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by
Burton Leonard Cooper

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Doctoral Committee:

Professor Herbert C. Barrows, Jr., Chairman
Associate Professor Donald L. Hill
Professor Karl Litzenberg
Professor Paul M. Spurlin

THE CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT OF LYTTON STRACHEY

By Burton L. Cooper

The present study is an attempt to describe the intellectual and social environment of Lytton Strachey and the direction it gave to his thought and his writing.

Strachey's work developed from two distinct currents in nineteenth-century thought and life. The first was the tradition of Cambridge rationalism, associated with the idea of social progress, and exemplified in the writing of such figures as Leslie Stephen and G. Lowes Dickinson. The second was a tradition of social relationships based upon close personal attachment and shared intellectual interests, exemplified in the structure of such coteries as the Clapham Sect. These two traditions came together in the Bloomsbury Group whose members were closely associated with Cambridge and who adopted the rationalistic ethics of G. E. Moore and the structuralist aesthetic of Roger Fry.

Strachey's work was narrowly guided by that combination. His views on more or less public matters--education, woman suffrage, censorship of books, for example--tended to the position that most wrongs could be righted if they were exposed to rational scrutiny. He believed in reasonableness as a universal attribute.

Manifestations of unreasonableness, whether destructive (as in the case of Philip II) or constructive (as in the case of Blake), he regarded as anti-human and based on religious ideals. He did not regard religious ideals as satisfactory standards for

the conduct of life or for the development of art. The irrational behavior of eccentrics like Lady Hester Stanhope or Mme du Deffand, however, he found sympathetic. For, with the help of Freud (whom he knew at second hand) and of Dostoievsky such irrational behavior could be rationally understood as social or sexual maladjustment.

For Strachey, those ideals toward which one might reasonably strive were summed up in G. E. Moore's list in the last chapter of Principia Ethica: "The pleasures of human intercourse and the enjoyment of beautiful objects." These ideals have been best realized in those periods which Strachey regarded as civilized (e.g. seventeenth-century France and eighteenth-century France and England). A civilization, as Strachey used that term, is distinguished by its worldliness and its respect for tradition in art and in society. Since, in accord with Roger Fry's and Clive Bell's doctrine of Significant Form, Strachey regarded both art and society as formal structures, he preferred tradition to experiment. He felt that an emphasis on tradition encouraged intensification within given forms and rendered them more "significant."

In much the same way, Strachey preferred classic to romantic art. The former draws attention to the perfection of traditionally known forms; the latter to the personality of the artist. Ideally, the artist ought to be anonymous; the work of art ought to be totally comprehensible in the context of its own form. Thus Strachey was drawn to a school of literary criticism, exemplified by Sainte-Beuve, which sought to understand and to explain literary works as formal structures only. Such a critical view is perfectly

in keeping with Bloomsbury's rational heritage since it leads to judgments based upon the evidence of what an artist has, in fact, created. It does not lead to judgments based upon a priori standards of what he ought to have done.

Strachey's notion of civilization, his literary theories, and his literary practice rely on a sense of formal perfection which is rationally perceived. Thus his literary criticism has particular value in the way in which it reveals the function of formal apparatus in literary works.

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INTRODUCTION

A writer, according to Sir Leslie Stephen, may be regarded in many ways: as an individual, in a strict psychological sense; as an intellectual or moral being who exists without regard to time or place; or as a being in a particular social/intellectual milieu. "He [the writer] is also dependent upon what in modern phrase we call his 'environment'--the social structure of which he forms a part, and which gives a special direction to his passions and aspirations."[1] The present study is an attempt to describe the environment of Lytton Strachey and the "special direction" it gave to his thought and his writing.

In Strachey's case, the "environment" may best be labeled "The Bloomsbury Group." There is some continuing argument about whether such a "group" ever did, in fact, exist. Yet, literary and cultural historians have consistently used the term "Bloomsbury Group" in reference to a particular set of artists and social scientists and critics who practiced their crafts in England in the early decades of this century. Those who deny the existence of a

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[1]Sir Leslie Stephen, English Literature and Society in the Eighteenth Century (New York, 1962), p. 5.

"Bloomsbury Group"--Clive Bell and David Garnett, for instance--stress the variety of interests among the so-called members as well as their strong sense of personal independence. Be that as it may, the circle of friends who began, about 1905, to meet in each others' houses in the Bloomsbury district of London had much in common, educationally and familially, and were influential as a group upon the intellectual life of England in the twentieth century. There is still some disagreement about who were and who were not members of the Bloomsbury Group. The names which are cited on the following pages are those about whom there no longer exists serious question in that respect. Leonard Woolf, in the third volume of his autobiography, describes Bloomsbury in this way:

> What came to be called Bloomsbury by the outside world never existed in the form given to it by the outside world. For 'Bloomsbury' was and is currently [1964] used as a term--usually of abuse--applied to a largely imaginary group of persons with largely imaginary objects and characteristics. I [Woolf] was a member of this group and I was also one of a small number of persons who did in fact eventually form a kind of group of friends living in or around that district of London legitimately called Bloomsbury. The term Bloomsbury can legitimately be applied to this group and will be so applied in these pages. . . . We did ourselves use the term of ourselves before it was used by the outside world, for in the 1920's and 1930's, when our own younger generation were growing up and marrying and some of our generation were already dying, we used to talk of 'Old Bloomsbury'. . . .
>
> Old Bloomsbury consisted of the following people: The three Stephens: Vanessa, married to Clive Bell, Virginia, who married Leonard Woolf, and Adrian, who married Karin Costello; Lytton Strachey; Clive Bell; Leonard Woolf; Maynard Keynes; Duncan Grant; E. M. Forster . . . ; Saxon Sydney-Turner; Roger Fry.[2]

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[2]Leonard Woolf, Beginning Again (New York, 1964), pp. 21-22.

Neither of the two most important available works on Strachey deals with both of the elements--"environment" and "special direction"--with which this work is concerned. J. K. Johnstone's The Bloomsbury Group deals extensively with "environment," but far less so with its manifestation in Strachey's writing. C. R. Sanders' Lytton Strachey concentrates more on "special direction" and sets Strachey off by himself, as it were, to give a close analysis of the writing without very much concern for the larger setting in which his works appeared. By joining the two elements, I hope to put Strachey's work in a perspective which will permit a new illumination of three principal areas.

First, Strachey's art itself should become more comprehensible if we understand some of the principles which underlay it. Second, by paying some attention to the transformation of a number of intellectual notions in the work of a single writer, there should be some clarification of the ways in which similar changes were effected in the work of his contemporaries. Third, there should be a clearer recognition of the early manifestations of themes and techniques we take for granted in contemporary literary practice and criticism. For the work of Strachey and his friends, though less fashionable in the nineteen-sixties than it was in the 'twenties or 'thirties, is still regarded as distinctively modern. "Modern," one might say, in distinction to "contemporary"; that is, their work is not so restricted by the specific social and economic situations of the time in which it was produced as the work of writers

like H. G. Wells or Arnold Bennett. Persistently aware of the continuing traditions of art, Bloomsbury writers tended, in a way, to transcend the immediate. They were not so concerned as Bennett or Wells to represent the values of the specific moment; rather, they wished to assert a larger historical consciousness.[3]

The Bloomsbury Group may be Lytton Strachey's proper "environment," but Bloomsbury itself was a continuation of social and philosophical attachments begun at Cambridge during the 'nineties. R. A. Scott-James calls attention to this important point:

> [Bloomsbury] dates from the death of Sir Leslie Stephen in 1904, when his children opened their house at 46 Gordon Square for gatherings of intellectuals, who continued to nourish in London the spirit of their Cambridge days.[4]

"To nourish in London the spirit of their Cambridge days" is an important phrase here; for, although the squares of Bloomsbury were the geographical center for the activities of the group, its spiritual center was Cambridge. Since Bloomsbury did tend to be a kind of post-graduate adjunct to the Cambridge sensibility at the turn of the century, this study begins with a summary outline of the notions of the men who were the strongest influence on that sensibility. It then moves on to describe the implications and the development of that Cantabrigian spirit

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[3]For a fuller development of the distinction between "modern" and "contemporary," see Stephen Spender, The Struggle of the Modern (Berkeley, 1965), pp. 71-78.

[4]R. A. Scott-James, Lytton Strachey (London, 1954), pp. 7-8.

in the work of the Bloomsbury Group, most particularly in the work of Lytton Strachey.

Unless otherwise indicated, all citations from Strachey's writings come from the volumes in The Collected Works of Lytton Strachey (London: Chatto and Windus, 1948), and from Spectatorial Essays, ed. James Strachey (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1965). For convenience, the titles of these volumes have been abbreviated in the notes as follows:

Landmarks in French Literature	LFL
Eminent Victorians	EV
Queen Victoria	QV
Biographical Essays	BE
Literary Essays	LE
Spectatorial Essays	SE

A history of the various printings of all of Strachey's published essays appears in the Appendix at the end of this study.

CHAPTER I

CAMBRIDGE

Giles Lytton Strachey was nineteen years of age when he went up to Cambridge as Pensioner in October, 1899; he was twenty-five when he finally gave up his residence at Trinity College in October, 1905. It was during these Cambridge years, apparently very happy years for Strachey, that he formed most of the close personal ties and connections which he was to maintain all the rest of his life. Leonard Woolf, E. M. Forster, Thoby Stephen, John Maynard Keynes, Desmond MacCarthy, Clive Bell were all resident at Cambridge during Strachey's years there. And they were, most of them, members of "The Society," a club "founded in the eighteen-twenties by F. D. Maurice and his friends."[1] Members were called "Apostles," and membership was closely limited; new members were chosen with extreme care. In the memoirs of those who were Apostles through the years, one observation is consistently made: The Society encouraged a sense of close comradeship among its members.[2]

> The Society was the centre of Cambridge life for its members. They were seldom apart. They dined in one another's rooms; they went on boating parties and on

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[1]Roy F. Harrod, The Life of John Maynard Keynes (London, 1951), p. 69.

[2]Harrod, 70-71.

> vacations together; and, above all, they talked. . . . This spirit and tradition endured through the years in The Society and were brought from Cambridge to Bloomsbury.[3]

Although any note of the pompous was regarded as a serious lapse among the Apostles, The Society was informed with a very self-consciously serious purpose--the quest for truth. Members were continually giving papers (though not in very erudite form) and no boundaries were set for the subjects of these papers. Nonetheless, each generation of Apostles had its own focus of philosophic interest.

> The subjects discussed were always of a fundamental kind, touching those central opinions which make the man. Tennyson's list is comprehensive; Merivale tends to stress transcendental philosophy. . . . It seems evident that Sidgwick's experience in the Society was not unconnected with his religious doubts. But by Maynard's [Lord Keynes's] time problems connected with orthodox creeds had receded into the background.[4]

Throughout the entire history of The Society, and especially in that generation of Apostles which included Lytton Strachey and John Maynard Keynes, frankness and a sense of humor were admired and encouraged. These qualities, in a way, helped to cement the bonds of friendship among the members.

> The intimacy of personal relationship manifested itself in a private language; letters and talk between members abounded in esoteric jokes and allusions. It is true that members criticized each other, frequently in a spirit of mockery and raillery, and often displayed considerable differences of opinion. . . .[5]

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[3]J. K. Johnstone, The Bloomsbury Group (New York, 1954), pp. 7-8.

[4]Harrod, 73.

[5]G. H. Bantock, "L. H. Myers and Bloomsbury," The Modern Age, ed. Boris Ford (Baltimore, 1961), p. 277.

The members of The Society were held together, then, not through any common philosophical view alone, but through the ties of friendship and of social intercourse, as well.[6] And there were ancestral ties, too.

Most of the young men who were Apostles in the late 'nineties were descended from families which were part of an intellectually elite middle class in the mid-nineteenth century. Forster, Stephen, and Strachey were all related to members of the famous "Clapham Sect," a group of free-thinking Evangelists whose first leader was Henry Thornton. And Claphamites or not (Roger Fry's family were leaders of Quaker society; Clive Bell came from a more or less aristocratic County family), they were many of them related in various ways. Lytton Strachey and Duncan Grant were cousins; Lady Ritchie, Sir Leslie Stephen's sister-in-law by his first marriage, was also a close friend of Lady Strachey (Lytton's mother) and godmother of James Strachey. There is this curious aspect of the class to which most of these families belonged: Claphamites, and Quakers, and High-Churchmen, and agnostics; they all belonged to and were active in one or another particular group, each group being distinguished from the others by its peculiar philosophic or religious attachment. These qualities--friendship cemented by family ties

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[6]Not all of the men who were later to be part of the Bloomsbury Group were Apostles, but they did all participate in the Midnight Society, founded by Strachey and others in 1899 for the purpose of reading and criticizing works of literature.

and philosophic principle--were to be inherited by the Bloomsbury Group as it itself became a reasonably well-defined coterie.

There are certain advantages to clannishness, despite the criticism which is often leveled by those outside the circle. Where intelligence, high-mindedness, and humor are combined in such a set, and where internal criticism is vigorous and presumably educative, the members have a freedom to develop their own intellectual bents and are fairly independent of the external pressures of fashion. The danger of snobbishness, however, is ever-present.

If, for all that, a social tone was established at Cambridge among those who were to become active members of the Bloomsbury Group ("Bloomsberries," as Lady MacCarthy called them),[7] there was intellectual direction, too. The academic voices the Apostles heard were those of Bertrand Russell, J. E. McTaggart, Alfred North Whitehead, G. Lowes Dickinson, and G. E. Moore.

Those undergraduate years provided an intellectual/aesthetic framework for Lytton Strachey's thought and art. Indeed, he had already begun his career as a professional writer and critic before he left the university to take up residence in his family's home in London. Strachey and MacCarthy and Keynes and Woolf, in fact all the young men from Cambridge who came to form the nucleus of the group

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[7]Clive Bell, Old Friends (London, 1956), p. 129.

which met in the homes of the Stephen children, had been influenced by the atmosphere and traditions of the university. If one is to understand the environment of Lytton Strachey's work, one must understand something of the "spirit of that Cambridge generation," as Desmond MacCarthy has called it.

> We were not much interested in politics. Abstract speculation was much more absorbing. Philosophy was more interesting to us than public causes. The wave of Fabian socialism, which affected some of Lytton Strachey's younger contemporaries like Rupert Brooke, had not reached Cambridge in my time. What we chiefly discussed were those 'goods' which were ends in themselves; and these ends, for which the rest of life was only a scaffolding, could be subsumed under three heads: the search for truth, aesthetic emotions and personal relations--love and friendship.
>
> Those who have been to a university will remember how each decade, as far as the intellectual life of the young is concerned, tends to be dominated by some unusually gifted man. The dominating influence when Lytton Strachey came up was metaphysical, embodied in G. E. Moore and Bertrand Russell who had shaken confidence in the idealism of McTaggart. Thus Amurath to Amurath succeeds. Lytton Strachey himself was the next influence.[8]

MacCarthy's use of "metaphysical" in the passage just cited is somewhat unfortunate, since both Moore and Russell were attacking metaphysics and were reacting against the metaphysical implications of Hegelian logic and idealism.[9]

Traditionally, and certainly throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, Oxford has been regarded as the

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[8]Desmond MacCarthy, "Lytton Strachey," Memories (New York, 1953), p. 40.

[9]"The Edwardian period saw idealism defeated on all three fronts: as a metaphysical system, as a theology, and as a social doctrine. A new generation of realists, led by Russell and Moore, attacked it at its intellectual heart by showing its logic to be an elaborately deceptive technique for having things both ways." Anthony Quintin, "Thought," Edwardian England 1901-1914, ed. S. Nowell-Smith (London, 1964), 253.

center of classics and poetry, while Cambridge has been noted for science and rational philosophy. The Aristotelean biasses and high-church leanings of Oxford dons during the nineteenth century were properly sustained by interest in Hegel. Cambridge, on the other hand, with its interest in mathematics and in the scientific method found more sustenance in John Stuart Mill. Mill's work, marking for one historian "the beginning of a return to the concrete and the practical,"[10] not only provided a justification for scientific leanings, but suggested that fruitful knowledge of society and of history could be gleaned empirically. Leslie Stephen observed that "the young men who graduated in 1850 and the following ten years found their philosophical teaching in Mill's Logic, and only a few daring heretics were beginning to pick holes in his system."[11]

Mill's System of Logic insists upon the importance of inductive reasoning and justifies, in the name of knowledge, the scientific method. Mill wished to re-establish logic as a scientific system, immediately applicable in examining both nature and society, rather than an abstract discipline, an appendage to mathematics, which was what logic had become at both Cambridge and Oxford by the eighteen-thirties. Mill had little use for the syllogism, since to accept the premise is to accept the conclusion and the exercise seemed redundant

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[10]D. C. Somervell, English Thought in the Nineteenth Century (New York, 1929), p. 54.

[11]Noel Annan, Leslie Stephen (Cambridge, Mass., 1952), p. 141.

and unprofitable. And he was not particularly interested in abstract speculation, since it appeared useless as far as the increase of knowledge was concerned. For Mill, man's energies are better spent in observing and analyzing objective phenomena than in attempting to discover a perfection of metaphysical unity or the ultimate "truth" of Hegelian logic. Speaking of the impact of Mill's Principles of Political Economy, D. C. Somervell has written that

> economists would not be content to simplify their problems by assuming the existence of a society of 'economic men' led by 'invisible hands'; they would attempt to grapple with the complexities of human society as it exists. They would no longer seek to achieve the neat finality of mathematical demonstrations. They would realize that their studies were a department of politics rather than an abstract science.[12]

Mill believed in the inductive method; he felt that knowledge is gained by moving from the particular to the general. In his work he suggests a need for evidence in order to support any belief, and a need for an open mind in order that beliefs may be changed whenever evidence indicates they should.

For Mill, history is not to be taken a priori as a weapon to defend or attack a given moral view; it is to be examined objectively in order to gain knowledge, and through such study certain general rules might emerge. The application of moral predispositions to any study would be irrational, since they move from the general to the particular, and since, like a syllogism, they aim to repeat the original premise. Such predispositions would deny the possibility of conclusions

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[12]Somervell, 54.

contradictory to themselves, and this would set a static limit to truth. Mill further believed that, since history indicates social change to be directly related to changes in knowledge, and changes in knowledge lead to changes in belief, the most active element in society is man's mind. He was thus moved, in On Liberty, to argue for complete tolerance of expression and free speech. His fear seems to have been that intolerant behavior will discourage the assimilation of important ideas and thereby impede the possible dynamic advance of society. He is not afraid of the dissemination of error in a perfectly tolerant atmosphere, since the reasonability of evidence would always render truth stronger and truth would, in a manner of speaking, defeat error. This view was somewhat transformed by some of his followers:

> The strength of the Newtonian tradition, to which Mill belonged, lay precisely in its explanation that society was governed by the same laws as obtained in the physical world. Thus Christian dogma could not be true and at the same time defy the laws of geology or common morality; if it could no longer receive the flood of new ideas pouring down the streams of science and philosophy, then it must be false.[13]

Mill was an advocate of individual freedom and of the free exchange of ideas (the very basis of The Society relies on this notion). If the nineteenth century had made any progress over earlier times, it was, for Mill, "precisely that sort of progress which increase of discussion suffices to produce."[14]

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[13]Annan, 47-48.

[14]John Stuart Mill, "The Spirit of the Age, No. 1," British Literature from Blake to the Present Day, ed. H. Spencer, W. Houghton, H. Barrows (Boston, 1952), p. 537.

Mill upheld the value of free inquiry; he saw questioning as the first step to knowledge.

Mill's stand for individual freedom and his argument for the value of empirically realized knowledge stand as a kind of background for the direction of Victorian rationalism and, in F. R. Leavis' term, "the liberal culture of the early years of the twentieth century."[15] It was this kind of thinking, not of course induced by Mill alone, that created a particular philosophical air at Cambridge during the last part of the nineteenth century. Surely it is this kind of thinking that lies behind Leslie Stephen's formulation of the duty of the critic of literature: "We must start from experience. We must begin by asking impartially what pleased men, and then inquire why it pleased them."[16] And the object of education, as Stephen suggests in his essay on Jowett, is not to lead the young to certain pedagogically pre-ordained goals, but to open their minds to the possibility of rational inquiry.[17] After that the truths of reason will take hold; and for Stephen, the truths of reason are scientifically determinable.[18] This view of Stephen has its parallel in John Maynard Keynes's exposition of one of the principal tenets of Bloomsbury:

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[15]F. R. Leavis, "E. M. Forster," The Common Pursuit (Harmondsworth, 1963), p. 276.

[16]Stephen, English Literature and Society . . . , 3.

[17]Sir Leslie Stephen, "Jowett's Life," Studies of a Biographer (London, 1898), II, 123-59.

[18]Annan, 139-41.

> We were among the last of the Utopians, or meliorists as they were sometimes called, who believe in continuing moral progress by virtue of which the human race already consists of reliable, rational, decent people, influenced by truth and objective standards, who can be safely released from the outward restraints of convention and traditional standards and inflexible rules of conduct, and left, from now onwards, to their own sensible devices, pure motives and reliable intuitions of the good.[19]

Bloomsbury writers, and particularly Lytton Strachey, present a number of resemblances to Sir Leslie Stephen. Stephen's children--Thoby, Adrian, Vanessa (Mrs. Clive Bell), Virginia (Mrs. Leonard Woolf)--were, of course at the very center of the group. Stephen and Strachey were both biographers, and both admired brevity in that art. J. Dover Wilson has noticed certain similarities of tone between the essays of Stephen and those of Strachey.[20] More significantly, however, Stephen represents not so much, perhaps, a direct and acknowledged influence on Strachey's work (Strachey was vociferous in attacking Stephen),[21] as a temper of intellect which is most typical of Strachey. Neither Stephen nor

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[19]John Maynard Keynes, "My Early Beliefs," Essays and Sketches in Biography (New York, 1956), p. 253.

[20]J. Dover Wilson, Leslie Stephen and Matthew Arnold as Critics of Wordsworth, The Leslie Stephen Lecture (Cambridge, 1939), p. 20.

[21]"To [a Victorian critic] literature was always an excuse for talking about something else. From Macaulay, who used it as a convenient peg for historical and moral disquisitions, to Leslie Stephen, who frankly despised the whole business, this singular tradition holds good. In what other age would it have been possible for a literary critic to begin an essay on Donne, as Leslie Stephen once did, with the cool observation that, as he was not interested in Donne's poetry, he would merely discuss his biography? An historian might as well preface an account of Columbus with the remark that, as

Strachey was able to escape certain logical contradictions and limitations in the rationalist position as it applies to works of art. Nor was their rationalism entirely pure.

Stephen made a distinction between the discoveries of intuition or conscience and those of "impartial enquiry."[22] And this distinction is central to his abandonment of his evangelical religion and his adoption of the role of an agnostic. Stephen's agnosticism is a kind of embodiment of the rationalistic trend. Since he is unwilling to accept as valid any article of belief that is not scientifically verifiable, he is repelled by the want of evidence to support theologians in their arguments. Consonant with Mill's positivism, Stephen condemns metaphysical belief as bigoted and intolerant and, more significant, as detrimental to the progress of human affairs. It is his insistence upon social positivism that renders his literary criticism self-contradictory at times. If Stephen wishes to do away with, what is for him, an unsupported belief in Heaven and Hell, he clearly desires at the same time to retain the notion of an almost palpable moral law which he sees manifest in social evolution.

> Virtue resides within man; and if a man's nature is corrupt, intrinsic reasons for good conduct do not exist. Belief in God and the fear of hell are not real sanctions, but theological superstructures built upon the hard facts of social ethics. . . . 'The limiting and determining

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he was not interested in Columbus's geographical discoveries, he would say nothing about that part of his career." LE, 210.

[22] Annan, 140. Cf. "Arnold is, perhaps, too much inclined to trust to his intuitions, as if they were equivalent to scientific and measurable statements." Stephen, "Matthew Arnold," Studies, II, 94.

> cause of the moral objection to vice is in all cases measured by the perception of the social evils which it causes.'[23]

In a way, Stephen looks to the scientific method to give substance to formerly unscientific moral notions. Stephen does not, as his friend Sidgwick for instance does, move to the logical extreme of the rationalist position and see the world as essentially neutral morally:

> His [Stephen's] faith, while he possessed it, had not been accompanied by what is called spiritual life. He had never associated religion with his most valued emotions toward nature or man. The points at which he had touched Christianity had been purely moral, and these he took over intact into his new life: they were a contempt, not to say dread, of self-indulgence, a belief in the importance of chastity, and something approaching adoration for tenderness of heart, while his reprobation of the softer vices remained adamant.[24]

To put it another way, Stephen insists upon a kind of moral utilitarianism. And, since he is not a Marxist, this leads to contradictions in his literary criticism. He will seek to justify his moral intuitions with the paraphernalia of impartial enquiry.

As a literary critic, Stephen tried to be true to the inductive tradition of Mill--to regard each work separately, to analyze individual methods, to avoid vast labels or tags.

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[23]Annan, 214. Cf. "Why is bodily health preferable to disease? If a man likes weak lungs and a bad digestion reason cannot convince him of his error. The physician has done enough when he has pointed out the sanitary laws obedience to which generates strength, long life, and power of enjoyment. The moralist is in the same position. . . ." Sir Leslie Stephen, "Wordsworth's Ethics," Hours in a Library (London, 1928), II, 282.

[24]MacCarthy, "Leslie Stephen," Memories, p. 90.

But Stephen appears to have been blocked in this endeavor in two ways. He had, in the first place, no poetic temperament; his concern in poetry was primarily with what was being said rather than how it was said. He pretends to no knowledge of the elements of style, and his determination of poetic excellence was often measured by the poet's "sincerity."[25] Further, he was heir to a Johnsonian critical system of judging, and he saw judgment, indeed, as the true end of criticism, since judgment, in his view, is the true end of analysis and of all scientific processes.

> If ever criticism was to be rescued from the wilderness of personal taste, judgement must be the critic's right true end. 'To admit that all tastes are equally good is to fall into an aesthetic scepticism as erroneous as the philosophical scepticism which should make morality or political principles matters of arbitrary convention. . . .' By pronouncing judgement the critic was helping to construct a body of doctrine analogous to case-law which would enable future critics to return a truer verdict upon a writer. . . .[26]

Stephen's insistence upon sincerity and upon morality suggests that the bases of his judgments are not the evidence of formal or aesthetic qualities, but rather the consistency of the moral views of authors.[27] His essay on Wordsworth, significantly

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[25]Annan, 261.

[26]Annan, 258.

[27]Stephen castigated Landor because Landor's philosophical notions "are little more than vehement explosions of unreasoning prejudice." Stephen went on to say that Landor's thought was superficial, inconsistent, unrealistic. But, in an ironic way, he admired Landor's style. Stephen, "Landor's Imaginary Conversations," Library, II, 306-07.

titled "Wordsworth's Ethics," reveals him at his best and his most typical.

The emphasis in "Wordsworth's Ethics" is away from the structure and style of Wordsworth's verse, and is focused upon the moral philosophy which underlies that verse. For Stephen, great verse is always written from a philosophic sub-structure that is morally sound. As Desmond MacCarthy has put it: "The test which Leslie Stephen applied was the relation of a work to life, the extent to which it ministered, in one way or another, to all human good."[28] Stephen wished to turn criticism away from a kind of effeminate aestheticism which dealt mostly in labels and which did little more than enthusiastically proclaim the subjective responses of the critic. In Stephen's view that approach is simply not very scientific. But rather than go to the work itself for examination, Stephen preferred to go to the author and to the moral principles which guided him. Stephen stated this fairly directly in the opening pages of the Wordsworth essay:

> A strong moral sentiment has a great value, even when forced into an unnatural alliance. Nay, even when it is, so to speak, inverted, it often receives a kind of paradoxical value from its efficacy against some opposite form of error. It is only a complete absence of the moral faculty which is irredeemably bad. The poet in whom it does not exist is condemned to the lowest sphere, and can only deal with the deepest feelings on penalty of shocking us by indecency or profanity. A man who can revel in "Epicurus' stye" without even the indirect homage to purity of remorse and bitterness, can do nothing but gratify our lowest

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[28]MacCarthy, "Stephen," 96.

> passions. They, perhaps, have their place, and the man who is content with such utterances may not be entirely worthless. But to place him on a level with his betters is to confound every sound principle of criticism.[29]

Not only, according to Stephen, did Wordsworth work from a "strong moral sentiment," but he avoided the excesses of metaphysics and intuition, and used his verse in a reasonable, almost scientific manner. In Stephen's view, Wordsworth tried to bring into harmony "our childish instincts and our enlightened experience." Wordsworth refused to accept mystical attributions for primitive instincts; it is for the reasoning faculty of the adult "to interpret and regulate them."[30] This makes Wordsworth a sane and profitable poet to read, even though his reasoning is occasionally faulty. Wordsworth's moral sensibility was solidly grounded in a mature realization of the world as it is in both its natural and its social aspects. Stephen comments: "He [Wordsworth] loves his native hills, not in the Byronic fashion, as a savage wilderness, but as the appropriate framework in which a healthy social order can permanently maintain itself."[31] For Stephen, then, morality is a worldly, not an otherworldly, proposition, and poetry is to be judged in terms of the suitability of its morality. For this reason poetry which is obscure (a fault he sees in Matthew Arnold) or

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[29]Stephen, "Wordsworth," 255.

