Victorian *Kulturkritik* and Philosophical Idealism in Britain: Matthew Arnold and T. H. Green

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I, Akihiro Machimoto, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

Abstract

In the history of British philosophy, the period from the 1870s to the First World War is characterized by the dominance of English and Scottish universities by Idealism. Despite the renewed interest in this intellectual movement since the Anglophone Hegel revival in the 1970s in various fields, including philosophy, political theory, or religious thought, the school of British Idealism has received scant attention in literary studies. To redress this situation, this thesis addresses a comparative study of Matthew Arnold and T. H. Green – the epitome of the literary 'genre' of cultural criticism and the acknowledged inaugurator of the philosophical movement, respectively.

British Idealism was not just an importation from the Continent alien to the indigenous intellectual soil. Green's moral conception of the State, alongside Arnold's, was partly a development from the liberal Anglican tradition of thinking on the national community with the Established Church at its moral centre. Although Green's arguments in epistemology were largely framed by the reading of German philosophers, they could be interpreted as a version of *Kulturkritik*, originating from his desire, stimulated by Arnold's inaugural lecture as Professor of Poetry, for a vantage point from which to command a comprehensive view of the confused spectacle of modernity. Besides, unlike many other Victorian intellectuals, what Arnold inherited from the French historian and public figure François Guizot was a liberalism with an emphasis on governability, which was congenial to the Idealist political ideas presented by Green, one of the 'University Liberals' who departed from the whiggish thinking on constitutional liberty.

Green has been often described as a Hebraist champion of dissenting conscience in contrast to Arnold as a Hellenist apostle of catholic, cosmopolitan culture. This thesis presents a more nuanced view by addressing the two thinkers' underappreciated affinities in their literary, philosophical, political, and religious arguments.

Impact Statement

The historical episode of the philosophical school of British Idealism has been largely lost from the cultural memory of the British nation and it is widely believed that the dominant mode of British philosophy has been Empiricism. This situation is superficially due to the triumph of the 'analytic' school of philosophy in academia in English-speaking countries. However, its 'refutation' of Idealism was helped by the anti-German sentiment in the inter-war period, in which such allegedly German political ideologies as militarism, statism, and totalitarianism were often ascribed to Hegelian metaphysics. Competition for hegemony through academic philosophy has not taken place in isolation from the wider world; intervened by the self-image of the nation, a history of philosophy could reveal something about its self-understanding.

It is all the more interesting that British Idealism has been neglected in literary studies. There are interpretations in which the historical development of English Studies is seen as having assumed various ideological functions, most prominently as a social cement to repress class antagonism. Empirical emphasis on concrete textual detail in place of system, theory, or philosophy is often regarded as having played a pivotal role in its social mission. However, it is possible that literary critics from Matthew Arnold to F. R. Leavis, who are canonized as founding fathers of English Studies, had a latent 'philosophy', one that has remained underexplored due to their overt rejection of system. When the possibility is considered at all, it is always with Continental thinkers from German Idealists to poststructuralists in mind. What is overlooked is the fact that the dominant mode of philosophy in Britain in the foundation period of English Studies was Idealism and that literary critics then read the *indigenous* Idealist philosophers like T. H. Green, F. H. Bradley, and Bernard Bosanquet. This thesis is expected to be a prolegomenon to a wider comparative study that scrutinizes the historical phenomenon of British Idealism as an ideological rival and a possible contributor to the critical programme of English Studies in its incipient period.

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Abbreviations

CPW *Complete Prose Works of Matthew Arnold*, ed. by R. H. Super, 11 vols (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1960–1977)

CW *Collected Works of T. H. Green*, ed. by Peter Nicholson, 5 vols (Bristol: Thoemmes, 1997)

DSF T. H. Green, 'On the Different Senses of "Freedom" as Applied to Will and to the Moral Progress of Man', in *Lectures on the Principles of Political Obligation and Other Writings*, ed. by Paul Harris and John Morrow (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 228–49

Letters *The Letters of Matthew Arnold*, ed. by Cecil Y. Lang, 6 vols (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1996–2001)

LLFC T. H. Green, 'Lecture on Liberal Legislation and Freedom of Contract', in *Lectures on the Principles of Political Obligation and Other Writings*, pp. 194–212

PE T. H. Green, *Prolegomena to Ethics*, ed. by A. C. Bradley (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1883)

PPO T. H. Green, 'Lectures on the Principles of Political Obligation', in *Lectures on the Principles of Political Obligation and Other Writings*, pp. 13–193

References to the works listed here are incorporated in the text. Volume numbers are given in Roman numerals. References to DSF, *PE*, and PPO are by section numbers, which is indicated by the symbol §.

Introduction

This thesis is the first extended comparative study of two influential Victorian intellectuals: Matthew Arnold and T. H. Green. It is relatively well-known among historians of philosophy and political thought that the dominant mode of philosophy in English and Scottish universities at the turn of the twentieth century was Idealism and that the acknowledged inaugurator of the philosophical movement of British Idealism, Green, was widely revered beyond the walls of Oxford University, where he taught as Whyte's Professor of Moral Philosophy and philosophical Idealism first gained a foothold in England. It is generally observed that his presence was felt in such extramural political activities as University settlements, educational reform, and the temperance movement.

Nevertheless, literary scholars and critics have been surprisingly silent about the omnipresence of this philosophical movement in the intellectual world of Britain during this period. One indication of this neglect is Raymond Williams's monumental work, *Culture and Society 1780–1950* (1958). This book contributed to the invention of a literary 'genre' called 'cultural criticism' and greatly caused, I believe, an anachronistic interpretation of the Victorian period in the field of English Studies, where the hegemonic status of literary criticism in the golden age of Cambridge English – the age of T. S. Eliot, the Leavises, William Empson – was projected onto a past when twentieth-century disciplinary formations had not emerged.

According to Williams's taxonomy in *Culture and Society*, Green and other Idealists were definitely against 'the bourgeois idea of society', in which society is seen as a 'neutral' and 'abstract regulating mechanism' and each individual as entitled 'to pursue his own development and his own advantage' therein (pp. 429, 426). British Idealists rather preferred to see society, like 'cultural critics' including not least Arnold, as 'the

positive means for all kinds of development, including individual development' and attempted to prove 'the common interest' identical with 'true self-interest' (pp. 427, 435). However, instead of reappraising the philosophical movement of British Idealism as a precursor to his 'working-class idea of society', Williams labelled the period from around 1880 to 1914 – the heyday of Idealism in Britain – as an 'Interregnum', in which there was scarcely 'anything very new' but 'a working-out, rather, of unfinished lines; a tentative redirection' (p. 216).

After Williams, there followed some Marxist thinkers in the late 1960s and 70s who pointed to the Hegelian revival in Britain at the turn of the twentieth century in their effort to find, in the words of Charles Taylor, 'the obstacles to an easy acceptance of Marxism on to British intellectual soil'. Tom Nairn was exemplary when he glanced at 'the brief episode of English Hegelianism', which he thought was 'an attempt to impart philosophical system and dignity to the English universe', only to conclude that 'it has vanished from the English cultural memory completely'. What this meant for him was that 'there vanished most of the likely basis for the diffusion of Marxism among English intellectuals'.[1] Following their cues, some of the critics who were concerned with ideological implications of the development of English Studies identified Green, in the words of Francis Mulhern, as Arnold's 'ideological rival'. In his study *The Moment of 'Scrutiny'* (1979), Mulhern asserted that 'it became possible for literary criticism to reassert its claim to cultural hegemony' only after the demise of the Idealist enterprise, which ensured 'the absence of synoptic social thought' confronting the 'profound political and social crisis' of the 1920s (p. 33). In Williams's 'Interregnum' period, 'Arnold's project survived only as an idea, active in the work of individuals, but never finding that

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[1] Taylor, 'Marxism and Empiricism', pp. 230–31; Nairn, 'The English Literary Intelligentsia', p. 76. Another essay which cannot be missed in this context is Perry Anderson's 'Components of the National Culture'.

social anchorage in a stratum of "disinterested" intellectuals', while 'the coeval system of neo-Idealism proved stronger and more efficacious' (p. 18). For Green's ideas found their embodiments in movements and institutions, including Toynbee Hall, the London Ethical Society, and the Charity Organization Society. As Gertrude Himmelfarb observes, although its critics have accused British Idealism of 'being excessively abstract', its 'abstractions' were nevertheless 'rooted in "praxis", as a Marxist would say, in the concrete, practical realities of private and public life'. [2] A presumption that a philosophical system cannot be more than a disembodied abstraction impervious to emotions or 'lived experience' is itself an abstraction.[3]

Yet with the decline of interest in an ideological critique of the disciplinary formation came the decline of interest in Arnold the 'cultural critic', and one outcome of this seems to have been stunted growth of interest in British Idealism in literary studies, just at a time when scholars working in other fields started to take a renewed interest in the philosophical movement as we will see in the next chapter. The present study is an attempt to redress this major omission that has been largely with us today in standard descriptions of the literary genealogy of cultural criticism in modern Britain, by addressing a comparative study of Arnold and Green, respectively a major protagonist of Williams's narrative and the virtual founder of the school of British Idealism.

In the first, preliminary chapter, '*Bildung* in England', I attempt to make my rationale clearer and more substantial. Although it was not obvious to the generation of Williams, early 'cultural critics' in the Victorian age wrote in the wake of German *Bildung* theorists, not least Humboldt, Goethe, and Schiller. The *Bildung* discourse crossed the boundary between literature and philosophy, making Williams's decision to concentrate

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[2] *Poverty and Compassion*, p. 248.
[3] See also Brian Doyle, *English and Englishness*, which not only sees philosophical Idealism as an ideological rival but also suggests its possible contribution to the foundation of English Studies (pp. 17–40).

on literary critics and omit Idealist philosophers inadequate. It is pertinent here to our purpose to look at Stefan Collini's critique of *Culture and Society*, thereby highlighting the latter's arbitrariness in terms of its geographical, disciplinary, as well as chronological limit. This chapter is closed by looking at a short article on aesthetics (or the lack of the subject in Britain) authored by a contemporary Idealist, Bernard Bosanquet. This article, entitled 'The Part Played by Aesthetic in the Development of Modern Philosophy' (1889–90), is insightful in our context because Bosanquet presents the philosophical movement he represents, British Idealism, as potentially an organic development from the indigenous cultural movement led by the likes of Carlyle, Arnold, Ruskin, Pater, and Morris, which he sees as having provided 'reflective culture' in England. In this article, in other words, Bosanquet vaguely delineates the 'culture and society' tradition as early as the 1880s as an unconscious precursor to the Idealist movement in Britain. The comparative perspective of this thesis follows his lead.

In fact, British Idealism was more than just a 'Germanised movement'. While its image as 'a strange and alien episode in the history of British thought and culture' has been consolidated by later generations, its indigenous roots may have been deeper than Bosanquet realized.[4] In Chapter 2, we will briefly look at the Victorian tradition of liberal Anglicanism as a common intellectual and moral background of Arnold and Green. As H. S. Jones has remarked, Green could be seen as belonging to an 'important strain in British social thought […] which cherished state power as an antidote to the excesses of commercialism, selfishness and narrow-minded individualism'. Long before Green argued for the 'moral ends' of the state, which he refused to identify with 'the civil government' but saw as comprehending the 'national church' and 'the voice or usage of society' as well (*CW*, V: 33–34), the liberal Anglican tradition had, from the 1830s

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[4] den Otter, p. 1.

onwards, given prominence to 'the concept of a moralized state'.[5] The focus here will be on Thomas Arnold and F. D. Maurice. Their emphasis on *this*-worldly human perfectibility, the social mission of the Church, and the significance of intermediate communities through which humanity overcomes selfish or sectarian impulses to reach for the universal standpoint left an unmistakable imprint upon the younger Arnold and Green.

Chapter 3 attempts to find two forms of *Kulturkritik* exemplified in the writings of Arnold and Green. In Mulhern's definition, the 'classical European form' of *Kulturkritik* which crystalized towards the end of the eighteenth century is equated with 'a critical, normally negative discourse on the emerging symbolic universe of capitalism, democracy and enlightenment – on the values of a condition and process of social life for which a recent French coinage furnished the essential term: *civilisation*'.[6] An admirer of the French Revolution, Arnold does not seem to fit neatly into this scheme, despite his acknowledged centrality in the tradition. I will use the term more loosely to denote a discourse that expresses a desire to attain an intellectual vantage point from which to command a comprehensive view of the times in response to the recognition that modernity, rather than civilization, is characterized by its confused spectacle of a flood of multitudinous facts and events that evade easy cognition. This definition owes much to Arnold's own famous inaugural lecture 'On the Modern Element in Literature' (1857), with a discussion of which the chapter begins. The argument on Arnold in this chapter is perhaps the least inspiring part of the thesis, but it is unavoidable because of the recent critical or scholarly agreement that we do not need to bother to read his prose works ourselves in order to decide our intellectual, aesthetic, and political attitudes towards this Victorian sage. Yet the more immediate reason is that Arnold's literary-critical output, as

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[5] H. S. Jones, *Victorian Political Thought*, pp. 88, 44.
[6] *Culture/Metaculture*, p. xv.

I argue, constitutes a neglected context for reading Green's philosophical enterprise. This becomes clear when we look at Green's early essays, written in his undergraduate years, which address literary matters. They have mainly been read only insofar as they anticipate his mature opinions in philosophy and political thought. I suggest here that, by contrast, they should be read not backwards but as a development from literary predecessors of cultural critics. Since Richter's study, Green's Idealism has been predominantly seen as an attempt at a surrogate religion (like Arnold's literary-critical programme). His early writings on art and literature are thus revealing in that they imply that religion for Green, as Greengarten writes, 'shares the stage with art and philosophy' to form 'tripartite' activities through which 'man seeks to transcend the individual limitations of the animal consciousness and existence' and 'attain the freedom of a universal spiritual existence'.[7] Only when we take this missing link into account can his later work in epistemology, presented in *Prolegomena to Ethics* (1883) and other writings, be interpreted as an outcome of his involvement with the literary tradition of *Kulturkritik*.

The next two chapters turn to the political and social thought of Arnold and Green respectively. In Chapter 4, a special focus will be given to the possible influence upon Arnold of the French historian, statesman, and political thinker François Guizot. The underappreciation of his presence throughout Arnold's oeuvre seems to have been due to three reasons. First, although the attraction that Guizot's historical works held for Victorian intellectuals is familiar, the chief political lesson they derived from Guizot's history was that the principle of diversity and multiplicity guarantees the progress of society. The lesson was congenial to J. S. Mill and Walter Bagehot, but not necessarily to Arnold, whose emphasis was obviously more on unity and authority. However, it is misguided to see Guizot's political ideal (other than historical arguments) as also

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[7] *Thomas Hill Green and the Development of Liberal-Democratic Thought*, p. 8.

congenial to many of them. Compared to his historical works, his output in political thought has been relatively neglected, probably because he was a representative *liberal* thinker during the Bourbon Restoration (1814–30) and the July Monarchy (1830–48). Due to the widespread view that 'liberalism is an Anglo-American tradition concerned primarily with the protection of individual rights and interests', which Rosenblatt has seen as 'a very recent development', the liberal tradition on the Continent has remained largely obscure in English-speaking countries.[8] Besides this second reason, i.e., the general neglect of Continental liberalisms, it could be argued that Guizot's liberalism, alongside that of other French thinkers collectively labelled as *Doctrinaires*, has been still stranger to the Anglophone world for its statist and often anti-individualist emphasis on governability. This explains why Mill abhorred Guizot's political vision; this also explains why Arnold, I argue, could have found some of his political arguments congenial to his idea of the State as 'summing up the right reason of the community' (*CPW*, V: 123–24) or his identity as a 'Liberal of the future' equipped with 'the governmental mind' (*CPW*, IX: 138; XI: 76). It will be seen that many of the liberal Idealist characteristics of Arnold's political thinking had their possible source in Guizot, as well as in the antique Stoics and German thinkers.

Chapter 5 begins by noting that Green was one of those 'University Liberals' addressed by Christopher Harvie in *The Lights of Liberalism* (1976), who departed from the traditional whiggish attachment to representation by classes or interests, not by individuals or numbers, in favour of the more idealistic and egalitarian vocabulary of democratic nationalism. When Green diagnosed 'Culture' as 'the same disease of modern life as the High-Church revival', he was in line with such democratic liberals as Frederic Harrison and Henry Sidgwick (*CW*, V: 430). Green has been thus depicted as a Hebraist

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[8] *The Lost History of Liberalism*, p. 4.

defender of dissenting conscience in contrast to Arnold as a Hellenist apostle of catholic, cosmopolitan culture. However, while these academic liberals collaborated with provincial Nonconformist intellectuals like James Martineau in their reform programme, Green, who also served as a school inspector, shared with Arnold the ideal of 'a total reformation of national life' via 'a system of national education'.[9] Besides, Green's 'moral conception of the state', whose rationale he saw as lying in making the citizens *good*, was not defined 'in any narrow moralistic sense', as Mander has argued; it was rather aimed at 'the cultivation of human "excellence" (*aretae*)' in the wake of Greek philosophers.[10] Hence, we find Arnoldian notes throughout *Prolegomena to Ethics*: 'a disinterested interest in the good', 'a realisation of the powers of the human soul or the perfecting of man', or 'an idea of something which man should become for the sake of becoming it' (*PE*, §§253, 280, 241). Green believed that the reformer, 'a man who improves the current morality of his time', must be 'something of an Idealist' (*PE*, §299). Nevertheless, following influential advocates of the idea of the clerisy, most notably Carlyle, he seems to have assumed that such a 'privilege' was restricted to 'higher and more religious minds than are commonly found among men', while the majority of the population must be satisfied in participating in 'the bettering of human life' by conforming faithfully to established morality (*CW*, V: 13; *PE*, §176). Ambiguities in Green's political thinking, significantly inherited from the literary-critical genealogy of *Kulturkritik*, will be attended to throughout the chapter.

Chapter 6 addresses Arnold and Green's writings on religion and theology. As David DeLaura has argued, Arnold's 'concern for the special role in history of a small elite fraternity who possess a privileged insight into truth' was greatly fuelled by John

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[9] Gordon and White, *Philosophers as Educational Reformers*, p. 71.
[10] *British Idealism*, p. 230.

Henry Newman.[11] Arnold derived from him the principle of 'reserve', according to which it is disastrous to attempt to communicate revealed truths at once to 'those who are strangers to the tone of thought and principles of the speaker' and not ready to be 'initiated into his system'. The speaker, according to this view, needs the art of 'accommodation to the feelings and prejudices of the hearers, in leading him to the reception of a novel or unacceptable doctrine'.[12] It is this sort of critical tact that Arnold saw as lacking in the Tübingen biblical scholars, a cluster of 'mere specialist[s]' whose 'negative criticism' cannot 'deal with the reality which is still left in the New Testament'. For the latter purpose, thought Arnold, 'a larger, richer, deeper, more imaginative mind' was needed (*CPW*, VI: 158). Nevertheless, it is totally misguided to assume that Arnold was inimical to the German Historicist movement of which the Higher Criticism could be seen as a part. Rather, his attempt at a rational reconstruction of the Christian faith in *Literature and Dogma* (1873) was grounded in the Herderian tendency to see both sacred and secular text as *Volkslieder*, folk poetry. The literalist interpretation of the Scriptures must be rejected in favour of a wider culture, which is identified as 'the acquainting ourselves' not only 'with the best that has been known and said in the world', but also 'with the history of the human spirit' (*CPW*, VI: 151). Arnold's allegedly Hebraist project in the 1870s thus could be seen as continuous with the better-known Hellenist phase.

