theory that
moral integrity enhanced an author's artistic output. If this be true, then revealed religion should prove to be the richest source of poetical material. Newman says that it is.

While its disclosures have an originality in them to engage the intellect, they have a beauty to satisfy the moral nature. It presents us with those ideal forms of excellence in which a poetical mind delights, and with which all grace and harmony are associated. It brings us into a new world -- a world of overpowering interest, of the sublimest views, and the tenderest and purest feelings. With Christians, a poetical view of things is a duty, -- we are bid to colour all things with hues of faith, to see a Divine meaning in every event, and a superhuman tendency.¹

A modern writer has gone to the extent of pointing out that the Catholic Church itself is the true Mother of poetic inspiration. What is the test which separates literature from that which is not literature? Arthur Machen answers:

I will give you a test that will startle you; literature is the expression, through the aesthetic medium of words, of the dogmas of the Catholic Church, and that which in any way is out of harmony with these dogmas is not literature. . . . I tell you that unless you have assimilated the final dogmas -- the eternal truths -- upon which these things rest, consciously if you please, but subconsciously of necessity, you can never write literature, however clever and amusing you may be. Think of it, and you will see that from the literary standpoint, Catholic dogma is merely the witness, under a special symbolism, of the enduring facts of human nature and the universe; it is

¹ Newman, Essays Critical and Historical, I, 23.
merely the voice which tells us distinctly that man is not the creature of the drawing-room and the Stock Exchange, but a lonely awful soul confronted by the Source of all Souls, and you will realize that to make literature it is necessary to be, at all events, subconsciously Catholic.²

To Cardinal Newman, the Catholic Church was the very embodiment of poetry. She is the "most sacred and august of poets."

She is the poet of her children; full of music to soothe the sad and control the wayward, -- wonderful in story for the imagination of the romantic; rich in symbol and imagery, so that gentle and delicate feelings, which will not bear words, may in silence intimate their presence or commune with themselves. Her very being is poetry; every psalm, every petition, every collect ... is a fulfillment of some dream of childhood, or aspiration of youth.³

It is true, he concedes, that poets are more commonly found external to the church than among her children. All arts and sciences, however, the sum of human knowledge and experience, form one corporate body, all linked in the unity that is Truth. A man can be closer to the Church in thought and feeling than he is conscious of being, or than he is willing to confess. Because he does not see the wholeness of life, and because of his eagerness to make a world of his own, he cannot see the

happiness of that universality of wisdom which the Church has always advocated, and which she has always professed to possess and to guard. He will grasp a grain of truth and make from it the bread of life. But even that grain is from her harvest.

If one of the functions of literature is to teach, to instruct, one of the esthetic joys poetry will afford is the delight that comes from the skilfull drawing of a moral lesson. Ascetic writers, it is true, are the ordinary sources for such instruction, but even the heathen poets derived many lessons from life. Their preachments are no less effective than those of theologians, while their artistry is often far superior. The fact that Horace was a pagan, for instance, does not militate against his picturing life in its true aspect. The heathen's experience of life is different from a Christian's, but

We may gain from the classics, especially from the Latin, a good deal in the way of knowledge, both of man and of God. The poems of Horace . . . bring before us most vividly and piteously our state by nature; they increase in us a sense of our utter dependence and natural helplessness; they arm us against the fallacious promises of the world, especially at this day -- promises of science and literature to give us light and liberty.

4 Cf. The Idea, I, Discourse V, "General Knowledge One Philosophy."

religions, because it stressed, so he said, the moral nature of man and neglected his intellectual faculties. In Rome, the Christian Rome, Newman discovered the mother of that twofold inspiration of art on which all poets draw whether they be her children in grace or in spirit and desire.

It would not be an irrelevant digression to instance the admiration that sermons, those writings most directly rising from contact with the Church, have aroused in men, -- not primarily for their moral content but for the genius with which preachers of the sacred word have exercised power over language, and that talent which combines "sweetness and light" with moral strength and earnestness.

