

THE SCHOLAR GIPSY: A STUDY OF THE GROWTH,  
MEANING AND INTEGRATION OF A POEM. (concluded.)

(III)

As Arnold turns from nature (*I*) to man (*II*), the emphasis passes from movement as flux to movement as angst. Angst is the specifically human restlessness, corresponding in some sort to flux in nature as a whole. There is association between them: an awareness of flux is inherent in angst. But there is also contrast: we are in large measure reconciled and adapted to flux (whose basis is in the rhythms of nature) as we never can be to angst (whose basis is not rhythm but conflict). Angst is a disease sprung of maladjustment with environment. Especially is it the characteristic 'disease of modern life', less 'strange' than inevitable, having regard to the character and conditions of that life.

The initial stanza of *II* —No. xv— is poised between flux and angst. The process of 'change to change' through which our 'being rolls' suggests flux predominantly; but 'repeated shocks' which 'exhaust the energy of strongest souls' deepens the picture of unrest, while it throws us irrevocably into the human world. With this and 'tir'd upon a thousand schemes our wit', the theme becomes unequivocally angst, though flux remains as it were a tolling knell in the background, at times swelling through in solemn reminder as in

The generations of thy peers are fled,

And we ourselves shall go... .

Specially to be noticed is the close counterpointing of outer and inner unrest, that in the world without (paralleling flux in the realm of nature) having its counterpart and correspondent in that of the individual psyche (angst). The key phrases fuse outward and inward: 'sick fatigue', 'languid doubt', 'fluctuate idly', 'weak resolves', 'new beginnings, disappointments new', 'hesitate and falter life away',



'long unhappy dream', 'cross and shifting'. The critique reaches its climax in the splendid stretto in which the Scholar and his Oxonia are smartly juxtaposed against our angst:

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

While stanza xv points the way to this development of theme, it also sets the new strain. The emotional tempo is quickened and the key raised. The reverie of *I* gives place to the declamation of *II*, a declamation charged with a note of angst that is prominent in such cries as 'O life unlike to ours!' and 'Ah, do not we, Wanderer, await it too?' Agitation remains as valid for *II* as tranquillity had been for *I*. No less important is the controlling *alto stile*.<sup>25</sup> While agitation is the realisation of angst on the level of emotional tempo, *alto stile* compensates for the replacement of landscape by a meditation whose substance suggests prose, the natural medium of scrutiny, analysis and diagnosis<sup>26</sup>. Nor is the *prose note* long or far out of hearing in Arnold's meditative verse. Making due allowance for the necessary rise and fall in the strain, it may be thought that stanzas xviii-xix fall rather low—though this would, I think, be captious. We have to recognise in Arnold an unusually strong tension between poetic and prose levels, one which comes to semi-awareness in such places as that where he expresses his dislike of a poetry which is 'a channel for thinking aloud instead of making anything'.<sup>27</sup> As a tension between sensibility and intelligence its fuller implications will, it may cautiously be hoped, become apparent in my concluding section. Meanwhile, we remark the success of the resolution by which competing claims are satisfied: by which complaint fuses with diagnosis, and lyricism and dialectic meet and mingle. Set *II*, for example, beside the Hymn of Empedocles (in which intellectual grasp predominates) or beside 'Dover Beach' (where there is abundance of emotion) and we are brought to realise how greatly both thinking and feeling contribute in the total process. What is said compels a deeper un-

<sup>25</sup> Even Dr. F. R. Leavis, the poem's severest critic, concedes 'nobility, sonority and finish of phrasing'. (*The Common Pursuit*, p. 31.)

<sup>26</sup> Cf. a parallel heightening in Gray: 'The boast of heraldry, the pomp of pow'r.....'

<sup>27</sup> *Unpublished Letters of Matthew Arnold*, ed. Whitridge, Yale 1923, p. 17. (Letter undated, probably 1849.) Especially was Arnold inclined to use Clough prophylactically, as a whipping-boy for self-introspected tendencies. M. Bonnerot calls it 'l'introspection au second degré'. (L. Bonnerot, *Matthew Arnold Poète*, Paris 1947. p. 470.)



derstanding of a large situation, but it is said in a manner which no prose could presume to replace.