[30]Stephen, "Wordsworth," 263.

[31]Stephen, "Wordsworth," 270.

which is too personal (a fault he sees in Shelley) is necessarily of second rank.[32]

Curiously enough, despite his moral biasses, Stephen was not a puritan in any narrowly conventional sense. (The freedom which he allowed his children with his library must attest to that.) If moral predispositions interfered, in Stephen's case, with the more or less scientific study of literature, if he did not deal with a work from within itself, but from without--from the author or the society which produced the work--his literary criticism is saved from pomposity and priggishness by a tone of disinterested humor. Whenever Stephen was not in critical (moral) sympathy with a writer, he used this humor as a critical tool. It is a peculiarly effective instrument in that it performs a number of functions at the same time. It acts, in the first place, to amuse the reader and to sustain his interest. It acts, in the second place, to suggest an ironic pose of humility or of simple reasonableness about Stephen. Finally, it attacks, often viciously, but without the necessity for overt pontification. In short, the style of Stephen's humor is <u>itself</u> a moral statement.[33] The following

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[32]<u>Cf.</u> "The simple truth is that what Lamb calls 'the essentials of gentlemanhood' reside indeed in a kind of morality; but it is only a very particular kind--it is largely the morality of social intercourse. One may be a good man and lack this special moral sense. Its precise domain lies in that region of the soul where morals seem to melt into aesthetics; it is bounded on the one side by taste, and on the other by good feeling." Strachey, "A Mirror for Gentlefolks," <u>Spectator</u>, 101 (24 Oct., 1908), 631.

[33]In this respect, one might compare Strachey's observations on the function of Gibbon's style: "Gibbon's irony, no doubt, is the salt of his work; but, like all irony, it is the product of style." <u>BE</u>, 145.

citation from Stephen's essay on Matthew Arnold should suggest something of this, and should suggest, too, something of the school of stylists to which Lytton Strachey belongs.

> On all sides his [Arnold's] loyalty to culture (the word has been a little spoilt of late), his genuine and hearty appreciation of scholarship and scientific thought, his longing to set himself in the great current of intellectual progress, are always attractive, and are the more marked because of his appreciation (his excessive appreciation, may I say?) of the 'sweetness,' if not the light, of the Oxford Movement. If, indeed, his appreciation was excessive, I am conscious, I hope, of the value of the doctrine which led him. We ought, he says [in Literature and Dogma], to have an 'infinite tenderness' for the popular science of religion. It is 'the spontaneous work of nature, the travail of the human mind, to adapt to its grasp and employment great ideas of which it feels the attraction.' I feel the truth of this teaching more, I fear, than I have acted upon it. I belong, as I have said, to the prosaic class of mankind. We ought to catch at least something of Arnold's spirit, so far as to admit, at least, that the great problem is to reconcile unflinching loyalty to truth with tenderness 'infinite,' if possible, for the errors which are but a grasping after truth. . . . He said of a great contemporary that he was always beating the bush without starting the hare. I am under the impression that Arnold, if he started the hare, did not quite catch it. But beating the bushes is an essential preliminary.[34]

Stephen's criticism, as I have suggested earlier, is, in effect, an attempt to justify his own moral predispositions by judging literature according to seemingly rational principles. The fact that the details of what is or what is not moral differ for Strachey is not of immediate concern here. What is important, however, is that both Stephen and Strachey approach criticism in the same way and employ the same kinds of rhetorical

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[34]Stephen, "Arnold," 119-20.

techniques to give an appearance of logical consistency to their work. There is a contradiction in Stephen's criticism between his desire to judge literature on moral/biographical grounds and his stated insistence on following Mill in considering inductively individual works. This contradiction is reconciled rhetorically in Stephen, though not logically. The same kind of contradiction and the same kind of reconciliation occur in Strachey, who tries to apply G. E. Moore's ethical principles to Roger Fry's formulation of Art for Art's Sake aesthetics. Where Strachey and Stephen differ is perhaps a result of the differing emphases of the rationalist position at Cambridge between Stephen's time there and Strachey's: for Stephen that emphasis was social; for Strachey it was psychological. The difference, of course, is not quite so clear-cut; and the overlapping may well be seen in the humanistic philosophy of G. Lowes Dickinson, a teacher and friend of Strachey, a student and an admirer of Sir Leslie Stephen.

It is E. M. Forster who has written a biography of Dickinson, and, certainly, of all the young men in the group Strachey knew at Cambridge, it was Forster who was most directly influenced by Dickinson.[35] Yet there is some value in a brief résumé of Dickinson's views here, since in them we find a number of parallels to Strachey's literary and philosophical tendencies. Forster's biography, which is unrelentingly

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[35]Forster's particular interest in music, his preoccupation with German culture, and his profound struggles in trying to understand Anglo-Indian relations are all nearly identical with Dickinson's interests.

admiring, stresses the amalgam of Dickinson's interests and occupations as a kind of modern humanism. Throughout his life, Dickinson seems to have wavered between the extreme Hegelian mysticism of his friend, J. E. McTaggart, and the scepticism of such people as Leslie Stephen and Henry Sidgwick. On the occasion of the death of C. P. Sanger, Dickinson wrote:

> It does not become a Cambridge man to claim too much for his university. . . . But there is, I think, a certain type, rare, like all good things, which seems to be associated in some peculiar way with my alma mater. I am thinking of men like Leslie Stephen (the original of Meredith's Vernon Whitford), like Henry Sidgwick, like Maitland, like . . . [C. P. Sanger]. . . . It is a type unworldly without being saintly, unambitious without being sentimental. Through good report and ill such men work on, following the light of truth as they see it; able to be sceptical without being paralyzed; content to know what is knowable and to reserve judgement on what is not. The world could never be driven by such men, for the springs of action lie deep in ignorance and madness. But it is they who are the beacon in the tempest.[36]

Dickinson's adoption of philosophical rationalism was based upon his faith in individual human relationships and his belief in the necessity for ameliorative action in any specific crisis. "Beyond, or beneath, the human," as Forster puts it, "he was reluctant to travel."[37] Thus Dickinson did not particularly fancy research scholarship, since it moves the mind away from the active give and take of human intercourse;[38] his books are, for the most part, cast in poetic

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[36]Cited in Keynes, 119.

[37]E. M. Forster, Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson (London, 1947), p. 37.

[38]Cf. "I hope, however, that the following pages may prove to be of interest from the strictly biographical no less than from the historical point of view. Human beings

or dramatic modes rather than a mode of scholarly exposition; and he conceived of teaching as Socratic conversation. Dickinson's aim, both as a teacher and as a writer, was to persuade, to move individual human beings to a consideration of cultural history which might result in sensible action.[39] In order to achieve effective persuasion, Dickinson was singularly preoccupied with form and style in his works. In discussing a passage from Letters from John Chinaman, E. M. Forster finds Dickinson's style to be "winged with poetry," but not extravagant in self-conscious poeticism. "All that is delicate and noble challenges all that is brutal and vulgar, and he employs for the contest neither appeals to the empyrean nor arguments of force, but the subtlest of all weapons, good taste."[40] Dickinson wished to interpret facts artistically, rather than accumulate them. Dickinson is reported by Forster to have told Beatrice Webb that "dramatic treatment is the only one that really represents truth at all, and most history books are mere materials for books."[41] The attitude expressed

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are too important to be treated as mere symptoms of the past. They have a value which is independent of any temporal processes--which is eternal, and which must be felt for its own sake." EV, 7.

[39]"Art, literature, music, culture are not external decorations, but age-long secretions in the soul of man, and one of the problems of our revolution is to prevent man from despising or forgetting his own past. Thus, although he [Dickinson] came more and more to condemn our economic system and advocate drastic changes, he had no sympathy whatever with the Marxian who rejects Shakespeare and Tchekov on the ground that they wrote for Capitalists. Such a view seemed to him childish and self-conscious, and best corrected by an intelligent study of history." Forster, 88.

[40]Forster, 144.

[41]Forster, 88.

in that remark is not far removed from Lytton Strachey's criticism of Victorian biographies in his "Preface" to Eminent Victorians:

> Those two fat volumes, with which it is our custom to commemorate the dead--who does not know them, with their ill-digested masses of material, their slipshod style, their tone of tedious panegyric, their lamentable lack of selection, of detachment, of design?[42]

Dickinson came up to Cambridge in 1881; by 1884 he was trying to follow McTaggart through the intricacies of Hegelian idealism. By 1887, however, he became impatient of any mystically qualified assumptions and would not accept the notion that "the universe is a veil to reality, for the reason that this view, though it may well be correct, offers no scope for action or thought, and ignores the existence of pain."[43] But Dickinson's philosophic move away from McTaggart was fairly reluctant as he continued to admire Hegelian logic. A stronger reaction and a revitalization of the rationalist tradition at Cambridge came from Dickinson's friend, G. E. Moore, who, in 1903--the year in which Lytton Strachey was awarded his B.A. degree--published Principia Ethica.

> It would be too much to say that Moore dethroned McTaggart, who was essentially undethronable, but he did carry the younger men by storm, and cause Lytton Strachey to exclaim, 'The age of reason has come!'[44]

There can be little question that of all the academic influences at work on Strachey and Bell and Keynes and Woolf

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[42] EV, 7.

[43] Forster, 84.

[44] Forster, 110.

and, indeed, all the young men in The Society during those undergraduate years at Cambridge, the strongest was that of G. E. Moore. MacCarthy, Woolf, and Keynes, among others, state openly and clearly that this was the case. A problem arises, however, in trying to identify the exact nature of that influence; and this problem is magnified immeasurably by the fact that none of these people was a professional philosopher and, although all of them knew Moore personally and well, they did not read all of Moore. It is of interest, then, to examine some of Moore's principal theses and to inquire of the application made of them by Lytton Strachey, since there are a number of unmistakable resemblances between Strachey's implicit aesthetic notions and Moore's ethical system.

It seems to have been Moore's apparent rationality and the modernity of that which struck the first appeal. Leonard Woolf writes that an undefined feeling of rebellion against "bourgeois Victorianism"[45] was given point and direction with the publication of Principia Ethica:

> The tremendous influence of Moore and his book upon us came from the fact that they suddenly removed from our eyes an obscuring accumulation of scales, cobwebs, and curtains, revealing for the first time to us, so it seemed, the nature of truth and reality, of good and evil and character and conduct, substituting for the religious and philosophical nightmares, delusions, hallucinations, in which Jehovah, Christ, and St. Paul, Plato, Kant, and Hegel had entangled us, the fresh air and pure light of plain common-sense.
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> It was this clarity, freshness, and common-sense which primarily appealed to us. Here was a profound

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[45]Leonard Woolf, Sowing (New York, 1960), p. 166.

> philosopher who did not require us to accept any 'religious' faith or intricate, if not unintelligible, intellectual gymnastics of a Platonic, Aristotelian, Kantian, or Hegelian nature; all he asked us to do was to make quite certain that we knew what we meant when we made a statement and to analyze and examine our beliefs in the light of common-sense.[46]

For the Apostles, Moore's approach to the problem of ethics begins with the re-asking of questions and the re-definition of terms, rather than with the acceptance of traditional premises and language. And this method appeared to lead to a freedom in discovering truth by exactitude in communication. It is, quite literally, a case of mind over matter. Mind can distinguish in matter elements which are not immediately apparent; and it is the function of language to single out and distinguish these elements without confusing them with others. Lord Keynes puts it in this way:

> It was all under the influence of Moore's method, according to which you could hope to make essentially vague notions clear by using precise language about them and asking exact questions. It was a method of discovery by the instrument of impeccable grammar and an unambiguous dictionary.[47]

If one may judge from the words of Woolf and Keynes, Moore's young disciples inferred that all areas of human experience could be, indeed needed to be, re-examined and re-questioned; all attitudes and judgments were to be determined rationally by the asking of proper and exact questions and by the rejection of traditional categories. They felt that Moore gave them a license by which they "claimed the right to judge

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[46]Woolf, Sowing, 161-62.

[47]Keynes, 252.

every individual case on its merits, and the wisdom, experience and self-control to do so successfully. . . . We repudiated entirely customary morals, conventions and traditional wisdom."[48] The fundamental problem, it would appear, was one of asking questions and of defining terms. But not all questions are answerable, nor, as Moore himself observes, are all terms definable. Moore's distinctions about definition are only a part of a larger discussion in Principia Ethica, the refutation of what he calls the "naturalistic fallacy."[49]

The naturalistic fallacy is the error by which some philosophers have identified goodness with another quality thought to be found concomitantly with goodness. Some philosophers, for instance, have stated that that which gives pleasure is good; and they go on to suggest that the qualities of goodness and pleasure occur together, perhaps invariably. Moore would agree that this is possible. But these philosophers are treading on dangerous ground when they move on to suggest that whatever gives pleasure must be good or, conversely, whatever is good must give pleasure. This, too, is possible as long as the two qualities are seen as two distinct qualities. If, however, such philosophers infer from this relationship between goodness and pleasure that they are

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[48]Keynes, 252.

[49]"Moore's 'Principia Ethica' came out while 'The Meaning of Good' was in proof, and Dickinson, on reading it, discovered that he had been guilty in his dialogue of a new philosophic error which Moore had discovered and had named 'the Naturalistic Fallacy,' 'a phrase which always amuses me, for it suggests some kind of unnatural vice.'" Forster, lll.

identical, then their arguments are tautologous. One learns nothing about goodness or about pleasure by discussing either in terms of the other if they are in fact identical. If goodness is pleasure there is no point in arguing that what gives pleasure is good. There is some resemblance here to Mill's disavowal of the syllogism.

Since Moore believes that such a quality as "good" does exist, he sees as essential the strict definition of all accompanying terms in order to show that "good" is not identical with any other quality (the motto for his book, borrowed from Bishop Butler, is "Everything is what it is, and not another thing.") Moreover, since Moore seems to feel that definition implies a complex of parts, "good" itself cannot be defined. Moore says: "My point is that 'good is a simple notion, just as 'yellow' is a simple notion; that, just as you cannot, by any manner of means, explain to anyone who does not already know it, what yellow is, so you cannot explain what good is."[50] Moore's view is that any definition of "good" must be based upon subjective predispositions and/or a consideration of extraneous qualities. Nothing, then, is necessarily good because it is something else. Any thing or any experience may be good whatever other qualities it does or does not possess.

> If we start with the conviction that a definition of good can be found, we start with the conviction that good can mean nothing else than some one property of things; and our only business will then be to discover what that property is. But if we recognize that, so

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[50]George Edward Moore, Principia Ethica (Cambridge, 1956), p. 7.

> far as the meaning of good goes, anything whatever may be good, we start with a much more open mind.[51]

Moore, then, denies the possibility of an a priori definition of "good" and moves on to examine some of those philosophies which have, for him, fallen into the trap of the naturalistic fallacy. He insists that before ethical judgments can be made in any case whatsoever, the individual case must be examined in its own context, in its own complex of causes and consequences. Precedents cannot be an absolutely determining factor in such a judgment, for the slightest shift of circumstance may alter the quality of the entire situation. Thus, notions of duty, interest, virtue--what Moore calls "rules of action"--are irrelevant in the abstract, and are of value only when palpably discernable in an examination of all of the relationships and elements in a given situation. That Moore's treatment of these terms encouraged those who felt oppressed by bourgeois Victorianism is not surprising. And Bloomsbury, taking its rationale from Moore, felt itself free to examine anything, to come to conclusions unhindered by the restraints of the judgments of earlier generations. Moore's influence, according to Lord Keynes, "was the extreme opposite of what Strachey used to call funeste; it was exciting, exhilarating, the beginning of a renaissance, the opening of a new heaven on a new earth, we were the forerunners of a new dispensation, we were not afraid of anything."[52]

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[51]Moore, 20.

[52]Keynes, 241.

Moore's entire method, and his philosophical vocabulary, tend to suggest a scientific predisposition and a kind of rationalism that derive from Hume and from Mill.[53] This impression is enhanced by Moore's outspoken criticism of metaphysical ethics. Moore defines "metaphysical" as having reference to an object or objects which are not part of nature and which are not defined or recognized by sensible perception:

> If, therefore, we are to define 'metaphysics' not by what it has attained, but by what it has attempted, we should say that it consists in the attempt to obtain knowledge, by processes of reasoning, of what exists but is not a part of Nature. Metaphysicians have actually held that they could give us such knowledge as can be supported by reasons, of that supersensible reality of which religion professes to give us a fuller knowledge, without any reasons. When, therefore, I spoke of 'metaphysical' terms, I meant terms which refer to qualities of such a supersensible reality; since I hold that its particular province is the truth about all objects which are not natural objects. And I think that the most prominent characteristic of metaphysics, in history, has been its profession to prove the truth about non-natural existents. I define 'metaphysical,' therefore, by a reference to supersensible reality; although I think that the only non-natural objects, about which it has succeeded in obtaining truth, are objects which do not exist at all.[54]

Because the metaphysical is not natural, and because the metaphysical universe has no common denominator in normal experience, metaphysicians work in an enclosed system to which there can only be a mystical key. While he does not deny the possible truths of metaphysical speculation, Moore, following Mill, denies the usefulness of such speculation and the logic of its

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[53] "The realism of Russell and Moore turned into a philosophy of analysis and rejoined the tradition of Hume and Mill which had been the main object of idealist criticism." Quinton, 254.

[54] Moore, 112.

application to ethical problems. Therefore, he criticizes "modern writers who tell us that the final and perfect end is to realise our true selves--a self different both from the whole and from any part of that which exists here and now in Nature."[55] And he urges a vigorous application of intellectual energy to the understanding of those objects and experiences which have a sensible reality.

> Thus a just appreciation of nature and of real persons may maintain its equality with an equally just appreciation of the products of artistic imagination, in spite of much greater beauty in the latter. And similarly though God may be admitted to be a more perfect object than any actual human being, the love of God may yet be inferior to human love, if God does not exist.[56]

We will see this view of Moore's manifested in Bloomsbury's distrust of the goals of institutions, especially religious institutions.

Moore's system of practical ethics moves away from absolutes, since he denies the possibility of knowing these, and focuses its attention on the structure of internal relationships in any given situation. In terms of aesthetics, such a system is not very different from the central doctrines of the Art for Art's movement of the 'eighties and 'nineties, doctrines which were to undergo re-definition and re-statement in the art criticism of Roger Fry and Clive Bell. And, in consonance with the Art for Art's Sake tradition, Moore does

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[55] Moore, 113.

[56] Moore, 200.

associate beautiful objects with ethical worth. His position, however, is certainly distorted in Clive Bell's statement that

> art is above morals, or rather, all art is moral because . . . works of art are immediate means to good. Once we have judged a thing a work of art, we have judged it ethically of the first importance and put it beyond the reach of the moralist.[57]

In the final chapter of Principia Ethica, Moore sets down those things which he regards as containing the greatest amount of good unalloyed with anything else. He calls this chapter "The Ideal" and suggests that the goods listed there represent the highest achievement man has attained. Indeed, he sees them as "the rational ultimate end of human action and the sole criterion of social progress."[58] His list is remarkably brief; it consists of two items: "The pleasures of human intercourse and the enjoyment of beautiful objects."[59] But although Moore's list is short, his defense of it is not, for both of these things are made up of complex elements and their value increases as the elements are verified and their interrelationships intellectually perceived. Further, since both items involve emotional/psychological/spiritual responses which, though non-material, are directed toward material qualities, these responses may be ranged in value in accordance with the degree of our cognition of these material qualities.

> By the cognitive element, which is equally necessary with emotion to the existence of a valuable appreciation, I mean merely the actual cognition or consciousness of any

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[57]Clive Bell, Art (New York, 1958), p. 24.

[58]Moore, 189.

[59]Moore, 188.

> or all of an object's beautiful qualities--that is to say any or all of those elements in the object which possess any positive beauty. That such a cognitive element is essential to a valuable whole may be easily seen, by asking: What value should we attribute to the proper emotion excited by hearing Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, if that emotion were entirely unaccompanied by any consciousness, either of the notes, or of the melodic and harmonic relations between them?[60]

What Moore is developing here, besides a raison d'être for educative criticism of the arts, is a principle of organic unity according to which a whole is valued in terms of the cognitive worth of all its elements without reference to those elements which lie outside the whole. Love, friendship, beautiful objects, each constitutes a good in and of itself, and each is a whole. Recognition of the value of any one can increase the amount of good, but, since recognition itself is an added element, we are dealing with still another and a different whole. Neither of these wholes, however, ought to be judged in terms of elements, material or otherwise, extrinsic to itself. Qualities not inherent in either should not be taken as reasonable criteria in an examination for value. Although Moore does not deny the applicability of behavioral cause and consequence through time in organic unity,[61] Bloomsbury does tend, outwardly at least, to disregard such considerations in the criticism of works of art. Genuine art, for instance, cannot be pornographic since pornography implies behavioral consequences and an appeal to a quality of morality which may not

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[60] Moore, 192.

[61] Moore does suggest, however, that such application is not practical since we do not have sufficient leisure to work out all the consequences and can, therefore, never know the ultimate end of a cause and effect sequence.

exist in the work itself. In terms of human relationships, John Maynard Keynes suggests another way in which the principle of organic unity was adapted by him and his friends:

> Nothing mattered except states of mind, our own and other people's of course, but chiefly our own. These states of mind were not associated with action or achievement or with consequences. They consisted in timeless, passionate states of contemplation and communion, largely unattached to 'before' and 'after.' Their value depended, in accordance with the principle of organic unity, on the state of affairs as a whole which could not be usefully analysed into parts. For example, the value of the state of mind of being in love did not depend merely on the nature of one's own emotions, but also on the worth of their object and on the reciprocity and the nature of the object's emotions; but it did not depend, if I remember rightly, or did not depend much, on what happened, or how one felt about it, a year later. . . . The appropriate subjects of passionate contemplation and communion were a beloved person, beauty and truth, and one's prime objects in life were love, the creation and enjoyment of aesthetic experience and the pursuit of knowledge.[62]

Noel Annan has written that Bloomsbury, "with the help of G. E. Moore's philosophy . . . created an ethical justification for art for art's sake."[63] This is certainly true; but it

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[62]Keynes, 242. R. F. Harrod, in his biography of Lord Keynes, observes that these beliefs of Bloomsbury do indeed derive from Moore's "goods." Harrod goes on, however, to comment on the logical extension of these "goods" in human practice:

> "The pleasure of personal intercourse may be regarded as comprised by the general expression, Love, in the broadest sense of that word. Even his [Moore's] treatment of love is, however, unsatisfactory--and rather curious. He emphasises the importance of corporeal qualities; it is a prime evil for anyone to be in a state of admiring contemplation of what is ugly; on the other hand, he is apt to speak of 'lust' as something to be condemned. By putting his doctrines together, one would reach the conclusion that one of the most evil things that can happen in the world, is to be carnally attracted by an ugly person. This is rather hard lines on a large minority of the human race! The matter would be made even worse if that person had faulty artistic taste." Harrod, 79.

[63]Annan, 124.

could not have been accomplished if Roger Fry's formulation of the aesthetic movement had not paralleled so closely Moore's formulation of his ethical principles. In complete consonance with the refutation of the naturalistic fallacy and with the principle of organic unity, Roger Fry, together with Clive Bell, developed the aesthetic principle of Significant Form. Fry, like Moore in the latter's discussion of the naturalistic fallacy, tries to isolate aesthetic experience from all other experience--especially moral experience. The first requisite of a critic, Fry tells us, is to "have a sensitiveness to purely formal relations."[64] The doctrine of Significant Form implies that the critic must judge a work of art on the balance of its internal relationships and the logic of its external form. A work of art has a life of its own, just as Moore's "good" has a meaning of its own, and it exists by virtue of its own organization. As E. M. Forster puts it: "A work of art--whatever else it may be--is a self-contained entity, with a life of its own imposed on it by its creator. It has internal order. It may have external form. That is how we recognize it."[65]

A critic ought not to judge a work, then, in its relationship to anything other than itself, not even--and this seems singularly difficult to achieve--its creator, its subject or the historical circumstances of its creation. Such reference

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[64]Roger Fry, The Artist and Psycho-Analysis (London, 1924), p. 9.

[65]E. M. Forster, "Art for Art's Sake," Two Cheers for Democracy (New York, 1951), p. 89.

would confuse aesthetic with non-aesthetic values.[66] Roger Fry, in discussing Courbet's "Blonde endormie," says that the picture contains its own unity and sets its own limits, thereby justifying itself by itself, and the viewer has no cause to be"thinking of the model who posed more than half a century ago to M. Courbet, or of any other woman whatever."[67] With some help from Charles Mauron,[68] Fry applies this principle to literature and he states that "the purpose of literature is the creation of structures which have for us the feeling of reality, and . . . these structures are self-contained, self-sufficing, and not to be valued by their reference to what lies outside."[69] For Fry, to refer to what lies outside is to substitute the values of what he calls the "actual life" for those of the "imaginative life."

> A great many objects in the world, when presented to our senses, put in motion a complex nervous machinery, which ends in some instinctive appropriate action. We see a

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[66]For Clive Bell, even the study of the history of art is a non-aesthetic pursuit:

> "The connection of one work of art with another may have everything to do with history: it has nothing to do with appreciation. So soon as we begin to consider a work as anything else than an end in itself we leave the world of art. Though the development of painting from Giotto to Titian may be interesting historically, it cannot affect the value of any particular picture: aesthetically, it is of no consequence whatever." Bell, Art, 75.

[67]Roger Fry, "Some Questions in Esthetics," Transformations (Garden City, 1956), p. 49.

[68]Mauron, who was blind, gave up his career as a chemist because of his disability and turned to literary criticism. He was a close friend of Fry, and the two of them collaborated on some translations from French poetry. But Fry's views on literary criticism derive from a book by Mauron which he, Fry, translated: The Nature of Beauty in Art and Literature (London, 1927).

[69]Fry, "Some Questions in Esthetics," 11.

> wild bull in a field; quite without our conscious interference a nervous process goes on, which, unless we interfere forcibly, ends in the appropriate reaction of flight. The nervous mechanism which results in flight causes a certain state of consciousness, which we call the emotion of fear. The whole of animal life, and a great part of human life, is made up of these instinctive reactions to sensible objects, and their accompanying emotions. But man has the peculiar faculty of calling up again in his mind the echo of past experiences of this kind, of going over it again, 'in imagination' as we say. He has, therefore, the possibility of a double life; one the actual life, the other the imaginative life.[70]

The instinctive responses with which Fry deals in the passage just cited are behavioral consequences occurring in time, and art, in Fry's aesthetic, is not related to time in the historical sense.[71] Further, behavior, which Fry equates with action,[72] suggests moral values and these are not equatable with aesthetic values, since, in the imaginative life, no action is involved (that is, we do not run from the bull). Rather we contemplate emotions for themselves. And such contemplation is what Keynes and Moore, as well as Fry and Bell, call a "state of mind." Moreover, as Fry sees it, insofar as states of mind do not "issue in good or bad behaviour"[73] there is no connection to morals. For morality "appreciates emotion

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[70]Roger Fry, "An Essay in Aesthetics," Vision and Design (New York, 1956), pp. 17-18.

[71]Fry, "Art and Life," ibid., 1-15.

[72]"In the first place the contemplation of Truth is . . . a spiritual function but is I judge entirely a-moral. Indeed I should be inclined to deny morals (proper) any spiritual quality--they are rather the mechanism of civil life--the rules by which life in groups can be rendered tolerable and are therefore only concerned directly with behaviours." From a letter from Fry to Robert Bridges, quoted in Virginia Woolf, Roger Fry (New York, 1940), p. 230.

[73]Ibid.

by the standard of resultant action. Art appreciates emotion in and for itself."[74] Aesthetic apprehension is a direct means to good states of mind; but since these do not refer to action or, indeed, anything but themselves, they are simple wholes and are no more definable than Moore's "good."