For Green, again, 'Culture' was a 'disease of modern life', alongside 'the High-Church revival'. However, despite his overt nonconformist temperament, he was as alert to precariousness and frailty of private judgement as the Tractarian sympathisers he despised. He avoided the High-Anglican solution of the dogmatic principle and the sacramental system. Nonetheless, he believed that the individual, 'left to himself', cannot avoid setting out to 'formulate the christian experience', necessarily inadequately, only to

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[11] *Hebrew and Hellene*, p. 30.
[12] Newman, *The Arians of the Fourth Century*, p. 79.

construct 'a dogma of his own' (*CW*, III: 182). It was the supposed truth of 'the collection of propositions which constitute the written New Testament' that once possessed an evidential status, guaranteeing the objectivity of the Christian faith (*CW*, III: 161). But in an age of science and scholarship, faith cannot subsist if it 'stands or falls with the admission or rejection of certain propositions'; what it needs instead is some a priori ground (*CW*, III: 265). It is this recognition that impelled both Arnold and Green to the liberal Anglican project of disentangling the 'kernel' from the 'husk', or 'the spiritual principle from the temporal expression of it', in the face of the demands of the *Zeitgeist*.[13] They both attempted to reinvent a Christianity that was, in the words of Benjamin Jowett, 'independent of the accidents of time and place', retaining its moral vitality intact.[14] It was expected to be achieved by reading the Scriptures as literary texts in the case of Arnold, and by transforming 'Christian dogma […] in its completeness' into a philosophical system in the case of Green (*CW*, III: 182).

This thesis concludes with a brief chapter that looks at a late-Victorian best-selling novel, *Robert Elsmere* (1888), as a powerful illustration that suggests a combined influence of Arnold and Green for their contemporaries. The author, Mrs Humphry Ward, was a niece of Arnold and acquainted with the inner circles of Oxonian intellectuals as the wife of a Brasenose fellow. It will be seen that even the world of novelists at that time was not immune to the influence of Green and that it was the matter of an historical coincidence that the Idealist movement dropped out of the sight of twentieth-century literary critics, including Raymond Williams, alongside Mrs Ward's moralistic novels. This chapter also looks at Williams's idea of 'common culture' in *Culture and Society* and his opposition between the bourgeois and working-class ideas of society. It attempts to clarify the relevance to the 'culture and society' tradition of Green and the Idealist school

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[13] Christensen, 'Thomas Arnold's Debt to German Theologians', p. 16.
[14] Abbott and Campbell, *The Life and Letters of Benjamin Jowett*, II, p. 77.

in general, which eluded Williams's attention. The chapter is concluded by suggesting that Williams's project would have been inconceivable without the predominance of the Idealist movement on both sides of the Atlantic, by pointing to the seminal influence of Green and other Idealists upon R. H. Tawney and T. S. Eliot, who gave immediate impetus to the conception of *Culture and Society*.

Chapter 1. The Fate of *Bildung* in England

I. Culture and *Bildung*

When we attempt to establish the place of Matthew Arnold's critical writings in Western intellectual history, it is essential to relate them to what Jennifer Herdt has called 'the *Bildung* tradition'. A professor of Christian ethics, Herdt has aimed in her latest book at 'redeeming' this German tradition against an accusation, associated not least with Karl Barth's critique of liberal theology, which reduces it to an expression of an aspiration towards 'autocratic humanism'.[1] Despite her interest in 'a positive appropriation' of the *Bildung* tradition as exemplifying an 'ongoing dialogical encounter' grounded in 'the willingness to listen to the other', and her emphasis on its root in Christian thinking of the imago Dei – 'theological reflection on humankind as created in the image of God' – she concedes that the discourse on *Bildung* broadened its appeal by the confident reassertion of human agency in reaction to the Pietist denigration of *Menschen-Kunst* and by the invention of *Kunstreligion* (religion of art) as a secular alternative medium of self-formation (pp. 18, 8). David Sorkin goes so far as to insist that '*Bildung* was created by philosophers and belletrists who aestheticized religious and philosophical notions under the aegis of the Hellenic revival' in the 1790s, becoming a 'secular social ideal' for Protestant Germany.[2] In this context, any account of the tradition cannot omit reference to the names of Humboldt, Goethe, and Schiller.

For Arnold the school inspector, the Continental idea of public responsibility for popular education was epitomized by François Guizot in France and Wilhelm von Humboldt in Prussia. To the student of the intellectual life of Victorian Britain, Humboldt is 'probably most familiar as the author of a single sentence', writes historian J. W.

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[1] *Forming Humanity: Redeeming the Bildung Tradition*, p. 26.
[2] 'Wilhelm von Humboldt', p. 66.

Burrow, namely one that J. S. Mill adopted as the epigraph for *On Liberty* (1859).[3] This association and his endorsement of the political principle that governmental interference is only permissible where there is 'immediate reference to violence done to individual rights', usually identified with Mill and Tocqueville, may seem to be enough to make him unqualified for Arnold's admiration, considering the latter's consistent polemic against the *laissez-faire* ethos both in social and individual life.[4] However, Arnold was conscious that the situation in which Humboldt stood when he warned against excessive state action was different from that in which the English people stood when he bemoaned the lack of moral authority to encourage the cultivation of one's best self – after all, Humboldt was an eminent *Staatsmann* who served as the Head of the Section for Religion and Education in the Ministry of the Interior, thereby establishing his name as the architect of the educational system of Prussia.[5] What Arnold feared more was individual wantonness; in the Prussia of Humboldt's times, it seemed, only by limiting the power of the absolutist Frederician state to the minimum would freedom be established as a prerequisite for what Humboldt thought of as the true end of humanity. As Humboldt wrote in *The Limits of State Action*, which was finished in 1792 but published posthumously in German and English in the 1850s, the 'true end of Man' was 'the highest and most harmonious development of his powers to a complete and consistent whole' (p. 10).[6] This developmental ideal finds echoes across a range of Victorian thinkers.

It has become a critical cliché to see Arnold's literary critical programme as an attempt at an ersatz religion, in an age when Christianity was being jeopardized by

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[3] Editor's Introduction to his edition of Humboldt's *The Limits of State Action*, p. xvii.

[4] Humboldt, *The Limits of State Action*, trans. by Burrow, based on the 1854 edition of Joseph Coulthard, p. 16.

[5] See Sorkin, 'Wilhelm von Humboldt'.

[6] Originally entitled *Ideen zu einem Versuch die Grenzen der Wirksamkeit des Staats zu bestimenn*. Frederick Beiser notes that Humboldt himself was aware of the difficulty of his minimal-state theory, conceding that 'his minimal state cannot provide its citizens with the necessary means for their *Bildung*' (*Enlightenment, Revolution, and Romanticism*, pp. 136–37).

progress in science and scholarship, to soothe the antagonism between classes. The ideological critique of the birth of English Studies seems to have drawn inspiration from similar work on German literature, addressed most prominently by Thomas Mann and Theodor Adorno, in which the posture of detachment cherished in the *Bildung* tradition, 'its fostering of the beautiful soul', was held responsible partly for 'the atrocities of the "Third Reich"' – a mass of scholarship on what Geoffrey Hartman has called *The Fateful Question of Culture*.[7] Humboldt's ideal of *Bildung* has been blamed for its obsession with 'narcissistic self-cultivation', as Herdt maintains; it has been 'tarred as egocentric individualism, as a turning away from society and world' for a seemingly pedantic project of cultural connoisseurship (p. 114). Burrow is right in seeing dilettantism as 'a possible parody of *Bildung*', a version of which could be found in Walter Pater's celebrated fantasy of Leonardo's 'Mona Lisa' as 'an inventory of possibilities' in *The Renaissance* (1873), or in Oscar Wilde's evolutionary rendering of the soul as 'a collective unconscious mind'.[8] Part of the aim of this thesis is to oppose a 'presentist' mode of ideological critique, suggesting that it is as anachronistic to deride Arnold's elevation of the universality of nation above the particularity of classes at a time when the Liberal orthodoxy was obsessed with the maintenance of liberty through the mechanism of constitutional check and balance as it is to indict Johann Gottfried Herder, another exponent of *Bildung*, of a linguistic assertion of nationalistic exclusivity with 'no real political entity called Germany' existing in front of him.[9]

Nevertheless, it is essential to understand the crucial link between the place of art in Humboldt's project of *Bildung* and Arnold's critical programme. *Bildung* was not a

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[7] Kristin Gjesdal, '*Bildung*', p. 695. A classical statement of what Beiser calls 'the myth of the apolitical German' was made by Madame de Staël, who observed that the Germans' 'freedom in the realm of thought was their compensation for political servitude, the escape from a political reality that they at heart despised' (Beiser, *Enlightenment, Revolution, and Romanticism*, p. 7).

[8] Editor's Introduction, p. xxiv; *The Crisis of Reason*, pp. 176, 182.

[9] Andrew Bowie, *Introduction to German Philosophy*, p. 51.

monopoly of any single intellectual or cultural movement, with its advocates dispersed equally among the *Aufklärer*, the *Sturmer und Dränger*, the *Klassiker* as well as the *Frühromantiker*.[10] It can at least be said that part of the attraction of the idea of *Bildung* lay in the fact that it appeared 'much better able than the Enlightenment's guiding light of reason to accommodate the newly fashionable virtues of sentiment, sensuousness, enthusiasm, and originality'.[11] Sharing with Kant the ideal of autonomy and self-direction, or 'the task of forming humanity', some of his followers found reason alone insufficient and preferred 'a more holistic ideal' of *Bildung*.[12] Humboldt, a serious student of Kant, conceived of imagination, *Einbildungskraft*, as a mediating element that relates the rational and sensual aspects of human nature. This capacity enables us to 'knit sensuous conceptions together with extrasensory ideas' and extract 'general ideas' – a useful notion that finds its way into Arnold's critical vocabulary – from 'sensuous impressions'.[13] This faculty is essential for his project of *Bildung*, for it is through imagination that we might abstract its goal – the ideal of humanity or what Humboldt liked to call *Menschheit* – from the particular manifestations in our everyday experience; and it is also by this faculty alone that the 'abstract idea of perfection is then clothed in a sensuous picture capable of engaging human desire and agency'. Art, an embodiment of imagination, plays a vital role here. For Humboldt, 'artistic taste' is credited with 'lending harmony and unity to all of our inclinations and sensations' by 'bringing transcendent values into the realm of sensuous appearance'.[14] This argument is redolent of Arnold's appeal to ancient Greek literature for equipping moderns with 'general ideas' to penetrate the present 'spectacle of a vast multitude of facts' awaiting comprehension, thereby

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[10] See Beiser, *The Romantic Imperative*, p. 28.
[11] Burrow, Editor's Introduction, p. xxxi.
[12] Herdt, pp. 1–2.
[13] 'Über Religion'; translated and quoted by Herdt in her *Forming Humanity*, p. 120.
[14] Herdt, p. 121.

serving as 'a mighty agent of intellectual deliverance' in modern times (*CPW*, I: 20).

Humboldt was a typical neo-classicist in his idealization of the ancient Greeks as the model of harmonious self-development, and he posited the glory of their past civilization as a standard against which to diagnose the condition of contemporary society. These characteristics, however, are much more salient in the writings of another philhellene, Friedrich von Schiller. Isobel Armstrong has stressed the vital importance that Schiller's *Aesthetic Letters* (1795) had for the practice of what she calls *Victorian Scrutinies*, exemplified not least by Arthur Hallam and Arnold himself.[15] Another follower of Kant, Schiller found his conception of freedom deficient in that it did not exclude the possibility of 'a form of constraint', namely, 'the repression of sensible feelings and desires'. Another stumbling block Schiller detected was that it presupposed 'a sharp metaphysical dualism', according to which 'the decisions and reflections of moral agents are independent of the causality of the natural world'. Schiller presents instead an aesthetic conception of freedom, seeing freedom as 'the autonomous development of *all* our human powers, sensibility as well as reason' and moral agency as existing '*within* nature, as the product of history and the education of sensibility'.[16] Schiller understands the fragmentation of human faculties as a condition of modern civilization in which he lives; it was not, however, a necessary outcome of civilization *per se*. With Greek civilization, thought Schiller, 'humanity undoubtedly reached a maximum of excellence'.[17] With the Greeks, 'that first fair awakening of the powers of mind', it seemed that 'sense and intellect did not as yet rule over strictly separate domains'; with them, 'no dissension had as yet provoked them into hostile partition and

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[15] *Über die Ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen in einer Reihe von Briefen*. Armstrong entitled her edited collection of Victorian periodical reviews of poetry as *Victorian Scrutinies*, of course alluding to the journal of the next century; see also the same author's *Victorian Poetry*, pp. 60–67, 211–13.

[16] Beiser, *Schiller as Philosopher*, p. 3. Emphasis original (all the emphases below are original unless otherwise noted).

[17] *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, trans. by Wilkinson and Willoughby, Letter VI, §11.

mutual demarcation of their frontiers' (VI, §3). From this apex of humanity, there was no choice for the human species, for the sake of progress, but to 'surrender their wholeness of being and pursue truth along separate paths' (VI, §11). The upshot is a situation in which 'the various faculties appear as separate in practice as they are distinguished by the psychologist in theory'; there, individuals as well as 'whole classes of men' develop 'but one part of their potentialities, while of the rest, as in stunted growths, only vestigial traces remain' (VI, §3). While an individual Athenian, formed under the influence of 'all-unifying Nature', was qualified 'to be the representative of his age', no single Modern, immersed in 'the all-dividing Intellect', dare claim as much (VI, §5).

How did civilization inflict this wound on modern individuals? It was not via the *industrial* division of labour. As W. H. Bruford has observed, 'the problem of industrialism', which Raymond Williams's *Culture and Society 1780–1950* (1958) tempts us to believe was 'central in Victorian England', had 'not yet emerged in Germany' when Goethe and Schiller forged theories of self-cultivation.[18] We will see shortly if the cluster of Victorian thinkers belonging to the 'culture and society' tradition were really united in their response to the seismic change supposed to have occurred towards the end of the eighteenth century. For now, suffice it to confirm that one of their intellectual precursors did not oppose culture against industrialism. For all that, Schiller did ascribe the fragmentation of modern man to a sort of division of labour. It first occurred as *intellectual* specialization, according to him. With the 'increase of empirical knowledge' and the advent of 'more exact modes of thought', 'divisions between sciences' became sharper and sharper (VI, §6). He does not fail to recognize the advantage of '[o]ne-sidedness in the exercise of his powers', for, disastrous as it was for the individual, this has benefited the species as a whole (VI, §13). After all, Nature alone would not have

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[18] *Culture and Society in Classical Weimar*, p. 4 (see also p. 273).

produced a power of vision that catches 'a satellite of Jupiter which the telescope reveals to the astronomer', nor a power of reflection that undertakes such 'an analysis of the Infinite or a Critique of Pure Reason' (VI, §13). But it is equally true that the individuals fell victim to this 'fragmentary specialization of human powers', being forced to 'suffer under the curse of this cosmic process' (VI, §14). The 'inner unity of human nature' was severed, with its originally 'harmonious powers' withdrawing 'in hostility to take up positions in their respective fields, whose frontiers they now began to guard with jealous mistrust' (VI, §6). Our specialist master now dominates within, 'suppressing the rest of our potentialities': 'While in the one a riotous imagination ravages the hard-won fruits of the intellect, in another the spirit of abstraction stifles the fire at which the heart should have warmed itself and the imagination been kindled' (VI, §6).

Subsequently, the *administrative* division of labour completes this disintegration in Schiller's scheme. The 'increasingly complex machinery of State' demanded this 'new spirit of government', necessitating 'a more rigorous separation of ranks and occupations' (VI, §§6–7). As Humboldt observes the situation, the belief that the State should provide for 'the whole physical and moral well-being of the nation' has begotten 'many new departments of administration, such as boards of trade, finance, and national economy', threatening, as he sees it, the spontaneous development of individuals.[19] Unlike the ancient Greek States, where individuals could be organically integrated with the whole without abandoning individuality, the organization of modern States has 'degenerated into a crude and clumsy mechanism', according to Schiller (VI, §7). It works like an ingenious clock, 'in which, out of the piecing together of innumerable but lifeless parts, a mechanical kind of collective life ensue[s]' (VI, §7). Disintegration is everywhere: State is divorced from Church, laws from customs, enjoyment from labour, the means from the

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[19] *Limits of State Action*, p. 9.

end. Alienated individuals are reduced to cogs in a lifeless mechanism:

> Everlastingly chained to a single little fragment of the Whole, man himself develops
> into nothing but a fragment; everlastingly in his ear the monotonous sound of the
> wheel that he turns, he never develops the harmony of his being, and instead of
> putting the stamp of humanity upon his own nature, he becomes nothing more than
> the imprint of his occupation or of his specialized knowledge. (VI, §7)

This indictment prefigures Thomas Carlyle's denouncement of 'the Mechanical Age' in 'Signs of the Times' (1829), in which he condemns the view of civil government as 'the Machine of Society', as 'the grand working wheel from which all private machines must derive, or to which they must adapt, their movements'; or Arnold's ridicule in *Culture and Anarchy* (1869) of the English '[f]aith in machinery' – the material or external aspect of civilization – 'as if it had a value in and for itself' (*CPW*, V: 96).[20]

Schiller's solution was, of course, aesthetic education. The tradition thus outlined would give a false impression that *Bildung* was a matter of exerting human agency in self-formation via art in the wake of the Greek revival. With Goethe's formulation of the idea of personal cultivation in contrast to the middle-class value of utility in the fifth book of *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* (1796), which is often lifted out 'as a clear statement of Goethe's own conception of Bildung', it tends to appear as a distinctly literary genealogy, finding its natural habitat in the genre of *Bildungsroman*.[21] The fate of *Bildung* in England – in the guise of culture as cultivation – was thus surveyed by

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[20] *Works of Thomas Carlyle*, XXVII, p. 66. Carlyle published the *Life of Schiller* in 1825, which Rosemary Ashton regards as 'a landmark in Anglo-German relations, being the first English biography of a great German writer' (*The German Idea*, p. 92). See also a classical study by Herbert Sussman on *Victorians and the Machine*.
[21] Herdt, p. 171; *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*.

Raymond Williams, who was 'known as something of a zealot for the methods of Leavisian practical criticism' in his early career, as a predominantly literary phenomenon.[22] It is incorrect to see Williams's project as an attempt at a reception history, for, as Bruford reminds us in his 1962 book *Culture and Society in Classical Weimar* (the title of which echoed Williams's book), the 'Weimar theories of culture', which he illustrates by discussing Herder, Goethe, Fichte, and Schiller, were 'not so well known […] even in Germany' at the time, and 'in England they [were] hardly known at all' (p. 290). It was with hindsight that the *New Left Review* interviewers in 1977 could point to the lack of 'international dimension in *Culture and Society*', noting that 'the famous opposition between a deeper, organic "culture" and a more superficial, mechanical "civilization" was a German one'.[23] It was only a year after this accusation that Norbert Elias's 1939 work, a 'magisterial treatment' of the contrast between German *Kultur* and French *civilisation*, was translated into English by Edmund Jephcott, the translator of Horkheimer and Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1947).[24] As Williams recollects, though the end-product may read 'like somebody selecting and redisposing something which is already a common property', the *Bildung* tradition in England was not a settled territory; in fact, the 'whole process of locating the writers' relevant to Williams's project was 'a pretty amateur job of reading from one book to another, looking this and that up, and finding always that I had to keep revising the formation with which I had originally started'.[25]

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[22] Collini, *Nostalgic Imagination*, p. 171.

[23] Williams, *Politics and Letters*, p. 114. One of the interviewers, Francis Mulhern, has partly addressed the 'international dimension' of the tradition in his *Culture/Metaculture*.

[24] Hartman, *The Fateful Question of Culture*, p. 205. See Elias, *The Civilizing Process*.