The integration of *II* with *I* is sufficiently firm to carry the contrasts between them, and to render a frequently expressed preference for *I* otiose. It is natural at a certain level of judgment to prefer a poetry of pastoral delight to one of meditation, but it scarcely occurs to us to do so in regard to (say) *As You Like It* or *Comus*, and it is no less irrelevant here unless we can point to some flaw in *II*, such as a failure in eloquium or a weak intellectual content<sup>28</sup>. There remains, however, the question of the final simile—a separate issue from that which we are discussing, but one which affects the poem's integration at its close. The simile has been defended, notably by M. Bonnerot<sup>29</sup> and Mr. Wilson Knight<sup>30</sup>. The former points to its verbal *rattachements* with the body of the poem<sup>31</sup> and considers that its contrasting figures of Tyrian and Greek are triumphantly justified as symbols, while Mr. Wilson Knight carries the essentials of this defence yet further and deeper. Nevertheless there must remain some doubt whether the simile does in fact make a really satisfactory ending, and also whether the luxuriant poeticality of the Greek cargo fitly parallels modern western civilisation. We may consider Saintsbury's 'sewn-on patch of purple'<sup>32</sup> to be not unjust for the general effect of a simile which changes the scene so violently and sends the poem out in so sudden and abrupt a blaze of colour. To me the first two stanzas (with their confused pastoralism), and the last two, constitute comparative blemishes<sup>33</sup>. But it would be disproportionate to dwell on them.

#### IV

### INTERPRETATION AND ILLUSTRATION.

The poem enshrines a critique of a civilisation. This aspect has been expounded so illuminatingly by Mr. Wilson Knight that I cannot do better than open this section by indicating his essential findings, for an adequate appreciation of which the reader is directed

<sup>28</sup> The latter Dr. Leavis purports to perceive (*The Common Pursuit*, pp. 30-1), but the balance of judgment is overwhelmingly against him.

<sup>29</sup> L. Bonnerot, *op. cit.*, pp. 473-6.

<sup>30</sup> *Review of English Studies*, VI, xxi (January 1955), pp. 53 *et seq.*

<sup>31</sup> Cf. the preceding portion of this study, *Litara* II (1955), p. 54.

<sup>32</sup> G. Saintsbury, *Matthew Arnold*, p. 42.

<sup>33</sup> '...repeated shocks, again, again' (l. 144) is not good, nor is the bathos at l. 150 noticed by Dr. Leavis.



to the article itself (in *The Review of English Studies*, volume VI number xxi, January 1955):—

The imagery as a whole is dichotomous between Dionysian (tending to darkness and mystery) and Apollonian (tending to light and clarity). The final simile gives the epitome and becomes the starting-point of Mr. Wilson Knight's exposition. The expulsion of the Tyrian by the Greek symbolises the displacement of a civilisation, nature-rooted and relying on the deeper powers of mind, by one whose emphasis is in the outer life of action (as opposed to contemplation) and intellectuation. Western civilisation has unduly neglected the more inward potencies of the psyche, whose 'liberation...might go far to solve the human enigma'. Thus,

Arnold's poem confronts our western tradition with suggestions of a wisdom, lore, or magic of oriental affinities or origin. The intellectual legacy of ancient Greece has clamped down with too exclusive a domination, too burning a weight of consciousness, or intellect; and the practical genius of Rome has reinforced it in the field of public affairs. Our consciousness has become, to use Nietzsche's terms, too purely 'Apollonian', too heated, and needs fertilization again from the cool depths of the 'Dionysian', the more darkly feminine, and eastern, powers. Both *The Scholar Gipsy* and *The Birth of Tragedy* see our contemporary culture as too purely academic, a new Alexandrianism; materially fecund, but spiritually static, infertile, and dead. Such a criticism is not new. The mind-structure of Europe has had need, again and again, of fertilization from the older, and deeper, wisdom. So the Olympian hierarchy was challenged by the cult of Dionysus; so the developing stream of classical culture was saved, modified, and reinforced by Christianity; and Renaissance poetry, though it owes much to Greece, contains deep-bedded in it a mass of wisdom akin to the esoteric cults. But this is a process we are still within, and of which *The Scholar Gipsy* itself is part. (p. 61.)