For English in the grand manner, combining eloquence with idiomatic vigor, better models would be hard to find than Richard Hooker, Jeremy Taylor, Isaac Barrow, and John Henry Newman. The pity is that, for obvious reasons, the chief sermonic and ecclesiastical writers are so generally neglected in the study of literature. They, rather than the novelists and even more than the essayists, have exploited the full riches of the language and are in the great tradition. Dr. Church, too, thought that Newman's sermons stood by themselves in modern English literature.

We have learned to look upon Dr. Newman as one of those who have left their mark very deep on the English language. . . . The

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Sermons have proved a permanent gift to our literature, of the purest English, full of spring, clearness, and force. Such English, graceful with the grace of nerve, flexibility, and power must always have attracted attention; but his English had an ethical element which was almost inseparable from its literary characteristics.  

Granted, then, that religion is the greatest source of poetic inspiration, is it the only source? No. The materials of the poet are the eternal forms of beauty and perfection wherever he may find them, within religion or without, for religion does not formally embrace all these forms. Let the poet take, if he will, the phenomena of nature and life, and supply us with pictures drawn after a creation of his own mind. Let him idealize, fictionize. Nor is it necessary that the poet "display virtuous and religious feeling." In truth, the solemnity of religious topics can deflate the genius of a talented writer. Newman cites John Davison as an example of one whose genius was fettered by his awe for the great subjects he discussed.

We think it will be found respecting him generally, that according as he approaches religious topics, his power of sustaining an argument flags, and his course becomes impeded, but as soon as he has no overshadowing awe to subdue him, he is able again to write

11 Ibid., 21.
with vigour and grace. Hence his occasional Sermons, though very valuable in point of matter, are some of his least satisfactory specimens of style. In truth, it is very plain that the subject was the cause of the difference.

The subject matter of composition need not be strictly religious; it can be, and most frequently and correctly is, indifferent and secular.

To steer a middle course between didacticism and the vitiated theory of art for art's sake is not always easy for a man whose moral fibre strained for eternal values, and whose delicacy of sentiment was revolted by the excesses of the worshippers of beauty. Newman's better sense guided him between the two extremes. He would have agreed with Francis Thompson when the poet warned religiously-inclined critics not to eye Poetry askance "if she seldom sing directly of religion; the bird gives glory to God though it sings only of its innocent loves." The Cardinal "deprecated . . . any ecclesiastical narrowing of the conception of literature." While he admits that the department of poetry will include such moralizing and philosophical poems as Young's Night Thoughts, and Byron's Childe Harold, he was not blind to the bad taste shown in judging such poetry. He is not led to admire and criticize

12 Ibid., II, 392-93.
13 Thompson, Works, III, 3.
14 Ward, I, 368.
15 Newman, Essays Critical and Historical, I, 17.
a literary work favorably merely because its subject is religious.16

In the days of the Tractarian Movement when all his energies and faculties had been united strenuously to further the religious revival, he had fallen into the error of thinking "that it was not right 'agere poetam' but merely 'ecclesiasticum agere'; that the only thing called for was to bring out an idea; that the harsher, the better, like weaving sack cloth."17 The preacher has his proper function; the author, his. Though the preacher can and should write literature to the best of his ability, the author has no specific call to the pulpit, and, if he teaches, often fails not only in carrying home his point, but also in achieving his artistic effect.

It is a thousand pities that a clever man like A. B. should sermonize in the way that he does. We are reading him in the refectory, and he always seems in the same place, prancing like a cavalry soldier's horse, without advancing in the face of the mob. He has a noble subject, but I have not gained two ideas from his book.18

This distaste for the didactic persisted in Newman's criticism to his last years. At the age of eighty-seven, he wrote to Miss Hope-Scott about her novel, "there is perhaps too much di-

16 Ibid., 13.
18 A letter of Newman's quoted Ibid., 335.
rect teaching and preaching in the Tale."

Against a humanism, also, that would put aside the doctrines and rites of religion in favor of the solace and refuge of Poetry to gain that faith and hope and love which only the truth of God can extend to all mankind, Newman used bitter words. To effect a moral improvement was not the function of literature, though it could and did accomplish that end secondarily; or even directly when it ministered to the Church. In that case, it became a type of Gospel truth. But, "if we attempt to effect a moral improvement by means of poetry we shall mature into a mawkish, frivolous and fastidious sentimentalism."  