> To justify ethically any human activity, we must inquire--'Is this a means to good states of mind?' In the case of art our answer will be prompt and emphatic. Art is not only a means to good states of mind, but, perhaps, the most direct and potent that we possess. Nothing is more direct, because nothing affects the mind more immediately; nothing is more potent, because there is no state of mind more excellent or more intense than the state of aesthetic contemplation. This being so, to seek any other moral justification for art, to seek in art a means to anything less than good states of mind, is an act of wrongheadness to be committed by a fool or a man of genius.[75]

There is an undeniable mystical quality in this view of Art for Art's Sake as there is in Moore's distinction of the good; and this quality tends to contradict the apparent scientific rationalism which marks both systems. Defining precisely, formulating unambiguously, examining specifically all of the details or elements which occur in any complex whole certainly seem both rational and scientific. But simple wholes cannot be treated in any way; their existence is inexplicable. Not only that, but in ignoring action and the

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[74]Fry, "An Essay in Aesthetics," 27.

[75]Bell, Art, 83. Such "a fool or a man of genius" must Ruskin have been, at least it would appear that way from this statement of Roger Fry: "That old fraud Ruskin has chapters about all that [Venetian palaces]. He was too virtuous--that's a great pity. Everything had to be squared--even those finicky palaces must be morally good, which they're not--oh no, merely slices of coloured stone." Quoted in V. Woolf, Fry, 280.

possibilities of action whatever value is determined seems to exist in a realm unapproachable by man. This logical contradiction is suggested by Fry when he says that there are states of mind which are good or bad spiritually but not morally and that "there are spiritual functions which are not moral."[76]

And this contradiction is unmistakable in the work of Lytton Strachey. It underlies the form he gave to his biographies, since the truths of history are different from the truths of aesthetic function. And it underlies his attitudes as a literary critic, since, reacting against what he regarded as the moral biasses of Victorian critics, like Arnold and Stephen, Strachey insists upon the inherent morality of aesthetic values. According to the theory of Significant Form and according to the principle of organic unity, any aesthetic experience is interesting and of value, and is to be criticized only in terms of its own characteristics. But in the quasi-scientific and humanistic framework of Strachey's thought, he is unable to criticize without reference to other experience, aesthetic or otherwise. As Lytton Strachey, either in his role as an artist or as a critic, imposes the idea of the precedence of form, as he does, for instance, outspokenly in the "Preface" to Eminent Victorians, that idea becomes a moral principle by which he judges human behavior. This may be the other side of the medal from Leslie Stephen, but it is, nonetheless, the same medal.

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[76]Quoted in V. Woolf, Fry, 230.

CHAPTER II

RATIONALISM

In an article written in 1940, Leonard Bacon wrote that, while there is much to admire in Lytton Strachey's work, Strachey seems, nonetheless, curiously remote. In Bacon's view, Strachey was limited absolutely by his time and his intellectual/social environment.[1] Bacon's remarks are certainly true and not really remarkable until we consider that his article was written only a little over eight years after Strachey's death. It appears, perhaps, a little odd, considering Strachey's enormous popularity and pervasive influence, that only eight years after his death he should have seemed so obscure.[2] During those eight years the western world had suffered enormous changes in both its political and its moral geography; and more was to follow. And the rationalistic, humanistic framework of Strachey's thought was really not pertinent to those changes. Consequently his writing seems to

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[1]Leonard Bacon, "An Eminent Post-Victorian," Yale Review, XXX (December, 1940), 310-24.

[2]As a biographer, Strachey fostered a method which still remains in fashion. He was a direct and acknowledged influence on such writers as Sir Harold Nicolson, André Maurois, Philip Guedalla. As a critic, according to Sir Max Beerbohm, Strachey was alone responsible for a revival of interest in Racine and Pope. See Sir Max Beerbohm, Lytton Strachey, The Rede Lecture (Cambridge, 1949), p. 19.

have little relevance to that new world. The truth of the matter is that Strachey was very closely bound by the two aspects of Moore's "Ideal"--beautiful objects and personal relationships.

It is noteworthy that although he was a biographer--and biography is a kind of history--Strachey rarely gave any indication of understanding (or of caring much about) large impersonal forces in history or society. One has only to compare Elizabeth Longford's recent biography of Queen Victoria with Strachey's to recognize how vast was that part of the Victorian world which he ignored. In discussing Strachey as an historian, H. R. Trevor-Roper has written:

> Like some skilfull Jesuit confessor of the Baroque Age, he [Strachey] could explore, with seemingly infallible technique, every quaint recess and dark corner of the labyrinthine human mind. But this interest, this technique, so useful for the exposure of human behaviour, did not extend to the analysis of impersonal or social facts, which also are the material of history. To Strachey historical problems were always, and only, problems of individual behaviour and individual eccentricity.[3]

Certainly Strachey did not deliberately turn away from the great social and economic forces in history, rather, his intellectual heritage shut these off from his vision. Strachey, according to one writer, "is quite clear that existence is a muddle, and that the artist's job is to impose form, significant form, upon it."[4] The "muddle," for Strachey, was almost always a personal

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[3]H. R. Trevor-Roper, "Lytton Strachey as Historian," Historical Essays (London, 1957), p. 281. Noel Annan makes a similar observation about Strachey's sense of history. See Noel Annan, "Lytton Strachey and His Critics," From the Third Programme, ed. J. Morris (London, 1956), p. 146.

[4]"The Air of Bloomsbury," TLS (20 August, 1954), p. 523.

one.[5] Moreover, given the narrow limits of Moore's "Ideal" and the exclusiveness of Fry's and Bell's aesthetic theories, the "muddle" is not really straightened out by the form; it is changed into something else. In a letter to G. Lowes Dickinson, Roger Fry wrote:

> I'm continuing my aesthetic theories and I have been attacking poetry to understand painting. I want to find out what the function of content is, and am developing a theory . . . that it is merely directive of form and that all the essential aesthetic quality has to do with pure form. . . . I think that in proportion as poetry becomes more intense the content is entirely remade by the form and has no separate value at all.[6]

Even Strachey's passionate interest in art is fairly limited; for when he wrote of "art," he almost invariably meant literary art--and he was far more at his ease in discussions of prose than he was of verse.

For Strachey, individual liberty and good writing are the ends toward which men should strive. All that is required to achieve these ends are good taste and a rational temper; and these means are achieved by emulation and by education (education of the Socratic sort which Dickinson

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[5]Strachey would certainly have been horrified by the scope and the circumstances of the Second World War; he would doubtless have spoken out against its wanton brutality. One cannot escape the feeling, however, that there is considerable sentimental exaggeration in David Garnett's claim that

> "Lytton, if he had lived, would have spoken out for mankind on Auschwitz, Hiroshima, the nuclear bomb and torture in France with a clarity and force with which the political leaders of the world would have had to reckon. He could not have been neglected as [Bertrand] Russell and [E. M.] Forster are." David Garnett, The Familiar Faces (New York, 1963), p. 130.

[6]Quoted in V. Woolf, Fry, 183.

advocated).[7] These are the notions which underlie Strachey's critical questions regarding Dr. Arnold's methods of molding character at Rugby.

> Was he [Arnold] to improve the character of his pupils by gradually spreading round them the atmosphere of cultivation and intelligence? By bringing them into close and friendly contact with civilised men, and even, perhaps with civilised women? By introducing into the life of the school all that he could of the humane, enlightened, and progressive elements in the life of the community? On the whole, he thought not.[8]

Measured against Strachey's ideals, Dr. Arnold falls far short of the mark. Arnold's educative system was unrealistic and irrational; Christian prejudice stood in his way. Prejudice of any kind is bound to limit somebody's personal freedom. And there are many kinds of prejudice.

There is, for example, the grossly tasteless prejudice which accompanies political and social ambition. It was that kind of attitude which Strachey remarked in Mme de Lieven, who refused to marry her lover because she could not bear to be called "Madame Guizot."[9] And it was that kind of attitude which so appalled Strachey when he recognized it in the letters

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[7]Before he went up to Cambridge, Strachey studied at Liverpool with Sir Walter Raleigh. In a letter to John Maynard Keynes, Strachey compared Raleigh to Dickinson:

> "Last night I spent with the Raleighs . . . partly listening to his consummate brilliance. It is so great that I think it practically amounts to a disease. But in any case he belongs to the age before the flood--the pre-Dickinsonian era which is really fatal. He is not interested in the things which absorb us. . . . He might be one's father." Quoted in Harrod, 111.

[8]EV, 196-97.

[9]BE, 227.

of Lord Chesterfield to his son. Chesterfield was anxious for his son to achieve fame as a diplomat; but Stanhope was totally unsuited for such a career. Not only did Chesterfield ignore his son's limitations, he had his own severe limitations. He was hopelessly vulgar in his minute setting out of all the details of good manners; and he was stupidly bigoted in his attitude toward works of art which, Strachey implies, Chesterfield regarded as things to be collected for a certain prestige and not to be loved for their own sakes.[10] Lord Chesterfield's method of instructing his son was a failure for two reasons: he had no insight into the character of his pupil, and his instruction "is either absurdly platitudinous or uselessly vague."[11] He judged conduct by rules which were derived a priori and not necessarily applicable to his son's situation: "Chesterfield's scheme of conduct was odious, not because it was immoral, but because it was blindly conventional."[12] Stanhope, Strachey suggests, had no way of replying to his father; he could only escape.[13] It would appear that, as far as Strachey was concerned, Chesterfield's want of good taste stemmed from his unawareness of things as they are.

It is with Lady Mary Wortley Montague that Strachey compared Chesterfield because they both wrote educative letters

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[10] LE, 257-58.

[11] LE, 256.

[12] LE, 258.

[13] LE, 257.

to their children. Lady Mary, despite her "bedraggled Italian adventures,"[14] and the occasional coarseness of her language, is not at all vulgar, as Chesterfield is, because she did not avoid, through superstition or petty ambition or patent sentimentality, the material truths of life.

> . . . A certain outspoken clarity is perhaps the most conspicuous characteristic of all her letters. She is always absolutely frank and absolutely sensible; yet she manages never to be heavy. Her wit has that quality which is the best of all preservatives against dullness--it goes straight to the point. If she had been a little less sensible, she would have been an eccentric; if she had been a little less witty, she would have been a prig.[15]

Lady Mary's letters to her daughter, then, are filled with "admirable reflexions" and dazzling humor, although Strachey did find somewhat monotonous her unremittingly dispassionate view of the world. Strachey was particularly impressed by Lady Mary's advanced views on education for women. He implies that the strength and clarity of her ideas of the need for women to be admitted to the same kind of education as men derive from an understanding of her own experience and not from an insensible ideal of education. Because she was direct, and because she did deal realistically with her own experiences, Lady Mary is not "blindly conventional" (a brief resumé of her life or a perusal of Pope's lines on her would, of course, indicate that). Indeed, "Lady Mary Wortley Montague certainly bears out Professor Raleigh's dictum that in the eighteenth century man lived up to his definition and was a rational animal."[16]

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[14] BE, 42.

[15] LE, 252.

[16] LE, 251.

Not only in education, but in most matters of more or less public concern--woman suffrage, censorship, pacifism, nationalism--Strachey tended to make judgments based upon the extent to which man does live up to his definition as a rational animal. And the most rational of all animals, in Strachey's view, was David Hume, whose career summed up all of the qualities in philosophy, art, and public affairs which Strachey admired. Hume was a philosopher, an historian, and a practical diplomat. In all of these roles he was persistently honest, straightforward, and witty. Hume's virtues are classified by Strachey under one heading: detachment.[17] It is Hume's glory that he did not cheat in the handling of metaphysical problems, did not turn away from the difficulties they presented, did not resolve them by means of a priori principles which were near to hand. Indeed, Hume applied a mathematical precision to his philosophical speculation. Hume "only wished to tell the truth as he saw it, with clarity and elegance."[18] And truth "as he saw it" was defined by Hume's absolute commitment to reason.

> The book [Treatise of Human Nature] opened a new era in philosophy. The last vestiges of theological prepossessions--which were still faintly visible in Descartes and Locke--were discarded; and reason, in all her strength and all her purity, came into her own. It is in the sense that Hume gives one of being committed absolutely to reason--of following wherever reason leads, with a complete, and even reckless, confidence--that the great charm of his writing consists.[19]

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[17] BE, 43.

[18] BE, 46.

[19] BE, 44.

The implication is certainly that Hume was more than a philosopher, that he was really a liberal emancipator as well. For Hume's lucidity breaks through the "darkness of speculation,"[20] and shows his reader the world as it is. In casting away the veil of religious superstition, Hume gave to mankind a system which is perpetually useful in human affairs.

Hume did not dictate as, Strachey indicates, Lord Chesterfield did (or as so many of Strachey's "eminent Victorians" did). The dictator whether in education or in politics, is, to Strachey, always the product of unenlightened convention. Indeed, Hume's philosophical writing has "the tone of polished conversation."[21] He appeared neither to pontificate nor to condescend. Hume was thoroughly involved in the human nature which he described and analyzed. Not only does the style of his philosophy reveal his close attachment to and deep understanding of the real problems of life, but his public career does, too.

> Hume was not only brilliant as an abstract thinker and writer; he was no less competent in the practical affairs of life. In the absence of the Ambassador he was left in Paris for some months as chargé d'affaires, and his despatches still exist to show that he understood diplomacy as well as ratiocination.[22]

In short, the rational clarity of Hume's mind was effective in the world; it had a very real and practical application. In fact, it even ameliorated and transformed the physiological

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[20] BE, 44.

[21] BE, 46.

[22] BE, 48.

circumstances of his last illness; he faced his painful disease with scientific detachment.[23] Hume's practical reasonableness is not unlike that of Lady Mary, whose sordid final years escaped the taint of vulgarity in Strachey's view because of the "honesty with which she looked into the worthlessness of things and the bravery with which she accepted it."[24] Detachment is the inevitable corollary of a rational, scientific spirit. It thus becomes, in Strachey's scheme, a supreme virtue.

But Hume's detachment is not that of a writer like La Rochefoucauld ("the cleverest duke who ever lived")[25] which is hedged about by scorn, and became thereby a retreat from the actual circumstances of the world. Hume wished to enlighten the world in order to save it. Strachey discusses an imaginary conversation Hume invented in which he asks Charon for more time in order that he may effect the complete enlightenment of the world and see the end, once and for all, of all systems of superstition.[26] Realistically enough, Hume's request is not granted. Strachey's point in drawing attention to this little dialogue seems to have been to make his readers aware of the practical compassion which guided Hume. Strachey saw him as an educator profoundly aware of the real needs of those whom he taught. In Strachey's essay, Hume is seen to be in a true

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[23] BE, 49.

[24] BE, 42.

[25] LE, 101.

[26] BE, 49.

humanist tradition; his goals were not determined by self-inflation or by vulgar success. The balance and wit of Hume's style set the final assurance for Strachey of his right to be worshipped as a saint in the holy order of reason.

Clarity and vivacity of style are manifestations of a rational temperament; more often than not Strachey equated rationality with good taste. In fact, he tended to associate everything good with rationality. That there are singular limitations to such a view is pointed out by Lord Keynes:

> As cause and consequence of our general state of mind we completely misunderstood human nature, including our own. The rationality which we attributed to it led to a superficiality, not only of judgement, but also of feeling. It was not that intellectually we were pre-Freudian, but that we had lost something which our predecessors had without replacing it.[27]

Perhaps Strachey was feeling something of the same uneasiness which Keynes expresses when he complained of the calm rationality of Lady Mary Wortley Montague, who was "too witty to be dull . . . too dispassionate to be true."[28]

What Strachey regarded principally as irrational and/or tasteless were assumptions about human goals and about the conventions of human behavior. Such assumptions tend to be general and frequently do not apply in individual cases. Human beings are widely diverse, and individual behavior must be guided by individual need. It was in this spirit that Strachey entered the cause of woman suffrage; attended meetings, wrote letters

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[27]Keynes, 254.

[28]LE, 254.

to the press.[29] In his essays, he often called attention to the frustrations suffered by women of acute intellect because of arbitrary limitations which convention had imposed upon their professional and social freedom. As I have already noted, he evokes some poignancy in Lady Mary's complaints about the education of women in her time. In a much later essay, written about Mary Berry, Strachey is continuously sympathetic with that lady's desire to excel as a creative political force in her world. She possessed the intellect and the connections which would have led to fulfillment; but she was a woman. Consequently she suffered bitterly from a sense of her own insignificance. Given the qualities of her mind, it is rationally unthinkable as far as Strachey is concerned, that such a woman should have been cut off from active leadership because of her sex. Strachey is at one here with the view expressed by Virginia Woolf in A Room of One's Own: women, for ages, unable by themselves to accede to position and money, are cut off from accomplishment. Mrs. Woolf wittily describes the misfortune of an imaginary sister of Shakespeare who might have equalled her brother's poetic eminence had she been permitted to seek her own fortune. Strachey tells us that the case of Mary Berry was comparable:

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[29]Strachey's interest in woman suffrage must surely have been encouraged by his sisters, Philippa and Joan Pernel, who were both active in the movement. Philippa was the Secretary of the London and National Society for Women's Suffrage; Joan Pernel, who was principal of Newnham College, was less officially involved.

> Had she been a man, she would not have shone as a writer, but as a political thinker or an administrator; and a man she should have been; with her massive, practical intelligence, she was born too early to be a successful woman. She felt this bitterly. Conscious of high powers, she declaimed against the miserable estate of women, which prevented her from using them. She might have been a towering leader, in thought or action; as it was, she was insignificant.[30]

Just as convention undermined the potential of Mary Berry, so too does it often cast a shadow over works of art and leaves their true value hidden or distorted. A patent manifestation of this kind of convention Strachey finds in literary censorship. Literary censorship, when it is based on ideals of sexual morality in particular, is barbaric, irrational, inconsistent, and unrealistic.[31] Professor Gilbert Murray in a letter to the Nation and Athenaeum, complained that modern literature was obscene and dealt in "constant talk about the excretory and procreative systems,"[32] and he suggested that the great writers of the world found inspiration for their imaginations in a higher sphere. Strachey

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[30] BE, 208.

[31] In a letter to Virginia Woolf, Strachey imagined a literary Utopia in this way:

> "The literature of the future will, I clearly see, be amazing. At last it'll tell the truth, and be indecent, and amusing, and romantic, and even (after about 100 years) be written well. Quelle joie!--To live in those days, when books will pour forth from the press reeking with all the filth of Petronius, all the frenzy of Dostoievsky, all the romance of the Arabian Nights, all the exquisiteness of Voltaire." Virginia Woolf & Lytton Strachey, Letters, ed. L. Woolf & J. Strachey (London, 1956), p. 43.

[32] Gilbert Murray, "Obscenity in Literature," Nation and Athenaeum, XLIV (23 March, 1929), 876.

replied to Murray's letter, and to Murray's catalogue of Homer, Virgil, Milton, and Racine Strachey opposed Aristophanes, Catullus, Rabelais, and Swift.[33] Prudery of any kind was shocking to Strachey, who, to his friends, "issued an edict that certain Latin technical terms of sex were the correct words to use, that to avoid them was a grave error, and, even in mixed company, a weakness, and the use of other synonyms a vulgarity."[34] So Strachey takes issue with Mrs. Paget Toynbee who omitted a number of passages in her edition of Walpole's letters:

> The jeune fille is certainly not an adequate reason, and, even if she were, the jeune fille does not read Walpole. Whoever does read him must feel that these constant omissions are so many blots upon perfection, and distressing relics of an age of barbarous prudery.[35]

The assumptions which underlie the bowdlerizing of the texts of Walpole's letters, or those of Boswell,[36] or of Lady Mary Wortley Montague[37] are, in a way, summed up in the notion of the jeune fille. They deal not with an actual situation, but with an a priori hypothesis of the nature of readers' minds.

Strachey's antagonism and disgust with sexual prudery is clearly seen in his defense of Restoration Comedy. He admits at once that "the dramatists of the Restoration were,

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[33]Strachey, "Obscenity in Literature," Nation and Aethenaeum, XLIV (30 March, 1929), 908.

[34]Keynes, 243.

[35]BE, 188.

[36]BE, 147.

[37]BE, 40.

in the ordinary sense of the word, indecent."[38] But this is not meant as a reproach, since Strachey goes on to observe that because of their indecency they are strongly in the tradition of all the great comic writers of the Western World who "have taken as the theme for their variations of humour and fancy one of the very few universal elements in the nature of man."[39] Strachey sees the attacks on Restoration Comedy by Thackeray and Meredith and Macaulay as a matter of personal inclination; and he advises those who share their sensibilities to avoid reading Wycherley and Vanbrugh--in whose plays he sees the English character at its most typical. The worst offense of those writers who inveigh against Restoration Comedy is their inability to distinguish between a work of art and a moral standard which is separate from the work. Moral conventions, particularly those dealing with the language for sexual matters, necessarily shift with time and circumstance,[40] but genuine works of art are not subject to such change since they provide their own environments. For these reasons these plays ought not to be criticized according to general notions of

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[38] LE, 48.

[39] LE, 48.

[40] "The Revenges of time in the matter of what may or may not be mentioned are curious to contemplate. Three centuries ago Rabelais, wishing to put forward his unorthodox religious and philosophical opinions, only ventured to do so under a veil of licentious stories and loose jests. If his book were published today in England . . . its philosophy would hardly arouse the faintest interest. But it would certainly be suppressed as an obscene libel." Strachey, "Avons-Nous Changé Tout Cela?" Characters and Commentaries (New York, 1933), p. 153.

morality. This argument is very much like Moore's insistence that rules of conduct are not universally applicable. Further, it is in accord with Fry's strict separation of aesthetic from non-aesthetic functions.

> It is perfectly possible that the presentation of such spectacles as Comedy presents may prove, in certain circumstances, undermining to the virtue of the spectators. But it is obvious that here no general rule can be laid down; everything depends upon contingencies. The time, the place, the shifting significations of words, the myriad dispositions of the audience or the reader--all these things are variables which can never be reduced to a single formula. Queen Caroline's meat was Queen Victoria's poison; and perhaps Lord Macaulay's poison was Mr. Aldous Huxley's pap. Every case must be considered on its own merits; but, after all, in any case, such considerations have no bearing upon the intrinsic excellence of works of art. Fireworks do not cease to be exhilarating and beautiful because it is dangerous for inexperienced governesses to play with them.[41]

What Strachey is objecting to is not only a breach of aesthetic commitment on the part of critics and editors, but a vulgar and unscientific (hence irrational) avoidance of the actual ways of the world as well (hence his insistence upon the irony that these plays are so peculiarly national in character). What is needed, perhaps, is a revival of the spirit of Hume, who understood, but did not propagate, even vulgar prejudices because they existed in the world,[42] who was censorious of a great deal, but censored nothing.

If society is to progress and man is to achieve his rightful freedom, then, as far as Strachey could see, he must

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[41] LE, 57.

[42] BE, 48-49.

break away from orthodoxy and convention, which derive from superstition, and re-express the scientific spirit which was the great hallmark of the eighteenth century. War, for instance, may well be inevitable as long as the claims of militarism and of patriotism go unquestioned. It is necessary, says Strachey, "to remember that nothing sweetens love--even love of one's country--so much as a little common sense--and, one might add, even a little cynicism."[43] In a review of a book, Deductions from the World War, Strachey is appalled by what seems to him rampant militarism. The book, Strachey tells us, does not deal with the opposition of war and peace; it does not deal with the waste and brutality of war. It blandly assumes the perpetual existence of war and treats of the most efficient means for conducting warfare. Strachey is horrified by the absence of a hyper-emotional tone. He finds the real menace of such a book in its moderate acceptance: "Militarism is an axiom taken for granted by every word in [this] book--and taken for granted so completely that it is hardly even discussed; it is simply, everywhere, and always implied. And this, surely, is a terrible phenomenon."[44] This attitude Strachey compares with religious faith and this leads him, finally, to a comparison between Baron von Freytag-Loringhoven, the author of the book, and Bossuet. The Baron, Strachey says,

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[43]Strachey, "The Claims of Patriotism," Characters and Commentaries, 231.

[44]Strachey, "Militarism and Theology," Characters and Commentaries, 224.

assumes that "war has its basis in human nature . . . and feels intimately convinced of the necessity of war through all eternity."[45] Had he lived at the time of the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, he might just as easily have been convinced that religion and religious wars were part of the inevitable constitution of human affairs, as Bossuet did. And he might have justified brutality on religious grounds, as Bossuet did. But, Strachey goes on to observe, within a generation after Bossuet's apologetics the world changed considerably in its intellectual outlook and the religious motive became one of secondary importance in the affairs of men: "The moderate man whose views were expressed by Bossuet, became transformed into the moderate man whose views were expressed by Montesquieu and Hume."[46] What had happened to effect this extraordinary transformation was the eighteenth century; and one of the chief characteristics of that age was "its scepticism--its elevation of the secular as opposed to the religious elements in society, and its utter lack of sympathy with all forms of mystical devotion."[47]

But the eighteenth century, whatever its many accomplishments, did not mark the end of war on this planet. And the logic of Strachey's argument is vitiated by that fact, even though the rhetorical juxtaposition of a German general and a French bishop is very effective indeed. Perhaps here we have another insight

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[45]"Militarism and Theology," 225-26.

[46]"Militarism and Theology," 227.

[47]LFL, 80.

into the reasons for the dated quality of Strachey's writing. He admires, it is true, the scepticism of the eighteenth century; and scepticism is one of the principal qualities his admirers find in his own work. Yet, Clive Bell's description of this quality in Strachey is more applicable to the ideal which Strachey sees in Hume:

> In art or life or politics it is always silly to be a reactionary crying for last month's moon; and it is, if possible, sillier to cut loose from the tradition and play at being Adam and Eve. Mr. Strachey is a good deal less silly than most of us; his attitude to life, his art therefore, is based on a critical appreciation of the past, an interest in the present, and a sense of human possibilities--the amalgam bound together and tempered by a pervasive scepticism.[48]

Strachey's scepticism is, in fact, not very "pervasive." It consists for the most part in rhetorical irony, which serves as a pleasurable mask for a militant optimism.[49] If, as Strachey asserts in Landmarks in French Literature (and in other places), the philosophes of the eighteenth century struck a death blow to religious superstition by establishing "once and for all as the common property of the human race that scientific spirit which has had such an immense effect on modern civilisation,"[50] then

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[48]Clive Bell, "Lytton Strachey," The New Statesman, XXI (4 August, 1923), 497.

[49]Strachey accused J. B. Bury of shallow optimism because, in The History of Freedom of Thought, he suggested that total toleration of freedom of thought was achieved in the nineteenth century. Religious persecution may have come to an end, Strachey argued, but persecution in other areas was still possible, indeed, still went on. Strachey used the same elements--only in reverse order--in his attack of the views of Freytag-Loringhoven. "Avons-Nous Changé Tout Cela?" 150-51.

[50]LFL, 96.

it might seem that the same blow can be struck to the moral superstitions of the nineteenth century. As Hume and Voltaire cleared away the remnants of Medievalism, Strachey and Bloomsbury would clear away the debris of Victorianism. The figures and philosophies which Strachey attacks, he attacks with a kind of condescension, suggesting that he is in possession of a truth which they did not have or which they misunderstood. But truly he is very like the Victorians. He believes just as strongly as they in moral and social progress via the application of scientific rationalism. Like the Baron's militarism, Strachey's scientific spirit is religious in character in that he never questions it and he assumes that it is universally applicable to all men at all times. Further, the narrowness of Strachey's interests (again, perhaps, summed up by Moore's "Ideal" and the principle of organic unity) gives an added effectiveness to his apparent detachment. In his demonstrations of scorn for human folly he almost invariably strikes at an individual surface. Strachey tends to deal with poses and conventions which affect individual relationships and individual freedom of choice, but he does not look through these to their most basic assumptions.

This short-sightedness is a fundamental difficulty in Eminent Victorians. One cannot avoid feeling that Strachey was there trying to assume the mantle of Hume and the other eighteenth-century rational philosophers and assist in liberating his contemporaries from false ideals. Despite the

enormous wit and charm of Strachey's book, he never really did get to those ideals. He concerned himself more with superficial attitudes which had, even by the time the book was published, lost currency to a considerable degree. The great popularity of Eminent Victorians might suggest something of that.[51] In a way Shaw and Butler were more worthy antagonists to Victorianism because they dealt directly with problems of social reform and, therefore, fought on their opponents' own ground. But Strachey, in his pious acceptance of rationalism, judges his four Victorians against a set of standards which he assumes to be universal. The grace and wit of his style enlist the reader in a sharing of this assumption, and place the Victorians outside the charmed circle. This position is responsible for a certain shallowness in his attack. He rarely saw or argued the essential problems with which Victorians had to struggle. In "General Gordon," for instance, Strachey is at pains to criticize particular colonial officials--most notably Sir Evelyn Baring--but he never questions colonialism itself. He points out some contradictions in the religious commitments

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[51] Eminent Victorians was first published in 1918, while the war was still going on. It was mentioned favorably in a speech by Lord Asquith, and, as a result of that publicity, became immensely popular. Strachey became a very rich man on the sale of Eminent Victorians alone. Bloomsbury, however, was snobbishly suspicious of popularity. Sir Harold Nicolson related the following anecdote to me.