[25] Williams, *Politics and Letters*, p. 99.

II. A Prelapsarian Origin of Culture and the Clerisy

Scholars and critics of the younger generations, particularly those equipped with theories from the Continent, could easily find both 'sins of omission and commission' in Williams's work, 'whether of gender, sexuality, historical periodization, nationality or colonialism'. [26] Williams's 'tradition' includes no more than two female writers, Elizabeth Gaskell and George Eliot, out of the forty figures he discusses, proving it to be even more 'heavily gendered as masculine […] than Leavis's "great tradition"'.[27] He has the least interest in the 'Interregnum' period from around 1880 to 1914, in which he could not find 'anything very new' but 'a working-out, rather, of unfinished lines; a tentative redirection'.[28] But was the period not the zenith of imperial expansion? Did not the *fin-de-siècle* sexual politics have any bearing on emancipatory radicalism of his own century? Despite all these retrospective allegations, we miss too much if we view the work as nothing more than 'a masterpiece of disinterested academic commentary' at best, an 'academicist project' immersed in empirical enquiry into textual detail.[29] The idea of culture was a rallying point of the first New Left, who revolted against official Communist Marxism after the moral crisis of 1956 occasioned by the double impact of the Hungarian Revolution and the Suez Crisis. Drawing on the fertile ground of Western Marxism, in which the problems of human agency and subjective consciousness were always to the fore, the New Left intellectuals attempted to find a more positive role in the sphere of culture and art, rather than conflating it with the political and legal superstructure and reducing it to 'a by-product of economic activity'.[30] Williams's valorization of culture was thus in conjunction with E. P. Thompson's project of socialist humanism exemplified

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[26] Milner, *Re-imagining Cultural Studies*, pp. 58, 60–61.
[27] Milner, p. 58.
[28] Williams, *Culture and Society*, p. 216.
[29] Higging, *Raymond Williams*, p. 46; Eagleton, *Criticism and Ideology*, p. 25.
[30] Milner, p. 42.

in such memorable works as *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963). Williams was never as harsh against theoretical development in Marxist thought as Thompson, who denigrated left intellectuals' involvement with Althusserian structuralism as nothing more than 'a psycho-drama within the enclosed ghetto of the theoretical left' in his notorious response at a conference centred around his provocative essay 'The Poverty of Theory' (1978).[31] Williams's own foray into Theory resulted in the formation of cultural materialism in such late works as *Marxism and Literature* (1977). However, not a few commentators see his theoretical works as of less value than his earlier outputs as a 'practical critic', and it has been common to identify his legacy alongside Thompson's with the label of culturalism, particularly in some foundation myths of Cultural Studies, only to be overcome by the succeeding moment of structure.[32]

Another context for Williams's polemical intent is more familiar to the student of English literature: conservative critics' appropriation of the idea of culture and their valorization of 'minority culture', in the phrase of F. R. Leavis, *vis-à-vis* 'mass civilization'. There is a sense in which it could be misleading to describe Williams's major achievement in *Culture and Society* as 'the establishment of the existence of a culture and society tradition'.[33] He attempted to 'refute the increasing contemporary use of the concept of culture against democracy, socialism, the working class or popular education', by the hands of such reactionary figures as the Leavises, Clive Bell, and T. S. Eliot – they had drawn strength from 'the general conservative backlash against the extension of working-class education heralded by the Beveridge Report of 1942 and inaugurated by the Education Act of 1944'.[34] Williams chose to confront the enemy 'by way of a kind

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[31] Kettle, 'The Experience of History', p. 543. On this conference organized by *History Workshop Journal*, see Dennis Dworkin, *Cultural Marxism in Postwar Britain*, pp. 232–45.

[32] Collini has recently remarked: 'I cannot help feeling that his later writing, which was always in danger of sinking into a midden of wordy over-abstraction, might have benefited from the crisp perceptiveness of his earlier literary-critical engagement with textual detail' (*Common Writing*, p. 122).

[33] Higgins, p. 58.

[34] Williams, *Politics and Letters*, p. 98; Higgins, p. 52. For a full account of the post-war debate on

of prototypical deconstruction', as Andrew Milner has remarked, citing Williams's *NLR* interviews, 'by discovering within the tradition the repressed legacy "of the tradition itself"'.[35] It is therefore no surprise that there is scarcely any novelty in the selection of the writers he includes in the book. Edmund Burke, the figure who is placed at the beginning of its chronology, at first may seem unexpected for a literary history. However, Burke was an established canonical writer in the foundation period of English Studies as a serious academic discipline.[36] Early defenders of literary studies from John Morley and Leslie Stephen to John Churton Collins stressed the political significance and the stylistic sophistication of Burke; C. E. Vaughan, who held chairs in English Literature successively at Cardiff, Newcastle, and Leeds from 1889 onwards, produced textbooks and abridged editions of his writings for school education. In this, they were in line with Arnold himself, who, alongside Morley, Stephen, and W. E. H. Lecky, contributed to 'the promotion of Burke and the eighteenth century' in general from the mid-1860s and the later establishment of him 'as a relevant contemporary political thinker following the Home Rule debates'.[37] A crucial document here is the so-called Newbolt Report (1921), a governmental committee's report that has occupied a central place in standard accounts of the historical formation of the discipline. Aiming at a 'system of education centred upon a national consciousness, based upon the native language and literature', and feeling confident of 'English studies' rightful pre-eminence in post-war education', the report rebuked the accusation that English is a 'soft option'.[38] Illuminating is the list of writers

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education as a background of the practice of literary criticism, see Guy Ortolano, *The Two Cultures Controversy*.

[35] Milner, p. 61; Williams, *Politics and Letters*, p. 98.

[36] The following account in this paragraph draws greatly on Emily Jones, *Edmund Burke and the Invention of Modern Conservatism*, chap. 7.

[37] Emily Jones, pp. 200–1.

[38] Christ Baldick, *The Social Mission of English Criticism*, p. 95. Henry Newbolt, who chaired the committee, was a prominent poet whose patriotic pieces were loved by John Betjeman, who saw in Newbolt a gentlemanly, patriotic intellectual and 'the archetypal Englishman' (Julia Stapleton, *Political Intellectuals and Public Identities in Britain since 1850*, p. 158).

whose canonical status the authors of the report resort to:

> we do not think it can be contended that it is a 'soft option' to be called on to understand the art, thought, imagination of such writers as Shakespeare, Milton, Wordsworth, Shelley. Is it a soft option to make oneself master of the political philosophy of Burke? Is it a soft option to enter into the world of Chaucer, so full both of the now forgotten life of his own time and country and of the life which belongs to all countries and all times?[39]

Rather than idiosyncrasy on the authors' part, this juxtaposition testifies to the position of Burke as 'an established part of an informal but effective national curriculum', which greatly contributed to the retrospective construction of Burke as 'the founder of conservatism' in the late Victorian and Edwardian period.[40]

A conservative classic by Russell Kirk, *The Conservative Mind* (1953), which was published in Britain by T. S. Eliot at Faber and Faber, starts its chronology with a discussion of Burke before going on to a chapter on Romantics and Utilitarians, where he includes a section on Coleridge's political ideas (Kirk's endpoint is Eliot himself).[41] Williams's recollection here begins to sound unreliable.[42] In recalling his composition process of 'haphazard and accidental discoveries', he remarks that he 'stumbled on *The Constitution of Church and State*'.[43] Kirk's book was certainly not available when he started to lecture on the idea of culture in Leavis, Eliot, and Arnold in adult education classes in the late 1940s. At this point, he used Leavis and Denys Thompson's *Culture*

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[39] *The Teaching in England*, p. 203.
[40] Emily Jones, pp. 209, 226.
[41] See Kirk, *Conservative Mind*, p. xiii.
[42] Collini warns that Williams's 'reconstructions of earlier episodes are not always to be trusted' or 'taken literally', particularly in the case of the 1970s' *NLR* interviews (*The Nostalgic Imagination*, p. 156).
[43] *Politics and Letters*, pp. 97, 99.

and Environment (1933) as a textbook and limited his scope to the contemporary debate accordingly – the debasing effect of commerce on cultural productions, such as radio, cinema, advertising, and periodicals. [44] But the year 1949 saw the publication of *Nineteenth Century Studies* by Basil Willey, another major protagonist in the golden age of Cambridge English, who Kirk himself thought had presented 'the best short account of Coleridge's thought' (p. 134). Subtitled 'Coleridge to Matthew Arnold', this commercially successful book included discussions of other Victorian prose writers who went into *Culture and Society*: Thomas Arnold, Newman, Carlyle, Bentham, Mill, and George Eliot.[45] In the chapter on Carlyle, Willey stresses his continuity with Coleridge and other thinkers, and we detect the scent of hyperbolism in Williams's remark that 'I had to discover for myself Carlyle's *Signs of the Times* essay, which was the single most exciting revelation'.[46] Besides, his inclusion of Mill was occasioned by Leavis's edition of *Mill on Bentham and Coleridge*, published in 1950; it is known that it was around this time that Williams started his inquiry into nineteenth-century writers. If only for this reason, it is not immediately clear what is meant by such a conventional statement as that *Culture and Society* has been 'a major achievement in its reconstitution of a lost or suppressed tradition of opposition to the organisation of society since the industrial revolution'.[47]

What Stefan Collini has persuasively demonstrated is that this 'lost and suppressed tradition' was an invented tradition – one both invented and then 'discovered' by Williams himself. His conclusion is that 'Williams's chosen chronological and national limits impose a kind of false unity of purpose or concern among the figures he includes' and

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[44] See Collini, *Nostalgic Imagination*, pp. 169–70.
[45] Drawing on the archives of Chatto and Windus, Collini argues that the sales figures of this book 'suggest the sales pattern (and volume) of what would now be regarded as a "trade" book rather than of the modern academic monograph', indicating 'Willey's increasing marketability' ('"The Chatto List"', p. 646).
[46] *Politics and Letters*, p. 99.
[47] McIlroy, *Border Country*, p. 305.

that 'it is only insofar as they can be presented as addressing the same "problem" – essentially the response to industrialism – that they can be seen as constituting a single "tradition"'.[48] Most of the figures discussed before the chapter on Mill still did not 'identify industrialism as a new and destructive force'. William Cobbett, for instance, was indignant at the oppression of agrarian capitalism, something 'scarcely to be brought under the black flag of "industrialism"', in the words of the historian V. G. Kiernan.[49]

The situation does not radically change even after Mill. In his discussion of Mill on Bentham and Coleridge, Williams suggests that 'what Mill calls "Civilization" […] might better be called Industrialism'.[50] But his idea of civilization had a broader historical perspective. Mill derived this from the French historian and public figure François Guizot, whose *History of Civilization in Europe* (1828), from its antiquity to the French Revolution, was hugely influential in Victorian England. Guizot's ascription of 'the chance of the most complete and varied development' and 'an almost unlimited progress in all directions' in modern European civilization to the coexistence of various principles or organizations – 'powers spiritual and temporal; elements theocratic, monarchical, aristocratic, democratic; all orders, all social arrangements' – without one stifling the others was congenial to the indigenous whiggish thinking on constitutional liberty.[51] The situation was different with the ancient civilizations, according to Guizot, which were all 'stamped with a singular character of unity in their institutions, their ideas, and their manners; a sole, or, at least, a strongly preponding force governs and determines all' (p. 28). The outcome of this was tyranny and stagnation. Mill must have abhorred the idea of 'economic rationality' becoming his society's 'determining and officially sanctioned

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[48] *Nostalgic Imagination*, p. 177.
[49] Collini, *Nostalgic Imagination*, p. 174; Kiernan, quoted in *ibid*., p. 181.
[50] *Culture and Society*, p. 75.
[51] Guizot, *The History of Civilization in Europe*, trans. by William Hazlitt, pp. 46, 29–30; *Histoire générale de la civilisation en Europe*.

principle', but for him, 'the most serious danger to the future prospects of mankind' lay in 'the unbalanced influence of the commercial spirit' rather than the industrial spirit threatening to stifle English culture.[52] The significance of Guizot for Mill probably exceeded that of Tocqueville, as Varouxakis has argued, for Mill even went so far as to identify what the latter specified as Democracy in America as a subspecies of modern commercial civilization in general.[53]

Mill believed that 'the progress of modern society' had a deleterious effect on the faculties of an individual, suspecting that 'ninety-nine in a hundred of those who have known only what is called the civilized form of life' would perform in practical sagacity much worse than a 'person of good natural endowments, in a rude state of society'.[54] This recognition led to Mill's quest for 'institutions, bodies, classes, and influences' that would counteract the 'tendencies of modern commercial civilization', such as endowed universities and a learned or leisured class.[55] This was a continuation of eighteenth-century thinking on the politically and morally enervating effects of commerce, exemplified by Rousseau on the Continent and Adam Ferguson in Scotland. Christopher Harvie has recently stressed the neglected 'input' from Ferguson, both direct and indirect, into Thomas Carlyle's 'belief in the fundamental quality of community'.[56] It was indirect in part, for this Scottish Enlightenment thinker was eagerly read among German writers in the eighteenth century and beyond, including Herder, Schiller, and Humboldt, who collectively 'made distinct and creative uses of some of Ferguson's ideas'.[57] Though his verdict was 'by no means a simple anticommercial jeremiad', Ferguson was heavily

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[52] Collini, 'The Literary Critic and the Village Labourer', p. 97; Mill, *Collected Works*, XVIII, p. 198.
[53] Mill, *Collected Works*, XVIII, pp. 191–92. See Varouxakis, 'Guizot's Historical Works and J. S. Mill's Reception of Tocqueville'.
[54] Mill, *Collected Works*, III, pp. 707–8
[55] Varouxakis, *Victorian Political Thought on France and the French*, p. 39.
[56] *A Floating Commonwealth*, p. 101. Carlyle's debt to the Scottish philosophical tradition is addressed by Ralph Jessop in *Carlyle and Scottish Thought*.
[57] Fania Oz-Salzberger, Introduction to her edited volume of Ferguson's *Essay on the History of Civil Society*, p. xxv. See also the same author's monograph, *Translating the Enlightenment*.

critical of what he saw as 'the most pathological features of advanced commercial societies', writes Iain McDaniel. The most conspicuous of them was the division of labour in the economic sphere and the encroachment of its logic further upon 'the institutions of the state itself'. He saw the latter process as operative in 'the distinction between civil and military institutions that was Ferguson's main criterion of an unfree state'.[58]

According to Ferguson in his *Essay on the History of Civil Society* (1767), the ascendancy of the 'commercial and lucrative arts' comes 'at the expence of other pursuits': the 'desire of profit' stifling 'the love of perfection'; interest cooling the imagination and hardening the hearts; 'ingenuity' and 'ambition' driven to 'the counter and the workshop' (p. 206). But apart from all these, 'the separation of professions' threatens to 'break the bands of society' and to 'withdraw individuals from the common scene of occupation', reducing them to 'the parts of an engine' (pp. 206, 207, 173). Anticipating Schiller's argument, Ferguson remarks: 'Under the *distinction* of callings, by which the members of polished society are separated from each other, every individual is supposed to possess his species of talent, or his peculiar skill, in which the others are confessedly ignorant' (p. 207). The upshot of this is a situation in which 'society is made to consist of parts, of which none is animated with the spirit of society itself' (p. 207). The members of a community no more have any 'common affairs to transact, but those of trade', which Carlyle called 'cash nexus', never 'affected by common interests,' nor 'guided by communicating passions' (pp. 208, 207). In such a society, there is no room for 'the national spirit', 'the common ties of society', or 'the bands of political union', which Ferguson sees as embodiments of distinctively human faculties (p. 208).

A most important implication of this analysis that Ferguson saw was 'the unsuitability of democracy for modern commercial society'. [59] As McDaniel has

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[58] McDaniel, *Adam Ferguson in the Scottish Enlightenment*, p. 93.
[59] McDaniel, p. 99.

maintained, Ferguson's fear about 'a peculiarly modern version of despotism grounded on "tranquillity" or "lethargy"' prefigured 'the anxieties about "soft despotism" in commercial society' expressed by Humboldt and Tocqueville (p. 102). Ferguson thought that the division of economic labour introduced 'additional grounds of inequality and subordination among mankind', writes McDaniel, since it was inevitable that different callings had different effects upon the human character (p. 99). Ferguson in the *Essay* distinguishes between 'liberal' and 'mechanic' arts or employments. They form different habits and cultivate different sentiments, drawing on different talents; and he sees it as reasonable to 'form our opinion of the rank that is due to men of certain professions and stations, from the influence of their manner of life in cultivating the powers of the mind, or in preserving the sentiments of the heart' (pp. 175–76). For it is natural for humanity to aspire 'to rise above the consideration of mere subsistence, and the regards of interest' (p. 176). One 'who confine[s] his views to his own subsistence or preservation' and 'whose ordinary applications are illiberal' cannot be safely 'intrusted with the conduct of nations', according to Ferguson (p. 178). Thus, 'democratical or popular government', which admits those of 'mechanical professions' to 'deliberate on matters of state', must result in 'confusion and tumult, or servility and corruption' (pp. 178, 176).

Therefore, writes Ferguson, '[w]e look for elevation of sentiment, and liberality of mind, among those orders of citizens, who, by their condition, and their fortunes, are relieved from sordid cares and attentions' (p. 177). The artist, an instance of those professions that require 'more knowledge and study' and proceed 'on the love of perfection', is thus placed 'in a superior class' and 'nearer to that station in which men are supposed to be highest' (p. 176). In short, Ferguson recognized that commercial societies necessitated 'a noneconomic elite' – 'a suitably uncontaminated patriotic elite

who possessed enough public spirit to keep their country on track'.[60] In this, his sympathy was with 'the "classical" position that "politics" is what free men do in contrast to "economics"', the latter being seen as the realm of women and slaves, although he realized the imperfection of ancient republics that sacrificed 'the honours of one half of the species […] to those of others'.[61] Ben Knights started his perceptive study on *The Idea of the Clerisy in the Nineteenth Century* (1978) with a discussion of Coleridge, the coiner of the word 'clerisy', not least because of his stress on the impact of German 'philosophical renaissance' declaring human epistemological independence (p. 19). But the starting point of a history of the *idea* of clerisy, not the word, could be set earlier; after all, the succeeding clerisy theorists he discusses – Carlyle, Arnold, Mill, Newman – did not find their exclusive source in Coleridge's *On the Constitution of the Church and State* (1829) or his earlier writings. If for them, as Knight asserts, 'politics were only of secondary importance', their continuity with the earlier tradition might not be overemphasized (p. 6). Ferguson was one of those Enlightenment thinkers who 'politicized' the idea of liberal arts education and linked it with 'the maintenance of a free constitution' by 'civic engagement'.[62] His aim was the establishment of 'a military and political hierarchy […] that would run parallel to the socioeconomic hierarchy'.[63] Nevertheless, given the possible influence of Ferguson's *Essay* on Coleridge's denunciation of 'the growing commercialisation of agriculture' as leading to the abandonment of 'the moral responsibilities of landholders' for the public, it would not be too speculative to see a trace of the Scottish thinker in Coleridge's subsequent effort to find forces to 'counterbalanc[e] the commercial spirit' in the landed interest, education 'reformed on the basis of Platonic philosophy', and 'intellectualized religions' in contrast

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[60] McDaniel, p. 100.
[61] Christopher Berry, *The Idea of Commercial Society*, p. 154; Ferguson, *Essay*, p. 176.
[62] Helena Rosenblatt, *The Lost History of Liberalism*, p. 33.
[63] McDaniel, p. 7.

to Evangelicalism, which he saw conspired with the spirit of commerce.[64]

It is almost inevitable to conclude, as Collini has done, that Williams approached the intellectual life of nineteenth-century England in *Culture and Society* with a priori historical assumptions, probably derived from J. L. and Barbara Hammond's catastrophist interpretation of modern English history: that (1) the Industrial Revolution inaugurated 'a new civilization', destroying the organic village community equipped with the 'traditional and customary checks on profit-maximising', and (2) this 'moral catastrophe' naturally demanded the concept of 'culture', which had been unnecessary before 'because the values it invokes had previously been integrated with the lived fabric of life', to serve 'a remedial or corrective function' in the postlapsarian world.[65] The nineteenth-century authors in the 'culture and society' tradition did not necessarily rally to the cause of anti-industrialism, nor did the modern senses of the word 'culture' take root until the 1860s. Textual evidence alone would not have supported the view that there was a cataclysmic watershed of exclusive significance in intellectual history around the end of the eighteenth century. Williams later stated that '*Culture and Society* is not a book I am greatly attached to now', and moved on to criticize his own initial 'categorical, unqualified fidelity to Leavis's meta-historical conceptions', which the *NLR* interviewers detected particularly in his earlier work, *Drama from Ibsen to Eliot* (1952).[66] In *The Country and the City* (1973), the most conspicuous illustration of his later critique of nostalgic organicism, Williams clarified that the 'only sure fact about the organic society' is that 'it has always gone'.[67]

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[64] John Morrow, *Coleridge's Political Thought*, pp. 117, 119, 121, 123. Morrow refers to Ferguson's *Essay*, of which Coleridge had first-hand knowledge, in his discussion of the latter's 'use of a military example [in the Scottish Highlands] of the implications of commercialization', an association which Morrow sees as 'probably not accidental' (p. 117).
[65] Collini, 'The Literary Critic and the Village Labourer', p. 110; *Nostalgic Imagination*, p. 174.
[66] Williams, *Politics and Letters*, pp. 100, 194.
[67] Eagleton, *Literary Theory*, p. 31.