...The poem's total meaning...strives, as its title *The Scholar Gipsy as good as* tells us, towards a fusion of two traditions, western and eastern. (p. 58.)

It may be doubted whether Arnold would have endorsed all the terms of this interpretation. It is something new, for instance, to find so impressive a crop of discontents as the poem voices hunted back to the intellectual legacy of Greece, or even to the practical genius of Rome, like beasts to their last lairs. Yet the interpretation seems to me essentially right. The poem is concerned with a state of affairs rather than with its origins; and the branches of a tree are in any case far removed from its roots; yet it may assist interpretation to glance towards the roots. Moreover, as Mr. Wilson Knight reminds us in closing, the poem's wisdom is not necessarily the same as the poet's, being an 'organization' of 'elusive truths' which may well be—some of them at least—'beyond the personal thinking of the poet himself'. Hence Mr. Wilson Knight's own wisdom in concentrating, after his wont, upon imagery and symbolism: nuclei of meaning and



suggestion which admit to areas below, or unfocused by, the poet's conscious thinking. In fact, however, the poet's wisdom coincides very nearly with the poem's during the relevant period. Some deepening, indeed, of the background in Arnold may—as Mr. Wilson Knight suggests, though he 'leaves it to others'—not be altogether out of place.

The crux is Arnold's disposition towards mysticism and his concomitant scepticism of intellectuality: factors whose importance during his great poetic period in the late forties and early fifties of the century have scarcely received their due. His life at this time was one of intense ferment finding its direct (and most valuable) issue in the poems of angst, such as 'Empedocles', some of the Switzerland lyrics, 'The Buried Life', 'Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse', 'A Summer Night', the first 'Obermann' elegy and 'The Scholar Gipsy'. The letters to Clough form an indispensable gloss<sup>34</sup>. Parts of these touch our poem very nearly. Thus, of the times:

My dearest Clough these are damned times—everything is against one—the height to which knowledge is come, the spread of luxury, our physical enervation, the absence of great natures, the unavoidable contact with millions of small ones, newspapers, cities, light profligate friends, moral desperadoes like Carlyle, our own selves, and the sickening consciousness of our difficulties. (p. 111.)

Au reste, a great career is hardly possible any longer—can hardly now be purchased even by the sacrifice of repose, dignity and inward clearness.....I am more and more convinced that the world tends to become more comfortable for the mass, and more uncomfortable for those of any natural gift or distinction.....in the air of the present times il nous manque d'aliment, and..we deteriorate in spite of our struggles. (pp. 122-3.)

He further remarks that '*congestion of the brain* is what we suffer from'; that the age is 'blank', 'arid', 'barren' and 'poetryless'; and that 'all tends to the triumph of the logical absolute reason'. He complains, as in the 1853 Preface, of the general tendency of English poetry to 'lose itself in parts and episodes and ornamental work' instead of 'pressing forwards to the whole', as well as of poets who will not 'understand that they must begin with an Idea of the world in order not to be prevailed over by the world's multitudinousness'. Finally, a glimpse into his own inner unrest:

I often think of you among the untoward generation with whom I live and of whom all I read testifies. With me it is curious at present: I am getting to feel more independent and unaffected as to all intellectual and poetical performance the impatience at being faussé in which drove me some time since so strongly into myself, and more snuffing after a moral atmosphere to respire in than ever before

<sup>34</sup> Edited H. F. Lowry, 1932. Page references are to this edition.



in my life..... What I must tell you is that I have never yet succeeded in any one great occasion in consciously mastering myself: I can go thro: the imaginary process of mastering myself and see the whole affair as it would then stand but at the critical point I am too apt to hoist up the mainsail to the wind and let her drive. However as I get more awake to this it will I hope mend for I find that with me a clear almost palpable intuition (damn the logical senses of the word) is necessary before I get into prayer: unlike many people who set to work at their duty self-denial etc. like furies in the dark hoping to be gradually illuminated as they persist in this course. Who also perhaps may be sheep but not of my fold, whose one natural craving is not for profound thoughts, mighty spiritual workings etc. etc. but a distinct seeing of my way as far as my own nature is concerned: which I believe to be the reason why the mathematics were ever foolishness to me. (pp. 109-10.)