At a dinner party, Mrs. Woolf turned to Strachey and, after making some observation about the success of Eminent Victorians, asked, "How does it feel to be a best-seller, Lytton?" (According to Sir Harold, the words seemed italicized as she spoke them.) Strachey replied in his falsetto voice, "Oh, Virginia, don't be disagreeable."

of Gordon and Dr. Arnold, but he never deals with the significance of the commitments themselves.

Strachey was quick to see the ironic contradiction between thought and action as in Miss Nightingale's humane aims and unenlightened denial of the theory of germs.

> Years after the discoveries of Pasteur and Lister, she laughed at what she called the 'germ fetish.' There was no such thing as 'infection'; she had never seen it, therefore it did not exist. But she had seen the good effects of fresh air; therefore there could be no doubt about them; and therefore it was essential that the bedrooms of patients should be well-ventilated. Such was her doctrine; and in those days of hermetically sealed windows it was a very valuable one. But it was a purely empirical doctrine, and thus it led to some unfortunate results. When, for instance, her influence in India was at its height, she issued orders that all hospital windows should be invariably kept open. The authorities, who knew what an open window in the hot weather meant, protested, but in vain; Miss Nightingale was incredulous.[52]

The irony here is sharp; and there is clearly a judgment proclaimed upon Miss Nightingale. But both the irony and the judgment are rhetorical rather than logical. We see Miss Nightingale in an absurd position because she clings to a particular notion; she is a slave to a system of personal empiricism. Is empiricism criticized here? It was, after all, an empirical system, too, which led Pasteur and Lister to their discoveries. Of course, what is held up to scorn is stubbornness, an idiosyncratic quality of Florence Nightingale's personality. And this quality opposes the science she was supposed to serve. It is with scorn of just such qualities that Strachey attacked what he regarded as Victorian ideals. But he did not attack ideals at all, only

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[52] EV, 182-83.

manners and personal styles. For ideals are widespread and highly inclusive. On the other hand, ambition (Cardinal Manning), stubbornness (Florence Nightingale), pomposity (Dr. Arnold), self-aggrandizement (General Gordon)--these are personal and particular.

The rationalist philosophers of the eighteenth century were attacking a system which went deep into all areas of human activity. Hume's Treatise deals profoundly with the vast general areas of existence--moral, social, aesthetic, psychological.[53] Strachey does not go beyond personal behavior and style; poses and conventions. Poses and conventions, as Strachey himself pointed out, change fairly rapidly in time. But these are only manifestations of more profound social/moral attitudes which are not so subject to fashion.

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[53]According to Strachey, it was the great flaw of Hume's history of England that he could be so general and so inclusive. BE, 46.

CHAPTER III

HUMANISM

When, in a somewhat startlingly dramatic statement, E. M. Forster wrote that he hates the idea of causes and that he would sooner betray his country than betray a friend, he was giving expression to one essential aim of a humanist tradition: the preservation of individual rights in opposition to the demands of an institution.[1] Forster has lived to see the prestige of that tradition (especially as he understood it from G. Lowes Dickinson) suffer unmistakable set-backs. And this might possibly account in part for his withdrawal from the writing of fiction, as well as for the tone of bewilderment and the more or less mystical affirmation of personal relationships which pervade his work.[2] Certainly the unresolved opposition of individual and institution is a dominant theme of A Passage to India as well as of Billy Budd, a work Forster has much praised and which he adapted as libretto for Benjamin

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[1] E. M. Forster, "What I Believe," Two Cheers for Democracy, 68.

[2] Forster's novels often do express bewilderment. His protagonists are frequently confronted with undeniable shifts in behavior and values and consequently come to rely heavily on personal relationships which traditionally transcend time and circumstance. But even these turn out to be treacherous.

Britten's opera. Whatever the institution--the state, the church, the academy--Forster implies that it represents authoritarian control of human behavior. Its power is affirmed by its single-minded pursuit of an apparently stable ideal. The notion of the ideal must, of course, come first; the institution acts as a means of realizing it. The goal, then, cannot palpably exist while the institution holds sway, except through the practice of faith. That is, salvation or education is the result of participation in the institution and cannot be achieved totally until participation is complete. Consequently the existence of the goal must be taken on faith. It might seem therefore--as it does seem to Forster--that faith is dangerous and unreliable since it refers to standards of judgment which are not applicable to immediate situations. All of this is well in accord with G. E. Moore's distrust of metaphysical philosophies and with Dickinson's rejection of Hegelian idealism. The rationalistic and humanistic tradition to which Forster--and Bloomsbury--belong turns away from faith and attempts to base its judgments upon the immediate needs and capabilities of individual men.

> Faith, to my [Forster's] mind, is a stiffening process, a sort of mental starch, which ought to be applied as sparingly as possible. I dislike the stuff. I do not believe in it, for its own sake, at all. Herein I probably differ from most people, who believe in Belief, and are only sorry they cannot swallow even more than they do. My lawgivers are Erasmus and Montaigne, not Moses and St. Paul. My temple stands not upon Mt. Moriah but in that Elysian Field where even the immoral are admitted.[3]

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[3]Forster, "What I Believe," 67.

In her first novel, The Voyage Out (first published in 1915), Virginia Woolf is even more violently and dogmatically opposed to faith than Forster. One of the protagonists of that novel, Helen Ambrose, seems to represent all the qualities of education, freedom, and cultivation to which Mrs. Woolf aspired. Helen is a thoroughly independent and enlightened "new" woman. At one point in the book, she states her fear that her children, while she is absent from them, might be taken to church by their governess. To the consoling suggestion that "a little religion hurts nobody," Helen replies, "I would rather my children told lies."[4]

These views of Forster and of Mrs. Woolf are fairly typical of Bloomsbury which accepts, with virtually no reservations, Moore's notion that, other things being equal, the value of a state of mind is increased in the contemplation and appreciation of things which actually exist in nature. Lytton Strachey shared in this Bloomsbury temper. And this practical and liberal humanism, as it is expressed in Strachey's works, takes a very distinct form; it is anti-religious and it is sentimentally comic. For Strachey, religion is the direct antithesis of science and reason: "He [Strachey] did not believe in the Christian religion, and he was one of the few English writers about the past--Gibbon was another--who have

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[4]Virginia Woolf, The Voyage Out (London, 1957), p. 23.

allowed scepticism to colour their view of believers."[5] Most of the absurdities he delineates in his eminent Victorians are connected with religious profession of one sort or another. In terms of literary expression, however, comedy represents, to Strachey's view, a state of mind derived from an engagement with the actual world; and his most persistent enthusiasms are for comic writers. He has, for instance, great admiration for Rabelais because he turned away from medieval religious views and found physical life not a sorrowful illusion, but rather "abounding in glorious energy, abounding in splendid hope, and, by its very nature, good."[6] Rabelais' coarseness and the great power of his comic invention derive from his "jovial acceptance of the physical facts of life."[7] And this "jovial acceptance" suggests that his standards are those of actual life, and not of a religious ideal.

Thus, in attacking the monasteries and revelling in loose jokes, Rabelais was a humanist. But he was, according to Strachey, rather an anachronism in that respect. In Strachey's historical canon the humanistic spirit did not achieve its fruition until the eighteenth century. It was then that humanism realized its greatest triumph; and the embodiment of that

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[5]MacCarthy, "Strachey," 46. Strachey once remarked to Virginia Woolf that Gibbon "was queer about the early Christians--didn't see anything in them at all." Virginia Woolf, A Writer's Diary, ed. L. Woolf (New York, 1954), p. 33.

[6]LFL, 19.

[7]LFL, 19.

triumph was the emergence of Voltaire as an influential and a motivating figure in the progress of Western Europe.

> Between the collapse of the Roman Empire and the Industrial Revolution three men were the intellectual masters of Europe--Bernard of Clairvaux, Erasmus, and Voltaire. In Bernard the piety and the superstition of the Middle Ages attained their supreme embodiment; in Erasmus the learning and the humanity of the Renaissance. But Erasmus was a tragic figure. The great revolution in the human mind, of which he had been the presiding genius, ended in failure; he lived to see the tide of barbarism rising once more over the world; and it was left to Voltaire to carry off the final victory.[8]

Aldous Huxley (somewhat exuberantly) once described Strachey as "the eighteenth century grown up; he is Voltaire at two hundred and thirty."[9] And Clive Bell has called him "the descendant of Voltaire."[10] It is clear that Strachey's humanism owes something to Voltaire. It is equally true that Strachey is inordinately admiring of him, for in Voltaire's non-dramatic writing he sees the perfect balance of serious purpose and ironic humor. The calm and honest detachment of Hume may be the extreme expression of the humanist mind, but it is difficult for most people to attain.[11] Voltaire, on the

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[8] BE, 50.

[9] Aldous Huxley, "The Author of Eminent Victorians," On the Margin (New York, 1923), p. 137.

[10] Bell, Old Friends, 33.

[11] Clive Bell recorded the following anecdote which suggests something of Strachey's worldliness.

> "I recall a meeting of the Sunday Essay Society at which Bray--one, and the most sympathetic, of the Christian intellectuals and a judge's son to boot--anxious to be fair and reasonable in a teleological argument, put it to Lytton--'I expect, Strachey, you would maintain that self-realisation was the end of existence.' To which Strachey replied: 'My dear Bray, that would certainly be the end.'" Bell, Old Friends, 29-30.

other hand, was bad-tempered and capricious. His mordant sense of humor and the scurrility of his wit are immediately comprehensible. In short, the humanism of Voltaire is less remote than that of Hume. Moreover, it is to the Voltairean mixture of seriousness and humor that Strachey is drawn in developing his own style.

Strachey is particularly fond of the Diatribe du Docteur Akakia which is marked by a "fiendish gaiety."[12] His admiration is stirred by Voltaire's use of ridicule and laughter in order seriously to criticize the commingling of medieval metaphysical superstition with scientific discovery. This was a method which Strachey was to employ himself, most notably in his essay on Dr. Arnold. And still more, according to Strachey, not only did Voltaire criticize, he implied as well a rational standard by which to judge all systems.

> Indeed, all through Voltaire's pamphlet, there is an implied appeal to true scientific principles, an underlying assertion of the paramount importance of the experimental method, a consistent attack upon a priori reasoning, loose statement, and vague conjecture.[13]

Even beyond supplying a positive standard in his criticism, Voltaire cast his wit in an exquisite style which attracted a large audience so that he was able to propagate his humanistic notions effectively.[14]

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[12] BE, 101.

[13] BE, 101.

[14] LFL, 105.

Art, in Voltaire's case, served the great cause of humanism. Like the other philosophes, Voltaire was not, Strachey tells us, a profound philosopher. But he was an unparalleled popularizer.[15] He awakened a vast public to the serious problems of his day and he succeeded in discrediting "the powers of darkness in France."[16] He defeated the "principles of bigotry and obscurantism"[17] which had guided the government of Louis XIV and which were manifestly expressed in the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. Strachey uses two principal images in his essays on Voltaire: the soldier engaging in mortal combat, and a malicious monkey.[18] The fight for intellectual freedom, it would appear, is best waged with a sense of humor.

> The movement of English thought in the eighteenth century found its perfect expression in the profound, sceptical, and yet essentially conservative, genius of Hume. How different was the attitude of Voltaire! With what a reckless audacity, what a fierce uncompromising passion he charged and fought and charged again! He had no time for the nice discriminations of an elaborate philosophy, and no desire for the careful balance of the judicial mind; his creed was simple and explicit, and it also possessed the supreme merit of brevity: 'Écrasez l'infâme!' was enough for him.[19]

In common with Hume, however, Voltaire represents for Strachey still another virtue, perhaps the most needed one of

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[15]"Charles Du Bos . . . volontiers eût dit de Voltaire, comme l'Impératrice Eugénie: 'Je ne lui pardonne pas de m'avoir fait comprendre des choses que je ne comprendrai jamais' . . . ." André Maurois, Mémoires (New York, 1942), pp. 280-81.

[16]BE, 70.

[17]BE, 50.

[18]Strachey used the image of the monkey again in his lecture on Pope.

[19]BE, 76-77.

all in order to make humanism a significant force: Voltaire was practical. Even when he was meanly so, as he was in his dealings with the Président de Brosses, Strachey is delighted.[20] He admires the Frenchman's social ease and grace as these are expressed in his letters. The plays had, at least, the merit of capturing an audience. The life of Charles XII indicates that Voltaire was capable of responsible historical research.[21] More significantly, Strachey admires Voltaire's understanding of political affairs. He knew how to deal with Frederick the Great (both from afar and in the king's own court), and he never became the mercenary sycophant that Frederick had imagined he would. Voltaire applied reasonableness to real and immediate situations, and his attacks on the injustices of the Calas case are impressive and moving to Strachey. Voltaire was capable of employing any means to achieve his ends--and his ends were determined by his "overwhelming passion for reason and liberty."[22]

A practical and a free spirit--one not bound by hierarchic conventions of church or state--is best expressed in literary terms through humor or apparent frivolity. Comedy, moreover, is attractive to a large audience and Strachey finds that mode the most practical way of broadcasting truth.[23] For

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[20] BE, 112-21.

[21] LFL, 85.

[22] BE, 55.

[23] LFL, 82.

these reasons all of Voltaire's remarkable practical capabilities are summed up in Candide, which is, in Strachey's estimation, the very peak of Voltaire's achievement. The book is witty and serious: "Voltaire's meaning is deep in proportion to the lightness of his writing . . . it is when he is most in earnest that he grins most."[24] To be sure, the ribald character of much of the humor in Candide is singularly appealing to Strachey. The style of the novel, at any rate, is sprightly, direct, and clear; and in its philosophy, Candide is the embodiment of all that is best and valuable in the humanist tradition.

> But perhaps the most wonderful thing about Candide is that it contains, after all, something more than mere pessimism--it contains a positive doctrine as well. Voltaire's common sense withers the Ideal; but it remains common sense. 'Il faut cultiver notre jardin' is his final word--one of the very few pieces of practical wisdom ever uttered by a philosopher.[25]

This is the point, after all. Ideals, philosophies, systems; these are of value only when they apply actively to life. Literary works range in value according to the relevance to actual life of the ideals, philosophies, systems which they expound.[26] In judging works in this way, Strachey is a victim

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[24] LFL, 109.

[25] LFL, 109.

[26] "What about the books which influence us negatively, which give us the food we don't want, or maybe, are unfit for, and so help us realise what we do want? I have amused myself by putting down four books which have influenced me negatively. They are books by great writers, and I have appreciated them. But they are not my sort of book. They are: The Confessions of St. Augustine, Macchiavelli's Prince, Swift's Gulliver, and Carlyle on Heroes and Hero Worship. All these books have influenced me negatively, and have impelled me away from them

of what G. E. Moore calls the "naturalistic fallacy" and he contradicts the pure formalism of Fry and Bell. Indeed, he is in somewhat the same predicament as Leslie Stephen, for, although they might differ as to the values and even the constitution of "actual life," they both regard a work of art as essentially didactic, and both demand of artists a lesson that is applicable in the phenomenal world. It is not surprising that, among others, writers like Desmond MacCarthy and Clive Bell describe Strachey as a moralist.

Literature, in the Bloomsbury view, is an appendage to life, not a denial of it. It takes its beginnings in known experience and develops that experience meaningfully and tastefully. For Strachey this view of literary works is especially true, and is often severely limiting to the scope and range of his critical appreciation.[27] Sometimes implicitly, sometimes

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toward my natural food. I know that St. Augustine's Confessions is a 'good' book, and I want to be good. But not in St. Augustine's way. I don't want the goodness which entails an asceticism close to cruelty. I prefer the goodness of William Blake. And Macchiavelli--he is clever--and unlike some of my compatriots I want to be clever. But not with Macchiavelli's cold, inhuman cleverness. I prefer the cleverness of Voltaire. And indignation--Swift's indignation in Gulliver is too savage for me; I prefer Butler's in Erewhon. And strength--yes, I want to be strong, but not with the strength of Carlyle's dictator heroes, who foreshadow Hitler. I prefer the strength of Antigone." Forster, "A Book that Influenced Me," Two Cheers for Democracy, 222-23.

[27]Strachey was limited, too, in his appreciation of the plastic arts, despite his close association with Roger Fry and Clive Bell. He seems to have considered abstract art as silly, and could not understand the enthusiasm of others for it.

> "Well do I [Clive Bell] remember Lytton drawing me aside and saying: 'Cannot you or Vanessa persuade Duncan to make beautiful pictures instead of these coagulations of distressing oddments?' Duncan Grant at that time was much under the influence of the Post-Impressionists and had been touched by Cubism even." Bell, Old Friends, 134.

explicitly, Strachey demanded of literature clear reference to general human experience. Yeats's poetry he found to be "an object lesson of the bad results which may follow when reason is left out of account in the making of poetry."[28] And in a generally complimentary discussion of the art of Thomas Lovell Beddoes, Strachey continually harps on that poet's "most characteristic faults: . . . the motives and actions of the characters themselves are for the most part curiously remote from the realities of life."[29] He is, to be sure, not wrong about Beddoes; but, considering the plays of such a writer as Beddoes, the observation is irrelevant.[30]

Strachey tended, as Lord David Cecil has pointed out, to be "unable to enter into the wild or mystical aspects of human nature."[31] Indeed, any writing which smacks of mysticism or of the absurd evokes a puzzled response from Strachey. Pascal, for instance, is a distressing writer. Strachey cannot but admire Pascal the scientist or Pascal the stylist, who

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[28]Strachey, "Mr. Yeats's Poetry," Spectator, 101 (17 October, 1908), p. 588.

[29]LE, 177.

[30]Strachey criticized W. W. Greg for the same kind of irrelevancy in the latter's Pastoral Poetry and Pastoral Drama. The characters of pastoral dramas, Strachey wrote,

> "are not intended to be representations of reality, so that it is beside the mark to judge them by the standards of the actual world. They belong to a universe which is very different from ours--a universe where there are very few proprieties and no reputations, where the only conventions are the conventions of art. . . ." SE, 80.

[31]Lord David Cecil, "Lytton Strachey," DNB 1931-1940 (London, 1949), p. 835.

"in the Lettres Provinciales . . . created French prose."[32] The author of the Lettres Provinciales created a prose which is "based upon reason . . . is primarily intellectual." But the Pascal of the Pensées is a different matter, one which provokes bewilderment in Strachey as well as (to judge from the tone of the following citation) a sense of betrayal.

> Modern as the style of Pascal's writing is, his thought is deeply impregnated with the spirit of the Middle Ages. He belonged, almost equally, to the future and to the past. He was a distinguished man of science, a brilliant mathematician; yet he shrank from a consideration of the theory of Copernicus: it was more important, he declared, to think of the immortal soul. In the last years of his short life he sank into a torpor of superstition--ascetic, self-mortified, and rapt in a strange exultation, like a medieval monk. Thus there is a strange antithesis in his character--an unresolved discord which shows itself again and again in his Pensées. 'Condition de l'homme,' he notes, 'inconstance, ennui, inquiétude.' It is the description of his own state. A profound inquietude did devour him. He turned desperately from the pride of his intellect to the consolations of his religion. But even there--? Beneath him, as he sat or as he walked, a great gulf seemed to open darkly, into an impenetrable abyss. He looked upward into heaven, and the familiar horror faced him still. 'Le silence éternel de ces espaces infinis m'éffraie'[33]

Voltaire's greatness, for Strachey, is partly due to his abhorrence of religion.[34] While Pascal, on the other hand, in embracing religion, was irrational and thus wanting in the greatness which humanism engenders.

Strachey's criticism of the poetry of Blake provides an even stronger case in point. Mystical poetry can realize no

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[32] LFL, 32.

[33] LFL, 34-35.

[34] LFL, 106.

immediate response from its readers unless they are specifically indoctrinated in the mysteries of a metaphysical universe. Science and reason Strachey regards as the property of all mankind and, consequently, satisfactory referents for judgments.[35] Religion and metaphysical ideals are not rightfully "property" at all, since their bases seem to have no phenomenal existence. For this reason there is something shocking about Blake's verse since it makes demands on the reader which his own actual experience cannot totally comprehend. Just as Blake's syntax cannot be judged or emended by reference to conventional usage, neither can his thought be examined by reference to reason, for reason does not apply to the mystic. So while Strachey hesitatingly admits that Blake "deserves the highest honour and the most enduring fame" because of his artistry, he cannot grant him unqualified praise. The poet's universe is far away from that of the critic, for Blake did not "take heed of the existing forms of things."[36] And while the poetry has undoubted force and power, "Blake's words will always be strangers on this earth."[37] The attitude implied in Blake's words is necessarily a dangerous one from the point of view of the humanist.[38]

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[35]Sir Harold Nicolson has suggested that Strachey's work is based upon

> "a fervent belief . . . in intellectual honesty; an almost revivalist dislike of the second-hand, the complacent, or the conventional; a derisive contempt for emotional opinions; a calm conviction that thought and reason are in fact the most important elements in human nature; a respect, ultimately, for man's unconquerable mind." Sir Harold Nicolson, The Development of English Biography (New York, 1928), p. 150.

[36]LE, 148.

[37]LE, 150.

[38]See supra pp. 24-25. Strachey's views here are parallel to those of G. Lowes Dickinson.

> Besides its unreasonableness, there is an even more serious objection to Blake's mysticism--and indeed to all mysticism: its lack of humanity. The mystic's creed--even when arrayed in the wondrous and ecstatic beauty of Blake's verse--comes upon the ordinary man, in the rigidity of its uncompromising elevation, with a shock which is terrible, and almost cruel. The sacrifice which it demands is too vast, in spite of the divinity of what it has to offer. What shall it profit a man, one is tempted to exclaim, if he gain his own soul, and lose the whole world? The mystic ideal is the highest of all; but it has no breadth. The following lines express, with a simplicity and an intensity of inspiration which he never surpassed, Blake's conception of that Ideal:
>
> And throughout all Eternity
> I forgive you, you forgive me.
> As our dear Redeemer said:
> 'This the Wine, & this the Bread.'
>
> It is easy to imagine the sort of comments to which Voltaire, for instance, with his 'wracking-wheel' of sarcasm and common-sense, would have subjected such lines as these. His criticism would have been irrelevant, because it would never have reached the heart of the matter at issue; it would have been based upon no true understanding of Blake's words. But that they do admit of a real, an unanswerable criticism, it is difficult to doubt. Charles Lamb, perhaps, might have made it; incidentally, indeed, he has. 'Sun, and sky, and breeze, and solitary walks, and summer holidays, and the greenness of fields, and the delicious juices of meats and fishes, and society, and the cheerful glass, and candle-light, and fireside conversations, and innocent vanities, and jests, and <u>irony itself</u>'--do these things form no part of your Eternity?[39]

Strachey's discomfort in the face of the mysticism of Pascal and of Blake is but one manifestation of his distrust of almost any expression of a religious temper. For the most part--although not always--he finds religious attitudes essentially hypocritical and dishonest; and he subjects them to his own "wracking wheel of sarcasm and common-sense." Thus Strachey juxtaposes Dr. Arnold's early doubts about the doctrine of the

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[39] <u>LE</u>, 147-48.

Trinity with his fondness for sleeping late.[40] And he further suggests that all of the inequities in Arnold's idea of proper education stem from his religious affiliations. In Strachey's view, human beings have generally suffered as a result of someone's religious enthusiasm. In Elizabeth and Essex, for instance, Strachey abstains from presenting any of the figures in the English court as totally villainous, for the apparent reason that they are all outspokenly motivated by worldly drives and they are none of them moved by religious ideals. The queen may be short-tempered and stingy, but she is not superstitious; Essex may be romantic and foolhardy, but he respects personal relationships; the Cecils may be crafty and secretive, but they are guided always by political expediency; Sir Francis Bacon may be sinister in his plotting and his various defections, but he is principally driven by the sharpness of his practical intellect and by greed. In Elizabeth and Essex the seat of real villainy and of destructiveness is clearly in Spain. Strachey unremittingly holds up to ridicule the piety of Philip II. Again and again he takes care to instance the loss and the suffering which are occasioned by religious fervor. He seems not to question the sincerity of King Philip's faith; he seems rather to suggest that such faith in itself is viciously hypocritical, since it destroys human beings for the greater glory of an ideal. Here, for illustration, is Strachey's treatment of the death of the king.

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[40] EV, 192.

> He was dying as he had lived--in absolute piety. His conscience was clear: he had always done his duty; he had been infinitely industrious; he had existed solely for virtue and the glory of God. One thought alone troubled him: had he been remiss in the burning of heretics? He had burnt many, no doubt; but he might have burnt more. Was it because of this, perhaps, that he had not been quite as successful as he might have wished? It was certainly mysterious . . . [he] sank into a tortured stupor. When he awoke it was night, and there was singing at the altar below him; a sacred candle was lighted and put into his hand, the flame, as he clutched it closer and closer, casting lurid shadows upon his face; and so, in ecstasy and in torment, in absurdity and in greatness, happy, miserable, horrible and holy, King Philip went off, to meet the Trinity.[41]

The dangers inherent in the religious fervor of Philip II are vast and readily comprehensible. To attack a commitment to the Inquisition is not a very difficult thing to do. But Strachey's finest effects are achieved in a less glaringly spectacular area. Strachey's humanism, except in a perfunctory and conventional way, does not embrace Humanity, rather human beings. He is far more interested in the personal than the general; while he admires the scope of Dante's universe, he prefers Wordsworth's sense of humanity.[42] He is certainly better equipped as a biographer than he is as a general historian. In this, again, he accords with Moore as well as with the narrowing focus of Significant Form. Consequently the religious conflicts induced by the Oxford Movement seem to suggest a more interesting field to Strachey--at least one about which he writes with more distinction--since these conflicts are most often manifested in personal, internal struggles.

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[41] EE, 171-72.

[42] LE, 64.

The four essays of Eminent Victorians constitute a series of dramatic conflicts between individuals and institutions, most often religious or political institutions. Within that framework moral judgments are made--or implied--based upon the relative ease with which the institution penetrates the consciousness of the individual.

The tenor of Strachey's attitude toward these struggles is set up at once in the life of Cardinal Manning. The prefatory remarks to that essay pose Manning's personality in juxtaposition to the possibly "hostile" nineteenth century. There is considerable irony in Strachey's rhetorical wonder and solicitude since he will indicate strongly that Manning, in whom "the Middle Ages lived again,"[43] was very much in accord with the political thought and tendencies of the Victorian Age. This accord is seen in the fact that Manning was successful in achieving the position and the power that he sought. Right from the beginning, Manning's religious pilgrimage is closely related to the pursuit of political advantage.[44] As Manning's power in the Catholic Church increases, the stature of his personality diminishes. That is to say, Strachey treats him

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[43] EV, 11.

[44] "If there is nothing monstrous in an Act of Parliament laying down what all men shall do, why should there be anything monstrous in a Papal Encyclical laying down what all men shall believe? . . . Is there indeed no radical and essential distinction between supremacy and infallibility? between the right of a Borough Council to regulate the traffic and the right of the Vicar of Christ to decide upon the qualifications for Everlasting Bliss? There is one distinction, at any rate, which is palpable: the decisions of a supreme authority can be altered; those of an infallible authority cannot." EV, 97.

more as the impersonal embodiment of an institution than as an individual who values human relationships.

> In after years, the memory of his [Manning's] wife seemed to be blotted from his mind; he never spoke of her; every letter, every record, of his married life he destroyed; and when word was sent to him that her grave was falling into ruin: 'It is best so,' the Cardinal answered; 'let it be. Time effaces all things.' But, when the grave was yet fresh, the young Rector would sit beside it, day after day, writing his sermons.[45]

This transformation from individual to institution is seen in broadly comic terms in the undocumented words which Strachey puts into the mouth of Pope Pius IX: "Before I was Pope . . . I <u>believed</u> in Papal Infallibility, now I <u>feel</u> it."[46] And Strachey's attitude toward such a transformation can be seen, as well, in the ironic judgment he makes on Sir Evelyn Baring: "His ambition can be stated in a single phrase; it was, to become an institution; and he achieved it. No doubt, too, he deserved it."[47]

Strachey draws the distinction between individual and institution in <u>Elizabeth and Essex</u>, too. The intrigues of the English court are almost invariably depicted in terms of personal animosities. The king of Spain <u>is</u> the Spanish court, however, and he is always moved by an ideal. It is entirely characteristic of Strachey that those whom he finds least sympathetic are, like Manning or Philip II, faithfully engaged to institutions and successful within them; Dr. Arnold <u>is</u> the British

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[45] <u>EV</u>, 17.

[46] <u>EV</u>, 99.

[47] <u>EV</u>, 286.

Public School System, Florence Nightingale is the British Hospital System. Gross success within any institutional system is debilitating to the individual; it is a mark of commonplaceness or of a personality so weak in itself as to surrender, virtually without a struggle, to an impersonal identity.