III. A Late-Victorian Idealist Response to the 'Culture and Society' Tradition

A survey of the fate of *Bildung* in England, therefore, does not necessarily need to confine itself to literary and aesthetic discourse or that which is centred around '*culture* as an abstraction and an absolute'.[68] After all, one of the most influential *Bildung* theorists was an eminent theologian, Friedrich Schleiermacher, who 'became for German Protestantism a reformer second only to Luther'. In his contribution to the tradition, *Soliloquies* (1801), which encapsulates core ideas of German Romanticism, his optimistic assumption that 'all original development in himself and others is good' seems to have been justified by 'his religious belief in the omni-presence of God'.[69] Schleiermacher grounded faith in God upon the immediacy of *Gefühl*, feeling. His argument that the proof of God lay not in 'objective miracles' but in 'the believer's experience' of being 'drawn into Jesus' personal relationship with God' would find echoes in English liberal theology throughout the Victorian period, not least in the religious writings of the two protagonists of this thesis.[70] Besides, it is no exaggeration to say that the history of German philosophy in the nineteenth century was largely 'the history of the idea of *Bildung*', whose exponents included Johann Gottlieb Fichte, G. W. F. Hegel, Arthur Schopenhauer, and Friedrich Nietzsche.[71] *Addresses to the German Nation* (1807–8) was Fichte's '*Bildungs*-manifesto', which rested upon the assumption that the realization of Humanity was only possible in society, 'the field of free interaction and mutual recognition'; for Fichte, *Bildung* was not self-formation precisely but 'a formation of the self in society *and* of a society'.[72] This ended in his ominous doctrine that 'any power, not ourselves, that takes hold of us, and comes alive in us instead of ourselves' – the nation, the Idea, or the Spirit

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[68] Williams, *Culture and Society*, p. 7.
[69] Bruford, *German Tradition of Self-Cultivation*, pp. 58, 87; *Monologen*.
[70] John E. Wilson, 'Remaking Theology', pp. 43–44.
[71] Gjesdal, p. 695.
[72] Gjesdal, p. 701; *Reden an die deutsche Nation*.

– is 'always divine'.[73] Hegel, in the wake of Fichte, characterized 'his own philosophical project in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* in ways that have licensed generations of interpreters to describe it as a kind of Bildungsroman'.[74] For Hegel, 'the absolute value' of *Bildung* lay in the 'cultivation of the universality of thought', which 'confers *formal universality*' upon the 'natural force of the drives' and 'purifies it […] of its crudity and barbarity', just as culture for Arnold meant overcoming of our ordinary, empirical selves to cultivate the universal standpoint of our best selves.[75]

This thesis addresses a major omission in the 'culture and society' tradition: the dominant presence of the philosophical school of British Idealism in what Williams calls the 'Interregnum' period. In his magisterial study *British Idealism: A History* (2011), the first and only comprehensive survey of the philosophical movement to date, W. J. Mander points to the situation in which the historical episode of the Idealist domination of English and Scottish universities before the triumph of the 'analytic' method of doing philosophy has been largely ousted from the repository of cultural memory of the English-speaking countries: 'The chronicle of British philosophy as taught in our universities stops at Mill to start again with Russell and Moore, as though nothing at all happened in the intervening period'. Yet once we set out to fill this gap, we find that 'a surprise meets us':

> Not only do we encounter a whole world of forgotten and unexplored philosophy, but we find it to be of a character markedly different in kind to anything of more recent currency. For at the close of the nineteenth century the philosophical landscape in Britain was predominantly idealist – the problems, concepts, methods, and history of the discipline all taken from a point of view opposed at almost every

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[73] Bruford, *Culture and Society*, p. 269.
[74] Herdt, p. 25. In the field of English literature, M. H. Abrams addressed the topic in *Natural Supernaturalism*, chap. 4.
[75] Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, §20 and the Addition to §20.

juncture to that which prevails today. (p. 1)

This philosophical movement, needless to say, received impetus from the study of German philosophers, particularly Kant and Hegel, but also others including Fichte and Hermann Lotze. However, its remarkable success would have been unthinkable without what Frank Turner describes as 'the triumph of Idealism in Victorian classical studies', which demolished the dominance of the rationalist, 'positivistic' interpretation of the ancient Greek world represented by the mid-century scholarship of George Grote.[76] As a result, as Jose Harris has argued in her social history that covers the period from 1870 to 1914,

> Numerous late nineteenth-century philosophical works not merely proposed an idealist methodology but reiterated the ancient Greek belief that state and society were logically prior to the individual, and that the goal of human association was not mere private satisfaction, but pursuit of the public good.[77]

This greatly explains the appeal of philosophical Idealism to the late Victorian intellectuals: in the words of Mander, their 'innovative and powerful conception of the individual and society' answered the widespread concern over the 'Social Problem' of the period. According to their 'societal conception of the individual', he continues, 'people could not be understood as distinct individuals, but made sense only in the context of a community which gave to them their thought, character and role in life' (p. 6). In this, their arguments anticipated those of recent 'communitarians' like Alasdair MacIntyre, Michael Sandel, Charles Taylor, and Michael Walzer. Alan Ryan wrote in the 1990s that

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[76] As Turner entitled chap. 12 of *Contesting Cultural Authority*.
[77] *Private Lives, Public Spirit*, pp. 227–28.

the 'so-called "liberal-communitarian debate" has been a somewhat confused American recapitulation of the arguments of late nineteenth-century Idealists, both British and American'.[78] Charles Taylor, who studied at Oxford and belonged to the founding editorial team of the *New Left Review* alongside Williams, stressed this continuity in his 1975 study of Hegel, writing that although '[i]nterrupted on the anglo-saxon scene by the reaction against the British "Hegelians"', this 'renewed interest' in the German philosopher 'is nevertheless returning' and 'continues unabated to this day'.[79] The 1970s marked, as a disciple of Taylor at Oxford has recalled, 'the dawn of the Hegel renaissance in the Anglophone world'.[80]

Since then, British Idealism has received sustained interest in the disciplinary history of political and social thought, from the pioneering study by Melvin Richter (which predated the 'Hegel renaissance' decade), *The Politics of Conscience* (1964), through Andrew Vincent and Raymond Plant's *Philosophy, Politics and Citizenship* (1984) and Peter Nicholson's *The Political Philosophy of the British Idealists* (1990), down to more recent studies including Matt Carter's *T. H. Green and the Development of Ethical Socialism* (2003) and Colin Tyler's *Civil Society, Capitalism and the State* (2012). The same is more or less true of other disciplinary histories. Historians of philosophy have been conscious of its (at least historical) significance. Peter Hylton has addressed Bertrand Russell's Idealist background in his account of the birth of the 'analytic' school, with a special focus on T. H. Green and F. H. Bradley (*Russell, Idealism, and the Emergence of Analytic Philosophy*, 1990). John Skorupski devotes around the half of the chapter on *fin de siècle* in his history of *English-Language Philosophy 1750–1945* (1993) to Idealist philosophers, against whom American Pragmatists reacted. Among more

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[78] 'The Critique of Individualism', p. 89.
[79] *Hegel*, pp. 537–38.
[80] Frederick Beiser, *Hegel*, p. xii.

recent scholarship, *The Oxford Handbook of British Philosophy in the Nineteenth Century* (2014) is outstanding, including six chapters that give exclusive focus to one or more philosophers of the Idealist school, narrowly defined (i.e., excluding its precursors or close associates like Coleridge, J. F. Ferrier, and James Martineau). In the field of religious thought, at least one monograph, Alan P. F. Sell's *Philosophical Idealism and Christian Belief* (1995), has been produced to investigate the theological arguments of British Idealists.

In contrast, the situation is different with literary studies, where interest in the school of British Idealism does not seem to have been revived. Part of the cause for this neglect seems to lie in this philosophical movement itself. As Mander has noted, 'British philosophy has never been drawn strongly to the subject of aesthetics, and it would be wrong to suggest that the Idealists stand out as any great exception to this tendency' (p. 328). But there is one notable exception among the Idealist philosophers active during the late-Victorian period: Bernard Bosanquet (1848–1923). Better known for his involvement with social work for the Charity Organization Society and what L. T. Hobhouse, a New Liberal thinker, denounced as a 'metaphysical theory of the state', Bosanquet also became 'the author of the first history of aesthetics in English', *A History of Aesthetic* (1892), after producing an English translation of the introduction to *Hegel's Philosophy of Fine Art* (1886).[81] A. C. Bradley, a literary scholar who is remembered for his Shakespearean criticism and the Inaugural Lecture as Oxford Professor of Poetry on 'Poetry for Poetry's Sake' (1901), regarded Bosanquet as 'the only British philosopher of the first rank who has dealt at all fully with this part of philosophy', namely aesthetics.[82] A 'neo-Hegelian' philosopher himself, Bradley's paradoxical relationship with

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[81] Sweet, 'British Idealist Aesthetics', p. 131. On L. T. Hobhouse's polemic against Bosanquet's *Philosophical Theory of the State*, see Collini, 'Hobhouse, Bosanquet, and the State'.

[82] Bradley and Haldane, *Bernard Bosanquet*, p. 8.

Aestheticism has been addressed by Nicholas Shrimpton, according to whom Bradley's 'rescuing or purifying of the doctrine of the founding generation of the English Aesthetic Movement', continuing the work of A. C. Swinburne and Walter Pater, ended up in 'turn[ing] the provocative slogans and manifestos of the dissident artists of the 1860s into a theory which has been the basis of mainstream English Studies ever since'.[83] With his celebrated distinction between 'subject' and 'substance', argues Shrimpton, Bradley succeeded in producing 'a model of a relatively disinterested intellectual discipline of literary criticism which is neither trivially concerned with effects of form nor a mere sub-section of the Politics Faculty' (p. 326). Joseph North presents the common-sense view that I. A. Richards objected to the 'idealist philosophies of the distinct aesthetic state', including that of Bradley, in favour of 'an incipiently materialist view' of aesthetic experience as continuous with 'experience of normal, practical kinds', while Shrimpton's more nuanced view sees Richards's project as 'providing a version of Bradley's approach to literature which makes it available (in a post-Idealist era) for Empiricists'.[84] In either case, our understanding of the initial phase of English Studies might be enriched by giving more attention to the fact that one of Richards's teachers at Cambridge, James Ward, was someone who overthrew classical associationism with an Idealist metaphysics. According to Richards's biographer, the Cambridge Idealist was congenial to Richards in presenting 'the individualist viewpoint, the cosmic blend of idealism and evolutionism, the interest in science, the "open possibility", and the vital role given imagination'.[85] It is too simplistic a scheme of history of philosophy to assume that the Oxford metaphysics of the previous century were swept away by Cambridge linguistic analysis, even if there is some truth to the remark that the 'reaction against Idealism was also in some ways a

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[83] 'Bradley and the Aesthetes', pp. 322, 316.
[84] North, *Literary Criticism*, p. 30; Shrimpton, 'Bradley', p. 328.
[85] Russo, *I. A. Richards*, p. 322.

reaction of Cambridge against Oxford'.[86]

The Aesthetic Movement seemingly emerged from the same milieu as philosophical Idealism in England. One indication of this is the fact that Swinburne and Pater belonged to the essay-reading group in Oxford known as the Old Mortality Society, alongside would-be Idealist philosophers T. H. Green, Edward Caird, and William Wallace. Some have focused on their intellectual intercourse, including Gerald Monsman in his studies of the Society itself and Kit Andrews in his reading of Pater as an 'Oxford Hegelian' comparable to Green. [87] The relationship between the Aesthetic Movement and philosophical Idealism in Britain is an interesting topic and it deserves an extended discussion, not least because Aestheticism was a doctrine grounded in 'a creative misunderstanding of Kant', which Victor Cousin and Leigh Hunt started to promote in the 1810s.[88] We shall return to the Old Mortality context in later chapters. However, the principal focus of the present study lies elsewhere. This thesis will follow the lead of Bosanquet. In his essay 'The Part Played by Aesthetic in the Development of Modern Philosophy' (1889–90), published in one of the founding issues of the *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, Bosanquet makes a hermeneutical call for an intellectual culture, which he sees lacking in Britain, that is reflective and self-conscious enough to be attentive to the self-sufficient life of the artificially created world of human constructs. According to him, philosophy attained its 'absolute stand-point' at the time of the French Revolution in the doctrines of German Idealism, and the epithet 'absolute' here is interchangeable with 'modern' (p. 85). We express by the idea of modernity 'a sense of rational freedom', or the conviction that 'man can meet with nothing that is outside himself, in the sense of being necessarily and fundamentally superior to his rational nature

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[86] Stuart Wallace, *War and the Image of Germany*, p. 52.
[87] Monsman, 'Old Mortality at Oxford' and *Oxford University's Old Mortality Society*; Andrews, 'Walter Pater as Oxford Hegelian'.
[88] Shrimpton, 'The Old Aestheticism and the New', p. 1.

and incapable of being faced or dealt with by it' (p. 85). The philosophical doctrine of 'the absolute or the objective idea' embodies this 'conviction of modern life', according to which the human world 'accessible through morality and science and art' will not be 'dwarfed by anything else of a more real kind that remains beyond it and incapable of assimilation' (p. 86). Hegel's 'objective mind', therefore, is not equated with Nature, but with 'actually existent although consciously constructed human organisations and institutions', from the family to the State (p. 87). The 'denotation' of Hegel's 'absolute mind' is 'human activities', which consist of 'Fine Art', 'Religion', and 'the philosophic intelligence' (p. 87).

It is crucial for Bosanquet that what comes first is Fine Art, which he equates with 'a connected whole consisting of minds by which certain actual things are regarded in a certain way' (p. 87). German Idealism ultimately acquired its unique insight into 'the idea within the reality' from 'the life work of Winckelmann', whose achievement in 'endow[ing] the human mind with a new organ in the sphere of fine art' Bosanquet sees as being reiterated 'in our own day by Mr. Walter Pater' (p. 82). Only after Winckelmann's 'deeper estimate of fine art' could Schiller present the 'idea that in beauty, and in the mind which is perceptive of beauty, there is an actual and existing reconciliation of such opposites as sense and thought, natural necessity and moral freedom, matter and form' (p. 84). (Note that Bosanquet was one of the earliest commentators in the Anglophone world on Schiller as a philosopher rather than a poet, alongside the contemporary American Idealist Josiah Royce.[89]) At the instigation of Winckelmann, the 'influence of aesthetic on the conception of nature' became 'a natural focus of the culture of that age' of Napoleon; hence, Goethe's interest in 'the science of morphology' (p. 89). Human minds at that time 'were busy with such realities as man and his works; with history, law, politics,

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[89] See Beiser, *Schiller*, p. 5.

art and civilization' (p. 89).

Yet when we turn to the situation of 'British culture and reflexion', it becomes clear, writes Bosanquet, that 'the nutriment of English philosophy has not been the same as that of continental thought' (pp. 91–92). The 'writers of greatest repute in British philosophy during the present century' are mostly those working on 'abstract moral philosophy, or on psychology, or on logic' (p. 91). Their thinking seems to be largely grounded on the assumption that 'man and his works, after the point at which he ceases to be merely animal, are not included in the object of philosophical analysis' (p. 96). There are occasions where 'the concrete works of man' are addressed, as in 'the theory of legislation' by Bentham or 'on political and economical subjects' by Mill (p. 91). However, Bosanquet sees their works as marred by the spirit of opposition and rebelliousness, never entering a truly 'concrete and constructive direction' (p. 92). In 'the arguments of the Associationist Psychology' and 'the new logic based upon scientific inference' underlying their works, we detect 'a feeling that there is a predominant superstitious tradition, adverse to free explanation and bound up with a kind of orthodoxy, which ought to be overthrown'; hence, 'a marked divorce' in England 'between philosophy and the older universities' (p. 92). Overall, for Bosanquet, 'nineteenth-century philosophy in Great Britain' could be characterized by 'opposition to all that vainly pretended to be the national culture and institutions' (p. 92).

Bosanquet concludes that 'the reflective thought of our most practical and concretely active of races', therefore, is 'singularly abstract, introspective, and unorganised', as much as 'wanting in constructive purpose' (p. 92). 'The history of philosophy, of religion, of fine art, of civilisation, is conspicuous by its absence', for histories written by the 'contentious' spirit cannot rise above 'something unappreciative'; and it is not surprising to find that 'in British technical philosophy' of the century 'there

is no aesthetic, and no part played by aesthetic' (pp. 91, 93). However, on his assumption, philosophy cannot be otherwise than 'an expression of national life'; a 'nation must think in its own language, and must reach the truth by its own road' (pp. 92, 93). Bosanquet finds clues in 'the higher culture of the people of these islands' itself (p. 93). In the realm of 'reflective culture' only, i.e., excluding creative authors like Wordsworth and Shelley, we find 'a succession of great writers' who, without being 'professional or systematic philosophers', pointed to the 'missing element' of 'intelligent and sympathetic history' or of 'self-conscious civilisation' (pp. 93, 96).

One of these is John Ruskin, whose 'chapter on "The Nature of Gothic Architecture"' registers 'the new and unmistakable note of philosophic history' – a kind of history 'which sees the works of men as instinct with the human reality of the life from which they spring with all its necessities and purposes' (p. 95). Ruskin's 'historical sense' illustrates how 'the actuality of civilization' could be 'brought home to consciousness' by attending to 'the ideal objectivity of human works, relations, and institutions' (p. 88). Another indication is William Morris. His 'estimate of the historical and social significance of architecture and the architectural handicrafts', for Bosanquet, is an illustration of 'the peculiar force of aesthetic reflection as an exponent of ideal reality' (p. 95). It is the 'aesthetic' that is able to 'interpret with vital significance all artificial surroundings', particularly when they relate to 'his tendencies to enjoyment, or to imaginative emotion, or to display'. By 'analysis *a posteriori*', aesthetic reflection 'lays the grasp of objectivity on that individual region of fancy and feeling' usually identified with 'the kingdom of caprice'. Human life is thereby 'rounded into a totality of which no part can escape the grasp of reason', reaching 'the absolute or modern stand-point' (p. 95).