In the inadequacy for him of church religion, his chief anchorage lay in sage-literature, especially in Sophocles, Epictetus, Aurelius, Spinoza, Goethe, Wordsworth, Senancour, Carlyle (for a time), Emerson and the *Bhagavad Gita*<sup>35</sup>. Mysticism is well, if (as we should expect) far from narrowly, represented. What is chiefly to be remarked of the list is the strong emphasis that all its constituents give to man's moral and inward nature: to what in fact is the true preoccupant throughout Arnold's verse.

The key document is 'Empedocles'. This is Arnold's most extensive autobiographical poem, the eponymous character being in large part himself<sup>36</sup>, and it is peculiarly relevant to *The Scholar Gipsy*. Its theme is adumbrated in the Yale MSS. as 'refusal of limitation by the religious sentiment'. In fact it becomes the attempt of a lonely and powerful mind to reconcile itself to the human situation by unaided intellectuation—to reason its way into, if not an optimistic, at least a tolerable view of things. The problem was Arnold's, and that he sees and represents it as essentially a 'modern' problem is very clear:

I intended to delineate the feelings of one of the last of the Greek religious philosophers, one of the family of Orpheus and Musaeus, having survived his fellows, living on into a time when the habits of Greek thought and feeling had begun fast to change, character to dwindle, the influence of the Sophists to prevail. Into the feelings of a man so situated there entered much that we are accustomed to

<sup>35</sup> The last deserves special notice as Arnold's principal contact with oriental mysticism. His attachment to it, unusual in Victorian times, is specially prominent during our period. He expresses disappointment that Clough should not have taken to it, and Clough reviewing Arnold's 1849 volume takes exception to what he calls 'the dismal cycle of his rehabilitated Hindoo-Greek philosophy'. Professors Lowry and Bonnerot differ on the potency of the Gita's influence in Arnold's poetry, the latter inclining to minimise it (*op. cit.*, pp. 244-5); but in Empedocles' final speech, which is of central importance, the mystical doctrine is as undeniable as is the fact of its oriental rather than Greek affinities.

<sup>36</sup> This, the view of Arnold's earliest readers, remains that of modern scholars. Arnold of course was only speaking truth when, in 1867, he denied that 'I merely use Empedocles and Obermann as mouthpieces through which to vent my own opinions'. (Letter to Henry Dunn, quoted C. B. Tinker and H. F. Lowry, *The Poetry of Matthew Arnold*, pp. 287-8.)



consider as exclusively modern; how much, the fragments of Empedocles himself which remain to us are sufficient at least to indicate. What those who are familiar only with the great monuments of early Greek genius suppose to be its exclusive characteristics, have disappeared; the calm, the cheerfulness, the disinterested objectivity have disappeared: the dialogue of the mind with itself has commenced; modern problems have presented themselves; we hear already the doubts, we witness the discouragement, of Hamlet and of Faust<sup>37</sup>.

*The dialogue of the mind with itself*; Hamlet and Faust—two peaks of western drama. Such dialogue has surely been increasingly the note since the age of *Hamlet* and especially during the ages to which Goethe's Faust is the prelude: the ages of 'Empedocles', *In Memoriam*, *Dipsychus* and *Modern Love*; of Baudelaire, Dostoevsky, Hardy and Yeats; of Kafka, Graham Greene, Camus, Mauriac and Sartre.

The philosophical coincidence between Arnold and his Empedocles is most to be remarked in two places: the famous Hymn (I. ii.) and the attack on 'the imperious lonely thinking-power' in the suicide speech (II.i.344-90). The first is a rigorously intellectual attempt to see the human lot as in itself it really is. The second is a denial of the ultimate validity of thinking mind in the name of a deeper faculty here suggested as

our own only true, deep-buried selves,  
Being one with which we are one with the whole world.