> The genius at school is usually a disappointing figure, for, as a rule, one must be commonplace to be a successful boy. In that preposterous world, to be remarkable is to be overlooked; and nothing less vivid than the white-hot blaze of a Shelley will bring with it even a distinguished martyrdom.[48]

Strachey's antagonism toward conventional success partly explains the fact that, despite his antipathy for the Catholic Church, he portrays Newman sympathetically in "Cardinal Manning."

Newman is a martyr to Manning's success. If Manning represents the de-humanization which an institution effects, Newman represents the suffering of the individual who cannot give up his personal identity. Moreover, Newman's attachment to the Church was non-political, was not involved in mundane ambition. His father's arbitrary choice of a University and Newman's own romantic imagination, Strachey tells us, are what brought him to Rome.[49] Ironically both Manning and Newman look back to the Middle Ages, but Manning is attracted by the clerical discipline, while Newman is attracted by romance and

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[48] LE, 174.

[49] EV, 23.

mystery: "he [Newman] was a child of the Romantic Revival, a creature of emotion and of memory . . ."[50] The true strength of Newman's personality, Strachey asserts, is to be measured not in his submission to a faith, but in his distinction as a writer.

> His [Newman's] future course was marked out for him all too clearly; and yet by a singular chance the true nature of the man was to emerge triumphant in the end. If Newman had died at the age of sixty, to-day he would have been already forgotten, save by a few ecclesiastical historians; but he lived to write his Apologia and to reach immortality, neither as a thinker nor as a theologian, but as an artist who has embalmed the poignant history of an intensely human spirit in the magical spices of words.[51]

Thus Strachey separates the religious from the poetic sensibility and finds greater worth in the latter, since it, in words and in forms, makes manifest individual human feelings and glorifies them.

Strachey distinguishes the writer in Newman from the priest, the poet in Blake from the mystic, the stylist in Pascal from the apologist. It is in their roles as artists that they are most intensely human; and they infuse language with passion (of a self-conscious and a personal sort). And this passion Strachey regards as the most distinctive and attractive of human qualities. In an essay on John Donne, for instance, Strachey finds that "Donne really has achieved the impossible. The ardours of his passionate soul transfuse

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[50] EV, 23.

[51] EV, 24.

his antiquated mannerisms, his contorted and remote conceptions, and fill them with an intensely human significance."[52]

The word "passion" recurs frequently and confusingly in Strachey's works. It is most often associated with romantic love, as in Elizabeth and Essex or "Mademoiselle de Lespinasse"; sometimes it is associated with kindness or general good will, as in "Mary Berry" or "The Abbé Morellet"; still other times it is associated with personal eccentricity, as in "The End of General Gordon" or "Lady Hester Stanhope." Wherever the word appears, however, Strachey uses it to suggest praise or sympathy.[53] Strachey's notion of passion is somewhat akin to Leslie Stephen's notion of sincerity; both terms are used in equal measure both in moral and in aesthetic contexts. One might say that for Strachey passion is personality, or, if not personality itself, certainly a state of mind expressive of a personality. The term "personality" I use here in the very strict sense of an individual sensibility, humanly/humanely responsive to other individual sensibilities. Thus Cardinal Manning is wanting in passion since he is possessed of a state of mind which is incapable of individuating, incapable of perceiving what G. E. Moore calls "the pleasures of human intercourse."[54] And thus passion, though a quality

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[52] SE, 91.

[53] The curious pattern of the way in which Strachey used the word seems to have been noticed by Wallace Stevens who made it an important motif in his poem, "Lytton Strachey, Also, Enters Into Heaven," Opus Posthumus (New York, 1957), pp. 38-39.

[54] Moore, 188.

of a psychological condition, becomes, implicitly at least, both a moral and an aesthetic virtue.

The Strachean morality of passion is well illustrated in an amusing anecdote which André Maurois recounts in one of his autobiographies. During the 'twenties distinguished men of all nationalities came to a series of annual conferences held at the Abbey of Pontigny, where they discussed, in rather informal fashion, various artistic and philosophical problems. In 1922, Strachey and Maurois were among the participants, along with Roger Fry, Gide, Curtius, Charles Du Bos, Roger Martin du Gard, and Paul Desjardins, who was the moderator. At one meeting, Maurois recalls:

> Lytton Strachey croisait l'une au-dessus l'autre ses longues jambes, fermait les yeux ... et s'endormait.
>
> "Et à votre avis, Monsieur Strachey, quelle est la chose la plus importante du monde?" demandait soudain Paul Desjardins.
>
> Il y avait un long silence. Puis de la barbe endormie de Strachey sortait une miniscule voix de fausset:
>
> "La passion," disait-il enfin avec une suave négligence.[55]

The imputation of moral value to a psychological characteristic does suggest that Strachey was not so pure a disciple of Moore and of Fry as one might expect; such an imputation is strongly remindful of the "naturalistic fallacy." In a way, however, the responsibility for Strachey's confusion seems to go back to the stress--made by both Moore and Fry--on states of mind, and especially on the intrinsic worth of good

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[55]Maurois, 281.

states of mind. And good states of mind, it will be remembered, seem to derive from the loving (passionate?) contemplation of human beings or of works of art. Certainly this preoccupation with states of mind is at least partially generative of much that Bloomsbury produced: of the conflict between the private world of the Schlegels and the public world of the Wilcoxes in Howards End; of Virginia Woolf's striking experiments in the "stream of consciousness" technique (The Waves is almost a handbook of novelistic treatment of states of mind); of Lytton Strachey's insistence that the biographer expose his subjects not as monuments in official poses, but as individual human beings moving through a series of personal responses (indeed, in the last paragraphs of Queen Victoria, to name but one place, he traces the stream of the queen's consciousness). All of this does not, of course, derive simply and solely from Principia Ethica; there were many other influences at work. The most important of these, in Strachey's case at least, were the works of Freud and Dostoievsky which complemented and complicated the general Bloomsbury interest in states of mind.

Given this initial interest, it is not difficult to understand the primary appeal of Freudian psychology. Freud seemed to be dealing directly with states of mind (private acts and private consciousness), almost as though these were totally separate from all external or public structures.[56]

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[56]The matter is, of course, somewhat more complicated than I have suggested. Yet it seems to me that my notion is

And Bloomsbury had, as it were, a kind of "inside track" on Freud. Leonard and Virginia Woolf, at their Hogarth Press, first published Freud in England. Lytton Strachey's brother and sister-in-law, James and Alix Strachey, who have completed a fairly definitive translation of all of Freud's works, were his patients and pupils and, until very recently, were themselves practicing psychiatrists. Doubtless it was from them that Strachey learned most of what he knew of the new psychology, for he seems never to have read Freud and never to have understood any of the technical principles of Freudian psychology very clearly.[57] He appears to have admired the rationality of a scientific approach to the study of the human mind; and it must have seemed as though Freud had provided a method by which many of the apparently irrational manifestations of human nature could be reasonably understood. Further, Freud's particular interest in sexual matters in some way apparently reinforced and tightened Strachey's hitherto loosely woven web of passion, love, and states of mind. Still, he never examined Freud's method very scientifically himself. He tended to confuse abnormal psychology with abnormal sexuality.

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borne out by the treatment of psychopathic behavior in the character of Septimus Smith in Mrs. Dalloway. Although Mrs. Woolf has created a solid social/economic milieu for Smith, his madness and his communication with other characters is always internalized. His relationship to Mrs. Dalloway herself and to the guests at her party seems almost always curiously mystical in nature.

[57]James Strachey has told me that, although his brother never did read Freud, "the Professor read Lytton, and enjoyed him very much." And see C. R. Sanders, Lytton Strachey: His Mind and Art (New Haven, 1957), p. 35.

The latter interested him, as it did, indeed, most of Bloomsbury, immensely. When he wrote Elizabeth and Essex, as the dedication to James and Alix Strachey makes very clear, he intended it to be a Freudian biography. But his own confusion about Freudianism led to serious lapses in taste in that book; in trying to be sophisticated and scientific, Strachey often succeeded in being vulgar.

Bloomsbury had an "inside track," too, on Dostoievsky, since his work was first translated in England by Constance Garnett and the Garnett family, particularly Constance's son David (who is presently married to the daughter of Clive and Vanessa Bell), were very much a part of the set. Dostoievsky offered Bloomsbury a number of things: he presented for inspection a fascinating and almost entirely unfamiliar culture; he placed enormous stress on the complexity of psychological make-up in fictional characters;[58] he suggested startling degrees of intensity of states of mind; and he tended to fuse moral and psychological conflict. Strachey was particularly impressed by Dostoievsky as a psychologist of the highest order.[59] There can be little doubt that many of the juxtapositions and eccentricities of his own work owe much to his understanding of Dostoievsky.

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[58]"People, like Arnold Bennett, say I [Virginia Woolf] can't create, or didn't in Jacob's Room, characters that survive. My answer is . . . it's only the old argument that character is dissipated into shreds now; the old post Dostoievsky argument." V. Woolf, Diary, 56.

[59]Sanders, 196-97. See also C. R. Sanders, The Strachey Family (Durham, 1953), p. 283.

> Paradoxical as it may seem, it is yet certainly true that Dostoievsky, with all his fondness for the abnormal and the extraordinary, is a profoundly sane and human writer. In this respect, indeed, he is the exact opposite of Tolstoy, who conceals a neurotic temperament under the cloak of a strict and elaborate adherence to the commonplace. Dostoievsky, while refusing to turn away his eyes from what is horrible, grotesque, and disgraceful in life, does not, like the French writers of the Naturalistic School, take a pleasure in these things, and deal out pessimism with an acrimonious relish; on the contrary, he only faces the worst in order to assert with a fuller courage and a deeper confidence, the nobility and splendour of the human spirit. He can depict, side by side with the distorted and excessive creatures who fill his canvases, figures of the rarest beauty and the most exquisite purity. . . . He can show us characters where all that is base, absurd, and contemptible is mingled together, and then, in the sudden strange vision that he gives us of their poignant underlying humanity, he can make us lay aside our scorn and our disgust, endowing us with what seems a new understanding of the mysterious soul of man.[60]

In a later essay, Strachey finds Dostoievsky "a humorist of a remarkable and original type,"[61] and goes on to suggest that his comic mastery is what makes the novels so real and so effective. Dostoievsky does not speculate from a remote vantage point as Tolstoy does. Rather, he is in the world, providing his reader with a feeling of "the solid earth under his feet."[62] Dostoievsky's humor serves the further purpose of evoking sympathy for eccentric behavior, and thereby enlarging on the notion of the individual. In this, Strachey says, Dostoievsky is akin to Shakespeare, Sterne, and Cervantes.[63] Strachey, too, in his biographies, tends to emphasize eccentric behavior, and, more often than not, tends to sympathize with eccentrics.

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[60] SE, 176-77.

[61] LE, 215.

[62] LE, 217.

[63] LE, 219.

From Queen Victoria (1921) on, Strachey increasingly sets his biographical subjects against a background of familial or sexual (psychological) motivations. The character of Queen Victoria herself, the group of biographies which constitute the first part of Portraits in Miniature, and the conception of Elizabeth and Essex seem to indicate pretty clearly that Dostoievsky, in a literary way, and Freud, in a quasi-scientific way, both encouraged Strachey's interest in states of mind and somewhat transformed the contexts of that interest. It is entirely conceivable that it was the psychological intuitions suggested by Freud and Dostoievsky which fostered Strachey's late interest in writing on Elizabethan or pre-eighteenth century subjects--subjects which were, for the most part, bizarre, ill-documented, remote, obscure. The persistent stress (as Strachey understood it) made by Freud and Dostoievsky on the eccentric and the abnormal enlarged Strachey's sentimental predisposition to delineate and to admire the individual with his singular peculiarities and quirks.

Man as a symbol, as an historical or universal or institutional emblem, does not accord with Strachey's liberal humanism. He preferred to examine individual beings in their individuating circumstances; he chose, unlike Dr. Johnson's poet, to "number the streaks of the tulip." And in the exercise of this literary botany, he catalogued a number of very curious hybrids. In fact, to judge by the number of essays concerning them, Strachey is excessively fond of

eccentrics. Shelley, Muggleton, Dr. North, Dr. Colbatch, Lady Hester Stanhope, General Gordon, Mme du Deffand; all of these are extraordinary people, to be sure. And in all of them personal idiosyncracy or passion comes into conflict with the organized or public forces of the world. Although often with considerable irony, Strachey usually generates a certain sentimental sympathy for the eccentric; perhaps the reason for this is the very fact that such conflict does occur. Here, for instance, is one expression of the conflict.

> Every morning Sir Evelyn Baring would find upon his table a great pile of telegrams from Khartoum--twenty or thirty at least; and as the day went on, the pile would grow. When a sufficient number had accumulated he would read them all through with the greatest care. There upon the table, the whole soul of Gordon lay before him--in its incoherence, its eccentricity, its impulsiveness, its romance; the jokes, the slang, the appeals to the prophet Isaiah, the whirl of contradictory policies--Sir Evelyn Baring did not know which exasperated him most. He would not consider whether, or to what degree, the man was a maniac; no he would not. A subacid smile was the only comment he allowed himself.[64]

Although, in "The End of General Gordon," Strachey subjects Gordon's religious views to sharp ridicule, and although he often presents the general as an irresponsible alcoholic, he does not withdraw his sympathy. In engaging himself and his readers on Gordon's side, the side of passion as opposed to ambition, Strachey is very much in the late eighteenth-century tradition of sentimental humor and romance; the tradition of Sterne,[65] of Horace Walpole, of Gray, of the Lyrical Ballads.

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[64] EV, 287.

[65] In a passage of unmistakable praise for Dostoievsky's humor, Strachey allies him with Sterne as opposed to Swift. LE, 219.

It is within this tradition where manners and morals, sense and sensibility merge that Strachey, both as artist and as critic, is at his best. It is surely to be regretted that he never wrote a biography of Chatterton.

The eighteenth century's "peculiar interest and its peculiar glory"[66] were, for Strachey, those tendencies which found fullest scope and expression in the years after 1750, both in France (with the triumph of the Encyclopaedists) and in England (with the strong emergence of romantic sensibility). Certainly Strachey's moral and psychological conceptions are most abundantly realized in that period; for the reasonable climate of the age tolerated the expression of sentimental passion and kept it in bounds: "The fire and the feeling were controlled and co-ordinated."[67] Moreover, the flavor of the period was decidedly feminine.

In Strachey's essay on Mme du Deffand, he portrays that lady as profoundly alien to the second half of the eighteenth century. She is seen as authoritarian, implacable, stern, selfish, bigoted;; her style, in her letters, is angular and spare. In short, she suggests a masculine principle. When she does fall in love, it is with an effeminate creature. And her love itself is seen as a kind of aberration of her old age. She is part (indeed, a leader) of a society which conducted itself according to the strictest discipline: "They

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[66] BE, 167.

[67] BE, 141.

required in their votaries the absolute submission that reigns in religious orders--the willing sacrifice of the entire life. The intimacy of personal passion, the intensity of high endeavour--these things must be left behind and utterly cast away by all who would enter that narrow sanctuary."[68] However elegant and witty the generation of Mme du Deffand may be, it is too cold, too barren, too impersonal for Strachey's tastes. To this masculine and passionless world of the first half of the eighteenth century, Strachey contrasts the "ardent, hopeful, speculative, sentimental group of friends who met together every evening in the drawing-room of Mademoiselle de Lespinasse."[69] While Strachey is sometimes in awe of Mme du Deffand, he seems genuinely fond of Mlle de Lespinasse. She weeps at the opera; she writes passionate love letters; she inspires the most brilliant men of her time; she almost literally dies for love--she is a pure sentimental heroine. Despite his frequent acerbity of manner, Strachey very much subscribes to the sentiment in Chatterton's poem: "O! droppe the brynie teare wythe mee." Significantly, the speaker of those words is a "damselle."

Strachey makes a careful distinction between the two halves of the eighteenth century, regarding the earlier as "coarse and vigorous" (masculine?) and the latter as "refined

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[68] BE, 171.

[69] BE, 169.

and sentimental" (feminine?).[70] Representative of this distinction are Sir Robert Walpole and his son; and Strachey makes no attempt to disguise his admiration for the latter who, in another place, is praised for having a "certain strain of femininity."[71] What this feminine quality seems to suggest to Strachey is an amalgam of a number of elements: aristocratic bearing; a sense of humor; intellectual curiosity; exquisitely good taste; deep, but controlled, wells of good feeling and passion; a knowledgeable love of works of art; ease and elegance of self-expression. Perhaps what all of this amounts to is a code of morality. It is a morality systematically realized in personal behavior and never imposed upon others. Horace Walpole, Mlle de Lespinasse, the Abbé Morellet, Mary Berry; these are figures much esteemed by Strachey, all of them, in greater or lesser degree, affected by private passion, all of them eccentric in some measure, but all of them functioning in the clear, reasonable light of the world, and all of them irrepressibly preserving their own personal identities.

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[70] BE, 190.

[71] BE, 196.

CHAPTER IV

CIVILIZATION

There are at least two contexts in which we can define the word "civilization." First, in a general historical or sociological context, the word has reference to a matrix of values, forms, or ideas commonly shared by a substantial number of people at a given time or place. Second, in the more rarefied contexts of intellectual history or of art history, "civilization" refers not only to a shared matrix of values, forms, or ideas, but also to a persistent and articulate expression of those by a variety of individuals within the community. Such articulate expression would be self-conscious and would, therefore, imply education and some measure of a critical spirit. While these two kinds of civilization are not mutually exclusive, a savage cannot participate in the second. Both kinds of civilization were of interest to the Bloomsbury Group with its mingling of social scientists, critics, and artists. But in matters of art and morality, it was the second kind with which they were most concerned. For Bloomsbury "civilization" was an evaluative concept; it implies the existence of certain standards. Bloomsbury writers were pretty well in accord as to what these standards are.

In a discussion of the ways in which Bloomsbury's values are reflected in the work of Virginia Woolf, Irma Rantavaara has devoted considerable attention to the effective notion of civilization as it was generally understood in Bloomsbury. She writes: ". . . the main characteristic of civilization is that it is something artificial. At its best we find it where a sense of values prevails and reason has become enthroned."[1] One might go even farther. As Bloomsbury understood it (or, at least, as certain members of the Bloomsbury Group understood it), civilization (or "culture" or "cultivation") is a manifestation of a (figuratively) holy order of reason and good taste. To people like Clive Bell, and the Woolfs, and Lytton Strachey who seem to have believed that they were leading England's emergence out of the barbaric darkness of Victorianism, civilization was a kind of religion. (Clive Bell has written about the "will to civilization" as a sort of fixed principle in the universe.)[2] The revelators of this religion were G. E. Moore and Roger Fry; "reasonableness" and "Significant Form" were key words in the creed; Clive Bell was its chief codifier and apologist; David Garnett, Virginia Woolf, and Lytton Strachey were among its militancy. There was some

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[1]Irma Rantavaara, "Virginia Woolf and Bloomsbury," Annales Academiae Scientarum Fennicae, Series B 82 no. 1 (Helsinki, 1953), p. 50.

[2]Clive Bell, Civilization (West Drayton, 1947), p. 154. That the Bloomsbury Group did believe they were leading England out into the light is surely attested to by the missionary overtones of such projects as Roger Fry's Omega Workshop, and the Woolfs' Hogarth Press, as well as by the tone of Strachey's introduction to Eminent Victorians and Bell's Art.

canonical disagreement about historical evidences, but the principal saints are beyond question and the chief of these is Voltaire.

Leonard Woolf, Clive Bell, and Lytton Strachey each set down a list of civilizations through history. Woolf, a social scientist, seems to be more liberal than his friends and has the longest list. He accepts as civilizations: Athens in the Age of Pericles, the Roman Empire under the Augustans, both Renaissance Italy and Renaissance England, eighteenth-century France, and nineteenth-century England.[3] Clive Bell is more restrictive.

> We feel--I, at any rate, feel--that the era of high Athenian civility opens not before Marathon; while, painfully aware though I am of the inferiority, not so much in particular genius as in general alertness, of the post-war period, I cannot admit that the epoch closes before the death of Aristotle (322).[4]
>
> Between the death of Boccaccio (1375) and the sack of Rome (1527) the Italians are generally allowed to have attained to a very high pitch of civilization, with which allowance I assuredly find no fault.[5]
>
> The other example of which I can make use without much fear of contradiction is the civilization which flourished in France during le grand siècle and the eighteenth century. From 1660 to 1789 is an age less glorious than that of Pericles, but hardly less renowned. It is the common opinion, and that it should be so is significant, that whereas the second half of the seventeenth century and the early part of the eighteenth is the greater, the second half of the eighteenth (which ends in 1789) is the more civilized.[6]

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[3]Leonard Woolf, Quack, Quack (London, 1935), pp. 9-40.

[4]Bell, Civilization, 30-31.

[5]Bell, Civilization, 35.

[6]Bell, Civilization, 37.

For Lytton Strachey, when he self-consciously prepares a list, there are only two periods of civilization: the Age of the Antonines and the second half of the eighteenth century in both France and England.[7] In other places, however, he adds to these seventeenth-century France after the Fronde. Significantly all three cataloguers agree on the eighteenth century.

The principal qualities of a civilization, as Leonard Woolf has defined them, are "dominance of reason, intelligence, and knowledge over instinct, habit, and superstition."[8] That is not a surprising definition from a Cantabrigian who has been strongly influenced by G. E. Moore. But Bloomsbury extends this definition considerably. It sees civilization as artificial, as non-utilitarian, as critical, and as devoted to the promotion of good states of mind.

> The savage who begins to criticize intellectually the customs and conventions of his tribe soon ceases to exist or ceases to be savage; he has taken a long step towards civilization. So has he who begins, ever so dimly, to perceive that the true value of things is their value as means to states of mind. But so long as a man remains natural and follows instinct he will not go far towards civilization. Civilization comes of reflection and education. Civilization is artificial.[9]

While there seems to be some confusion here between civilization as a social phenomenon and as a personal one, it is only an academic confusion.[10] In fact, Bell and Strachey clearly aver, a totally civilized individual simply does not exist in

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[7] LE, 241.

[8] L. Woolf, Quack, Quack, 17.

[9] Bell, Civilization, 44.

[10] Bell, Civilization, 15.

an uncivilized society since civilization itself implies an effective harmony between man and milieu. Consequently civilized societies produce artists who are, in a very literal sense, the product and the mirror of their environment.[11]

The image of the artist as an outcast is not one which derives from civilized eras: "No genuine artist is a protestant by nature. The rôle is forced on him by the malevolence of his contemporaries. . . . Civilization tends to make protestation unnecessary."[12] Since there is no basic disagreement between the artist and his audience, there is a greater concentration on the formal aspects of art. The essence of art, therefore, lies not in any revolutionary or exotic content, but in the perfection of form. Civilizations foster works of art which neither puzzle nor preach, but provide delight or reasonable pleasure.

> We are still under the spell of The Ancient Mariner; and poetry to us means, primarily, something which suggests, by means of words, mysteries and infinitudes. . . . But the eighteenth century knew none of these things. To Lord Chesterfield and to Pope, to Prior and to Horace Walpole, there was nothing at all strange about the

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[11]". . . the poetic inspiration of an age seems to follow what may be called, for want of a better term, a nation's 'centre of gravity.' With the Elizabethans the centre of gravity was among the middle classes--the country gentlemen like Drake and Raleigh, the country yeomen like Shakespeare, and the University scholars like Marlowe and Ben Jonson. After the Restoration the centre of gravity moved more and more rapidly towards the aristocracy, until at the beginning of the eighteenth century it became fixed in the great Whig families who had achieved the Revolution. And simultaneously literature took on the qualities of aristocracy, grew refined, brilliant, and ordered, and concerned itself exclusively with the life of London drawing-rooms." SE, 129-30.

[12]Bell, Civilization, 54.

> world; it was charming, it was disgusting, it was ridiculous, and it was just what one might have expected. In such a world, why should poetry, more than anything else, be mysterious? No! Let it be sensible; that was enough.[13]

Strachey's words here reflect his own predilections as well as those of the eighteenth-century figures he mentions. Since he associated civilization with traditional forms and an acceptance of a humanistic universe, it is clear that he was using "civilization" as a criterion in making literary and moral judgments. If he is moved to admire the literature of France, it is because the qualities of urbanity and reasonableness are persistently realized there. And those qualities came very early into that literature.

> Nothing shows more clearly at what an early date, and with what strength, the most characteristic qualities of French literature were developed, than the way in which the vague imaginations of Celtic romances were metamorphosed by French writers into the unambiguous elegances of civlized life.[14]

Romance is but one escape from social realities; there are others. The rebel, the mystic, the extreme eccentric may produce extraordinary works of art, but these are out of touch with the realistic conventions of life,and, while they may be civilizing, they are not civilized. In Landmarks in French Literature, Strachey draws a brief comparison between Montaigne and Rousseau.[15] While acknowledging Rousseau as the greater genius, the greater philosopher, the greater artist, Strachey

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[13] LE, 98.

[14] LFL, 3.

[15] LFL, 22.

expresses his very clear preference for Montaigne who triumphed "in the gentle, personal, everyday things in life."[16] The charm and beauty of the Essays derive from Montaigne's observation of life in the actual world and of his acceptance, critical though it often is, of that life. Montaigne was a sophisticated man of the world. He looked outward to the world; Rousseau looked inward to the recesses of his own personality, thereby rejecting the world. Rousseau presents a vision that is too personal and too intense to be entirely pleasing to Strachey. He "pushes the introspective method to its farthest limits."[17] Such intense introspection reveals a soul, not a mind. It removes the reader from the actual world, and, in effect, distorts Nature. Moreover, introspection is a method of extreme self-assertion; it tends to exalt an individual personality to the exclusion of "good manners and sociability."[18] Strachey observes that Rousseau "was the only man of his age who ever wanted to be alone."[19] His anti-social attitudes and his deep concern with himself alienated him from the most reasonable men of his age, perhaps the most

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[16] LFL, 22. Strachey praised Bacon, too, for his worldliness. "Bacon was, in the best sense of the expression, a man of the world. There can be no doubt that he was sincere in his religion, and that he was a genuine lover of the arts. But these things were not fundamental to him. He was not essentially spiritual like Pascal, nor essentially an artist like Keats. His philosophy was utilitarian, and his deepest interests were fixed upon the workings and the welfare of human society." SE, 86.

[17] LFL, 117.

[18] Bell, Civilization, 68.

[19] LFL, 118.

reasonable men who ever lived--Diderot and Hume. Such an alienation suggests Rousseau's essential irrationality, and signals the eventual break-up of eighteenth-century civilization.

Civilizations are guided by reason, and are, therefore, tolerant and free from the narrow limits of parochial prejudice. Superstition, fervent nationalism, ideological intolerance are all foreign to the civilized man.[20] In eighteenth-century France, for instance, a man was measured by his adherence to reason and not by his accidental identities or roles. Clive Bell calls attention to an observation made by Gustave Lanson in the latter's history of French literature. Lanson wrote that, for an eighteenth-century Frenchman,

> "son rationalisme lui interdisait les préjugés de couleur et de race. L'homme digne de ce nom est celui qui n'obéit qu'à la raison: mais cet homme n'est pas Français plutôt qu'Allemand: il est Européen, il est Chinois, il est partout où il y a des hommes; et toutes les vérités que conçoit la raison humaine sont faites pour cet homme universel."[21]

Strachey's own agreement with Lanson's view is attested to in his brief biography of the Abbé Morellet. In that work Strachey ponders the question of how it was possible that Morellet, a young man without money and without connections, should have

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[20]"For, if the eighteenth century was profoundly an age of activity, it was also, no less profoundly, an age of leisure. The conflict and torment of the religious struggles, into which the whole energies of the Renaissance had been plunged, were over; the infinite agitations ushered in by the French Revolution had not yet begun. The interval was one of toleration and repose: of toleration which would have seemed incredible to the age which preceded it; of repose which seems no less incredible to ours." LE, 242.

[21]Quoted in Bell, Civilization, 69.

"found himself a member of the most brilliant society in Paris." The answer is not difficult: "He had shown that he was intelligent; and in those days a little intelligence went a long way."[22] Civilizations, then, encourage individual men to aspire to the realization of universally conceived standards and tend to abate what Clive Bell has called "the individualistic tendency to aggressive self-assertion."[23]

Someone who, like Rousseau, departs from universal standards is pretty much of an isolated phenomenon in French cultural history, but English cultural history is notable for a long succession of eccentric or individualistic men of genius. The romantic impulse toward alienation is stronger among the English than among the French. This suggests that the English, both as individuals and as a nation, tend to be insular and rebellious, tend, in short, to be uncivilized. In Victorian England, for instance, the cosmopolitan polish of the eighteenth century had been long abandoned and "the centrifugal forces, always latent in English life, had triumphed, and men's minds had shot off into the grooves of eccentricity and provincialism."[24] Strachey associates this quality of the English with their Germanic heritage; and he rather persistently sets anything German as antithetical to civilization. Indeed, in Queen Victoria, he identifies the worst aspects of the

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[22] BE, 133.