Bosanquet's list of writers who 'supplied a reflective and intellectual element in

English thought' includes Carlyle, Arnold, and Pater alongside Ruskin and Morris, conceding 'the addition perhaps of George Eliot' (p. 96). It is virtually synonymous with the 'tradition' that we often identify with the label of 'cultural criticism' – a tradition of which, according to Gerald Graff and Bruce Robbins, Williams's *Culture and Society* depicts 'the founding story'.[90] Bosanquet avoided discussing the philosophical school of British Idealism – 'the work of Professor Caird or of Professor T. H. Green' – because his aim was to give a diagnosis of 'those indigenous conditions of English culture' that he saw as indicating 'the fact of a recognised imperative necessity for deeper and more human theories of life in England' (p. 97). However, the essay was indeed an apologia for the intellectual movement to which he himself belonged. Even though the 'English revival' of interest in reflective culture is 'original and indigenous', this is 'fundamentally an expression of the same necessity' as that which underlies the philosophical counterpart in Germany; it must thus 'ultimately include the material with which the parallel movement began'. German Idealism has not been 'wholly exotic and unknown' to the world of 'English thought', Bosanquet insists. Rather, it has presented 'certain intellectual forms' and 'certain organised regions of experience' whereby the English 'national mind' would be assisted 'in the systematic expressions of that many-sided ideal reality' which has obsessed the indigenous thinking throughout the century (p. 97).

This argument of Bosanquet, I believe, helps to make my rationale for a comparative study in following chapters sound more convincing. Before discussing the writings of Arnold and Green, however, the next chapter looks briefly at the tradition of liberal Anglicanism in the Victorian period to consolidate Bosanquet's contention that the Idealist school in Britain was not just an alien import but an organic development of its national culture.

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[90] 'Cultural Criticism', p. 422.

Chapter 2. The Liberal Anglican Inheritance

Francis Mulhern, in his study of *Scrutiny*, characterized the philosophy of T. H. Green as one of 'the greatest intellectual syntheses of the nineteenth century' predating the ascendancy of English literary criticism, and designated Matthew Arnold as 'his ideological rival'. Besides their common acknowledgement of 'the force of the cumulative scientific critique of Christianity and the futility of the restorationist ambitions of High Church intellectuals', Mulhern argued that they concurred in thinking that 'the State, which both perceived as an organ that transcended the divergent interests of civil society, should henceforward assume a pre-eminent role in the moral leadership of society'.[1] But the moral conception of the State was not an invention by Arnold or Green in the history of English political thinking so much as a chief characteristic of the liberal Anglican tradition – a theological genealogy that originated in the 1830s with S. T. Coleridge and Thomas Arnold, continued through figures such as F. D. Maurice and Benjamin Jowett, finding a practical expression in Christian Socialism, and migrated eventually into the critical programme of the younger Arnold and the philosophical renovations of British Idealism. As Matthew Grimley has argued, the tradition of liberal Anglicans or Broad Churchmen 'propounded a moral, organic state which embodied the whole national community' with the conviction that 'Christianity had an essential role to play in providing common social values for the state'. They 'envisaged a tightly knit society' which had overcome class conflict and believed that a national Church would play *the* central role in their social project.[2] Despite the cultural centrality of the liberal Anglicans, which was owed not least to 'their domination of the ancient universities from

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[1] *The Moment of 'Scrutiny'*, pp. 10–11.
[2] *Citizenship, Community, and the Church of England*, p. 25.

the 1840s', this cluster of thinkers, as H. S. Jones notes, has 'not featured prominently in most accounts of Victorian political and social thought'.[3] This chapter addresses their significance in the intellectual world of Victorian Britain by looking synoptically at two of the most eminent figures, Thomas Arnold (1795–1842) and F. D. Maurice (1805–72), in order to sketch a common intellectual background for Matthew Arnold and T. H. Green.

It was against the utilitarian conception of the relationship between individual and society that liberal Anglican thinkers posited their views of the ethical state; for, in general, 'the utilitarian tradition furnished few intellectual resources with which to tackle questions of nationhood and identity'.[4] The latter questions haunted the political thinking of the European continent throughout the nineteenth century, finding its most salient expressions in such thinkers as Fichte, Mazzini, Renan, and Treitschke; and the liberal Anglicans, according to Jones, can be seen as an English counterpart to these European thinkers. They disputed the political economists' and utilitarians' view of national boundaries as 'mere frictions interfering with the free play of the market' and their dismissal of intermediate communities and institutions in favour of the atomistic view of the general good as an aggregate of discrete individual interests.[5] What Thomas Arnold called 'the moral theory of a state' disputed this view, envisaging the state as the embodiment of the national community whose common social values would be yielded by Christianity via a national, inclusive Church.[6] The Church thus needed to allow the greater doctrinal and liturgical variety to be comprehensive. Both church and state were expressions of the nation, and, under the seminal influence of the Neapolitan philosopher,

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[3] *Victorian Political Thought*, p. 44.
[4] H. S. Jones, *Victorian Political Thought*, pp. 43–44.
[5] H. S. Jones, *Victorian Political Thought*, p. 43.
[6] *Introductory Lectures on Modern History*, p. 49.

Giambattista Vico, the nation was conceived as endowed with a divine purpose in history.[7]

The beginning of these liberal Anglican ideas can be dated to around 1830 – Thomas Arnold's *Principles of Church Reform* was published in 1833, four years after Coleridge's *On the Constitution of the Church and State*, whose theories of the moral state, the national Church, and the clerisy were influential among the succeeding generations of Broad Churchmen.[8] It was a decade which immediately followed the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts (1828) and the passing of the Roman Catholic Relief Act (1829), inevitable outcomes of the Act of Union with Ireland in 1800. They created a situation where 'the old identification between full citizenship and membership of the Church of England' was no longer tenable.[9] They could not but pose a question: 'in a Christian state with an established Church which had its own quasi-credal articles of religion, to what extent could the terms of citizenship be relaxed so as to open public office to Protestant dissenters, to Roman Catholics, to non-Trinitarian Christians, and to non-Christians, especially Jews?'[10] The Church of England had to justify its national position in this unprecedented political situation.

I. Thomas Arnold

One who attempted this justification was Thomas Arnold himself. Best remembered as an educational reformer who 'changed the face of education all through the public schools of England', Dr Arnold and his Rugby School 'provided the soil, the air and the climate in which Matthew was nurtured, and his deepest certainties were thence derived'.[11] The

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[7] See Duncan Forbes, *The Liberal Anglican Idea of History*.
[8] See Charles Richard Sanders, *Coleridge and the Broad Church Movement*; Tod E. Jones, *The Broad Church: Biography of a Movement*.
[9] Grimley, *Citizenship*, p. 26.
[10] H. S. Jones, *Victorian Political Thought*, p. 46.
[11] Basil Willey, *Nineteenth-Century Studies*, p. 52; 'Arnold and Religion', p. 237.

son was conscious of his intellectual inheritance from his father and consciously retained a sense of continuity with it, writing in a letter in 1868 that he regards 'the main part of what I have done and am doing as work which he would have approved and seen to be indispensable' (*Letters*, III: 258–59; to Mary Penrose Arnold, 13 June 1868). Green was also educated at Rugby, although the elder Arnold had been dead for eight years before his career as a pupil there began in 1850. Both Arnold and Green went up to Balliol College, Oxford, which would become the bastion of philosophical Idealism in England. Green belonged to the student essay-reading group called the Old Mortality Society, which flourished from 1856 to 1866 with the membership of such would-be notable figures as Walter Pater, A. C. Swinburne, A. V. Dicey, James Bryce, Edward Caird, and William Wallace. According to Gerald Monsman, the 'tone of the Society' was not only derived from that of Balliol, but the ethos of Dr Arnold and Rugby was also omnipresent, because for more than a decade 'the best of Thomas Arnold's pupils had come up to Balliol from Rugby', bringing with them 'ideals of social radicalism and a distrust of the mystical element in Tractarianism'. There was also the existence of the Snell Exhibitioners from Glasgow, who were 'always older and more serious than their English counterparts'; their Continental metaphysics, products of the reading of Carlyle and German Idealism, joined 'Arnoldian liberalism […] to make Balliol the leading intellectual force in Oxford', where 'friend and foe alike acknowledged the distinctive […] set of mind'.[12] Edward Caird came to Oxford from Glasgow in 1860 as a Snell Exhibitioner, and he would later become a leading British Idealist philosopher alongside other 'Scottish Idealists', such as his brother John Caird, Andrew Seth Pringle-Pattison, Henry Jones, D. G. Ritchie, and R. B. Haldane.[13] He would succeed Benjamin Jowett as

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[12] 'Old Mortality at Oxford', p. 366.

[13] On the 'Scottish Idealists', see David Boucher, 'The Late 19th Century Scottish Idealists and the

Master of Balliol in 1893. No sooner had the Old Mortality been launched than Matthew

Arnold took up the chair as Professor of Poetry and gave an inaugural lecture in 1857.

His audience then, as Melvin Richer writes, 'no doubt included Green and the Old

Mortality'.[14]

What Thomas Arnold called the 'moral theory of a state' in his 1842 lectures on

modern history – a theory that he believed to be 'the foundation of political truth' – was

directed against the utilitarian theory of a state which regarded its primary role as 'the

protection of persons and property'.[15] This 'godless Utilitarianism', which he saw

exemplified by T. B. Macaulay, was objectionable to Arnold because:

> as in each individual man there is a higher object than the preservation of his body
>
> and goods, so if he be subjected in the last resort to a power incapable of
>
> appreciating this higher object, his social and political relations, instead of being
>
> the perfection of his being, must be its corruption […].[16]

For Arnold, the prime aim of a state should be 'the highest perfection of its members'

rather than 'the false and degrading notions of civil society which have prevailed within

the last century'.[17] In the latter view, '[s]ociety has been regarded as a mere collection of

individuals, looking each after his own interest; and the business of government has been

limited to that of a mere police'. The organizing principle was 'the mere money-getting

and money-saving selfishness which cries aloud for *cheap* government'.[18] He saw its

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Problem of Philosophy' and his edited volume of *The Scottish Idealists: Selected Philosophical Writings*.

[14] *The Politics of Conscience*, p. 166.

[15] Thomas Arnold, *Introductory Lectures*, pp. 49, 35–36.

[16] A letter to the Chevalier Bunsen, 6 May 1833, in *The Life and Correspondence of Thomas Arnold*, pp. 202–4; *Introductory Lectures*, pp. 36–37.

[17] *Introductory Lectures*, p. 41.

[18] *Principles of Church Reform*, p. 93; *The Life and Correspondence*, p. 203.

hideous consequences 'in the actual state of the poor throughout England': it was 'their physical distresses, their ignorance, and their vices' that disclosed 'the true fruits of the system of "letting alone"'. Society had been fatally damaged by 'the exclusiveness of private property' with 'the absence of public walks, public gardens, public exercise grounds, public museums, &c.'.[19] It is misguided to describe Arnold as a socialist. Nevertheless, he was eagerly read by Christian Socialists including Thomas Hughes, Charles Kingsley, and J. M. Ludlow; Christopher Harvie has even described Christian Socialism as 'the practical embodiment of the Liberal Anglican ideal'.[20]

Arnold was never a conservative anti-reformer. He classified 'the real parties in human nature' into 'the Conservatives and the Advancers', identifying himself firmly with the latter.[21] He detested 'that godless' Jacobinism in France and his own country, but that did not avert his eyes from 'the wickedness of Toryism'; the latter he saw as the 'spirit which crucified Christ Himself'.[22] For Arnold, '[t]he Advance in its perfect form is Christianity' and his theory of a moralized state, as H. S. Jones has observed, was 'rooted in his progressivism'.[23] Arnold was convinced that the object of the ethical state based on Christian principles was 'the intellectual and moral improvement of mankind, in order to their reaching their greatest perfection, and enjoying their highest happiness'.[24] His 'Hellenized' Christianity, with its emphasis more on human perfection than 'the restraint of sin', was to be recapitulated in various forms throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century, even though its continuity with later development should not be overstated.[25] One example is offered by Green, who is recorded by John Addington

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[19] *Principles of Church Reform*, p. 29.
[20] *The Lights of Liberalism*, p. 36.
[21] A letter to Bunsen, 10 February 1835, in *The Life and Correspondence*, p. 236.
[22] *The Life and Correspondence*, pp. 202–3.
[23] *The Life and Correspondence*, p. 236; Jones, *Victorian Political Thought*, p. 48.
[24] *Principles of Church Reform*, p. 162.
[25] H. S. Jones, *Victorian Political Thought*, p. 48.

Symonds – his brother-in-law and a fellow member of the Old Mortality – to have said: 'the sense of Sin is very much an illusion. People are not as bad as they fancy themselves'.[26] Oscar Wilde, for another, remarked through the mouth of his version of Christ in 'The Soul of Man under Socialism' (1891): 'Be yourself. Don't imagine that your perfection lies in accumulating or possessing external things. Your perfection is inside of you'.[27]

Arnold was clear that his ethical theory of the state did not imply that 'the great object of a state is to promote and propagate religious truth'. To substitute 'the term "religious truth"' for 'man's highest perfection' was from his point of view an utterly confused idea which misunderstood the object of the state as both upholding 'a certain creed and a certain sect or church' and discountenancing all those who did not belong to 'one particular church'.[28] He called for an inclusive and comprehensive Church, dismissing the sectarian spirit and denouncing those who resorted to dogmatic uniformity as a basis for the social bond. He realized that 'differences of religious opinion, and of religious rites and ceremonies, are absolutely unavoidable', concluding that 'it is vain for any one sect to condemn another, or in its dealings with others to assume that itself is certainly right, and its opponents as certainly in error'. Since the existence of Dissent 'makes the Establishment cease to be national', Arnold found it urgent for the Established Church to relax its membership regarding doctrinal matters to accommodate Dissenters.[29]

This assimilation was reasonable, thought Arnold, for 'Christian unity and the perfection of Christ's Church are independent of theological Articles of opinion'.[30] This

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[26] A letter to Charlotte Green and others, 7 October 1882, in Symonds, *Letters*, II, p. 777. See Colin Tyler, *The Metaphysics of Self-Realisation and Freedom*, pp. 17–19.
[27] *The Soul of Man*, in *Criticism*, p. 241.
[28] *Introductory Lectures*, pp. 38–39
[29] *Principles of Church Reform*, p. 107.
[30] A letter to Rev. Julius Hare, 26 January 1835, in *The Life and Correspondence*, p. 232.

insight derives greatly from his study of German Biblical criticism, which Merton Christensen describes as 'a prelude to Matthew Arnold's *Literature and Dogma*'.[31] For an educated young man not to be drowned in 'obscurities, apparent contradictions, and still more, what he would feel to be immoralities' on reading the Scriptures, the elder Arnold proposed the idea that revelation was progressive.[32] As he argued in his essay 'On the Right Interpretation and Understanding of the Scriptures' written around 1831, apparent obscurities and confusions are due to the nature of 'any communication between a Being of infinite knowledge and one of finite', where 'the former must speak sometimes according to the views of the latter'. Christ needed to 'speak as a man who possessed no greater knowledge than the men of that time and country', that is, according to the principle of accommodation. Hence, '[t]he revelations of God to man were gradual' and necessarily proportionate to the stages of human development.[33] This recognition entailed the sense of historical relativity of intellectual formulations of Christian doctrines and absurdity of fighting for some fixed dogmas among divided sects. A. P. Stanley, the editor of Arnold's *Life and Correspondence* (1844) and a notable Broad Churchman himself, used a metaphor of 'everlasting mountains' to champion the alterability of Christian doctrines facing *Zeitgeist*. We tend to think that the Eternal stands still while 'it is the Transitory alone which changes', writes Stanley; but it is the reverse indeed:

> The everlasting mountains are everlasting, not because they are unchanged, but because they go on changing their form, their substance, with the wear and tear of ages. 'The Everlasting Gospel' is everlasting, not because it remains stationary, but

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[31] See Christensen's essay on 'Thomas Arnold's Debt to German Theologians'.
[32] 'On the Right Interpretation and Understanding of the Scriptures', p. 377.
[33] 'On the Right Interpretation', pp. 382–84.

because, being the same, it can adapt itself to the constant change of society, of civilization, of humanity itself.[34]

Matthew Arnold wrote to his mother that he felt himself on his father's ground whenever he 'touch[ed] on considerations about *the State*', believing that 'the change of times and modes of action being allowed for, my scope is not so different from his as you and others think' (*Letters*, III: 206–7; 25 December 1867). As Richard Shannon remarks, '[o]ne immediate implication of the National Church idea' was 'a marked disposition towards an "idealization" of the State as the civil function or attribute of the organic nationality'; and *Culture and Anarchy*, which Shannon rightly sees as a product of 'the Broad tradition', was 'the great literary monument of this disposition'.[35]

II. F. D. Maurice

Frederick Denison Maurice was too original a thinker to be neatly classified in any theological sect or intellectual school, forbidding himself system-building; yet, his idea of an organic national community with the Established Church at its moral centre, which was set against sectarianism and 'godless' utilitarian views of society, is enough to ally him with the liberal Anglican tradition we have been addressing.[36] Matthew Arnold was acquainted with him, but Maurice was of more personal and intellectual significance for Green. One of Green's uncles on his mother's side, David James Vaughan, was friends

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[34] *Sermons on Special Occasions*, p. 46. See James C. Livingston, *Matthew Arnold and Christianity*, p. 49.

[35] 'John Robert Seeley and the Idea of a National Church', pp. 238, 236.

[36] H. S. Jones has described the genealogy of the liberal Anglicans as 'a line of descent that began, perhaps, with Coleridge, and continued through Thomas Arnold certainly, F. D. Maurice less certainly' ('The Idea of the National in Victorian Political Thought', p.15). On Maurice's complex relationship with the Broad Church movement, see C. R. Sanders, 'Was F. D. Maurice a Broad Churchman?'.

with Maurice.[37] After resigning as Fellow of Trinity, Cambridge in 1860, Vaughan became Vicar of St Martin's, Leicester. Inspired by Maurice, he devoted his life to social reform as a Christian Socialist, founding a working men's college in the city, now part of the University of Leicester. He had been appointed a curate of St Mark's, Whitechapel, in 1850, where he witnessed the new London Working Men's College. The purpose of the latter, under the direction of Maurice and J. M. Ludlow, was 'to re-Christianize labouring men, improve their minds and foster economic cooperation'.[38] The Vaughan Working Men's College was modelled on this programme.

Green was on good terms with his uncle throughout his life, and he was almost persuaded by him to take orders as a clergyman. Green's father was also a rector in Birkin, a small village in the West Riding of Yorkshire, where Green was born. Leighton speculates that Green might have been inspired by his uncle when he considered leaving Balliol in the middle of the 1860s and taking a position as a teacher at Owens College, Manchester, inspired by 'Christian Socialist ideas about useful work with urban labouring men' (p. 149). It was in Leicester in 1881 that Green gave his famous lecture on 'Liberal Legislation and Freedom of Contract', which we will discuss in a later chapter. According to Green's biographer, 'it was his uncle who placed Maurice in his nephew's hands while Green was still at Rugby'[39]; and R. L. Nettleship, the Victorian editor of *Works of Thomas Hill Green* (1885–88), recollects that the writers Green 'assimilated the most' in his university years were 'Wordsworth, Carlyle, Maurice, and probably Fichte' (*CW*, III: xxv).