Together the two portions present the tension in Arnold between (on the one hand) intellectuality and (on the other) a sense of the utter incompetence of such to deal with the complexity of life—which, indeed, it only increases—and a consequent search for more authentic springs of feeling and insight. He was a Fox that would fain become a Hedgehog<sup>38</sup>.

The second portion is now to be displayed for its close community of doctrine with *The Scholar Gipsy*:—

But mind—but thought—  
If these have been the master part of us—  
Where will they find their parent element?  
What will receive them, who will call them home?  
But we shall still be in them, and they in us,

<sup>37</sup> *Poems 1853*, Preface.

<sup>38</sup> Isaiah Berlin, *The Hedgehog and the Fox*, 1953. An investigation into two antithetical types, the one (Hedgehog) tending to realise itself through a search for unity, the other (Fox) through a search for variety. The distinction is, broadly, between the man of religion and the humanist, between the 'Hebrew' and the 'Hellene'. Mr. Berlin takes Tolstoy and Montaigne as his prime exemplars. Arnold's uncomfortable polarity, one shared by many in the modern world, is basic for our enquiry.



And we shall be the strangers of the world,  
 And they will be our lords, as they are now;  
 And keep us prisoners of our consciousness,  
 And never let us clasp and feel the All  
 But through their forms, and modes, and stifling veils.  
 And we shall be unsatisfied as now,  
 And we shall feel the agony of thirst,  
 The ineffable longing for the life of life  
 Baffled for ever: and still thought and mind  
 Will hurry us with them on their homeless march,  
 Over the unallied unopening earth,  
 Over the unrecognizing sea; while air  
 Will blow us fiercely back to sea and earth,  
 And fire repel us from its living waves.  
 And then we shall unwillingly return  
 Back to this meadow of calamity,  
 This uncongenial place, this human life;  
 And in our individual human state  
 Go through the sad probation all again,  
 To see if we will poise our life at last,  
 To see if we will now at last be true  
 To our own only true, deep-buried selves,  
 Being one with which we are one with the whole world;  
 Or whether we will once more fall away  
 Into some bondage of the flesh or mind,  
 Some slough of sense, or some fantastic maze  
 Forged by the imperious lonely thinking-power.  
 And each succeeding age in which we are born  
 Will have more peril for us than the last;  
 Will goad our senses with a sharper spur,  
 Will fret our minds to an intenser play,  
 Will make ourselves harder to be discern'd.  
 And we shall struggle awhile, gasp and rebel;  
 And we shall fly for refuge to past times,  
 Their soul of unworn youth, their breath of greatness;  
 And the reality will pluck us back,  
 Knead us in its hot hand, and change our nature.  
 And we shall feel our powers of effort flag,  
 And rally them for one last fight, and fail;  
 And we shall sink in the impossible strife,  
 And be astray for ever.

The parallelism with our poem is very impressive. *Clasp and feel the All* has its counterpart in *clutching the inviolable shade* and, generally, in the Scholar's ever deepening absorption in the life of nature. *Their forms and modes and stifling veils* = the various images under which flux and angst are presented, epitomised as *the world*. *The imperious lonely thinking-power* corresponds to *the intellectual throne* and *heads o'ertaxed* and *our mental strife*. *Our own only true deep-*



*buried selves* = the Scholar himself, *i. e.* the soul seeking return to its 'parent element, its 'home', 'the life of life', 'the All'.

The doctrine is a great deal more characteristic of oriental mysticism than of Greek metaphysics. Essentially Arnold is elaborating the distinction he makes in a letter to Clough and associates with 'the Indians': between 'meditation or absorption' and 'knowledge'<sup>39</sup>. The former conducts to the parent element, the life of life, the All—to unity; the latter to the forms and modes and stifling veils, to flux and change—to multiplicity, wherein we remain 'the strangers of the world'. The life reached through meditation or absorption—an office of soul—is thus set over against that reached through knowledge, or intellectuation, and associated with the world. Associated too with this last is the 'practical' round of ordinary daily living in which we are likewise lost in multiplicity. This antithesis between soul and (1) intellectuation and (2) the practical life is recurrent in Arnold and it ranges him, so far as it goes, with the mystics.