He warns his congregations about substituting the Books of the Church and their teaching for an apparently Christian Muse. Professor Osgood used the title, *Poetry as a Means of Grace*, for a book. Newman said: "it is but poetry not religion," no matter how high and beautiful the sentiments.

It is but human nature exerting the powers of imagination and reason, which it has, till it seems also to have powers which it has not. There are, you know, in the animal world various creatures, which are able to imitate the voice of man; nature in like manner is often a mockery of grace. The

19 Ibid., 529.
truth is, the natural man sees this or that principle to be good or true from the light of conscience; and then, since he has the power of reasoning, he knows that, if this be true, many other things are true likewise; and then, having the power of imagination, he pictures to himself those other things as true, though he does not really understand them.21 (Italics mine.)

However potent it be in the education of man, literature is by no means a substitute for revealed religion.

Having acknowledged that the good heightens the artistic effect of literature, and that the subject matter, though not religious, can be indifferent without injury to the art, we come upon the question of the representation of evil. Must every intimation of human frailty, wickedness, sin, be exterminated if present, or forbidden initial entry into literary composition? Should not literature sketch life realistically inasmuch as it deals with life? The enthusiastic modern would say that the more realistic art is the greater art. "We have reached the point," Mr. Alfred Noyes wrote, "when, if any writer of realistic descriptions ... dealt with particularly ugly or dirty details, it would be called Mr. Jargon's great new poem, and described as a work of genius."22 Mr. Sherwood Anderson argued that, "inasmuch as we ourselves are crude, our literature, if it is not to be unreal and factitious, should be crude likewise."23

22 Noyes, 56.
23 Babbitt, 218.
Such is the marked tendency of some writers today, who, influence by Zola, have brutalized naturalism to so great an extent that, "the very shock to the nerves will stun the reader into thinking that the spectacle of these horrors -- chiefly incest, rape, and hideous death -- is opening to him the very inner significance, the very heart . . . of human life."  

"Man's work will savour of man," wrote Cardinal Newman, "in his elements and powers excellent and admirable, but prone to disorder and excess, to error and to sin."  

His literature, therefore, will have, together with the beauty and sweetness, the fierceness and rankness of the natural man. We should not expect to find in literature only beauty and virtue portrayed. If not, how then shall evil be painted?

Newman's answer to this question can be given best and most briefly in his criticism of Shakespeare:

There is no mistaking in his works on which side lies the right; Satan is not made a hero, nor Cain a victim, but pride is pride and vice is vice, and whatever indulgence he may allow himself in lighter thoughts and unseemly words, yet his admiration is reserved for sanctity and truth. . . . Often as he may offend against modesty, he is clear of a worse charge, sensuality . . . .

We may be crude, true, but our lives are poetry not because of

24 Cowardin and More, 388.
26 Ibid., 330-31.
the crudeness, but in spite of it. We are not to embrace our filth though we acknowledge it as our own; we ought to shun it. The act of repugnance or hatred for what is evil and foul is at the same time a recognition of and a fleeing to what is good.

Though poetry represents the ideal, it need not on that account be unreal in presenting evil. To judge poetry as untrue because it is not as crude as man is a fallacy. Individuality of character, for instance, is the principle charm of fiction. An author ought to delineate the varied characteristics and actions of men. He should avoid, however, "such improbabilities, wanderings, or coarsenesses, as interfere with the refined and delicate enjoyment of the imagination." Newman does not exclude imperfect and odious characters from appearing in narrative or drama. They have their place along with the good, as long as their evil is treated as something reprehensible, not as laudable or desirable. Moral excellence might in the case of some characters become a fault.