[23] Bell, Civilization, 68.

[24] BE, 249.

Victorian sensibility with the strong German influence in nineteenth-century Europe. For Strachey, as for most of Bloomsbury, the French influence is a happier one. The French appear far more cosmopolitan (aesthetically, spiritually, socially) than the Anglo-Saxons.[25]

> In violent opposition to most of what surrounds him, any greatly gifted, and tough, English youth is likely to become more and more aware of himself and his own isolation. Meanwhile, his French compeer is having rough corners gently obliterated by contact with a well-oiled whetstone, and is growing daily more conscious of solidarity with his accomplices in a peculiar and gracious secret. France, in fact, has still a civilization.[26]

The French youth is encouraged by his social milieu to good manners and a sense of tradition. Both of these qualities derive from a rational temperament which is the very basis for a civilization: "From reasonableness come open-mindedness, a willingness to listen to what others have to say, and a distaste for dictatorial methods"[27] (in brief, politeness). Good manners are also the result of a "sense of values," which Clive Bell defines as the quality of assigning value to things solely in proportion to their use in producing good states of mind.[28] Consequently, good manners are rarely pervasive during periods of extensive material progress. Civilized man is not

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[25]An important exception to this aspect of the Bloomsbury temper is E. M. Forster whose interests in music (especially that of Beethoven and Wagner) and classical archeology make him more sympathetic to German culture. Even in his considerations of Latin cultures, Forster prefers the Italian sensibility to the French. He appears to find the latter too precious.

[26]Bell, Civilization, 57-58. And see BE, 229-35.

[27]Bell, Civilization, 54.

[28]Bell, Civilization, 61.

technologically inventive; rather he "considers himself in all his relations, thinks, feels, states, expresses, concerns himself with spiritual, rather than material, problems."[29]

Thus good manners are connected with good states of mind. Indeed, they are a means to good states of mind since they facilitate personal communication. Moreover, manners constitute the forms of social intercourse; and in society these forms stand for consistent historical links or traditions. And because these are traditions, they are immediate means to perception. That is, in a civilized society, one learns the forms of politeness much as one learns the language he speaks, in a manner so habitual as to seem almost instinctive. The forms are set by continuous human usage. The individual must adapt these forms to satisfy the requirements of particular situations; he neither omits the forms, nor replaces them. Really good manners are a response of commitment, not to the rules per se, but to the sense of them in actual situations, in the relationship between one person and others. (Just as Aristotle's "rules," to draw an analogy, are not merely arbitrary, but derive from a consideration of their effectiveness in actual and successful plays.)[30] Good manners are not simply learned; they are ingrained. They must be part of the whole

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[29]Bell, Civilization, 152.

[30]"The emphasis which critics belonging to this school [literary criticism of the Restoration] laid upon the 'rules' of Aristotle . . . is . . . somewhat delusive, for the real foundation for the new spirit was to be found in the present, and not in the past. . . . It was not because of their antiquity that the new critical school adopted the Aristotelian formulae, but because they seemed to fit in with an ideal of literature which was pre-eminently, as the phrase went, 'correct'." SE, 130.

texture of everyday life. The mere conning of the rules of etiquette does not necessarily produce good manners. We are often more offended by officiousness than by boorishness. In fact, Bloomsbury really tended to equate manners with morals. Her grace and ease as a hostess work to enlist our sympathy for Clarissa Dalloway; the Schlegel sisters are simply better bred than the Wilcoxes. Lytton Strachey finds it significant that "in Latin countries . . . morals and manners are expressed by the same word; in England it is not so. . . . Morality, curiously enough, seems to belong to that class of things which are of the highest value, which perform a necessary function, which are, in fact, an essential part of the human mechanism, but which should only be referred to with the greatest circumspection."[31] Since the forms of politeness appear to be so set, and since they appear to be learned so automatically, they imply a sense of universality. In a way, form is even more significant for Strachey than it is for Roger Fry or Clive Bell. The eccentric, like Blake or Rousseau, who turns away from accepted modes of worldly behavior, is forced to the position of a moralizing preacher and is, in a very basic sense, anti-social and uncivilized. An acceptance of the formal manners of society is, as well, an acceptance of the historical/intellectual continuity of the material world in which society exists.

In aesthetic terms, this civilized insistence on manners and tradition is another way in which emphasis is placed on the formal aspects of art. It suggests a response to formal

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[31] BE, 252.

relationships, rather than to any separable moral content such relationships may contain. Civilization, whether manifested in art or in life, is an elaborate rhetoric; forms are their own morality.

> If it takes two to make a quarrel it takes as many to make a bargain; and if even the best Frenchmen are willing to make terms with society, that must be because society has something to offer them worth accepting. What French society has to offer is French civilization. . . . Feel thus, think thus, act thus, says the French tradition, not for moral, still less for utilitarian, reasons but for aesthetic. Stick to the rules, not because they are right or profitable, but because they are seemly--nay, beautiful. We are not telling you to be respectable, we are inviting you not to be a lout.[32]

Civilized societies value forms for their inherent beauty, and honor "art--not artists but art."[33] Beauty, like virtue, is its own reward. The artist who is more concerned with personal fame or moral power than he is with arrangement or design is most likely an inferior artist. Strachey finds Tacitus a greater historian than Carlyle, and a more profound one, for the Roman devoted his energies to the creation of a perfect design and "composed a tragedy." But Carlyle, who could not temper his personality and his moral preoccupations, to suit his work, "spent himself in melodrama." "Perhaps," Strachey observes, "if Carlyle's manners had been more polished his morals would have been less distressing."[34] The worst danger of a moral obsession like Carlyle's is its tendency to obscure and distort the natural and reasonable forms of things.

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[32]Bell, Civilization, 58-59.

[33]Bell, Civilization, 49.

[34]BE, 251-52.

Civilization is dependent upon moderation, and its values are threatened by any manner of excess. Excesses are the result of a lack of detachment and, consequently, a lack of critical spirit. Voltaire is at his best when he questions standards and presuppositions, not, as in his plays, when he carelessly assumes them. Carlyle's moralizing Strachey compares to "some German cooks who have a passion for caraway seeds,"[35] and who, thereby, ruin every dish they prepare. They are then bad cooks because their critical intelligence is not at work as they create. Strachey seems to regard history as a continuous accretion and diminution of a critical spirit. If "the golden evening of Marcus Aurelius was succeeded by a night of storm and utter darkness,"[36] no less appalling was the decline from the "elegance, the seclusion, the leisure of the eighteenth century"[37] through the brief chaos of Romanticism to the Age of Victoria, "an age of barbarism and prudery, of nobility and cheapness, of satisfaction and desperation."[38] Edmund Wilson has observed that Strachey mapped out the history of that decline in his organization of Portraits in Miniature.[39] And it can be seen as well, perhaps in even more explicit terms, in Queen Victoria. In that work Strachey delineates a series

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[35] BE, 252.

[36] LE, 241.

[37] LE, 276.

[38] BE, 255.

[39] Edmund Wilson, "Lytton Strachey," A Literary Chronicle: 1920-1950 (Garden City, 1956), p. 169.

of temperamental climates symbolized by the personalities of the Queen's prime ministers. Victoria's reign spanned a movement from the elegant and insouciant worldliness of Melbourne to the blind and egocentric fundamentalism of Gladstone. For Strachey the Victorian world is the direct opposite of civilized; he sees it as narrow, impolite, self-assertive, as run through with an idea of sacerdotalism, of piety, of low-church morality. The Victorian Age was a descent from a social mean of ease and understanding and cultivation (represented by Melbourne and the great Whig families)[40] to one of pious earnestness and Protestant self-complacency (represented by Gladstone and the new industrial middle-class).

Strachey regards the Victorian sensibility as indecent because of its insistence upon the pious and the respectable and because of its refusal to consider things as they are. In discussing Lord Morley's Recollections, Strachey notes:

> Only a Victorian, having made his reputation by writing the lives of Diderot, Rousseau and Voltaire, would, on his return from visits to Paris, have thrown, in horror,

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[40] "There are two subjects, I [Algernon Cecil] can recollect hearing the late Lord Oxford remark, that would suit Lytton Strachey--Shelburne and Melbourne. . . . [Shelburne] is, however, the weaker partner in this jingling association of names. Melbourne, dawdling out from Holland House, cutting a dandified figure in the days of Beau Brummel; contracting a mad marriage with Caroline Ponsonby; moving, debonair if not dissolute, through the world of the Regency and the reign of the monarch self-styled, with unconscious irony, the first Gentleman in Europe; figuring in the courts, though not found guilty, on a charge of seduction; described . . . as 'sauntering over the destinies of a nation and lounging away the glories of an Empire'; and then . . . appearing in 1837 as the mentor of Victoria and the first begetter of the Victorian Age." Algernon Cecil, Queen Victoria and Her Prime Ministers (London, 1953), p. 73.

> two French novels out of the railway-carriage window. Such details, slight as they are, depict a period. The Victorian Age, great in so many directions, was not great in criticism, in humour, in the realistic apprehension of life. It was an age of self-complacency and self-contradiction. Even its atheists (Lord Morley was one of them) were religious. The religious atmosphere fills his book, and blurs every outline. We are shown Mr. Gladstone through a haze of reverence, and Emerson, and Marcus Aurelius. We begin to long for a little of the cynicism and scepticism of, precisely, the Age of Diderot, Rousseau and Voltaire.[41]

The reverent gloom that imbues Morley's work is no less repellent to Strachey than the methodical efficiency of Bishop Creighton's History of the Papacy. While Morley is revealed as a hypocrite through his moralizing, Creighton achieves the same end by moving in the opposite direction. Ironically, the Bishop of London presents all historical acts in an essentially neutral moral light, thereby passing over, "with inexcusable indifference, the persecution and intolerance of the medieval Church."[42] Victorian literary critics are even more reprehensible. For they dealt with literature "as an excuse for something else. From Macaulay, who used it as a convenient peg for historical and moral disquisitions, to Leslie Stephen, who frankly despised the whole business, this singular tradition holds good."[43] Only Dr. Arnold's son, Strachey informs us, could have imagined that great poetry and high seriousness are inevitable concomitants.[44] The Victorians were preoccupied

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[41] BE, 283.

[42] BE, 276.

[43] LE, 210.

[44] LE, 84.

with industry, sobriety, efficiency; they had a preference for "what is swift, what is well arranged, and what is not too good."[45] Such predilections, since they inhibit a truly critical spirit, betray an inherent barbarity.

Although they are not necessarily greatly creative, civilized societies are critical, speculative, and appreciative.[46] To be sure, such societies do, of course, encourage artistic achievement and welcome the production of works of art. But the works are highly formal and the encouragement proffered is bound within the pervasive mold of reason, tradition, and good manners. Within the environment of a civilization, perfection is conceived in terms of growth or refinement, not in terms of change or of profit.

> The precept 'Il faut cultiver notre jardin' has come down to the degenerate descendants of Candide in the form of 'Have an eye to the main chance'--a very different exhortation. The twentieth century has learned to cultivate its garden so well that it makes a profit of ten per cent. The eighteenth century cared less for the profit and more for the garden. It spent its leisure in the true process of cultivation. It ripened, and it matured; it did not advance. In art, in thought, in the whole conduct of life, what it aimed at was the just, the truly proportioned, the approved and absolute best.[47]

In such a climate the object of art is not to seek out unknown experience, but, through precision in form and in technique, to clarify reality (the reality not just of external nature, but of psychology, tradition, and social organization as well).

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[45] BE, 249.

[46] Bell, Civilization, 49.

[47] LE, 242.

In order to achieve this, the artist must be in some agreement with the values and forms of the society in which he exists.

According to Strachey, French literature of the seventeenth century achieved its high degree of excellence because its artists created for an informed and sensitive audience which was interested in "the refined and intimate pursuits of peace and civilisation." That literature, Strachey goes on to say, was "cast in the fine mould of perfect manners."[48] Together with the forms of social intercourse, literary forms were clearly and traditionally defined (e.g., all tragedies were written in twelve-syllable lines) and the reader or spectator was easily knowledgeable in them in much the same way that he was in the manners of society. A breach of form in the salon or on the page was shocking and possibly offensive. Forms were inherited and the business of the artist was not to experiment, but to create new beauties out of accepted modes. One essential difference between an English writer and a French one is that the former has no consistent formal tradition and must be continually inventive and startling, while the latter, accepting inherited conventions, avoids surprise and gains in concentration and profundity: "Racine's poetry differs as much from Shakespeare's as some calm-flowing river of the plain from a turbulent mountain torrent. To the dwellers in the mountain the smooth river may seem at first unimpressive. But still waters run deep. . . ."[49] The formal conventions which any

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[48] LFL, 39.

[49] LFL, 60-61.

seventeenth-century French poet had to work with were extremely difficult and restrictive: "Artificial rules of every kind hedged round his inspiration; if he were to soar at all, he must soar in shackles."[50] That the literature did soar, not in despite of its inherited limitations, but because of them, reflects the greatest glory on the artists and on the idea of tradition.

One of the fundamental characteristics of French literature, Strachey writes, is the "endeavour to say nothing that is not said well."[51] From the beginnings of the Pléiade in the sixteenth century, French writers have been traditionally and self-consciously concerned with the perfection and continuity of forms. Strachey notes that this continuity is exemplified even in the Romantic exuberance of Chateaubriand and Lamartine who represent a revolutionary spirit but temper it with traditional forms.[52] Because it is rooted in history, and because it is a common heritage not a peculiar one, tradition keeps a literature from flying off into eccentricity and wild enormity and encloses it within the bounds of civilized understanding. Both the artist and his audience inherit traditions, and together conspire to sustain their power. For Strachey, French literature of the seventeenth century reflects a society of artists and public that has "ease and good breeding."

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[50] LFL, 60.

[51] LFL, 14.

[52] LFL, 126.

> [In that literature] we shall find the play of passion and the subtle manifestation of the soul; we shall realise that the shutting out of terrors and mysteries has brought at least the gain of concentration, so that we may discern unhindered the movements of the mind of man--of man, not rapt aloft in the vast ardours of speculation, nor involved in the solitary introspection of his own breast; but of man, civilised, actual, among his fellows in the bright light of the world.[53]

Civilized art is closely bound to a somewhat sceptical awareness and acceptance of the world as it is; indeed, it is part and parcel of that world, not an extraneous appendage. Perfection of form derives from an entire organism; it cannot be achieved in isolation. As a society's interests change, its manners and its art must change as well. Traditions are not really eternal and universal, although in civilized societies they seem to be. The great classical tradition of seventeenth-century France "like all traditions, became degenerate; its virtues hardened into mannerisms, its weaknesses expanded into dogmas. . . ."[54] To imagine that conventions have an existence independent of a comprehensive moving spirit is fatal in dealing with works of art.[55] The artist or the critic who holds such a view is necessarily a pedant and/or a specialist; and "the specialist is never completely civilized."[56] Nor can he be, for whatever is "special" is a quite separate strand in the texture of life; and this propensity to admire

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[53] LFL, 42.

[54] LFL, 40.

[55] This view of critical errors is in accord with G. E. Moore's attack on "rules of action." See supra p. 31.

[56] Bell, Civilization, 64.

conventions produces a singular paradox in the works of some writers who are the products of a civilized climate. Since the civilized writer is usually in close sympathy with the conventions of his own time, he is apt to be out of sympathy with any others. Such, for example, is the problem one faces in reading The Lives of the Poets. Dr. Johnson was certainly a civilized writer, but his critical judgments "have always some good quality to recommend them--except one: they are never right."[57] He judged writers according to (what were for him) established rules of poetry; he did not investigate into what poets were trying to do.

Unlike Dr. Johnson, Strachey was aware that great writers are not (or ought not to be) strictly bound by the conventions of dictated form. In this Strachey is like Neander, Dryden's spokesman in the Essay of Dramatic Poesy, who prefers Shakespeare to Jonson. Although Jonson was the "more correct poet, . . . Shakespeare [was] the greater wit." Strachey draws a comparable distinction between Racine and Molière. His admiration for Molière is based upon the breadth of the latter's understanding of the ways of the world rather than any perfection of dramatic form. Molière's realism provides the principal appeal for Strachey. And it is in that regard that Molière triumphs over Racine.

> It is by his very perfection, by the very completeness of his triumph, that Racine loses. He is so absolute, so special a product of French genius, that it is well-nigh impossible for anyone not born a Frenchman to appreciate

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[57] LE, 95.

> him to the full; it is by his incompleteness, and to some extent even by his imperfections, that Molière gains. Of all the great French classics, he is the least classical. His fluid mind overflowed the mould he worked in. His art, sweeping over the whole range of comic emotions, from the wildest buffoonery to the grimmest satire and the subtlest wit, touched life too closely and too often to attain that flawless beauty to which it seems to aspire. He lacked the precision of form which is the mark of the consummate artist; he was sometimes tentative and ambiguous, often careless; the structure of some of his finest works was perfunctorily thrown together; the envelope of his thought--his language--was by no means faultless, his verse often coming near to prose, and his prose sometimes aping the rhythm of verse. In fact, it is not surprising that to the rigid classicists of the eighteenth century this Colossus had feet of clay. But, after all, even clay has a merit of its own; it is the substance of the common earth. That substance, entering into the composition of Molière, gave him his broad-based solidity, and brought him into kinship with the wide humanity of the world.[58]

In being too self-consciously or too long aware of manners or traditions, one is apt to divorce them from the contexts of their real function and make of them a kind of mystique. This is the error into which "rigid classicists" and pedants fall.

In a review of a book by W. P. Ker, Strachey makes this very clear. He praises Ker's essays because "they are the work of a cultivated man as well as of a learned one, so the ordinary reader will find himself quite at home wherever Mr. Ker may lead him."[59] The distinction that Strachey makes between the "cultivated man" and the "learned man" is an important one. It

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[58] LFL, 46.

[59] Strachey, "Mediaeval Studies," Spectator, 97 (17 November, 1906), p. 786. Strachey's notion of the "general reader" is analogous to Virginia Woolf's "common reader." Both deny the necessity for specialization among critics. And, consequently, both have been attacked as impressionistic and as wanting in seriousness. See Mark Goldman, "Virginia Woolf and the Reader as Critic," PMLA, LXXX, No. 3 (June, 1965), pp. 275-84.

signifies the difference between Lord Chesterfield and his son, between the two Walpoles, between Mme du Deffand and Mlle de Lespinasse. And it explains why Voltaire was able to baffle the expectations of Frederick the Great.

Frederick was a learned man in conflict with a cultivated one. Tireless and energetic, confident of his own abilities, Frederick imagined that true cultivation could be learned if one but studied under a recognized master. Further, he believed that manners and talent were quite separate from personality. For Frederick, civilization meant French culture; and he aspired to fame as a writer of French verse. But extraordinary though he was as a politician and as a general, he was neither French nor a poet. The volumes of his verse, Strachey writes, "afford probably the most complete illustration in literature of the very trite proverb--Poeta nascitur, non fit." Aware of certain of his limitations, Frederick determined to overcome them by engaging as a tutor the most eminent proponent of civilization of his day.

> Voltaire, there could be no doubt, would do just what was needed; he would know how to squeeze in a little further the waist of the German Calliope, to apply with his deft fingers precisely the right dab of rouge to her cheeks, to instil into her movements the last nuances of correct deportment. And, if he did that, of what consequence were the blemishes of his personal character? 'On peut apprendre de bonnes choses d'un scélérat.'[60]

Frederick was wrong; the real strengths of his personality--his vitality and his cynicism--deceived him. He tried to court cultivation as though he were engaged in a military siege; he

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[60] BE, 89.

would bully and batter his way into the citadel, or he would trick the governor into giving up his keys. His tactics turned back on him, however, and the would-be conqueror became a slave. Twenty years after he had been embarrassed, deceived, and deserted, "the King of Prussia was submitting his verses as anxiously as ever to Voltaire."[61] Frederick's ambitions were provincial and crude. He worshipped forms and techniques without realizing the whole of which these were but a part. (In this regard there is some significance to Strachey's insistence that Frederick admired Voltaire most as a poetic dramatist.) The tremendous energies which create empires are not the energies which support civilization. Frederick was cynical, indeed contemptuous, of human life, but he was sentimental about literary conventions.

> [Thus] . . . the same amazing force which made Prussia a Great Power created, in spite of incredible difficulties, in a foreign idiom, under the bondage of the harshest literary conventions ever known, that vast mass of fifth-rate poetising from which shuddering History averts her face.[62]

The poetic failure of Frederick the Great is what one might expect; by birth and by temperament, he was alien to a truly civilized tradition. But the same disaster befell even Voltaire himself when he attempted to write tragedies. In trying to continue the tradition of Racine, Voltaire was too much the specialist. He understood and imitated the technical

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[61] BE, 105.

[62] BE, 111.

apparatus without possessing any true dramatic sense.[63] The result is a lifeless and, at best, mediocre theatre. Mechanics are no substitute for spirit.

The novels of Fanny Burney offer another case in point. Her Diary, Strachey writes, shows us where her real strength lay.

> Fortunately for us indeed, she was left to herself in one domain; for her Diary flourished beyond the reach of criticism, deep-rooted in her own private nature, and fed with truth. . . . It is here that Madame D'Arblay appears at full length; it is here that she shows us her mirror of the world, gives us the relish of real persons, real intimacies, real conversations.[64]

As a novelist, however, Miss Burney was the victim of the encomiums lavished upon her work by the "greatest intellects"[65] of her own day; she was encouraged by men of such distinction as Johnson and Burke to substitute generalities for truths, humors for characters. The eighteenth century had evolved to a condition of critical complacency (was, indeed, propagating the naturalistic fallacy) and confused the manner for the matter, ignoring the true passions of human nature. Art must be more than mere technical proficiency. Fanny Burney was well able to supply all the conventions of novelistic action and characterization, but, unlike Mrs. Inchbald whom Strachey regards as a finer novelist, she could not invest her fiction with "the sense of life itself--the pains, the triumphs, and

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[63] LE, 116.

[64] LE, 126.

[65] LE, 121.

the agitations of the human heart."[66] For Fanny Burney, brought up in one of the most cultivated milieus in history, art (or one branch of it, at least) was divorced from the well-spring of actual human experience. And cultivation diminished into learnedness.

Thus civilization, because of its emphasis on forms and conventions, often produces failures from within. The confusion between convention and conformity is one of the most serious dangers of a civilization. Such a confusion often leads artists away from the individual bent of their own talents, and stifles the critical instinct. In Strachey's view, the really civilized artist is the one who, like Pope, is "not a theorist, but an artist; [is] not concerned with good poetry in general, but with the particular kind of poetry which he [feels] himself fitted to produce."[67] Such an artist is a highly self-conscious one, but not self-conscious in the mechanically imitative way of Frederick the Great or of Fanny Burney. Rather, he is critically conscious of the true direction of his own mind and talent.[68] Critical reasonableness, more than any other quality, is the mark of a civilization.

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[66] LE, 130.

[67] SE, 151.

[68] Self-conscious formalism is a trait to be admired in Strachey's aesthetic. But Strachey's view of self-consciousness includes self-criticism. As the Renaissance took hold in France, for instance, an important change took place in the literature: "The change was one towards consciousness and deliberate, self-critical effort. The medieval poets had sung with beauty; but that was not enough for the poets of the Renaissance: they determined to sing not only with beauty, but with care." LFL, 14.

CHAPTER V

CLASSIC AND ROMANTIC

"The very word 'classical,'" Clive Bell writes, ". . . suggests reasonableness and taste. And these qualities . . . we shall find . . . distinguishing every age of high civilization."[1] Those periods which Bell and Lytton Strachey regard as "civilized" and those qualities which they assign to "civilization" are more usually called "classical" by literary historians. Strachey, however, tends to use the word "classical" as a term of approbation; and his tastes are somewhat more catholic than a strict and conventional classicism might allow. The liberality of Strachey's classicism has been noted by John Middleton Murry, who observed "a certain anti-romantic tendency in him [Strachey] which is peculiarly satisfied by the century of intelligence and order and prose. But his anti-romanticism is never extravagant, like that of so many reactionary classicists to-day [1922]."[2] Strachey is particularly admiring, for instance, of Wordsworth and Keats and Tennyson. Moreover, he has a marked fondness for nature

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[1]Bell, Civilization, 45.

[2]John Middleton Murry, "Mr. Strachey's Criticism," The Nation and the Athenaeum (3 June, 1922), p. 347.

poetry, and, as we have already noted, he prefers the sentimental in literature. Even in his considerations of literary criticism, Strachey is not narrowly a classicist. In his defense of Pope, he is far more tolerant of Wordsworth's criticism than he is of Arnold's, since he regards the former as basing his dislike on literary grounds, the latter on moral grounds. Whenever Strachey does take issue with romantic writers, his principal quarrel rests on four bases: their distortion of the natural world; their apparent lack of critical discipline; their verbal extravagance; and their preoccupation with matters other than style. Consequently, a number of writers, not normally considered "romantic," are treated by Strachey as though they were--or, if not "romantic," as "non-classical."

Strachey is as dissatisfied with the "windy inflation" in the work of Victor Hugo as he is with the didacticism of George Bernard Shaw. In comparing Manon Lescaut with Les Misérables, Strachey finds all the distortions and impassioned rhetoric of Hugo's novel useless, indeed, ridiculous, next to the bare-boned artistic precision of Prévost's novel.[3] And of Shaw, Strachey writes: "Le secret d'ennuyer c'est de tout dire; and Mr. Shaw insists upon saying everything."[4] Hugo and Shaw represent a kind of artistic anarchy for Strachey. In his view, the primary virtues of literary style are clarity,

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[3] LFL, 136.

[4] Strachey, "Three New Plays," Spectator, 100 (6 June, 1908), p. 900.

conciseness, and correctness, qualities which are most persistently realized in classical art. And the primary virtue of the critical idea which underlies that art is its acceptance of literature as literature.

Hugo was one of those writers who disrupted what Strachey regards as the great tradition of French literature, a tradition which was solidly grounded on the critical strictures of Malherbe.

> His [Malherbe's] object was to purify the French tongue; to make it--even at the cost of diminishing its flavour and narrowing its range--strong, supple, accurate, and correct; to create a language which, though it might be incapable of expressing the fervours of personal passion or the airy fancies of dreamers, would be a perfect instrument for the enunciation of noble truths and fine imaginations, in forms at once simple, splendid, and sincere.[5]

There are certain shortcomings to a complete acceptance of Malherbe's critical principles, or those of Dryden and Johnson. Among other things, poetic license is restricted and the domain of the poet is thus limited. But at least when these critics wrote of literature, Strachey tells us in his essay on Arnold, "they wrote of it as an art."[6] Elsewhere Strachey praises Swinburne as a critic because he "can speak of poetry as if it were indeed poetry, and not some superior kind of chemistry."[7]

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[5] LFL, p. 24. Strachey goes on to say that while Malherbe's reforms had little immediate effect, they at least impelled writers "towards a deliberate effort to produce some form."

[6] LE, 210.

[7] Strachey, "A Poet on Poets," Spectator, 101 (3 October, 1908), p. 502.

To seventeenth- and eighteenth-century literary critics, as T. S. Eliot has put it, "literature was something distinct from philosophy and psychology and every other study; and its purpose was to give a refined pleasure to persons of sufficient leisure and breeding."[8] Such readers as Eliot describes form, what Strachey would have regarded a civilized society. The literary qualities which Strachey most admires are best supported in a civilized atmosphere where there is a continuous rapport between the artist and his audience. This rapport is usually a concomitant of the establishment of critical schools. In one respect it is surprising that Strachey is so very violent in his attack on Matthew Arnold,[9] since they agree on at least one important point. In Strachey's admiring assessment of Sainte-Beuve, he noted that the French critic acted as interpreter between the artist and the public.[10] Both Strachey and Arnold regard the critic as one who performs the dual service of educating the public to the appreciation of works of art and of inspiring the artist to create. In a Spectator review, entitled "The Age of Corneille," Strachey deals with this subject.

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[8]T. S. Eliot, "Experiment in Criticism," Tradition and Experiment in Present Day Literature (London, 1929), p. 200.

[9]James Strachey told me that when he replaced his brother as drama critic for the Spectator, Lytton praised his work and told him that he might one day be as fine a critic as Matthew Arnold. Since he sensed no irony in the remark, Mr. Strachey was very much surprised by his brother's essay.

[10]LFL, 143.