*So far as it goes.* Arnold was profoundly sensible of the cleavage between the withdrawn interior life and the exterior life of 'the world'. Many poems suggest, evoke or explore it. Two are of special note: *The Scholar Gipsy*, where the contrast is most fully realised through personification of interior life in the Scholar; and *The Buried Life*, where that life is most sensitively mined by direct introspection. The conclusion, especially, of the latter is as near as Arnold ever comes to mystical writing:

And there arrives a lull in the hot race  
Wherein he doth for ever chase  
That flying and elusive shadow, Rest.  
An air of coolness plays upon his face,  
And an unwonted calm pervades his breast.  
And then he thinks he knows  
The Hills where his life rose,  
And the Sea where it goes.

It is in places like this where the mystery, depth and serenity of the inner life is suggested that Arnold's poetry is most vitally touched with mystical feeling. Often, however, as in Empedocles' speech or in the elaborate image of the soul in the Butler sonnet, it is more a matter of doctrine than of feeling. Or again, as the organ of *striving* (as it essentially is in Arnold), soul may have moral rather than fully

<sup>39</sup> 'The Indians distinguish between meditation or absorption—and knowledge: and between abandoning practice, and abandoning the fruits of action and all respect thereto'. (4 March 1848. *Letters to Clough*, ed. Lowry. p. 71.)



mystical implications—*Rugby Chapel* and *Immortality* supply ready examples. In the last resort, Arnold was too deficient in a central and consistent mystical vision, such as needs to rest upon a firmer sense of noumenality than he possessed, for mysticism to have more than a restricted significance in his work.

Yet such significance is not to be slighted. Arnold is primarily a poet of polarities, and mysticism—in the sense and with the limitations indicated—is one of the poles. No poem reflects his polar character so well as *The Scholar Gipsy*. The dichotomous imagery analysed by Mr. Wilson Knight is a fulfilment at a deep level of the basic impulse of the poem, which follows the basic rhythms of Arnold's temperament. M. Bonnerot diagnoses *doubt* as his dominant psychic trait<sup>40</sup>, and his analysis of this essentially *double* quality in Arnold<sup>41</sup> brings out (1) an oscillatory movement between positive and negative poles (the phrases *la croyance elle-même en état de dissolution*, *une nostalgie de la croyance*, and *un besoin de foi* deserve emphasis); (2) that the condition points to inner conflicts and disharmonies as staple features of the personality; (3) that the cleavage is especially between affective and intellectual levels. That Arnold should, nevertheless, so manifestly have avoided the disruptive consequences of a tendency to split personality is of no less account in the moral sphere than its profitable exploitation in the poems of angst is in the artistic.

*The Scholar Gipsy* is the best example of such exploitation, and the parable it illustrates has a growing relevance in our own age. Mr. Eliot, in a famous phrase, has indicated a radical 'disassociation of sensibility' as marking our culture since the seventeenth century<sup>42</sup>; and certainly disintegration has become increasingly a hallmark of western life both in individual personality and in the cultural macrocosm. The difficulty of attaining *sophrosyne* on the psychic level; the over-activation of consciousness inducing the excessive Apollonianism remarked by Mr. Wilson Knight; the separatist condition of the arts and sciences; the opposed assumptions underlying the *magistri vitae*—religion, science and philosophy; the abandonment by the more advanced philosophy of any attempt to construct larger syntheses of thought and knowledge; the private-coterie character of the arts; the ambivalence between rationalist and irrationalist stances in the thought climate: these and other factors proclaim the cleft universe of modern man and show that the process of disintegration

<sup>40</sup> L. Bonnerot, *op. cit.*, pp. 200 *et seq.*

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Arnold's poem 'Desire': 'Save..... from doubt, where all is double'. The etymology of the word proclaims the doubleness, as does the German *Zweifel*.