The Clytemnestra of Euripides is so interesting, that the divine vengeance, which is the main subject of the drama, seems almost unjust. Lady Macbeth, on the contrary, is the conception of one deeply learned in the poetical art. She is polluted with the most heinous crimes, and meets the fate she deserves, yet there is nothing in the picture to offend the taste, and much to feed the

27 Newman, Essays Critical and Historical, I, 15.
imagination. 28

The secret, then, behind the poetical representation of evil lies in the imaginative faculty. "Refined and delicate imagination" is the norm which Newman acknowledges. The quality of a poem is proportionate to the poet's delicate sense of refinement. The poet should be in love with what is good; for what is crude and obscene can scarcely please. Man cannot avoid evil in this world, but his artistic and moral consciences warn him that evil is disorder and ugliness; they tell him that he must employ evil subjects only as a means of driving souls to what is good.

A work of realism, may indeed contain some incidental poetry: "Now and then the lustre of the true metal catches the eye, redeeming whatever is unseemly and worthless in the rude ore; still the ore is not metal." 29 We must refer extravagance to the "wantonness of exuberant genius." Off-color matter may be introduced for the sake of relief or for other reasons, but the whole is not beautiful because of it, nor does the beauty of the whole forgive it. A poem may have incidental beauty, but the unworthy substance in which it is embedded arouses a feeling of shame and indignation in the reader. "This . . . applies strongly to the immoral compositions to which Lord

28 Ibid., 15-16.
29 Ibid., 11.
Byron devoted his last years.”30

It is no less the part of the artistic novelist, too, to poetize, to idealize. His selection, combination, refinement, and coloring are the means to poetry. To narrate the actual, bare fact is the purpose of the historian. To soften and to decorate by the poetry of his own mind is the work of the artistic novelist.31

Evil, if presented in its true aspect, -- as repulsive and reprehensible, -- and not for the sake of mere detailed display with intention to shock and to startle; if presented as subservient to the final end to be achieved by the whole literary work, -- evil may be the subject matter of art. The whole work must be poetically true to life, to the ultimate standards of life; to a beauty which serves not merely the senses, degrading itself to bestial sensuality, but to a beauty which captures and enthralls the whole man: feeling, intellect, and will. To achieve this total effect, evil must be represented in such a way that it shock not the refined and delicate imagination of the reader.

30 Ibid., 11-12.
31 Ibid., 13.
CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

This thesis has aimed at an exposition of Cardinal Newman's argument on the relationship of morality to literature. No attempt was made to criticize or to evaluate his opinions; they were presented as they were found, and arranged into a logical sequence. Perhaps the writer's personal inclinations were manifested in various places. Certainly he has tried to parallel Newman's criticism in some instances with the opinions of modern authors, and this may be mistakenly interpreted as an endeavor to bolster up the Cardinal's opinions when it is but an endeavor to demonstrate how "modern" was his defense of a traditional point of view.

At the very outset, necessary distinctions were employed in order to make for a clearer understanding of the issues involved. Two questions arose demanding separate answers. Is art in its final analysis subject to ethical considerations, or is it absolutely autonomous? Are moral and esthetic values identical or distinct? If they are distinct, a third query confronts us: namely, are esthetic values superior to the moral? that is, is the good in art of lesser importance than the beautiful, and must the good be sacrificed positively if it proves
no vehicle for the expression of the beautiful? By sacrificing positively we mean that the artist disregards the norm of morality.

Newman's answer to the first question is that art is not absolutely autonomous. No art or science constitutes the final end of man; all knowledge is a means to the ultimate goal, God. In the Christian tradition, creatures -- and art is a creature -- are looked upon as instruments for man wherewith he is to achieve his final end, God. They are looked into as images of God, and their beauty is recognized as an imitation of that supreme Beauty that shines forth from the face of the Almighty Good. The beauty of the world, then, is not merely the complement of man's appetite for a natural beatitude to be fulfilled in the satisfaction of his sensual nature (as the vicious would have it); nor is it the complement of his moral nature which is to be perfected for its own sake (as the Stoic and the Kantian would have it). The beauty of the world is a promise of the supreme happiness in the eternal vision of God. The role of art in life, therefore, is not an independent role; it is a role subservient to a higher spiritual good. An independent art destroys the unity of human experience. It assumes functions which belong properly to religion and theology. Art has significance only in the light of eternal values.