> From the point of view of letters, the central interest of the period might be described as a dramatic one. Its history is the history of the rise, the development, the apparent defeat, and the sudden and absolute triumph of a great artistic idea. And this idea was no random instinct; it was a conception of art deliberately held and consciously fostered by a long succession of workers. Never has the importance of criticism as a creative force in literature been more clearly shown. It is often carelessly assumed that the creative and the critical faculties are either actually antagonistic to one another, or so distinct as to be mutually exclusive; but the more the facts are examined, the more certain it appears that the contrary is the case. In England the great school of Dryden and the great school of Wordsworth both drew their strength from a profound and searching criticism; and there can be little doubt that even the 'wild enormity' of the Elizabethan drama was the result of a deliberate revolt against the frigid classicism which preceded it. No less deliberate was the long and complex movement which forms the subject of Mr. Tilley's book [From Montaigne to Molière; or, The Preparation for the Classical Age of French Literature]--the movement, as he describes it, 'from imagination to reason, from disorder to form.' It was, indeed, to its extreme self-consciousness that it owed its peculiar character.[11]

The significance of the critical ideas with which Strachey deals in the passage just cited consists in the breadth of their application. For they determined the practice of writers as well as the tastes of readers. Thus the function of criticism is to address both the artist and his audience, and to provide them with fairly fixed and impersonal formal criteria which, in turn, become a common ground for creation and appreciation. For Strachey, the degree of civilization to which any given era accedes can be measured, in part, by the pervasiveness of a dominant critical principle which presupposes that a work of art has value in and of itself.

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[11] Strachey, "The Age of Corneille," Spectator, 102 (30 January, 1909), p. 182.

Classicism derives from a widespread view of life and art which is shared by readers and writers, not one which is imposed from either side. In the "Preface" to Eminent Victorians this agreement is clearly assumed when Strachey writes that his purpose is "to illustrate rather than to explain."[12] A romantic artist, on the other hand, rebels against such sharing; indeed, he often seems to derive some satisfaction from his sense of isolation. Consequently he does not rely on the sympathetic intelligence of his audience, and is heavily insistent in imposing his views by means either of an impassioned and flamboyant rhetoric or by a needlessly extravagant piling up of details. In the early novels of George Sand, Strachey tells us, "the ardours of passionate love are ecstatically idealised in a loose and lyric flow of innumerable words."[13] It was Yeats, I believe, who somewhere said that rhetoric was the will trying to do the work of the imagination. Strachey would certainly have agreed insofar as the imagination takes its flight from experience which is commonly understood. The romantic artist, however, insists upon the singularity of his experience. Strachey admires Milton's "material imagination, perpetually concerned with objects which, however vast and however splendid, still remained objects of sense."[14] For Strachey, imaginary gardens must have real toads in them.

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[12] EV, 6.

[13] LFL, 136.

[14] SE, 107.

Romanticism, then, suggests the separation of the artist from his public. Lord Byron, whom Strachey regards as the prototype of the romantic artist, was more "distinct and individual" than eighteenth-century writers:

> It was not that he was greater than they; it was simply that he was differentiated from his contemporaries to a greater degree; he was the first of those dominating and isolated figures which were to be produced in such profusion in the first half of the nineteenth century.[15]

Because of the necessity of presenting a vision which is not generally understood, romantic writing is egocentric, inflated, pedantic, careless; whereas classical writing is impersonal, realistic, unemphatic, economical. Strachey praises Vigny whose best work avoids "the strain, the over-emphasis, the tendency towards the grotesque, always latent in Romanticism."[16] The view that economy--conciseness, selectivity, a limited vocabulary--increases the effectiveness of a literary work is one to which Strachey is continually drawn, particularly when he attempts to defend the work of writers who have suffered at the hands of romantic critics. Both Racine and Pope, for example, are shown by Strachey to have created "by what are apparently the simplest means, effects which other poets must strain every nerve to produce."[17] And Gibbon, whose style, Strachey observes, was consistently attacked by nineteenth-century critics, is praised for succeeding always "with the least possible emphasis."[18]

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[15] LE, 279.

[16] LFL, 133.

[17] LE, 66.

[18] BE, 144.

In discussing the style of Mme du Deffand's letters, Strachey states very explicitly this distinction between the classic and romantic modes.

> The object of all art is to make suggestions. The romantic artist attains that end by using a multitude of different stimuli, by calling up image after image, recollection after recollection, until the reader's mind is filled and held by a vivid and palpable evocation; the classic works by the contrary method of a fine economy, and, ignoring everything but what is essential, trusts by means of the exact propriety of his presentation, to produce the required effect.[19]

For Mme du Deffand ("who had never given a thought to her style") there was no question as to what precisely is "exact propriety of presentation." The expression does suggest a fixed standard of style which is not merely arbitrary, but absolute, and which must be amenable to the exposition of a wide variety of human experiences. This breadth is achieved by the ability of the classical writer to de-personalize his own experience; to make style itself an experience which the writer communicates. For the writing of biography--of anybody's biography--there are, Strachey says, only two satisfactory techniques: Boswell's and Aubrey's.[20] Significantly, Strachey stresses Aubrey's scientific interests and his personal detachment, that is, his freedom from preoccupation with himself. And Boswell's triumph is a triumph of method; his personality, or, for that matter, Dr. Johnson's, is quite separate from the success of the biography.

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[19] BE, 180.

[20] BE, 16.

In explaining his own method, Strachey observes that it is "as difficult to write a good life as to live one."[21]

In a way, because he is so subjective, the non-classical writer is narrower and more arbitrary than the classical. In his exuberance--or in his pedantry--he cuts down aesthetic distance in order to encourage immediacy of feeling, and he thereby denies his audience the pleasure of the contemplation of form. In a review of a recent American production of Phèdre, Stanley Kauffmann noted that Racine's theatre

> . . . wants to abstract and purify emotion, to preserve it in timeless form. This is a different aim from that of subjective art . . . whose aim is immediacy. In a sense the classic aim is more sophisticated because to the validity of its feeling it adds a graceful consciousness of the art itself. Thus it provides a double reward that we do not get so often from the romantic or realistic: a pleasure in the telling that is simultaneous with the effect of what is being told.[22]

Strachey would certainly have been in agreement with Kauffmann's observation. He is unhappy with any critical view which sets artificiality in opposition to inspiration, form in opposition to feeling. The regularity and order of the heroic couplet "no more implies mechanical monotony than the rigid form of the fugue,"[23] and the only poetry which is not artificial is bad poetry.[24] When the eighteenth century is labeled artificial, the imputation is true only insofar as that age was "the very

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[21] EV, 7.

[22] Stanley Kauffmann, "Theater: A Stylish 'Phedre' [sic] in English," New York Times (12 February, 1966), p. 17.

[23] SE, 151.

[24] LE, 88.

contrary of being spontaneous."[25] But it is a serious misapprehension to suppose that it was wanting in passion, Strachey asserts, and he calls upon Watteau and Bach and Mozart to support his argument. And of Marivaux:

> His plays are like Watteau's pictures, which, for all the unreality of their atmosphere, produce their effect owing to a mass of accurate observation and a profound sense of the realities of life. His characters, like Watteau's, seem to possess, not quite reality itself, but the very quintessence of rarified reality--the distilled fragrance of all that is most refined, delicate, and enchanting in the human spirit.[26]

Through a care for "exact propriety of presentation" literary works are detached from their writers, and are anonymous. A study of the life of Sir Thomas Browne, for instance, is a work of supererogation if it is meant to bring us closer to his writing: "It is not as a philosopher, nor as an antiquarian, nor as a man of science that Browne has taken his place among the acknowledged potentates of letters--it is as a master of words."[27] The value we place on the greatest poetry is "for its own sake and not for the sake of its creator."[28] It is because of his regard for detachment that Strachey regards Stendhal as the soundest of nineteenth-century French novelists.

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[25] LE, 243.

[26] LFL, 88.

[27] Strachey, "A New Book on Sir Thomas Browne," The Speaker, 13 (3 February, 1906), p. 441.

[28] Strachey, "The Late Miss Coleridge's Poems," Spectator, 100 (4 January, 1908), p. 19. For another Bloomsbury view of the problem of anonymity in literature, see Forster, "Anonymity: an Enquiry," Two Cheers for Democracy, 77-88.

In Stendhal are conjoined virtually all of the qualities which most appeal to Strachey. His life was a series of romantic posturings and eccentric escapades of the sort which are ideally suited to the purposes of a writer of entertaining biographies. Yet, despite the exaggerated passions of his life, Stendhal's art is a nearly perfect example of classical restraint. Indeed, as an artist, Stendhal had sufficient detachment to find ironic the very poses he himself assumed: "Other men have been by turns sensible and enthusiastic: but who before or since has combined the emotionalism of a schoolgirl with the cold penetration of a judge on the bench."[29] As a writer, Stendhal was opposed to the extravagances of his romantic contemporaries. And his work manifests neither the egocentric distortions of Hugo or Musset, nor the egocentric carelessness of Byron. ("Je fais tous les efforts possibles pour être sec. Je veux imposer silence à mon coeur, qui croit avoir beaucoup à dire. Je tremble toujours de n'avoir écrit qu'un soupir, quand je crois avoir noté une vérité.")[30] In preparation for the writing of La Chartreuse de Parme, Stendhal spent his mornings reading the Code Napoléon, which he regarded as an example of perfect style; and he attempted to make his work, like the law, "resemble a sheet of plate glass through which every object may be seen with absolute distinctness, in its true shape."[31]

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[29] LE, 162-63.

[30] Quoted in LE, 164-65.

[31] LE, 157.

For Strachey, the principal charm of Stendhal's style rests in its "quiet terseness."[32]

> In his [Stendhal's] narratives he is like a brilliant talker in a sympathetic circle, skimming quickly from point to point, taking for granted the intelligence of his audience, not afraid here and there to throw out a vague 'etc.' when the rest of the sentence is too obvious to state; always plain of speech, never self-assertive and taking care above all things never to force the note.[33]

Zola complained of Stendhal's deficiency as a novelist when, in Le Rouge et le Noir, he did not detail all the meteorological conditions during the scene in the garden when Julien first holds the hand of Madame de Rênal. Strachey replies to this objection by pointing out that such detailed completeness would be aesthetically damaging to the scene. Stendhal achieves an effective psychological precision by sparing his readers an "elaborate expatiation" on extraneous accessories: "In fact, Beyle's method is the classical method--the method of selection, of omission, of unification, with the object of creating a central impression of supreme reality."[34]

"A central impression of supreme reality" suggests an apparently objective presentation of experience, a goal which Strachey himself tried to achieve in his biographies. It is the business of the biographer, according to Strachey, "to lay bare the facts [italics mine] of the case, as he understands them," while preserving a brevity which "excludes everything

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[32] LE, 161.

[33] LE, 159-60.

[34] LE, 158-59.

that is redundant and nothing that is significant."[35] Such objectivity is hardly what the non-classical writer provides. The image of the world that we find in Byron's verse, Strachey tells us, is a singular projection of the poet's personality.[36] And Carlyle's gift for history "was undone by his moralisations."[37] In both cases the writing carries the central burden of the writer's personality and distorts what Strachey regards as truth (normal/universal experience, or the material world) instead of transforming it (setting it off for pleasurable contemplation). Strachey does not regard style as the imposition of personality; he sees it, rather, as the manifestation of an objectively critical intelligence. Thus the difference between distortion and transformation may be paralleled, for illustration, to the two major phases of Browning's aspirations in poetry: the earlier, to create a poem that was himself; the later, to create a style that was dramatic; that is, apparently objective. Or the difference may be seen in Sainte-Beuve's description of his own development as a writer of literary portraits:

> Jeune, je mêlais aux Portraits que je faisais des poëtes beaucoup d'affection et de l'enthousiasme, je ne m'en repens pas; j'y mettais même un peu de connivence. Aujourd'hui je n'y mets rien, je l'avoue, qu'un sincère désir de voir et de montrer les choses et les personnes telles qu'elles sont, telles du moins qu'en ce moment elles me paraissent.[38]

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[35] EV, 8.

[36] LE, 279.

[37] BE, 253.

[38] C. A. Sainte-Beuve, Causeries de Lundi (Paris, 1869), II, 287.

Perhaps the real difference between the practice of the romantic writer (distortion) and that of the classical (transformation) lies in their method of selection. In the classical mode, selection is guided by the necessities of form; in the romantic, by content or subjective predisposition.

All writing, of course, whether romantic or otherwise, involves selection. And selection gives rise to distortion. At the heart of the matter is the quality of the self-consciousness of the artist, the degree of his apparent detachment from his subject in his desire to create a beautiful form. "The true battle," A. J. A. Symons observes in a discussion of pre- and post-Strachean biography, "is between unguided instinct and self-conscious technique."[39] It was one of Milton's greatest achievements, according to Strachey, that after the publication of Comus "our poetry could never be the half-unconscious thing that it had been before." And when Strachey compares earlier Elizabethan lyrics with the songs from Comus, he finds: "It is the difference between a wild rose and a rose in a garden bed."[40]

The self-consciousness which Strachey emphasizes is the sense the reader receives of the writer's awareness of himself as an artist, as a creator of pleasing forms--and not as anything else. The work of art itself ought to be at once both

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[39]A. J. A. Symons, "Tradition in Biography," Tradition and Experiment in Present-Day Literature, 153.

[40]SE, 105.

subject and object to the writer; form and feeling are inseparable in artistic creation. Although Strachey finds much to complain of in Shakespeare's later plays, he is pleased with the image of the poet which he sees there.

> At last, it was simply for style that Shakespeare lived; everything else had vanished. He began as a poet, and as a poet he ended. Human beings, life, fate, reality--he cared for such things no longer. They were figments--mere ideas; and poetry is not written with ideas; it is written with words.[41]

Strachey finds that Macaulay's work suffers most when we see Macaulay through it, with his Whig predilections and his moralizing. But he can be superb when he concentrates on form.

> History is primarily a narrative, and in power of narration no one has ever surpassed Macaulay. In that he is a genius. When it comes to telling a story, his faults disappear or change into virtues. . . . It is clear from his journal that Macaulay realised the dominating importance of this side of his work. He laboured at his purely narrative passages for weeks at a time, with the result that they are masterpieces. . . . But it is not only in certain passages that Macaulay triumphs. His whole history is conditioned by a supreme sense of the narrative form. It presses on, with masterly precipitation, from start to finish. Everything falls into place. . . . [everything is] part of the pattern--the enthralling, ever-shifting pattern of the perfect kaleidoscope. A work of art? Yes, there is no denying it: the Philistine was also an artist.[42]

As far as Strachey is concerned, the sole aim of the writer's occupation is the creation of beautiful structures. These structures are most often achieved when the artist is critically aware of his own techniques. It is by no means surprising

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[41] LE, 19.

[42] LE, 200-201.

that Strachey adored Pope who wished to be the most correct of poets.

That the artist himself has an acute awareness of style is a notion to which Bloomsbury was devoted. It is certainly related to the concept of Significant Form. As a biographer, Strachey himself was clearly conscious of the limitations and the possibilities of the art which he practiced and he "worked at his sentences like a Pater; . . . managed his effects with the care of a Proust."[43] Vanessa Bell, Roger Fry, Duncan Grant were all, as painters, concerned with the technical problems of form and color. Virginia Woolf was an inordinately self-conscious artist, striving continually to create and to perfect forms of the novel. It is significant that all of Bloomsbury's artists were critics as well.

Strachey regarded history as an art, and in his discussions of that art, he relegates even factual accuracy to a second rank. For him, form comes first: "It is obvious that History is not the accumulation of facts, but the relation of them. . . . Facts . . . are no more History than butter, eggs, salt and herbs are an omelette."[44] When Strachey reviewed for the Spectator two histories of the Bonaparte family--one written by a Frenchman, the other by an Englishman--he preferred the French work because it was amusing, though inaccurate. The English writer suffered from

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[43]Richard D. Altick, Lives and Letters (New York, 1965), p. 284.

[44]BE, 142.

a "lack of artistic feeling," and was more concerned with "the collection and verification of his facts than with the arrangement of them."[45] Even in history a work achieves meaning as a result of its style.

> When Livy said that he would have made Pompey win the battle of Pharsalia if the turn of the sentence had required it, he was not talking utter nonsense, but simply expressing an important truth in a highly paradoxical way--that the first duty of a great historian is to be an artist. The function of art in history is something more profound than mere decoration; to regard it, as some writers persist in regarding it, as if it were the jam put round the pill of fact by cunning historians is to fall into grievous error; a truer analogy would be to compare it to the process of fermentation which converts a raw mass of grape-juice into a subtle and splendid wine. Uninterpreted truth is as useless as buried gold; and art is the great interpreter.[46]

Clearly, the first obligation of the historian is to give his collection of facts an organization which is in itself meaningful. It was Gibbon's style which "conditioned the whole treatment of his material, the whole scope and nature of his History. . . . The style once fixed, everything else followed."[47] Consequently, to complain of Gibbon's style as though it were a mere appendage to his History is like complaining that St. Paul's was not built in Gothic. In another style it would be an entirely different work.

For historians, at least, the most efficient means of achieving a satisfactory style is to have what Strachey calls

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[45]Strachey, "Some Napoleonic Books," Spectator, 101 (26 December, 1908), p. 1100.

[46]SE, 13.

[47]BE, 144.

"a point of view."[48] In his book on Strachey, Professor C. R. Sanders tries to define what is meant by that term.

> First he [Strachey] meant that for the sake of both art and truth the biographer must employ selection, proportion, and emphasis in dealing with the facts relating to his subject. Only thus could he achieve the perspective which a good portrait must have. Second, Strachey meant that biography should be critical and evaluative. The biographer should seek to determine the extent to which his subject lived in accordance with true values--the extent to which his subject succeeded in living the good life. He must discover the extent to which his subject practiced wisdom or fell into stupidity.[49]

Sanders goes on to observe that there is a strong subjective element in the determination of what is a true or a false value, what is wisdom and what is stupidity. He therefore describes Strachey's own point of view, and he finds it to be detached and worldly, based upon a scientific or rational idealism. What Sanders writes is true as far as it goes; but he ignores one very important element of Strachey's theory and of his practice. In "Macaulay," Strachey writes: "But a point of view, it must be remembered, by no means implies sympathy. One might almost say it implies the reverse."[50] In Eminent Victorians, he states that one of the first duties of a biographer "is to maintain his own freedom of spirit. It is not his business to be complimentary."[51] Charity may oblige us to love our neighbors as ourselves, but, as Saint-Simon

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[48] LE, 195.

[49] Sanders, Lytton Strachey, 47.

[50] LE, 195.

[51] EV, 8.

wrote, "elle n'ordonne pas, sous prétexte d'aimer les personnes parce que ce sont nos frères, d'aimer en eux leurs défauts, leurs vices, leurs mauvais desseins, leurs crimes."[52] Both Strachey and Saint-Simon pretend--outwardly at least--to be impartial observers, and both pretend to the fulfillment of a noble duty by exposing the wicked.[53] A "point of view" really seems to mean a cool antagonism to one's subject. Sympathy, it would appear, is the enemy of reason and of clarity. It is worthwhile recalling here that Strachey far prefers the Lettres Provinciales to the Pensées. And Saint-Simon, Strachey observes, is at his best when he dissects those whom he detested.[54] Gibbon and Michelet were "at daggers drawn with their subjects."[55] Indeed, Gibbon's style "makes sympathy impossible."[56] While Strachey likes Trevelyan's history of the Italian Risorgimento, it "would have been still more delightful if it had contained a little of the salt of criticism--if, in fact, he had not swallowed Garibaldi whole."[57] And Frank Swinnerton has pointed out that, while Strachey admired Newman and loathed Manning, he did not write his essay on Newman.[58]

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[52]Saint-Simon, Mémoires (Paris, 1953), I, 11.

[53]In Eminent Victorians, Strachey claims to write "without ulterior intentions. To quote the words of a Master--'Je n'impose rien; je ne propose rien: j'expose.'" EV, 8.

[54]LFL, 91.

[55]LE, 195.

[56]BE, 144.

[57]LE, 195.

[58]Frank Swinnerton, Figures in the Foreground (Garden City, 1964), p. 141.

Sympathy in an historian or biographer is a mark of provincialism, a "symptom of crudity." Macaulay's sympathies derive from his political engagements; and one misses a great deal in observing life from "one side or other of the House of Commons."[59] Political sympathy, however, is less bad than religious sympathy. If Macaulay's work suffers from his political bias, that bias, at least, derives from an "intellectual tradition; while Froude's Protestantism is--there is really only one word for it--provincial."[60] Froude was a particular disappointment to Strachey. Carlyle's great biographer who overcame his sympathy and refused to mask the faults of his subject, whose style was often so worldly, never did become a great historian.

> Old Mr. Froude [the historian's father] had drawn a magic circle round his son, from which escape was impossible; and the creature whose life was almost ruined by his father's moral cruelty, who--to all appearances--had thrown off the yoke, and had grown into maturity with the powerful, audacious, sceptical spirit of a free man, remained, in fact, in secret servitude--a disciplinarian, a Protestant, even a churchgoer, to the very end.[61]

From the influence of his father, Froude moved under the influence of Carlyle. And, as Strachey sees it, this influence was devastating. He is amazed that a man of intelligence could be swayed by the views of Carlyle. However that may be, the double heritage from his father and from Carlyle had apparently entered so deeply into Froude's sensibilities that it shut him off from

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[59] LE, 197.

[60] BE, 262.

[61] BE, 258.

a point of view which could have made his History of England a masterpiece.

> If only, one feels, this gifted, splendid man could have stepped back a little, could have withdrawn from the provinciality of Protestantism and the crudity of Carlylean dogma. . . . Then surely . . . he would have preferred civilisation to fanaticism. . . . He might even have written immortal English.[62]

Froude's History is thus damaged by his Protestant sympathies even though--or more accurately, because--the work is concerned with the evolution of a Protestant country.

There is another side to the coin of sympathy. There is, Strachey writes, one quality "which is as necessary in criticism as salt is in cooking,--the quality of sympathy."[63] What is reprehensible in the artist, is admirable in the critic. Insofar as sympathy vitiates Froude's work or is responsible for the worst of Macaulay's writing, it signifies a friendly bias towards a subject, a commitment to a particular attitude or principle. What is wanting is a commitment to form.[64] But the critic often falls into serious error if he is antagonistic to any subject or to any style: "The first duty of the critic is to point out to his readers what is best worth reading in an author."[65] It is not that a critic must ignore the worst in an author; rather he must be aware that there is a proper

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[62] BE, 263.

[63] Strachey, "Mr. Yeats's Poetry," 588.

[64] In the histories of Taine and Renan, Strachey finds accuracy and style in proper balance--and he even approves of their "untiring sympathy," but "a suave and lucid style adds the charm and amenity which art alone can give." LFL, 143.

[65] SE, 157.

presentation for any subject. In assuming this view, Strachey is in accord with G. E. Moore who urges a recognition of the notion that "anything whatever may be good."[66] It is in this spirit that Strachey, in Landmarks in French Literature, calls the second half of the nineteenth century an "Age of Criticism." The writers of that period wished to combine the expansiveness of thought and subject of the Romantics with the formal precision of the Classics. The critical center of that time is to be found in the writings of Sainte-Beuve.

It was Sainte-Beuve, according to Frank Swinnerton, who was "the prime literary inspiration of Strachey's life."[67] It is noteworthy that so few of Strachey's admirers--Swinnerton cannot be counted among them--have remarked a resemblance which is so strong. Certainly the whole form and scale of what Strachey calls a portrait in miniature correspond closely to the technique of Sainte-Beuve's portrait littéraire. The history of Sainte-Beuve's career is one of a movement away from romantic enthusiasm to classical restraint. Both as an historian and as a critic, Sainte-Beuve is to be admired for producing "a mass of material of unequalled value concerning the whole of French literature."[68] (An observation which might have given rise to Swinnerton's suspicion that Strachey read at least as much Sainte-Beuve as he did original materials in preparing

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[66]Moore, 20.

[67]Frank Swinnerton, The Georgian Literary Scene (London, 1935), p. 380.

[68]LFL, 144.

Landmarks in French Literature.) Strachey considered Sainte-Beuve to be the primary exponent of the best of critical traditions. Sainte-Beuve's critical method involves the kind of sympathy which Strachey likes: a willingness on the part of the critic to meet the poet on the poet's own grounds; a putting aside of personal and academic prejudices in order to examine a work in terms of its own form and environment.

> With Sainte-Beuve, in fact, one might almost say that criticism, as we know it, came into existence for the first time. Before him, all criticism had been one of two things: it had been either a merely personal expression of opinion, or else an attempt to establish universal literary canons and to judge of writers by the standards thus set up. Sainte-Beuve realised that such methods--the slap-dash pronouncements of a Johnson or the narrow generalisations of a Boileau--were in reality not critical at all. He saw that the critic's first duty was not to judge, but to understand. . . .[69]

Ultimately a critic must make a judgment, but not on the basis of pre-ordained laws or of a fixed philosophic position. Neither must the critic be himself obtrusive, for he must present the writer under consideration clearly. In a way, this is like the method of history and biography which Strachey and Saint-Simon and Sainte-Beuve hold claim to: one exposes one's subject. Such a method is essential to Strachey's presentation of Landmarks in French Literature. Clearly such writers as Hugo and Lamartine could not have been personally pleasing to one of Strachey's satiric bent; but a good critic "must know the difficult art of 'bringing out' an author, of realizing his strong points, of making him show himself at his very best."[70]

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[69] LFL, 143.

[70] SE, 111.

> Le génie critique n'a rien de trop digne, ni de prude, ni de préoccupé, aucun quant à soi. Il ne reste pas dans son centre ou à peu de distance; il ne se retranche pas dans sa cour, ni dans sa citadelle, ni dans son académie; il ne craint pas de se mésallier; il va partout, le long des rues, s'informant, accostant; la curiosité l'alèche, et il ne s'épargne pas les régals qui se présentent. Il est, jusqu'à un certain point, tout à tous, comme l'Apôtre, et en ce sens il y a toujours de l'optimisme dans le critique véritablement doué.[71]

The basis of sound critical judgment derives from an understanding of what the artist has attempted, not what he should have or might have attempted.

In his essay on The Lives of the Poets, Strachey pictures Johnson as a jurist about to pronounce sentence on a prisoner in the dock. But the laws of art are different from criminal laws. The critic cannot judge an artist for infractions as a criminal might be judged because each work of art provides its own laws, and "the judge must bow to the prisoner's ruling."[72] Consequently, as far as Strachey is concerned, Matthew Arnold's "touchstone" theory is unworkable: "It cannot come into operation until we have decided the very questions it is intended to solve--namely, who 'the great masters' are."[73] The very notion of the touchstone suggests pre-established standards by which all writers are to be judged. Any acceptance of such standards is altogether inconsistent with the critical philosophy of "the school of Sainte-Beuve."[74] Indeed, the

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[71] C. A. Sainte-Beuve, Oeuvres (Paris, 1949), I, 984-85.

[72] LE, 95.

[73] LE, 213.

[74] LE, 95.

acceptance of such standards implies negligence on the part of the critic; Strachey takes John Bailey to task for this reason.

> Mr. Bailey tells us that the couplet is only fit for satire. Has he forgotten Lamia? And he asks, 'How is it that we read Pope's Satires and Dryden's, and Johnson's with enthusiasm still, while we never touch Irene, and rarely the Conquest of Granada?' Perhaps the answer is that if we cannot get rid of our a priori theories, even the fiery art of Dryden's drama may remain dead to us, and that if we touched Irene even once, we should find it was in blank verse.[75]

"A priori theories" fall generally into two categories: formal (as in the case of Johnson or of Boileau), or moral (as in the case of Arnold or of Leslie Stephen). Of the two the former is by far the less dangerous, for it accepts the independent existence of beauty. Whereas the latter seeks to apologize for art by giving it a raison d'être outside of itself; that is, a work of art is successful if it serves some function other than being beautiful. Matthew Arnold, Strachey argues, was incapable of talking about literature for its own sake, so he was fortunate to come upon "that ingenious godsend, the theory of the Criticism of Life."[76] In a review of a book by J. Churton Collins, Strachey severely criticizes that writer for suggesting that the principal value of poetry is educative, that poetry can direct the course of human life toward satisfying moral goals. Collins judges poetry by "an accidental quality," and rejects the true value of beauty.

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[75] LE, 76.

[76] LE, 213.

> For it is not by its uses that poetry is to be justified or condemned. Its beauty and its goodness, like the beauty of a landscape or the goodness of a human being, have a value of their own, a value which does not depend on their effects. We love poems, as we love the fields and the trees and the rivers of England, and as we love our friends, not for the pleasure which they may bring us, nor for the good which they may do us, but for themselves.[77]

Each work of art is a thing unto itself. Working on much the same principle as Roger Fry, who tries to separate the aesthetic experience from all other experiences, or G. E. Moore, who tries to distinguish the good in experience from all accompanying qualities, Strachey objects to literary critics who apply extra-literary criteria in making a judgment of value. Strachey's best and most sustained statements on this subject are to be found in his essays on Racine and on Pope.