<sup>42</sup> T.S.Eliot, 'The Metaphysical Poets', *Selected Essays*, 1917-32, p. 274.



has proceeded a great deal farther and faster than Arnold himself could have foreseen. The ideal

That mind and soul, according well,  
May make one music,

an ideal that seemed not utterly impossible to Tennyson's contemporaries, and whose attainment in some considerable measure is among the distinctive characteristics of the greater ages of civilisation, was never more distant than it has now become.

Arnold's critique has its vital historical affinities in romanticism, alike in what it says as in the forms under which it says it. Romanticism proclaims the deepening rift between sensibility and environment, as well as between creative and non-creative levels of the personality. Hence such characteristic forms as the poetic dream-world, or substitute environment with which sensibility can wholly identify itself; the craving for solitude, withdrawal, death; the themes of wandering and questing; the tone of angst. The attacks on reason and 'philosophy' are specially symptomatic of the rift; and a new synthesis was sought in terms of a cult of inwardness finding illustration in the exaltation of 'imagination' and in such characteristic recommendations as those to a heart that watches and receives, a wise passiveness, the holiness of the heart's affections and the truth of imagination, diligent indolence, negative capability and

that content, surpassing wealth,  
The sage in meditation found,  
And walked with inward glory crowned.

*The Scholar Gipsy* is a culminating point in this traditional critique. The tensions it reflects, basic for Arnold and his civilisation alike, found their right projection, through the polarisms potential in Glanvill's legend, in a form enabling the inner dialectic to realise itself with a singular poetic cogency. In point of fusion between quality and significance, we must give it first place in Arnold's poetic achievement.

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*Note (1) on the Scholar's departure from Oxford.* It is natural to infer some equation between the Scholar's leaving Oxford and his 'leaving the world', the decisive step in his career thus coinciding with the decisive point separating the man from the timeless spirit. Yet the only motive given for the former is that he was 'tir'd of knocking at Preferment's door', which comes straight from Glanvill's 'wanting the encouragement of preferment'. So far as it goes the motive is



suiting also to leaving the world, where, as the poem insists, frustration is the rule. What further motive, if any, for leaving Oxford is it permissible to read? It is clear that Arnold conceived none consciously, or he would not have been content to fall back so obviously on Glanvill. Mr. Wilson Knight, however, finds a principal one in the Scholar's 'repudiation' of 'official studies'<sup>43</sup>. This is nowhere hinted in the poem; and, while it may seem to fall not unreasonably within an interpretation by which 'our contemporary culture' is viewed as 'too purely academic, a new Alexandrianism'<sup>44</sup>, I think it stretches the critique of Empedocles-Arnold-Clough intellectuation a good deal too far. Such intellectuation surely has little to do with the studies pursued at Oxford, especially in the seventeenth century; and if, as an undergraduate, Arnold seems not to have taken those in his own day quite as seriously as he might have done, he was in general a firm upholder of the grand, old, fortifying, classical curriculum. 'Our contemporary culture', as this forms the burden of the critique, can have little in common with the kind of culture—official or unofficial—for which in his conception Oxford stands.

A separate but related question: how far may we infer from the poem any polarity in Arnold's attitude to Oxford? Essentially the place, with its Scholar who—as we have seen—is such an Oxford figure (Mr. Wilson Knight even allows him to be a 'guardian deity' of Oxford) and its country, stands in contrast to the objects of displeasure: the grand symbol of a time 'before this strange disease...'. Yet something may, perhaps, be allowed at a deep level to the polarities in Arnold which the poem reflects and which his Oxford life and connections must have helped to develop. The church controversies of his day, with their centre in Oxford, affected him much less directly than they affected Clough; but the strongly dialectical atmosphere of the place, and especially perhaps his friendship with Clough, must have played powerfully on his Empedocles vein. He cannot, however, have associated such a vein—and neither can we—at all narrowly with Oxford: so much, indeed, does Oxford form part of his nostalgic symbolism that he even calls it (in the 1865 Preface) 'unravaged by the fierce intellectual life of our century'—a strange opinion to come out of either the Balliol or the Oriel of the time, let alone out of them both.

That the Scholar 'came to Oxford...no more' can only mean that he had severed his official connection with the University.