The Vaughan family also had a strong connection with Rugby. Vaughan's elder brother, Charles John Vaughan, was 'one of Thomas Arnold's prized students and

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[37] On the uncle Vaughan, see Denys P. Leighton, *The Greenian Moment*, pp. 146–49; Richter, *Politics of Conscience*, pp. 41–43.
[38] Leighton, p. 148.
[39] Richter, *Politics of Conscience*, p. 42.

disciples at Rugby', winning the nickname of 'Half-Holiday Vaughan' thanks to his academic achievements, and once even contested the Headmastership of the school (a post which would be later held by another Vaughan descendant, W. W. Vaughan, from 1921 to 1931).[40] The Vaughan family left an imprint on the national life of modern Britain as one which constituted what Noel Annan called 'the intellectual aristocracy'.[41]

A declared Christian Socialist, Maurice nonetheless upheld monarchy and aristocracy, seeing no need for radical change in the existing social order:

> [R]econstitute society upon the democratic basis – treat the sovereign and the aristocracy as not intended to rule and guide the land, as only holding their commissions from us – and I anticipate nothing but a most accursed sacerdotal rule or a military despotism, with the great body of the population in either case morally, politically, physically serfs, more than they are at present or ever have been.[42]

The idea of popular sovereignty was rejected, alongside 'the great idolatry of the day, the worship of Public Opinion'.[43] He wrote in a letter to Ludlow in 1848, the year both of revolutionary upheavals throughout continental Europe and of the third abortive attempt of Chartist petitions: 'the necessity of an English theological reformation, as the means of averting an English political revolution and of bringing what is good in foreign revolutions to know itself, has been more and more pressing upon my mind'.[44] The identity of Christian Socialism lay in the fact that its proponents 'were held together not

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[40] Richter, *Politics of Conscience*, p. 42; Noel Annan, 'The Intellectual Aristocracy', p. 329.
[41] See Annan, pp. 327–29.
[42] *The Life of Frederick Denison Maurice*, II, p. 129.
[43] A letter to his father, 25 September 1851, in *Life*, II, p. 70. See Norman, pp. 22–24.
[44] 24 March 1848, in *Life*, I, p. 459.

by a political programme but by a spiritual vision': 'setting out from the fact of the incarnation, they saw Christ in the suffering workers of the great manufacturing towns'.[45] One who crucially contributed to this grounding of social criticism on 'the fact of the incarnation' was Maurice.

Like Thomas Arnold, Maurice disliked the Benthamite spirit, which regarded mankind as nothing more than 'an aggregate of individual atoms' in competition with one another, striving for the maximum of one's utility.[46] This 'anti-social' theory supposed that the 'struggle to get for oneself, and to prevent any one else from getting, is the primary fact of our existence' and that 'all companies, communities fellowship, societies, have this origin and no other'.[47] Community, according to this theory, was created just as an efficient means for attaining the greatest degree of material possession. Maurice thought that social diseases, clearly seen in the condition of the poor, were caused by this false economic principle of competition, where there really should be cooperation. He objected to the separation of the secular from the sacred, the political from the religious, fearing that 'all economics, politics, physics, are in danger of becoming Atheistic'. This was not a problem associated with utilitarians alone. For him, theorists like J. S. Mill, Charles Fourier, and Wilhelm von Humboldt all seemed to be 'in danger of making a system which shall absolutely exclude God, and suffice without Him'. They failed to realize that God was 'the root from which all human life, and human society, and ultimately, through man, nature itself, are derived'.[48] This monist view, which does not allow the secular to be demarcated from the sacred, would have a decisive impact on Green and other philosophical Idealists, even though Stanley Pierson is surely right in

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45 H. S. Jones, *Victorian Political Thought*, p. 50.
46 Maurice, *The Kingdom of Christ*, I, p. 197.
47 Maurice, *On the Reformation of Society*, p. 13.
48 A letter to J. M. Ludlow, 24 September 1852, *Life*, II, pp. 136–7.

assuming that the fortification of Maurice's socio-ethical thinking by a later generation 'with philosophical systems, Kantian or Hegelian' would have been deplored by Maurice himself.[49]

One of Maurice's objections to the Benthamites was that the latter ignored particular, intermediate communities like the nation and the family, leaping from the individual interest immediately to the whole. This is one area where Maurice made a significant contribution to nineteenth-century British thought, testifying to the fact that Britain in the century was no exception in holding some thinkers who wrote substantially on 'the national' comparable to those of continental Europe. According to Reardon, Maurice did not think that the commitment to the Church Universal was incompatible with the fact of national differences:

> By no means, Maurice thinks; on the contrary, it enables the different nations each to acquire an enhanced strength and distinctiveness of character. The Church, in the shape of a national institution, would itself participate in this distinctiveness, as it would in turn promote it. It was the misfortune of the Jews in the time of Christ to have gone far towards losing their sense of nationhood and to have become, rather, a collection of covetous individuals moved by the spirit of the sect or the faction more than by the conviction of a common origin, land and Lord. National characteristics are therefore good. It is a false universalism which would depreciate them, just as it was a vicious sectarianism or party fractiousness which would weaken them by its divisions.[50]

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[49] *Marxism and the Origins of British Socialism*, p. 11. Pierson does not name Green or any other specific philosophers here.
[50] *Religious Thought in the Victorian Age*, p. 144.

Nationhood here is not posited against universalism nor characterized by opposition to nations other than itself; rather, it points to a tendency towards comprehensiveness which aims to transcend 'a vicious sectarianism or party fractiousness'. This is what distinguishes Maurice from a version of nationalism which we tend to see as predominant in modern European history. As H. S. Jones has claimed, it is problematic to regard 'that organic nationalism of the kind that developed in Germany' as the standard expression of 'nationality' in nineteenth-century Europe.[51] Jones turns to other Continental thinkers, including Michelet and Renan. Of particular interest in our context is Giuseppe Mazzini, who lived in exile in 1840s London and who had many admirers among Victorian intellectuals like Carlyle, Jowett, Green, Swinburne, and Maurice himself. For Mazzini, nationhood was 'a bridge towards a universal fraternity' and 'a remedy for vices of selfishness and individualism'.[52] According to his own words in the influential work on *The Duties of Man*, if 'Humanity is a vast army, advancing to the conquest of lands unknown', the 'peoples are the different corps, the divisions of that army'; '[i]n labouring for our own Country on the right principle, we labour for Humanity'.[53] Jones thus finds the equivalent to these Continental thinkers in the liberal Anglicans, 'whose central concern was the relationship between universal values and particular institutions'.[54] The continuity of this indigenous tradition with Matthew Arnold is palpable. In Arnold's political thinking, the antonym of the national was 'not the foreign or the cosmopolitan, but the narrow, the peripheral and the provincial', for the nation was 'the most general

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[51] 'The Idea of the National', p. 15.
[52] H. S. Jones, 'The Idea of the National', p. 13.
[53] *The Duties of Man*, trans. by E. A. Venturi, pp. 89–90; *Doveri dell'uomo* (1860).
[54] *Victorian Political Thought*, p. 48.

and universal of actual communities'.[55]

Maurice's socialism was more ethical and educative than political, and economic issues did not press upon his mind strongly. His socialism was the sort compatible with the declaration in 1848 that '[p]roperty is holy, distinction of ranks is holy' and '[b]eneath all distinctions of property and of rank lie the obligations of a common Creation, Redemption, Humanity'.[56] For Edward Norman, Maurice ended up in 'empt[ying] "Socialism" of its political content', which irritated Ludlow; in his hands, socialism became 'a matter of adult education, self-help economic enterprise and general exhortation to mutual respect between social classes'. Despite, or because of, these limitations, Maurice inspired Victorian social reformers of later generations as a specimen of social conscience 'in his cooperative work, in his elevated view of humanity, and in the examples he gave of involving the Church with the aspirations of working men'.[57] We shall look briefly at his 'elevated view of humanity' and the concomitant view of the Church's obligation to society. For Maurice, writes Norman, '[t]he Kingdom was not reserved for some ethereal existence: it was to be recognized in the social arrangements of men'; in short, God was 'immanent in the world' and humankind (p. 24).

Between the early part of the nineteenth century, when the religious mood was under the sway of Evangelicalism, and the end of the century, when Maurice's reputation was at its highest, there occurred a certain shift in theological thinking.[58] 'At the beginning of the nineteenth century', as T. R. Sansom has argued, 'the prevailing idea of God in relation to man tended to dwell on the sinfulness of man and the vengeance of

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[55] Jones, 'The Idea of the National', p. 17; *Victorian Political Thought*, p. 49.
[56] Maurice, *The Lord's Prayer*, p. 65.
[57] *Victorian Christian Socialists*, p. 32.
[58] Reardon states that Maurice's reputation 'grew steadily, reaching its zenith in the 1890s' (*Religious Thought*, p. 121).

God against sinners'. God in this mode was 'harsh, demanding and punitive'. By the end of the century, in contrast, 'the concept increasingly emphasized was God's love and benevolence'; and at the centre of Maurice's theology was 'the concept of the love of God for all of mankind'.[59] This shift was gradual and widespread. Christian Orthodoxy had been damaged, even before the dissolvent effects of Biblical criticism and the accumulation of scientific knowledge came to be felt, by personal revulsion against a set of ethical implications that Evangelical teachings seemed to entail: moral revulsion against the 'set of interrelated doctrines – Original Sin, Reprobation, Baptismal Regeneration, Vicarious Atonement, Eternal Punishment'.[60] The Victorian meliorist conscience could not tolerate the Evangelical 'salvationist' views of life, according to which, in the words of James Anthony Froude in *The Nemesis of Faith* (1849), 'the next was the only real world, and this but a thorny road to it, to be trod with bleeding feet, and broken spirits' (p. 152).[61] Mary Ann Evans, later George Eliot, confided in a letter in 1842, 'I cannot rank among my principles of action a fear of vengeance eternal, gratitude for predestined salvation, or a revelation of future glories as a reward'.[62] She was impatient with the anti-humanist morality of Evangelicalism, which decreed that '[a] man is not to be just from a feeling of justice; he is not to help his fellow-men out of good-will to his fellow-men; he is not to be a tender husband and father out of affection'; according to these religious ethics, she concludes, 'all these natural muscles and fibres are to be torn

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[59] 'From God to Man? F. D. Maurice and Changing Ideas of God and Man', p. 155.

[60] Howard R. Murphy, 'The Ethical Revolt against Christian Orthodoxy in Early Victorian England', p. 816.

[61] George Bernard Shaw wrote in a section entitled 'The Perils of Salvationism' in his preface to *Androcles and the Lion* that the idea of Original Sin and Vicarious Atonement 'did not work so badly when you could also conscientiously assure him that if he let himself be caught napping in the matter of faith by death, a red-hot hell would roast him alive to all eternity'. But 'belief in that hell is fast vanishing. All the leaders of thought have lost it' (*Androcles and the Lion, Overruled, Pygmalion*, p. ciii).

[62] To Mrs Abijah Hill Pears, 28 January 1842, in *The George Eliot Letters*, I, p. 125.

away and replaced by a patent steel-spring – anxiety for the "glory of God".[63] Maurice's socio-theological writings demand to be placed in this context; in Sansom's words, Maurice 'both exemplifies and contributes to the movement in theology' away from 'the Calvinist notion of "God the Sovereign"' and towards 'the notion of "God the Father"' (p. 158).

Maurice thought that 'the traditional presentation of Christian doctrine' stood on a 'false basis', as Reardon writes:

> Theology, Catholic and Protestant alike, made its starting-point the Fall, so that Christ's incarnation and death, despite St Paul's language about the mystery of Christ as the ground of all things in heaven and earth, were commonly regarded only as provisions against its more or less catastrophic effects. What had always been insisted on was the fact of man's depravity.

Despite his praise for 'the evangelical rekindling' of 'the faith of the English people', Maurice saw that the Evangelicals 'had become weak, because they assumed sin, and not redemption, as the starting point'.[64] For 'Protestants and Romanites' alike, 'the fundamental fact of divinity' was the 'Fall of Adam – not the union of the Father and the Son, not the creation of the world in Christ'.[65] To the contrary, in Maurice's view, we need to start from the recognition that:

> thou dost not merely carry about with thee that divided nature which thou hast

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[63] 'Evangelical Teaching', p. 460. See Rosemary Ashton, *George Eliot: A Life*, pp. 144–46.
[64] Reardon, *Religious Thought*, p. 126; Maurice, *Life*, I, p. 236.
[65] Maurice, *The Conflict of Good and Evil in Our Day*, p. 170.

inherited from the first Adam – a nature doomed to death, with death stamped upon it – thou hast the nature of the Divine Son, thou art united to Him in Whom is life, and from Whom the life of thee and of all creatures comes.[66]

This recognition led to his 'heretical and subversive' views on Hell and everlasting punishment in *Theological Essays* (1853), which were suspected of threatening to destroy the foundation of morality itself with the perilous ideal of universal salvation; and this suspicion caused him to resign his chair at King's College London, helped by his commitment to socialism.[67] No sooner had this volume of essays been published than Green observed of it that 'its merits, as is usually the case, seem to be in exact counter-proportion to the abuse which has been heaped upon it' (*CW*, III: xiv).

For Evangelicals, salvation in the life to come was primary, and physical sufferings on earth could be dismissed as trivial. Hence, 'the social conditions developing out of the dislocations caused by rapid industrialization and urbanization at the beginning of the nineteenth century were seen by most Evangelicals as unimportant'.[68] For Maurice, to belittle man's animal nature and their physical conditions was unacceptable. It was Christ Himself who was concerned with these things, thought Maurice. Christ heals their *bodies*; he 'proves man to be a spiritual being'

> not by scorning his animal nature and his animal wants, but by entering into them, bearing them, suffering from them, and then showing how all the evils which affect man as an animal have a spiritual ground, how he must become a citizen of the

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[66] *Sermons Preached in Lincoln's Inn Chapel*, I, p. 81.
[67] Sansom, pp. 157–58. See Reardon, *Religious Thought*, pp. 136–38.
[68] Sansom, p. 159.

kingdom of heaven, that everything on earth may be pure and blessed to him.

Maurice understood the Gospel as demonstrating in the figure of Christ the standard of human perfection 'to which man shall be raised'.[69] Human nature need not be denigrated, because we are 'already *in* Christ, and therefore, through him, in God', in the continuing process through which the revelation has been imparted to us.[70] 'In Him', thus, 'we find how humanity has been a holy thing, though each man felt himself to be unholy'. We are not, through the progressive process of revelation, led into 'a region more remote from humanity and human sympathies: rather, into one where humanity has reached its highest point; where every faculty and affection and energy has its full expansion and fruition'.[71] This 'elevated view of humanity' offered a theological foundation for Maurice's involvement with Christian Socialism, urging him towards the this-worldly realization of the Kingdom of Christ.

God, for Maurice, is not some remote, transcendent presence, miraculously intervening in our earthly existence only intermittently; God is immanent and progressively reveals Himself in the world and mankind. This immanentist turn provides a background for reading both the younger Arnold and Green. As David DeLaura has noted, when Arnold rejected 'the "monstrous" vision of a capricious God who deals in election and predestination' in assaulting Evangelical theology in *St. Paul and Protestantism* (1870), he was arguing in the same spirit as George Eliot.[72] Maurice's emphasis on the nearness of God had a crucial impact on Green, whose philosophical system was centred around

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[69] Maurice, *Theological Essays*, pp. 113–4.
[70] Reardon, *Religious Thought*, p. 124.
[71] Maurice, *The Epistles to the Hebrews*, p. 29.
[72] *Hebrew and Hellene in Victorian England*, p. 13.

the thought of God, not as 'far off' but 'nigh,' not as a master but as a father, not as a terrible outward power, forcing us we know not whither, but as one of whom we may say that we are reason of his reason and spirit of his spirit; who lives in our moral life, and for whom we live in living for the brethren, even as in so living we live freely, because in obedience to a spirit which is our self; in communion with whom we triumph over death, and have assurance of eternal life.

This view of God was 'an essence within the essence of christianity' for Green (*CW*, III: 221). It is suggested here that God is immanent in 'our self'; God is an ideal, higher self that exists as a possibility within us awaiting to be realized. In the words of *Prolegomena to Ethics*, posthumously published in 1883 by his pupil A. C. Bradley, God is 'a Being in whom we exist; with whom we are in principle one; with whom the human spirit is identical, in the sense that He is all which the human spirit is capable of becoming' (*PE*, §187). To live conforming to the ideal self, God immanent, is to 'live freely', which is Green's theory of positive freedom, and it is the personal commitment to this possible self that forms the basis of our communal well-being. That his ethics and political philosophy were interlinked with his religious and theological standpoint will be made clearer in the following chapters.

Chapter 3. Two Versions of Victorian *Kulturkritik*

I. Arnold's Quest for 'Intellectual Deliverance' in Modern Times

When T. H. Green went up to Balliol College, Oxford, in 1855, as a graduate of Rugby School, he naturally gravitated towards Matthew Arnold. Arnold would deliver his inaugural lecture as Professor of Poetry at Oxford two years later, addressing the 'Modern Element in Literature'. Among the audience on 14 November 1857 in the Sheldonian Theatre were members of the Old Mortality Society. Arnold was not necessarily held in high repute among them. For John Nichol, the founder of the society and later Professor of English Literature at Glasgow, Arnold as a poet was 'little more than an exquisite imitator':

> He knows Sophocles, but it is to the exclusion of Shakespeare, and his judgement is as much reactionary and partial as that of Rossetti and the pre-Raphaelites. They both move back, only in different directions.[1]

Nichol here seems to have had in mind the poet's preface to the 1853 collection of *Poems*, in which Arnold dismissed Shakespeare as an ideal model for young poets, who thereby might put themselves at 'risk of being vanquished and absorbed' by the Elizabethan poet's gift of 'happy, abundant, and ingenious expression', a quality which he conceded as 'eminent and unrivalled' (*CPW*, I: 9). Among Shakespeare's victims, according to Arnold, was John Keats. He instead recommended the return to ancient Greek poets, who would produce in moderns 'a steadying and composing effect upon their judgment' and give them a guiding hand to come through the confusion of modern times (*CPW*, I: 13).

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[1] William Knight, *Memoir of John Nichol*, p. 157.