The aim of both essays is to correct critics in two ways. (In "Racine" the argument is principally directed against John Bailey, in "Pope" against Matthew Arnold.) First, Strachey wishes to demonstrate that the traditions of neo-classicism are not inferior to those of romanticism; second, he wishes to explode a critical myth which is non-aesthetic in its assumptions. For Bailey, Racine is a poet of the second rank. He is empty and artificial; he wants the grandeur and

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[77]Strachey, "The Value of Poetry," Spectator, 97 (21 July, 1906), p. 94. Of The Lives of the Poets, Strachey writes:

> "We do not go to it for information or for instruction, or that our tastes may be improved, or that our sympathies may be widened; we go to it to see what Dr. Johnson thought. Doubtless, during the process, we are informed and instructed and improved in various ways; but these benefits are incidental, like the invigoration which comes from a mountain walk. It is not for the sake of the exercise that we set out; but for the sake of the view." LE, 94.

the range of Shakespeare. What Bailey has done, according to Strachey, is provincially to judge all poetry by a single English tradition; and such a judgment is too restrictive. The study of literature is a cosmopolitan venture to Strachey. The duty of the critic is to widen and to civilize the sensibilities of readers, not to encourage them in their prejudices. Bailey complains that Racine's alexandrines are difficult for an English ear, and that the classical limitations under which Racine wrote narrow the emotional qualities of the plays too severely. Where Shakespeare stuns our emotions with great series of detailed images, Racine generalizes; where Shakespeare opens out his plays to the entire world, Racine follows closely the unities of time and place. Bailey has not read Racine with sympathy; he does not see what Racine himself was attempting. The beauties of Racine's verse are different from those of English verse, but no less excellent.

> When Shakespeare wishes to describe a silent night he does so with a single stroke of detail--'not a mouse stirring'! . . . Racine's way is different, but is it less masterly?
>
> Mais tout dort, et l'armée, et les vents, et Neptune.
>
> What a flat and feeble set of expressions! is the Englishman's first thought--with the conventional 'Neptune,' and the vague 'armée,' and the commonplace 'vents.' And he forgets to notice the total impression which these words produce--the atmosphere of darkness and emptiness and vastness and ominous hush.[78]

Comparing Racine to Shakespeare, to Goethe, to Sophocles is a wasteful exercise, for such comparisons can in

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[78] LE, 69.

no way determine the merit of the French playwright.[79] Judging one poet by another is to be blind to the variety of forms which literature permits, and to imply a hierarchic structure of literary works. Moreover, a system of judgment by comparison can only tell us where a poet is remiss; it is hard put to define his positive virtues if these differ from the touchstone (indeed, if they differ from the touchstone, can they be virtues at all?). Such is the problem, not only of a "touchstone" system, but, as well, of any system which insists upon particular qualities as a kind of universal law. Arnold criticizes Pope for a lack of "high seriousness," but

> . . . if one is to judge poets by what they are without, where is one to end? One might point out that Wordsworth had no sense of humour, that Shelley did not understand human beings, that Keats could not read Greek, and that Matthew Arnold did not wear a wig. And, if one looks more closely, one perceives that there were a good many things that Pope could do very well--when he wanted to.[80]

To set up a standard, as Bailey does, that great poets have "a wide view of humanity, a large view of life," or, as Arnold does that poetry is a criticism of life indicates a closing of the critical mind to the intrinsic values of a literary work. Again, there is a suggestion of hierarchic ranking. Working from Bailey's standard, lyric poetry would have to take second place

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[79]To the Shakespeare-Racine comparison, Strachey replies:

> "It is as if we had become so accustomed to looking at boxers, wrestlers, and gladiators that the sight of an exquisite minuet produced no effect on us; the ordered dance strikes us as a monotony, for we are blind to the subtle delicacies of the dancers, which are fraught with such significance to the practised eye. But let us be patient, and let us look again." LE, 66.

[80]LE, 91.

to works of larger scope. Herein there are obvious pitfalls and contradictions. "How wide," Strachey asks, "was Milton's 'view of humanity'? And though Wordsworth's sense of the position of man in the universe was far more profound than Dante's, who will venture to assert that he was the greater poet?"[81] Strachey will not admit to a literary hierarchy; he will admit only to variety.

> Take away the expression from the Satires of Pope, or from The Excursion, and, though you will destroy the poems, you will leave behind a great mass of thought. Take away the expression from Hyperion, and you leave nothing at all. To ask which is the better of the two styles is like asking whether a peach is better than a rose, because, both being beautiful, you can eat the one and not the other.[82]

Again and again, Strachey points out the dangers of criticizing any work on grounds other than those of the work itself. Vast generic terms, for instance, tend to distort and to prejudice. To talk of "realism" is quite beside the point in connection with Racine. The whole tradition in which Racine was working was non-realistic. When Bailey complains of Racine's artificiality and narrowness, he is being irrelevant. He imposes the standards of one tradition upon another, and thereby denies the latter its artistic rights. The movement of Racine's plays, Strachey indicates, is not outward to the physical world and from there to the metaphysical; it is inward, in a modern sense, psychological. Racine probes "the mysteries of the mind of man."[83] Since his characters appear

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[81] LE, 64.

[82] LE, 189.

[83] LE, 71.

to us at the moment of crisis, external circumstances are of little importance. The workings of the mind of a Racinian character are revealed to us through restraint and compression. The unities of time and place are justified "in the conception of drama as the history of a spiritual crisis--the vision, thrown up, as it were, by a bull's-eye lantern, of the final catastrophic phases of a long series of events."[84]

The critic must examine form and language in terms of the contexts for which they are used, in terms of the total structure of which they are a part. To demand a quality of language or of structure or of morality in a literary work, is to deny the infinite possibilities of beauty. In making these demands, the critic does not admit the total coalescence of experience and form and content. In art there is a larger freedom, a larger cosmopolitan spirit than there is in life: "It is the business of the poet to break rules and to baffle expectation; and all the masterpieces in the world cannot make a precedent."[85] The true critic recognizes that fact and is himself enlarged thereby; for no longer is the world a crude projection of his own predilections--no longer is the world either Whig or Tory. A work of art is its own comment upon itself, and, perhaps, upon the world: "And now, perhaps, we have discovered what may truly be said to have been Pope's 'poetic criticism of life.' His poetic criticism of life was, simply and solely, the heroic couplet."[86]

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[84] LE, 62.

[85] LE, 65.

[86] LE, 90.

Literature is at a far remove from life, and we must accept it at its proper distance. But the artist who has no point of view and the critic who has too much of one try to narrow the distance, try to make art and action the same thing; and they are guilty of a failure of the imagination. The classical artist, the Sainte-Beuvean critic cherish the distance and admire the forms of the hitherto unimaginable for the simple beauty of those forms. To the specialist--the psychologist, the physician, the medium--there might be some advantage in learning specifically and factually what passed through the mind of Queen Victoria at the moment before her death. For the civilized reader or critic, though, is it not sufficient to recognize that her thoughts went ever backwards--from Beaconsfield, to Palmerston, to Albert, to Melbourne, to her coronation, to her uncles, to her mother, to her nurse, to "the trees and the grass at Kensington"--because "the turn of the sentence" required it?

CONCLUSION

We come back to where we began: "The environment of Lytton Strachey and the special direction it gave to his thought and his writing." Strachey's work was the product of mutation in two distinct tendencies in nineteenth-century thought and life. The first was the tradition of rationalistic thought, developed most notably at Cambridge, and associated with the idea of social progress. The second was a tradition of social organization and social intercourse, based upon close personal attachment and high-minded intellectual interests, and exemplified in the structure of certain upper-middle-class coteries (e.g. the Clapham Sect). These two traditions came together in the formation of the Bloomsbury Group whose members were closely associated with Cambridge and who took for their philosophic guideline the rationalistic ethics of G. E. Moore and the structuralist aesthetic of Roger Fry.

Perhaps more than any other member of the Bloomsbury Group, Lytton Strachey was very narrowly controlled and directed by that combination. His views on more or less public matters--education, woman suffrage, censorship of books, some of the problems arising out of the First World War--tended to the position that most wrongs could be righted

if they were only exposed to the scrutiny of reasonable people (and all people were capable of being reasonable). The other side of the coin, however, tended to distress him; he rarely considered that all people were, as well, capable of being unreasonable. To him, manifestations of unreasonableness, whether destructive (as in the case of Philip II) or the obverse (as in the case of Pascal or of Blake), were anti-human and prompted by a faith in religious ideals. And religious ideals he did not regard as satisfactory standards for the conduct of human life. Yet there were some kinds of irrational behavior with which he was in some sympathy: the behavior of amusing eccentrics. With the help of Freud (whom he knew at second hand) and of Dostoievsky, he was able to regard Dr. North, or Mme du Deffand, or Lady Mary Wortley Montague as socially or sexually maladjusted. Significantly, very few of the sympathetic eccentrics with whom he dealt held very strong religious views.

For Strachey those ideals toward which one might reasonably strive were summed up in G. E. Moore's list in the last chapter of Principia Ethica: "The pleasures of human intercourse and the enjoyment of beautiful objects." These ideals have been best realized in those periods which Strachey regarded as civilized (most particularly, seventeenth-century France, and eighteenth-century France and England). Civilizations, as Strachey used that term, are particularly noteworthy for their worldliness and for their

respect for tradition in art and in society. Since, somewhat in accord with Roger Fry's and Clive Bell's doctrine of Significant Form, Strachey regarded both art and society as formal structures, he preferred tradition to experiment; emphasis on tradition encourages intensification within given forms and renders them more "significant."

In much the same way, Strachey preferred classic to romantic art. In the former our attention is drawn to the perfection of traditionally known forms; in the latter to the personality of the artist. Ideally, the artist ought to be anonymous. The work of art ought to be totally comprehensible in the context of its own form. For that reason, Strachey was drawn to a school of literary criticism, which he regarded as best embodied in the work of Sainte-Beuve, which presents literary works in terms of the histories of formal traditions, and which seeks to understand and to explain works of art as formal structures only. Such a critical method is, again, perfectly in keeping with Bloomsbury's rational heritage. It is a method which explains that which is; it does not make judgments based on a priori standards of that which ought to be. Perhaps Strachey's own literary reputation has suffered from just such a priori critical standards.

Among critics and literary historians, the reputation of the Bloomsbury Group has been on the decline, although the reputations of some of its individual members (e.g. Virginia Woolf and E. M. Forster) have been able to stand somewhat

apart from the general decline. Not so Lytton Strachey. For his work and his environment are virtually the same thing. Strachey's notion of civilization and his literary theories rely on a sense of formal perfection which is rationally perceived. What this perception leaves almost entirely out of account is intuition or inspiration. Modern as Strachey's work is, it is modern in the way that some furniture can be modern: so self-conscious, so deliberate in its design that it betrays too exactly its own date of manufacture. That is, there is nothing beyond the design to link it to the largest general conditions of the times. The design of Queen Victoria is both functional and graceful; it holds up well; we can go back to it time and again; and each time we learn something about the nature of design. But we learn little, if anything, of that change which, according to Virginia Woolf, occurred in human character "in or about December, 1910."[1] To put it another way, To the Lighthouse is a work of the twentieth century, whereas Queen Victoria is a work of the nineteen-twenties. That does not mean, to refer once again to Stephen Spender's distinction, that Strachey is "contemporary" rather than "modern." There is no massive sense of a present moment in Strachey's work. There is no literal reproduction of laws and institutions, of building and dress, of commercial and political habits such as we find in Bennett or Wells. But

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[1] Virginia Woolf, "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown," The Captain's Death Bed and Other Essays (New York, 1950), p. 96.

then the latter have not Strachey's sense of design which is very much a part of the "modern."

In her diary, Mrs. Woolf recorded a conversation with Strachey which took place shortly after the publication of Mrs. Dalloway. Strachey had not liked that novel and he told his friend that she should try "something wilder and more fantastic, a framework that admits of anything, like Tristram Shandy." Mrs. Woolf replied that she was afraid that in doing that she might "lose touch with emotions." "Yes, [Strachey] agreed, there must be a reality for you to start with."[2] The reality with which Strachey usually started may have been wild and fantastic (e.g. Lady Hester Stanhope), but it was always complete. Other satiric and sceptical writers developed from the same tradition of nineteenth-century rationalism as Strachey--George Bernard Shaw, Aldous Huxley, Evelyn Waugh, for example. But it is significant that, unlike these other writers, Strachey was not, in a strict sense, a creative artist. He had to have, for his art, a palpable and undisputed reality ready to hand. General Gordon or Queen Victoria did, in historical fact, have an existence, however much Strachey may have transformed that existence. If, however, we accept the existence of Charles Ryder or of Captain Shotover as we read Brideshead Revisited or Heartbreak House, it is because we are aware of a social or moral climate in which they might live. Shaw and Waugh

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[2]V. Woolf, Diary, 77.

created active beings out of an abstract reality; Strachey worked the other way round.

Strachey was not so much gifted with a "shaping spirit of the imagination," as he was with a re-shaping spirit. His interest in the past, the emphasis he placed upon traditions and traditional forms all reveal this. He gave significance to forms which were already in existence. Even the method of his literary criticism, deriving as it did from Sainte-Beuve, is little more than a fairly detailed explication de texte; it attempts to reveal the true shape of what a writer has created. It does not deal with what the writer may or may not have meant, nor does it deal with the abstract implications which might be drawn from a work. Thus, we may see another reason why a present moment, in any large sense, is always absent from his work. The present is always incomplete; its organic unity--to use G. E. Moore's term--cannot be perceived.

To read Strachey for the depth of his insight into the century in which he lived, or for the extensiveness of his commitment to noble causes, or for the moral/intellectual sweep of his sense of history is a senseless exercise which reflects as badly upon the reader as it does upon the writer. The philosophical traditions and the artistic traditions which lay behind his work were held together in a particular social mould. The Bloomsbury Group was a coterie which was descended from other coteries. Philosophy in such circles has as much personal application as it has general. And applied personally, it becomes the excuse for gossip. Like Sir Charles Greville whose

diaries he edited, Lytton Strachey was a gossip. His biographies and his literary criticism rely on a witty analysis of what has already happened in specific instances to specific people. "Why" is a question which is asked when philosophy is applied generally; "how" is the question which is asked by the gossip. Lytton Strachey deals with "how"--traditions and forms in a reasonable world.

Narrow though that range may be, Strachey, at his best, deals with it superbly. He wrote of Bacon's style that "it has no poetical mystery, no power of vague suggestion and romance. It never reaches the heights, nor explores the depths; but it is strong, subtle, clear. . . ."[3] The same might be said of Strachey's own style. Since he is not in the tradition of the great novelists and poets of England, need he be disregarded because he is in the lesser tradition of letter-writers and informal essayists? Walpole and Lamb are among his literary progenitors. To the wit, to the sense of the pleasures of life lived in society, to the knowledgeable love of beautiful objects--in brief, to the sense of good taste in life and in art which Strachey inherited from them, he added Bloomsbury's gift for significant design.

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[3]SE, 86.

APPENDIX

Until the publication in 1948 of The Collected Works of Lytton Strachey, some of Strachey's essays had been collected in three books: Books and Characters, French and English (1922); Portraits in Miniature and Other Essays (1931); Characters and Commentaries (1933).[1] Not all of the essays in these three books were re-printed in the Collected Works. And, with one exception, none of the essays Strachey wrote for the Spectator were re-printed until the publication of Spectatorial Essays (1965). The following lists present information about the various publications of Strachey's essays. The first list deals with those essays which were not written for the Spectator; the second with those which were. For information regarding those Spectator essays which were not re-printed in Spectatorial Essays, and for information about publication in American periodicals, I have relied on C. R. Sanders' "A Chronological Check List of Lytton Strachey's Writings" which appears at the end of his book, Lytton Strachey: His Mind and Art.

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[1]For convenience these books are abbreviated in the lists as follows:

Books and Characters	BC
Portraits in Miniature	PM
Characters and Commentaries	CC

I

ESSAY	ORIGINAL PUBLICATION	RE-PUBLICATIONS
"A Diplomatist: Li Hung Chan"	War and Peace (March, 1918)	CC,BE
"A New Book on Sir Thomas Browne"	Speaker (3 February, 1906)	
"A Sidelight on Frederick the Great"	New Statesman (27 January, 1917)	CC,BE
"A Simple Story"	"Introduction" to Mrs. Inchbald's A Simple Story (London: Henry Frowde, 1908)	CC,LE
"A Statesman: Lord Morley"	War and Peace (February 1918)	CC,BE
"A Victorian Critic"	New Statesman (1 August, 1914)	CC,LE
"An Adolescent"	New Statesman (31 March, 1917)	CC,BE
"An Anthology"	New Quarterly, 1 (October, 1908); Living Age, 259 (21 November, 1908)	CC,LE
"Avons-nous changé tout cela?"	New Statesman (22 November, 1913)	CC
"Bonga Bonga in Whitehall"	New Statesman (17 January 1914)	CC
"Carlyle"	Nation and Athenaeum, 42 28 January, 1928)	PM,BE
"Charles Greville"	Nation and Athenaeum, 33 (11 August, 1923); New Republic, 35 (15 August, 1923)	BE
"Congreve, Collier, and Macaulay"	Nation and Athenaeum, 34 (13 October, 1923); New Republic, 36 (21 November, 1923)	PM,LE
"Creighton"	Life and Letters, 2 (June, 1929); New York Herald Tribune Books (28 May, 1929)	PM,BE

"Dizzy"	Woman's Leader, 12 (16 July, 1920)	CC,BE
"English Letter Writers"	Written in 1905, but first published in CC.	LE
"French Poets Through Boston Eyes"	New Statesman (4 March, 1916)	CC
"Froude"	Life and Letters, 5 (December, 1930); Saturday Review of Literature, 7 (6 December, 1930)	PM,BE
"Gibbon"	Nation and Athenaeum, 42 (14 January, 1928)	PM,BE
"Henri Beyle"	Edinburgh Review, 219 (January, 1914)	BC,LE
"Horace Walpole"	Independent Review, 2 (May, 1904)	CC,BE
"Hume"	Nation and Athenaeum, 42 (7 January, 1928)	PM,BE
"James Boswell"	Nation and Athenaeum, 36 (31 January, 1925); New Republic, 41 (4 February, 1925)	PM,BE
"John Aubrey"	Nation and Athenaeum, 33 (15 September, 1923); New Republic, 36 (10 October, 1923)	PM,BE
"Lady Hester Stanhope"	Athenaeum (4 April, 1919); Living Age, 301 (17 May, 1919)	BC,BE
"Lady Mary Wortley Montague"	Albany Review, 1 (September, 1907)	CC,BE
"Macaulay"	Nation and Athenaeum, 42 (21 January, 1928)	PM,LE
"Madame du Deffand"	Edinburgh Review, 217 (January, 1913)	BC,BE

"Madame de Lieven"	Life and Letters, 6 (April, 1931); Saturday Review of Literature, 7 (18 April, 1931)	PM,BE
"Madame de Sévigné's Cousin"	Nation and Athenaeum, 36 (4 October, 1924); New Republic, 40 (8 October, 1924)	PM,BE
"Mademoiselle de Lespinasse"	Independent Review, 10 (September, 1906)	CC,BE
"Mary Berry"	Nation and Athenaeum, 36 (21 March, 1925); New Republic, 42 (1 April, 1925)	PM,BE
"Militarism and Theology"	War and Peace (May, 1918)	CC
"Mr. Creevey"	Athenaeum (13 June, 1919); New Republic, 19 (7 June, 1919); Living Age, 302 (19 July, 1919)	BC,BE
"Mr. Hardy's New Poems"	New Statesman (19 December, 1914)	CC,LE
"Muggleton"	Nation and Athenaeum, 35 (26 July, 1924); New Republic, 39 (30 July, 1924)	PM,BE
"Othello"	An unfinished essay begun in 1931, and published in CC	
"Pope"	Leslie Stephen Lecture, 1925; published (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1925)	CC,LE
"Rabelais"	New Statesman (16 February, 1918)	CC,LE
"Racine"	New Quarterly, 1 (June, 1908)	BC,LE
"Sarah Bernhardt"	Nation and Athenaeum, 33 (5 May, 1923); Century Magazine, 106 (July, 1923)	CC,BE

"Shakespeare at Cambridge"	Athenaeum (20 June, 1919)	CC,LE
"Shakespeare's Final Period"	Independent Review, 3 (August, 1904)	BC,LE
"Sir John Harington"	Nation and Athenaeum, 34 (17 November, 1923); New Republic, 37 (26 December, 1923)	PM,BE
"Sir Thomas Browne"	Independent Review, 8 (February, 1906)	BC,LE
"The Abbé Morellet"	Nation and Athenaeum, 34 (26 January, 1924); New Republic, 37 (13 February, 1924)	PM,BE
"The Claims of Patriotism"	War and Peace (July, 1918)	CC
"The Eighteenth Century"	Nation and Athenaeum, 39 (29 May, 1926); New Republic, 47 (16 June, 1926)	CC,BE
"The First Earl of Lytton"	Independent Review, 12 (March, 1907)	CC,LE
"The Last Elizabethan"	New Quarterly, 1 (November, 1907)	BC,LE
"The Life, Illness, and Death of Dr. North"	Nation and Athenaeum, 40 (19 February, 1927); New Republic, 50 (9 March, 1927)	PM,BE
"The Lives of the Poets"	Independent Review, 10 (July, 1906)	BC,LE
"The Old Comedy"	New Statesman (6 December, 1913)	CC,LE
"The Poetry of Blake"	Independent Review, 9 (May, 1906)	BC,LE
"The Président de Brosses"	New Statesman and Nation, 1 (11 & 18 April, 1931); New Republic, 66 (22 April, 1931)	PM,BE

"The Rousseau Affair"	New Quarterly, 2 (May, 1910)	BC,BE
"The Sad Story of Dr. Colbatch"	Nation and Athenaeum, 34 (22 December, 1923); New Republic, 37 (26 December, 1923	PM,BE
"The Wrong Turning"	Independent Review, 2 (February, 1904)	CC,LE
"Two Frenchmen"	Independent Review, 1 (October, 1903)	CC,LE
"Versailles"	Speaker, 14 (28 July, 1906)	CC
"Voltaire"	Athenaeum (1 August, 1919); New Republic, 20 (6 August, 1919)	CC,BE
"Voltaire and England"	Edinburgh Review, 220 (October, 1914)	BC,BE
"Voltaire and Frederick the Great"	Edinburgh Review, 222 (October, 1915)	BC,BE
"Voltaire's Tragedies"	Independent Review, 5 (April, 1905)	BC,LE
"Walpole's Letters"	Athenaeum (15 August, 1919); Living Age (27 September, 1919)	CC,BE
"Words and Poetry"	"Introduction" to G. H. W. Rylands' Words and Poetry (London: Hogarth Press, 1928)	CC,LE

II

ESSAY	ORIGINAL SPECTATOR PUBLICATION	RE-PUBLICATIONS
"The Electress Sophia"	92 (9 January, 1904)	SE
"The Praise of Shakespeare"	92 (4 June, 1904)	
"Land and Sea Pieces"	93 (27 August, 1904)	

"Newman"	93 (1 October, 1904)	
"Shakespeare's Sonnets"	94 (4 February, 1905)	SE
"Shakespeare's Marriage"	95 (29 July, 1905)	
"Forgotten Poets"	96 (27 January, 1906)	SE
"Andrew Marvell"	96 (14 April, 1906)	
"The Value of Poetry"	97 (21 July, 1906)	
"The Pastoral"	97 (28 July, 1906)	SE
"Medieval Studies"	97 (17 November, 1906)	
"Mr. Sidney Lee on Shakespeare"	97 (1 December, 1906)	
"The Age of Spenser"	98 (23 March, 1907)	
"Provincial Letters"	98 (13 April, 1907)	
"Shakespeare's First Editors"	98 (22 June, 1907)	SE
"Rothiemurchus"	99 (5 October, 1907)	
"Shakespeare and Water"	99 (5 October, 1907)	
"Molière"	99 (26 October, 1907)	SE
"Cambridge"	99 (2 November, 1907)	
"Mr. Walkley on Drama"	99 (16 November, 1907)	
"Macaulay's Marginalia"	99 (16 November, 1907)	SE
"Sir Henry Wotton"	99 23 November, 1907)	SE
"The Mollusc"	99 (30 November, 1907)	
"The Swan of Lichfield"	99 (7 December, 1907)	SE
"Milton's Words"	99 (14 December, 1907)	
"French Poetry"	99 (21 December, 1907)	SE
"L'Art Administratif"	99 (28 December, 1907)	SE
"The Late Miss Coleridge's Poems"	100 (4 January, 1908)	

"Old Masters at Burlington House"	100 (11 January, 1908)	
"The International Society"	100 (18 January, 1908)	
"The Prose Style of Men of Action"	100 (25 January, 1908)	
"Mr. Beerbohm Tree"	100 (1 February, 1908)	SE
"Elizabethanism"	100 (8 February, 1908)	
"The Sicilians"	100 (29 February, 1908)	SE
"Coleridge's Biographia Literaria"	100 (7 March, 1908)	SE
"The Poetry of Thomson"	100 (14 March, 1908)	SE
"Wordsworth's Letters"	100 (21 March, 1908)	
"Mr. Granville Barker"	100 (28 March, 1908)	SE
"Shakespeariana"	100 (4 April, 1908)	
"The Age of Louis XIV"	100 (11 April, 1908)	SE
"Modern Poetry"	100 (18 April, 1908)	
"Shakespeare on the Stage"	100 (25 April, 1908)	SE
"Seventeenth-Century Criticism"	100 (2 May, 1908)	SE
"The Grandiloquence of Wordsworth"	100 (9 May, 1908)	SE
"King Lear"	100 (23 May, 1908)	SE
"The Shakespeare Memorial"	100 (23 May, 1908)	
"Three Frenchmen in England"	100 (30 May, 1908)	SE
"Three New Plays"	100 (6 June, 1908)	
"The Poetry of T. E. Brown"	100 (13 June, 1908)	
"Elizabethan Drama"	100 (20 June, 1908)	

"Coquelin"	100 (27 June, 1908)	SE
"Milton"	100 (4 July, 1908)	SE
"Comus at Cambridge"	101 (18 July, 1908)	
"America in Profile"	101 (25 July, 1908)	
"Shakespeare on Johnson"	101 (1 August, 1908)	SE
"The Works of W. E. Henley"	101 (8 August, 1908)	
"The Guides"	101 (15 August, 1908)	SE
"Tragedy Old and New"	101 (22 August, 1908)	
"The Shakespeare Apocrypha"	101 (29 August, 1908)	
"Mr. Barrie's New Play"	101 (26 September, 1908)	
"A Poet on Poets"	101 (3 October, 1908)	
"Mr. Yeats's Poetry"	101 (17 October, 1908)	
"Fitzgerald and 'Posh'"	101 (24 October, 1908)	
"A Mirror for Gentlefolks"	101 (24 October, 1908)	
"Bacon as a Man of Letters"	101 (24 October, 1908)	SE
"Lady Epping's Lawsuit"	101 (31 October, 1908)	
"The Admirable Boileau"	101 (7 November, 1908)	
"The Political Wisdom of Burke"	101 (14 November, 1908)	
"The Italian Renaissance"	101 (22 November, 1908)	
"Mr. Hawtrey"	101 (28 November, 1908)	SE
"John Milton"	101 (5 December, 1908)	
"Some New Plays in Verse"	101 (12 December, 1908)	
"Music and Men"	101 (19 December, 1908)	

"A Play for Children"	101 (26 December, 1908)	
"Some Napoleonic Books"	101 (26 December, 1908)	
"The Life of Henry Irving"	101 (26 December, 1908)	
"A New History of Rome"	102 (2 January, 1909)	SE
"The Poetry of William Barnes"	102 (16 January, 1909)	
"The Age of Corneille"	102 (30 January, 1909)	
"The Shakespeare Problem"	102 (30 January, 1909)	
"The Author of Hudibras"	102 (6 February, 1909)	SE
"The Follies"	102 (13 February, 1909)	
"Light Verse"	102 (20 February, 1909)	
"Jonathan Swift"	102 (27 February, 1909)	SE
"Caran d'Ache"	102 (6 March, 1909)	
"Elizabethans Old and New"	102 (13 March, 1909)	
"Mr. Galsworthy's Plays"	102 (27 March, 1909)	
"Canning and his Friends"	102 (27 March, 1909)	
"Some New Carlyle Letters"	102 (10 April, 1909)	
"Alexander Pope"	103 (20 November, 1909)	SE
"Warren Hastings"	104 (12 March, 1910)	SE
"Dostoievsky"	109 (28 September, 1912)	SE
"The Poetry of John Donne"	110 (18 January, 1913)	SE
"A Russian Humorist"	112 (11 April, 1914)	CC,SE

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