Subordination to a higher end does not deny the autocracy
of art. In defining the various arts and sciences we recognize that none of them in itself constitutes the sum of human existence; all are linked in subordination to help man achieve his supreme end. Each has its proper principles which form the norms for the aspirant in that particular field. The mathematician follows his rules, the physicist his, the artist his. Biology is not geometry; religion is not literature. All this Newman recognizes and acknowledges; indeed, he insists upon the truth.

Because literature is bound up with the importance of life, the writer must take care not to distort life; to prevent him, ethical considerations must play at least a negative part in criticism. The true view of life is not the partial view but the total view,—one that embraces all the fonts of knowledge and effects favorably and profitably all of man's faculties, the spiritual as well as the physical. The denial of man's supreme destiny, the scorn for man's religious and moral development shown in some artistic theories and productions have not merely degraded man; they have disfigured art. It is with a necessary eye to the vital connection between literature and life that the esthetic problem must be delineated and argued. Such was Newman's position.

Because life (the life of man and all created things in their relations to man) is the subject matter of literature,
though literature be the poet's personal expression of the beautiful, yet beauty is not its own excuse for being, and the artist is always faced with a graver responsibility than that to his art. He is a teacher of man, a vates. The beauty he perceives and expresses must not degrade man to the den of the beast; it should give man wings to soar to the divine.

Esthetic values are not identical with moral values. Beauty and goodness are not convertible. But if the poet transgress the good, he produces a monster of evil; in evil there is no beauty, but only ugliness. The morally good enhances art; the immoral does not (except when portrayed as reprehensible, and then it serves to drive us to the good). An artist is a great poet insofar as he reproduces the nobility of his own soul; a poem is sublime in proportion as it sings the highest themes. In proportion, -- for Newman knew and loved poetry that did not directly inculcate religious sentiment, and even saw the possibility of religious themes hindering the artist for his very awe of sacred subjects. While he disapproved of making poetry a substitute for a humanistic religion, he despised men and women who made it the didactic drudge of their moral and religious tenets. Beauty and good are not co-extensive. Good does enhance beauty, and provides it wings to soar.

1. Cf. page 46, note 35.
to the Highest; but when it endeavors, in the province of literature, to make a menial of art, the result for art is only less disastrous than when art usurps the function of religion or denies religion altogether.

Newman's most brief, concise, and conclusive response, then, to the esthetic problem of the good and the beautiful is that "bad will be the best (i.e., the best literature will be the worst), when weighed in the balance of truth and morality."² And that balance was always ready to hand for one of the most delicate and sensitive of consciences, and one of the most refined of literary tastes.

Though Newman's criticism is based on philosophy, there is not noticeable in his argument a use of the principles of general metaphysics, that is, those notions of the transcendancy of the good and the beautiful that are ever found in the discussions of the Schoolmen. True, the good is distinguished from the beautiful, but with moral and esthetic arguments rather than ontological. He is satisfied to argue from both his keen moral and his no less accurate esthetic sense of taste which led as surely and truly to the same conclusion as that of the more ontologically minded scholastics.

Far from presenting himself as a mere moral critic of lit-

² *The Idea*, II, 329.
erature, Newman, it is trusted, has shown himself in this dis-
cussion a true critic of Letters. With an attitude that requires
sympathy for their reason rather than for their opinions, mod-
ern critics belittle their contemporaries who introduce ethical
or religious considerations into their canons of literary taste.
There are some today who not only insist that art must be moral,
but prophecy that art will never be truly great, will never
again attain her true aspect of beauty and grandeur, until and
unless the hand of God be visible in man's work. It is reason
not religion that prompts them, as it was reason that prompted
Newman. The fact of modern literary production today proves
them correct. What guided Newman in his criticism was his re-
alization and appreciation of the true function of literature
in life, -- as a means to subserve the noblest in man to lead
him by apprehension and contemplation to the highest Beauty of
all. There can be no true beauty, reason told him, unless it
images Him Who images forth all things.
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