'The confusion of the present times is great', Arnold diagnoses, with 'the multitude of voices counselling different things bewildering' (*CPW*, I: 8). The argument that the ancients would work more aptly than Elizabethan countrymen as 'a hand to guide' was reiterated in the inaugural lecture. It is recorded in the Old Mortality's minute book that its members 'expressed their disappointment' with the lecture.[2] A short article entitled 'Modern Hellenism' appeared in December 1857 in the first number of *Undergraduate Papers*, 'the organ of the "Old Mortality"'.[3] All articles were unsigned, and this piece was attributed to Swinburne by G. B. Hill, an original member who would become a scholar of eighteenth-century literature and produce a six-volume edition of Boswell's *Life of Johnson* in 1887. Monsman, though, speculates that the author was Nichol. It did not mention Arnold by name, but there is no doubt that the subject was nothing other than his inaugural lecture, which had been delivered only a month before.[4]

In the lecture, Arnold looks to ancient Greek poets for an intellectual vantage point from which to command a comprehensive view of his age. His is an age that 'exhibits to the individual man who contemplates it the spectacle of a vast multitude of facts awaiting and inviting his comprehension' (*CPW*, I: 20). His poetry continued registering his sense of the 'bleak modern understanding of the human condition', in the words of Nicholas Shrimpton: 'The mass swells more and more / Of volumes yet to read, / Of secrets to explore', while 'Our hair grows grey, our eyes are dimmed, our heat is tamed' ('Empedocles on Etna', I. ii. ll. 333–36). '[T]his strange disease of modern life' was rife '[w]ith its sick hurry, its divided aims, / Its heads o'ertaxed, its palsied hearts' ('The Scholar-Gypsy', ll. 203–5)[5]. Around 1849 Arnold wrote to Clough in a similar vein,

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2 Quoted in Monsman, 'Old Mortality at Oxford', p. 368.
3 Knight, *Memoir of John Nichol*, p. 157.
4 See a letter from Hill to Miss Scott, his future wife, dated 1 December 1857, in *Letters of George Birkbeck Hill*, pp. 75–76; and Monsman, 'Old Mortality at Oxford', p. 382 (n. 53). Hill makes it explicit here that 'you will not understand [the article on 'Modern Hellenism'] without knowing that it is an attack on a lecture just delivered by our Professor of Poetry, Matthew Arnold' (p. 76).
5 Shrimpton, Introduction to his edition of *Matthew Arnold* for Everyman's Poetry, p. xx. All references

disparaging these 'damned times' as opposing 'the height to which knowledge is come' with 'the spread of luxury, our physical enervation, the absence of great *natures*, the unavoidable contact with millions of small ones, newspapers, cities, light profligate friends, moral desperadoes like Carlyle, our own selves, and the sickening consciousness of our difficulties' (*Letters*, I: 156; 23 September [1849])[6]. The Scottish 'moral desperado' made available to English readers a *Life of Schiller* in 1825, and Arnold refers to Schiller's remark that '[a]ll art is dedicated to Joy' in the 1853 Preface (*CPW*, I: 2). Arthur Hallam apparently followed Schiller when he presented an argument about 'dissociated sensibility' in his age's 'overcivilised condition' – one which Isobel Armstrong has seen as 'extraordinarily prophetic' of T. S. Eliot. In his essay 'On Some of the Characteristics of Modern Poetry' (1831), Hallam observes that '[t]hose different powers of poetic disposition, the energies of Sensitive, of Reflective, of Passionate Emotion, which in former times were intermingled, and derived from mutual support an extensive empire over the feelings of men, were now restrained within separate spheres of agency'. His solution, the poetry of sensation, which *physically*, not morally or intellectually, brings readers to the height of 'the author's point of vision' according to the 'regular law of association', was anathema to Arnold.[7] For Arnold, as Shrimpton has remarked, 'remained unashamedly a poet of reflection' in Hallam's taxonomy.[8] He saw that the situation rather demanded what he called an 'intellectual deliverance' in the inaugural lecture.

For this deliverance, thought Arnold, modern minds needed to possess 'the general ideas which are the law of this vast multitude of facts'. The process will be complete, as he continues,

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to Arnold's poetry are from Kenneth and Miriam Allott's edition of *The Poems of Matthew Arnold*.
[6] Brackets in references to *Letters* indicate unspecified dates.
[7] Hallam, pp. 91, 89; Armstrong, Introduction to *Victorian Scrutinies*, p. 19.
[8] Introduction, p. xvi.

when we have acquired that harmonious acquiescence of mind which we feel in contemplating a grand spectacle that is intelligible to us; when we have lost that impatient irritation of mind which we feel in presence of an immense, moving, confused spectacle which, while it perpetually excites our curiosity, perpetually baffles our comprehension. (*CPW*, I: 20)

Arnold insists paradoxically that some ancient Greek writers are more modern than English ones of the Elizabethan age. His strategy is to compare Sir Walter Raleigh's scheme of the *History of the World* (1614), which dully repeated a medieval religious worldview, with the history of Thucydides, whose style was that of '*modern* language' (*CPW*, I: 26). In his accounts of the Trojan war, the Greek historian 'labours to correct popular errors, to assign their true character to facts, complaining, as he does so, of men's habit of *uncritical* reception of current stories' (*CPW*, I: 26). Thus juxtaposed, Arnold rhetorically enquires: 'Which is the ancient here, and which is the modern?'; 'Which has the rational appreciation and control of his facts? which wanders among them helplessly and without a clue?' (*CPW*, I: 27–28). According to his premise, each man represented the average critical power of the majority of intelligent men in each age: Thucydides that of Athens in the fifth century BC; Raleigh that of Elizabethan England. In this argument for the modernity of the ancient world, Arnold was reiterating his father's belief that 'the classical past seen in true perspective actually is modern, and that its literature offers guidance when readers are sufficiently aware of their own times to achieve that perspective'.[9]

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[9] Warren Anderson, 'Arnold and the Classics', p. 265. Behind the cyclical view of history held by the liberal Anglicans, including the elder Arnold, was the Viconian theory of history. See Culler, pp. 128–29; Dale, pp. 91–97; Day, *passim*; Forbes, *passim*; and Turner, *The Greek Heritage*, pp. 25–28.

The article on 'Modern Hellenism' by one of the Old Mortality members focused its condensed attack on the lecture on Arnold's undue disparagement of the Elizabethan age in favour of the Hellenist inheritance, his ungrounded assumption that '[i]n their best moments the leaders of English thought and action were unable to attain the ordinary height of a Grecian citizen'.[10] It was difficult for the author to believe that 'the age which culminated in the yet more shameful than mournful ruin of the Syracusan expedition' – an Athenian expedition to Sicily during the Peloponnesian War that resulted in a disastrous defeat on their part and 'left its successors to sink under a disgraceful tyranny' – was superior to the age of Elizabeth. The latter was, by contrast, one which 'attained its consummation in the defeat of the Spanish Armada', and its inheritance was long-lasting. The successors to Elizabethan England were

> a nation so organised as to resist the influence even of Stuart tyranny and Stuart baseness, in the consciousness that under Elizabeth it had seen established in Europe, first and for ever, the right of political freedom as the secret of political strength (p. 39).

'After Pericles came Critias – after Elizabeth, Cromwell', the author concludes, with 'the establishment of the noblest Republic the world has yet seen' (p. 40).

Arnold must not have been impressed by the argument that the Elizabethan era was great because it paved the way for Cromwell and 'the noblest Republic'. He had argued in the lecture that the fact that 'the Puritans are then in full growth' in the sixteenth century was the sign that there was less and less room for the toleration that existed in the Athens of Pericles (*CPW*, I: 25). As his favourite phrase has it, the English middle class, after the

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[10] 'Modern Hellenism', p. 39.

English Revolution, 'entered the prison of Puritanism, and had the key turned upon their spirit there for two hundred years' (*CPW*, III: 121).[11] In fact, Arnold was ambivalent about the Elizabethan past, and his view of it vacillated. He confided in a letter to his brother Tom that he was inclined to think that the age was 'a *second class* epoch', a view he never dared to make public (*Letters*, I: 369; 28 December [1857]).[12] But he could at least concede that it was England's greatest epoch, describing the England of Shakespeare, alongside 'the Greece of Pindar and Sophocles', as one where poets lived in 'a current of ideas in the highest degree animating and nourishing to the creative power' (*CPW*, III: 262–63). For, in this 'greatest literary epoch', society at large was accessible to, permeated by, and vivified by *ideas* – 'to a degree which has never been reached in England since' (*CPW*, III: 121). The idealization of the Elizabethan age and the concomitant sense of belatedness on the part of Arnold's generation had a precedent in the essay on contemporary poetry by Hallam to which we have referred – a piece of literary criticism that Armstrong regards as 'one of the high points of early Victorian criticism' and finds 'resonat[ing] throughout the century'.[13] Hallam wrote, in reviewing Tennyson's 1830 volume of poems, that '[i]n the youthful periods of any literature', illustrated by the age of Shakespeare in his own country, 'there is an expansive and communicative tendency in mind, which produces unreservedness of communion, and reciprocity of vigour between different orders of intelligence'. Thus, 'amid the flux of generations and customs we retain unimpaired this privilege of intercourse with greatness'. However, he continues, '[t]hat first raciness' and 'juvenile vigour of literature' has gone, and 'never to return', and '[s]ince that day we have undergone a period of

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[11] The phrase was first used in his essay on 'Heinrich Heine' (1863) and later reproduced several times; for instance, in 'Falkland' (1877) and 'Equality' (1878).
[12] See Dwight Culler, pp. 140, 147.
[13] *Victorian Poetry*, p. 60.

degradation'.[14] Arnold was following Hallam's declinist scheme of literary history when he consistently disparaged 'the prison of Puritanism', which cut off the intellectual life of England from European culture and contributed to the subsequent burgeoning of a provincial spirit. Compared to this pre-history in Hallam, its afterlives have been relatively well-known. Collini thus repeats a conventional view when he writes that Arnold was in the company of T. S. Eliot and F. R. Leavis in idealizing 'the vigorous and expressive life of Elizabethan England', a time when 'English culture was not yet divorced from the mainstream of the European tradition'.[15]

It is almost certain that Green would have sympathized with the views of the Old Mortality author. Indeed, the evaluation of the Puritan past in English history seems to have been a major point of divergence between Arnold and Green. Green was, in the wake of Carlyle, an admirer of Cromwell; in 1867, he gave a series of lectures on the English Revolution and the Commonwealth, in which he heavily drew on Carlyle's edition of *Cromwell's Letters and Speeches with Elucidations* (1845).[16] As he remarked in public on the occasion of the foundation of the new Congregational Chapel and School Buildings in Oxford as late as 1880, the 'greatest men in literature and politics' in English history, i.e., Milton and Cromwell, were products of the Congregational body. The Congregationalists were 'the early champions in this country of the two causes of Christian liberty and toleration'; and, for Green, the service they rendered 'in the seventeenth century in fighting the battle of freedom had not ceased to the present day' (*CW*, V: 367–68). Green was clearly more sympathetic to the Dissenters in his own age than Arnold as well. He concluded his lectures on the Revolution by pointing to one of the 'palpable benefits' of the short triumph of Puritanism in the country: it created the

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[14] 'On Some of the Characteristics', pp. 90–91.
[15] *Matthew Arnold*, p. 78. For a more nuanced account, see Collini, *Nostalgic Imagination*, chap. 2.
[16] See Green, *CW*, III, p. vi.

'dissenting bodies' (*CW*, III: 364). They were given 'a permanent force' by 'the fifteen years of vigorous growth which Cromwell's sword secured'; and the vigour of the 'sectaries', in Green's judgment, 'has since been the great spring of political life in England' (*CW*, III: 364).[17]

It should be noted, however, that the differing views of modern English history did not necessarily entail radical divergence in their political thought and practice, as we will see in the next two chapters. Despite its disparagement of Puritanism, some central points of Arnold's inaugural lecture were congenial to Green's intellectual inclinations: the power of a mental construct to penetrate and bring into unity the confusing spectacle of modern life; the holistic, instead of atomistic, view of human cognition and social life; and the active conception of the human mind. For Arnold, poets 'must begin with an Idea of the world in order not to be prevailed over by the world's multitudinousness' (*Letters*, I: 128; to Clough, December 1848). But his 'general ideas' are at once 'the law of this vast multitude of facts' themselves; 'the true point of view from which to contemplate this spectacle' cannot be an arbitrary construction (*CPW*, I: 20). For this immense spectacle itself, which he identifies with 'the collective life of humanity', implies pervasive interconnections:

> [N]o single event, no single literature, is adequately comprehended except in its relation to other events, to other literatures. The literature of ancient Greece, the literature of the Christian Middle Age, so long as they are regarded as two isolated literatures, two isolated growths of the human spirit, are not adequately comprehended. (*CPW*, I: 20–21)

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[17] See also Lang; Worden; Morrow, 'Heroes and Constitutionalists'.

There is a glimpse here of Arnold's mature view of Hellenism and Hebraism as interlinked phenomena, each indispensable elements of human nature, where the overgrowth of one at the expense of the other should be avoided for the harmonious development of human capacities. Throughout 'the events, the institutions, the sciences, the arts, the literatures', which constitute the 'immense facts' to be comprehended, 'there is connexion' everywhere; 'the collective life of humanity' thus cannot be properly addressed from an atomistic viewpoint, as a mere aggregate of distinct individuals' isolated activities (*CPW*, I: 20). Arnold's culture, contrary to the common misrepresentation of it as the individualistic practice of self-refinement, will be a collective, perhaps intersubjective, enterprise of society.

Arnold's call for a 'rooftop' viewpoint from which to synthesize the modern spectacle entails epistemological implications.[18] He confirms that 'all facts, all the elements of the spectacle before us, have not an equal value – do not merit a like attention' (*CPW*, I: 21). Deliberate choice on the perceiver's part is essential; it is not just the matter of receptively reflecting the objective reality out there as it really is. This emphasis on the constitutive function of mind will be elaborated in his later work on Christianity, *Literature and Dogma* (1873). In this book, he discusses the function of attention in relation to morality and emotion, making a dubious assertion that the 'very words *mind*, *memory*, *remain*, come, probably, all from the same root, from the notion of staying, attending'. The capacity of attention, he insists, is what makes humanity distinct:

> [E]ven the word *man* comes from the same; so entirely does the idea of humanity, of intelligence, of looking before and after, of raising oneself out of the flux of

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[18] In using the word 'rooftop', I draw on Matthew Beaumont's usage in his discussions of utopian literature at the *fin de siècle*. He owes the reference to Ernst Bloch, who in turn derived the metaphor originally from Goethe – aptly here, in our discussion of Arnold, because he admired the German poet throughout his life. See Beaumont, *The Spectre of Utopia*, pp. 41–42; *Utopia Ltd.*, p. 36.

things, rest upon the idea of steadying oneself, concentrating oneself, making order

in the chaos of one's impressions, by attending to one impression rather than the

other. (*CPW*, VI: 179)

We know that Oscar Wilde, following Pater's Preface to *The Renaissance* (1873),

subverted Arnold's formula in writing that the aim of the critic is 'to see the object as in

itself it really is not'.[19] But Wilde, with Bosanquet, must have understood that Arnold

was also on the side of 'reflective culture'. Wilde attempts to prove his thesis that Nature

imitates Art from 'a metaphysical point of view'. What is Nature? 'She is our creation'

and it is 'in our brain that she quickens to life', for 'what we see' and 'how we see it'

depend on 'the Arts that have influenced us'. Hence, he rhetorically asks: 'Where, if not

from the Impressionists, do we get those wonderful brown fogs that come creeping down

our streets'?[20] A remarkably similar argument appears in Bosanquet's aesthetic essay. He

writes there that the 'appreciation of natural beauty by the public mind is in fact

conditioned by and historically sequent upon the revelations made by great painters and

poets'. This insight he ascribes to Ruskin, whose achievement was 'the discovery of the

idea in nature' in England.[21] What has been underappreciated is the contemporaneity of

the critical development from Arnold to Wilde and the growing influence of philosophical

Idealism in their university.

That the preponderance of the Idea is a major characteristic of the modern world is

a central motif that recurs in Arnold's writings. A modern poet needed to 'begin with an

Idea of the world', because life and the world that ought to be dealt with in poetry in

modern times were very complex (*Letters*, I: 128; to Clough, [early December 1848]). G.

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[19] 'The Critic as Artist', in *Criticism*, p. 159.
[20] 'The Decay of Lying', in *Criticism*, p. 95.
[21] 'Part Played by Aesthetic', pp. 90, 95.

H. Lewes wrote in 1847 that 'there reigns an intellectual anarchy' at the present time, with '[g]reat ideas' being 'in the process of incarnation', but 'not yet on the eve of a new birth'.[22] This meant that poets had 'no longer a powerful body of ideas' upon which to work.[23] And it explained why, for Arnold, the creative process in modern times required 'a great critical effort behind it', which was how he famously defended the cause of criticism in his essay on 'The Function of Criticism at the Present Time', collected as the opening essay for his 1865 volume of *Essays in Criticism* (*CPW*, III: 261). This also clarifies what he implied by the statement that English Romantic poetry, that 'burst of creative activity in our literature' in the early nineteenth century, 'had about it in fact something premature' (*CPW*, III: 262). In short, 'the English poetry of the first quarter of this century, with plenty of energy, plenty of creative force, did not know enough'.

Arnold did not wish himself to be classed together with the 'Spasmodic' school of poetry, represented by such then 'big names' as Alexander Smith and Philip Bailey. They were commercially successful and 'being touted as the true heirs of Keats and Shelley' – both Hallam's poets of sensation.[24] According to Richard Cronin, who draws on the words of another Spasmodic poet, John Stanyan Bigg, the 'highest aim' of the Spasmodics was 'self-revealment'. In Bigg's verse drama, *Night and the Soul* (1854), Alexis, a 'representative Spasmodic hero', soliloquizes that 'the soul seeth nothing but the soul' and '*self* is the beginning and the end, / The Alpha and the Omega, and the *all*' – a statement which adumbrates what might be called a Spasmodic poetics.[25] Arnold suspected that Clough had fallen victim to the charm of their overpowering poetic fits. He himself decided to exclude *Empedocles on Etna* from his 1853 volume not least because he came to see that 'his own poem could be thought of as representing in a quaint

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[22] Review of Robert Browning, *Bells and Pomegranates*, p. 492.
[23] Armstrong, Introduction to *Victorian Scrutinies*, p. 36.
[24] Ian Hamilton, *A Gift Imprisoned*, p. 98.
[25] Cronin, 'The Spasmodics', p. 293.

and transparent disguise a representation of the state of his own mind', argues Cronin; and that, therefore, *Empedocles* 'might itself be identified as a Spasmodic poem' (pp. 303, 292).

An article on 'Recent English Poetry' that appeared in the *North American Review* in July 1853 compared Arnold's two volumes (*The Strayed Reveller*, 1849; *Empedocles on Etna*, 1852) with Alexander Smith's poetry, which, according to one literary historian, 'represents a zenith of Victorian subjectivism'. The reviewer, Clough himself, preferred 'the fervid, sometimes incoherent, but recognizably contemporary poetry of Smith' to the enervating elite culture of Arnold's poems, which were replete with erudite classical references.[26] It was inconceivable for Arnold to succumb to the disorderly flux of chaotic, contemporary, incoherent poems such as those by Smith. Clough went against Arnold; for Clough, 'art has to do not with great human actions but limited ones, not past events but contemporary ones', with a mission to address the 'overwhelming sense of limit in work' experienced not least by the factory worker.[27] Thus, for Antony Harrison, Arnold's denunciation of the 'Spasmodics' was a matter of 'class warfare' or 'culture war'; for Smith was, after all, 'a self-educated muslin designer from Glasgow'. Their antagonism could be seen as a moment of 'a fortuitous confrontation of two opposed fields of mid-Victorian taste', which Harrison labels as 'culture' and 'sensation'.[28]

Romantic poets, lacking 'general ideas', ended in being crushed under the pressure of the world's diversity. Coincident as it was with this literary movement, the French Revolution for Arnold was a political event which was genuinely alien to the English intellectual atmosphere. It was quite unlike the English Revolution of the 1640s; for the French one 'appeal[ed] to an order of ideas which are universal, certain, permanent',

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[26] James Eli Adams, *A History of Victorian Literature*, pp. 169, 170.
[27] Armstrong, *Victorian Poetry*, p. 185.
[28] *The Cultural Production of Matthew Arnold*, pp. 68, 57, 59, 71.

while the English one appealed just to the practical sense of men (*CPW*, III: 264). What was pertinent to 1789 was the question, 'Is it rational?', while '1642 asked of a thing, Is it legal?' or 'Is it according to conscience?' But legality is unmeaning beyond specific time and place, writes Arnold, and conscience varies from individual to individual; in contrast, 'the prescriptions of reason are absolute, unchanging, of universal validity'.