<sup>43</sup> *Op. cit.* p. 55.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 61.



*Note (2) on the 'One' (stz. xix).* Arnold evidently had a single contemporary (or near contemporary) specially in mind, and at the end of his life he declared, in the course of a reading of his poems in America, that it was Goethe. This would appear to settle the matter. (1) He would scarcely have called anyone else 'our wisest' (l. 191). It is not impossible, however, to take 'wisest' as *plural* and denoting an élite suggested by the One. (2) Goethe makes the largest symbolic figure for the age. Anybody else would be something of an unclassical descent from the general to the particular. (3) Goethe was pre-eminent for Arnold by his wisdom. Yet his wisdom is also of an unusually intellectual cast, without concession to mysticism, sentiment or emotion. His genius was Apollonian: 'the demonic', he told Eckermann, 'is not in my nature, though I am subject to its influence'. Nothing separates him from Carlyle more than that. (4) The sombreness of Arnold's description is difficult to reconcile with the serene Olympian sage of Weimar, who had 'attained to see his way'. But we are not required to do this. Arnold expressly stated that the picture was evoked by his memory of Goethe's autobiography, *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, and the abiding impression of sadness it made upon him. Here, in fact, is Goethe at his most representative of the restless discontent of the age. That he outgrew the worst of his malaise, as did also Arnold himself among others who had been romantics in youth, diminishes neither its validity nor its representative character.

In any case, Goethe is not seriously in dispute. The debate is rather as to whether he *alone* was in Arnold's mind, or whether the One isn't to some extent *composite*, with Goethe no doubt as senior partner. Professors Tinker and Lowry have canvassed Tennyson's candidature<sup>45</sup>, and now Mr. J. C. Maxwell canvasses Leopardi's<sup>46</sup>. In both instances presentable cases are made out, for two very different figures therefore: which shows that speculation, once loosed, may be unending. For once the field is opened to copartnership, the number of possibles is very large indeed.

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<sup>45</sup> Tinker and Lowry, *op. cit.*, pp. 209-11.

<sup>46</sup> *Review of English Studies*, VI. xxii. (April 1955) p. 182.



Vol. 12, on the One (p. 167). Arnold evidently had a single contemporary (or near contemporary) speech in mind and in the end of his life he declared, in the course of a reading of his poems in America, that it was Goethe. This would appear to settle the matter. (1) He would scarcely have called anyone else our great (1849). It is not impossible, however, to take a poet as found and drawing an idea suggested by the One (2) Goethe makes the larger symbolic figure for the age. Arnold else would be something of an understatement from the general to the particular. (3) Goethe was pre-eminent for Arnold by his wisdom. Yet his wisdom is also of an unguaranteed intellectual cast, without concession to insistent sentiment or emotion. His genius was Apollonian; the demonic, he told Eckermann, is not in my nature, though I am subject to its influence. Nothing separates him from Carlyle more than that. (4) The sobriety of Arnold's description is difficult to reconcile with the serene Olympian ease of Whitman, who had stung to see his way, but we are not required to do this. Arnold expressly stated that the picture was copied by his memory of Goethe's autobiography, Eckermann and Herbart, and the abiding impression of sadness it made upon him. There, in fact, is Goethe at his most representative of the realist character of the age. That he outgrew the worst of his nature, as did also Arnold himself, among others who had been tainted in youth, diminishes neither its validity nor its representative character.

In any case, Goethe is not serious in spirit. The debate is rather as to whether he alone was in Arnold's mind or whether the One ran to some extent comparable with Goethe, no doubt as scholar-partner. Professors Fisher and Lowry have canvassed Tennyson's candidature, and now Mr. J. C. Maxwell canvasses Carlyle. In both instances respectable cases are made out, for two very different figures, therefore, which shows that speculation, once loosed, may be unending. For once the field is opened to copartnership, the number of possible is very large indeed.

A. P. CARSWELL

... all by legitimate ...  
 ... too much ...  
 ... must be ...

... Fisher and Lowry, op. cit. pp. 23-24.  
 ... Review of English Studies, VI, xiii (April 1955), p. 112.