Discussion in the 'Function of Criticism' essay then leads to a general disparagement of the empirical frame of mind of the English, which he thought was uncongenial to the task of the critic. Criticism for him was an 'un-English' project of pure reason and intellect (*CPW*, III: 268). The critic needs to 'keep out of the region of immediate practice' so as not to be absorbed into the 'rush and roar of practical life' and 'its vortex'; the critic needs to remain 'collected', resisting the 'dizzying and attracting effect' of practical life (*CPW*, III: 274–75). 'Practical' England is opposed to 'ideal' France, where 'a whole nation' could be 'penetrated with an enthusiasm for pure reason' and 'with an ardent zeal for making its prescriptions triumph' – the outcome of this was the Revolution itself. France thus became the country in Europe 'where *the people* is most alive', believes Arnold (*CPW*, III: 272, 264–65). It seemed to James Fitzjames Stephen, a jurist and staunch Benthamite, that the argument in the essay could be reduced to the question of patriotism, as we will see in the next chapter.

Arnold's high estimate of the French Revolution in the light of *ideas* and *the people* dates back to his lesser-known pamphlet entitled *England and the Italian Question* (1859). Arnold was appointed School Inspector early in 1851, backed by the head of the education committee, Lord Lansdowne, for whom he had served as private secretary since 1847. After eight years of inspecting home schools, he faced the prospect of crossing the Channel and spending five months visiting primary schools in France, Switzerland, and

Holland.[29] This prospect was '*liberating*', as he wrote in a letter, stimulating his 'general interest' in public education – in 'its history and principles' – and freeing him from the 'routine work' of which he had come to feel 'very sick' (*Letters*, I: 414–15; to Mary Penrose Arnold, 16 February 1859). The errand would enable him to accumulate the materials that formed the basis of *Popular Education of France* (1861) and *A French Eton* (1864). A further product of this trip was the pamphlet on the Italian Question. On 15 March 1859, three days after he gave his fifth lecture in Oxford, he left for the Continent. During his stay there, war broke out between Austria and Sardinia, with Napoleon III intervening on the latter's side. The pamphlet was occasioned by this event, and it promptly appeared during the summer.

The main argument of *England and the Italian Question* was for the cause of the Italian war of independence. Generally, as Jonathan Parry argues, the importance of events in Italy, Greece, and Bulgaria from the 1850s to the 1870s for politics in Britain lay not in 'what the British thought about the Italians, Greeks, and Bulgarians' themselves, i.e., not in their national characters nor in the political implications of them, but 'the ideals that the British should promote there' in the face of 'the dangers of Austrian, French, Russian and Turkish illiberalism'.[30] Arnold was no exception here. He rhetorically asks: 'what nation in Europe should desire the establishment of a great and free Italy with such cordiality as England?' (*CPW*, I: 94). For him, England's 'programme for Italy' should be the realization of 'Italy for the Italians, and the removal of all foreign interference between the Italian and their governments' (*CPW*, I: 94). Nevertheless, Arnold was idiosyncratic in that his interest lay less in celebrating the contrast between the 'successfully inclusive British political community' and the 'overwhelmingly autocratic Continent' than in what their countrymen could learn from *the* icon of autocracy,

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[29] See Honan, pp. 112, 218, 297.
[30] *The Politics of Patriotism*, p. 14.

Napoleon III.[31] When war broke out, the British naturally had a suspicion that the Emperor would revert to 'a standard French expansionist strategy', even though he ostensibly declared his sympathy towards popular ideals among the Italians of nationalism and human brotherhood.[32] Arnold recognized that the English aristocracy was generally hostile to the event, a situation he attempted to redress by correcting what he saw as the misassumptions upon which their condemnation rested.

According to Arnold, one argument often urged against the Italian war was that 'the result of the Emperor Napoleon's intervention in Italy could only be a French war of conquest, and the substitution, for the Italians, of French in the place of Austrian domination' (*CPW*, I: 65). It is in this context that he refers to 'the ideas of 1789', which he equates with 'ideas of religious, political, and social freedom' (*CPW*, I: 81). He insists that 'the bulk of the industrious classes in France' reposes 'hearty confidence' in the Emperor Louis Napoleon, who, 'however absolute, must take some accounts of the dispositions of the French people' (*CPW*, I: 76, 74). Arnold here presents his favourite notion that one characteristic that distinguishes France from all other nations is the fact that the mass of the population can have access to 'ideas' of 'elevated order' – in this case, an idea of the long-awaited independence of a nation, the historical achievements of which can only be matched by England and France, which elsewhere would be appreciated only by an educated minority (*CPW*, I: 78). Arnold here was in line with other major mid-Victorian thinkers including Walter Bagehot in taking a nation's 'greatness' or 'prestige' as a chief criterion by which to judge whether it deserves to free itself from foreign dominion to become a separate, independent nationality.[33]

In modern times, Arnold asserts, ideas occupy a more prominent place than before.

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[31] Parry, *The Politics of Patriotism*, p. 4.
[32] Parry, *The Politics of Patriotism*, p. 226.
[33] See Varouxakis, '"Great" versus "Small" Nations', pp. 141–44.

He also contends that democracy, which, he argues, has been 'brought about by natural and inevitable causes' via 'operations of nature', is then to prevail – and the two are interconnected for him (*CPW*, II: 7):

> At a time when the masses of the European populations begin more and more to make their voice heard respecting their country's affairs, at a time when sovereigns and statesmen must more and more listen to this voice, can less and less act without taking it into account, it is an extraordinary advantage for a ruler to be able to hear this voice in his own bosom, and therefore to understand it when he hears it from the people. The masses of the people are strongly susceptible to certain powerful ideas. When a ruler is himself susceptible to these ideas, he not only knows how to speak to the people a language which they will comprehend, but how to speak it with the force and effectiveness of conviction. He knows how to gain, not only the attention of the masses, but their enthusiasm. (*CPW*, I: 81)

The first Napoleon, Arnold thinks, was deeply influenced by 'the ideas of 1789', which no one in Europe ever since had been allowed to neglect for success in the world of politics (*CPW*, I: 81). Napoleon III was no exception; he was keenly aware of the power of these ideas prevalent in the world, a recognition he attained via 'his intercourse through his varied career with all classes of men' (*CPW*, I: 82). Besides, 'the constitution of his own nature' was such that the Emperor himself was 'in entire sympathy with them' (*CPW*, I: 82).

In the end, the upshot of the event in Italy would turn out to be satisfactory for the British because it concluded in 'a victory against the four faces of autocracy with which the British were most familiar – Austria, Russia, Napoleon III and the Pope'. The

establishment in Italy of a constitutional regime that apparently respected English political values was 'an enormously symbolic moment for Victorian Liberalism'; this could be seen as a triumph for the English ideal of constitutional monarchies no less than nationalist values.[34] This explains why Italy 'became such an attractive cultural symbol' among the British intellectuals in the 1860s.[35] The Italian Question, according to Monsman, was at the time probably 'the hottest issue' at the Old Mortality Society as well.[36] Mazzini attracted University Liberals of a more radical inclination, including such professed republicans as A. C. Bradley, A. V. Dicey, Arnold Toynbee, Swinburne, and Green himself.[37]

In the passage from Arnold's pamphlet quoted above, we detect his early involvement with the question of publicity and, by implication, of the ideological use of language and literature.[38] This concern dates back at least to his response to the Revolution of 1848 in France. When that event broke out, he was able to get '[l]ater news than any of the papers have' at Lansdowne House, where he worked as secretary to the Lord President of the Council, via telegraph keys recently installed in London (*Letters*, I: 82; to Clough, [24 February 1848]). His duties were 'little more than translating the odd letter or from time to time supplying scraps of "literary information"'.[39] He wrote as follows from his office to Clough, with whom he had begun trading 'insults and explosions' from which the turbulence in Europe seems to have helped distract these 'two

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[34] Parry, *Politics of Patriotism*, p. 223. Varouxakis demonstrates that 'the principle of nationality' found few unreserved advocates among British liberals even in the aftermath of 1848. See '1848 and British Political Thought on "The Principle of Nationality"'.

[35] Parry, *Politics of Patriotism*, p. 232.

[36] 'Old Mortality at Oxford', p. 372.

[37] See Colin Tyler, *Civil Society, Capitalism, and the State*, pp. 107–9; Harvie, *The Lights of Liberalism*, pp. 97–105.

[38] See Kate Campbell for an introductory study which focuses on Arnold's life and work up to the publication of *Culture and Anarchy* in the light of his concern with publicity or, in Arnold's own words, 'the exposure of one's thoughts and feelings to the general public' (*The Yale Manuscript*, ed. by S. O. A. Ullman, p. 173).

[39] Hamilton, p. 93.

fervid friends'[40]:

> amongst a *people* of readers the litterature [*sic*] is a greater engine than the philosophy. Which last they change very fast – oh said a F[renc]hman to me the other day – Comte – Comte has been quite passé these 10 years.

> Seditious songs have nourished the F[renc]h people much more than the Socialist: philosophers: though they may formulize their wants through the mouths of these. (*Letters*, I, p. 92; [8 March 1848])

These brief observations anticipate his mature view of the task of the critic as distinct from the system-monger and, for some interpreters, of poetry as an ideological weapon to maintain the bourgeois hegemony. Terry Eagleton has written in a recent work that Auguste Comte, for whom religion was 'a matter of sentiments rather than doctrines, social cohesion rather than supernaturalism', is 'a French cousin of Matthew Arnold, though of a more rationalist, relentlessly systematising kind'.[41] However, Arnold was at least ambivalent about the *people* to which he referred. Kate Campbell contends that Arnold here 'apparently writes "a people" emotionally and unthinkingly, with Romantic and political associations with revolution and nationalism' (p. 22). His idealization of the people seems to have been instigated not least by George Sand, a French novelist who was widely read among European intellectuals from the 1840s onwards; and she was possibly, as J. W. Burrow speculates, the then most influential of 'all the disseminators of ideas of emancipation, free love and a populist humanitarianism and sympathy with

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[40] Honan, p. 134.
[41] *Culture and the Death of God*, p. 144.

the poor'.[42] When Arnold went up to Oxford in the early 1840s, Sand was 'unorthodox reading and a minority cult figure'; it was therefore no wonder that the young Arnold, 'foppish and witty', was drawn to her novels.[43] Sand's novels, alongside Saint-Simonianism and French socialism more broadly, created what Burrow calls the 'cult of the People', the worship of the natural goodness of humanity. Arnold in the aftermath of 1848 was apparently a devotee of this ideal, not least because his notion of the people was more like a universalist idea derived from French literature than the German concept of *Volk*.[44] Arnold admired Sand throughout his life as 'the greatest spirit in our European world from the time that Goethe departed' (*Letters*, IV: 330; to his sister Frances, [21 June 1876]). As he wrote in commemorating her death in 1876, he was impressed with Sand's conviction that the 'holy doctrine of social liberty and fraternal equality' was 'the secret of the civilisation of France'; hence, her love of the French peasant – 'the real people in France, the foundation of things there' (*CPW*, VIII: 230–31).

The 'February Days of 1848' for Arnold, according to Honan, was a final reminder of 'a chief fact about modern Europe', i.e., the total 'disintegration of the medieval world view'; a major result of the disintegration was a situation in which 'no Christian church could reassert its authority or enforce its dogma', creating 'a psychological vacuum' (p. 140). We shall see Arnold's more positive, reconstructive involvement with Christianity in the penultimate chapter of this thesis, which looks at his religious writings of the 1870s. In the 1840s and 1850s, he often seems to suggest that poetry must replace religion by becoming *the* modern religion itself. As he wrote in a letter, poetry in modern times could

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[42] *The Crisis of Reason*, p. 12.

[43] Thomson, *George Sand and the Victorians*, p. 90. See also Juliette Atkinson, *French Novels and the Victorians*.

[44] Burrow explains that the French idea of the People was more like the 'Marxist notion of the proletariat, seen as the essence of humanity itself', than the German idea of *Volk*, which was 'the nation as anonymous creator and poet'; because of the confidence that the French could have in 'their own centrality in the life of Europe', according to him, they did not feel acute need to distinguish between a 'nationalist' (or 'volkish') and a 'universal conception of the People' (*Crisis of Reason*, p. 12).

only subsist

> by becoming a complete magister vitae as the poetry of the ancients did: by
> including, as theirs did, religion with poetry, instead of existing as poetry only, and
> leaving religious wants to be supplied by the Christian religion, as a power existing
> independent of the poetical power. (*Letters*, I: 245–46; to Clough, 28 October 1852)

This insight is in line with his message in the inaugural lecture of 1857 that intellectual deliverance would be brought about by the 'guiding hand' of classical literature, which belonged to the 'modern' period of ancient Greece. The significance Arnold attached to ancient Greece would be sublimated into the celebrated notion of Hellenism in *Culture and Anarchy*. But this idea did not have much to do with ancient Greece, nor did his Hebraism with Jews. It could be seen rather as a signifier to carry a set of values inherited from a certain intellectual tradition of his country. The remarkable success of this notion as a comprehensive critique of Victorian Britain in its intellectual, spiritual, and social aspects was possible not least due to the fact that, as Frank Turner argues, Arnold's idea of Hellenism was a continuation of the English Humanist tradition that had originated in the Christian Humanism of John Colet and Thomas More in the early sixteenth century. This tradition, which was continued through Milton, Swift, Pope to Reynolds, Burke, and Coleridge, had been opposed to 'excessive commercialism, individualism, materialism, scientific reductionism, and other patterns of thought' that 'subordinated social and spiritual values to selfish materialistic accomplishment'; and it offered a chief weapon to fight against 'excessive subjectivism and relativity in morality, religion, and aesthetics'.[45]

Collini's contention against Williams's *Culture and Society* that the 'tradition' it

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[45] *The Greek Heritage*, pp. 15–16. On the tradition of English Humanism, see Paul Fussell, *The Rhetorical World of Augustan Humanism*.

delineates is cemented with 'a kind of false unity of purpose or concern among the figures he includes' relates to the same point. It is telling that Arnold, unlike some 'critics of industrialism', was 'almost silent about political economy'.[46] Williams's genealogy was rather a continuation of 'revived or adapted humanism in early modern Europe', where 'the ideal of the whole man' inherited from antiquity presented 'both a critique of, and remedy for, the short-sighted, practical, and passion-powered activities' – hence, a remarkable absence in Williams's book: 'the huge presence of an idealized Hellenism in Victorian thought and beyond'.[47] Green, as we shall see, had a version of idealized Hellenism, too.

II. Green's Literary-critical Diagnosis of Modern Civilization

In an essay he wrote in his undergraduate years at Oxford, Green attempted to diagnose the condition of 'our modern civilisation' (*CW*, III: 18). This essay, entitled 'The Influence of Civilisation on Genius', is interesting in that it discloses Green's commitment to a version of the declinist view of modern history which is often associated with cultural critics. In this narrative, the fading appeal of traditional Christianity attracts scant attention from the author; nor is the so-called Industrial Revolution specified as the beginning of the decline. He does refer to the division of labour as a tendency of modern civilization, but this concept for him is not specifically linked to the process of industrialization. In another essay written during the same period, Green relates the 'progressive division of labour' with 'professional limitations' in general, without implying an association with factory workers or manual labourers:

We hear much in these days of the sacrifice of the individual to society through

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[46] *Nostalgic Imagination*, p. 177; *Matthew Arnold*, p. 78.
[47] *Nostalgic Imagination*, pp. 173–74, 176.

professional limitations. In the progressive division of labour, while we become more useful as citizens, we seem to lose our completeness as men. The requirements of special study become more exacting, at the same time that the perfect organisation of modern society removes the excitement of adventure and the occasion for independent effort. There is less of human interest to touch us within our calling, and we have less leisure to seek it beyond. Hence it follows that one who has made the most of his profession is apt to feel that he has not attained his full stature as a man; that he has faculties which he can never use, capacities for admiration and affection which can never meet with an adequate object. (*CW*, III: 40)[48]

The idea of untilled capacities and unfulfilled possibilities in an age of the 'division of labour' may seem vaguely to anticipate his mature political philosophy of the common good and positive freedom, which we will see in a later chapter. However, his concern in this passage with academic pursuit ('special study' becoming 'exacting') and highly specialized bureaucratic machinery ('the perfect organisation of modern society') suggests that the classes Green had in mind in writing these early essays were not fundamentally different from those against whom Arnold presented the idea of culture as contributing to 'our completeness as men'. They chiefly addressed the condition of the men of 'profession' in modern times.

Green's main target was what we call specialization, professionalization, and marketization of intellectual pursuits. As civilization progresses, people from every kind of occupation come to be aware of the importance of mental rather than physical force in society; the phrase 'knowledge is power', during the process, 'passes from the

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[48] 'An Estimate of the Value and Influence of Works of Fiction in Modern Times'; it was written as a prize essay in 1862.

philosopher to the shopkeeper', if 'only to strike his bargains with a harder head', claims Green (*CW*, III: 13). An upshot of this situation is the degradation of intellectual occupations *per se*:

> The discoveries of science with which the young man must be conversant if he would be master of the various appliances of life are daily accumulating; the philosopher is daily spinning theories of which some knowledge but no appreciation is necessary for that familiarity with the opinions of men which enables one most plausibly to influence them. […] The different branches of knowledge and thought which are separately evolved as civilisation advances are, as it were, separately ticketed by men who are ignorant of their common principle, and take their places as so many means of strengthening the mind for its worldly occupations, while their true end is as clean forgotten as their true significance. (*CW*, III: 13–14)

In a moral atmosphere where a product of scientific and philosophical enquiry is 'ticketed' according to its market value, its capacity to afford its owner a better career, and intellectual pursuits are instrumentalized and subordinated to commercial values, a man of genius falls victim to 'the learned education of his day' and alienates himself (*CW*, III: 14–15). The situation was different in 'older times' when 'a semblance of learning' was not yet 'a necessary qualification for success in life' nor had the knowledge yet hardened into 'systems with no bond of unity' (*CW*, III: 15). However, in 'our advanced civilisation', genius gets lost 'amid unreal and bewildering diversities'; 'the unity of truth' is missed 'amid a crowd of separate truths' (*CW*, III: 16, 15). In a passage which echoes Arnold's idea of 'confused multitudinousness' of modern times, Green fears that '[t]he

food of the mind is ever accumulating, while its digestive power remains as it was':

> Discoveries in the storehouse of nature, observations on the variety and complexity of external facts, all kinds of knowledge, in short, that come to us through the medium of the senses, increase with the growth of experience; but our insight into the common principles of knowledge, and the unity of truth, is certainly not greater than that of Bacon or the Hebrew prophets. (*CW*, III: 16)

In this hostile environment, according to Green, the task of the artist is to infuse 'the endless flux of outward things' with his 'thought and emotion' and introduce 'harmony and order into the confused multiplicity of sensuous images' with 'the combining force of art' (*CW*, III: 22–23). For this purpose, 'the language of common life' is felt inadequate by keener poets, among whom Green especially admires Wordsworth, in contrast to Arnold's qualification (*CW*, III: 34). The Lake poet reacted against the 'poetic diction' of his time because he regarded most of the productions of eighteenth-century poets, in Green's words, as nothing better than 'practical philosophy in verse'. The 'poetic diction' worked as 'a superadded ornament' to cloth 'the outer aspect of things'; but verse for Green is not for imitating life. It is really an organ for 'that energy of thought which simplifies the phenomena of life by referring them to a spiritual principle; which blends its shifting colours in the light of a master-passion, and passes from the contradictory data of the common understanding to the unity of a deeper consciousness' (*CW*, III: 34).

The person of genius he sees as one who discerns and is acted upon by this 'spiritual principle'. To illustrate this idea, he sets out with the metaphysical hypothesis of 'a divine idea of the world', by which he means 'the purpose of God in the creation of the universe' (*CW*, III: 11). We recognize a man of genius when 'the divine idea manifests itself in the

mind of men in an intellectual form' or when, put in reverse, 'man apprehends the idea through the medium of his intellectual faculties' (*CW*, III: 12). This organizing divine idea is what Green refers to when he writes that 'the different branches of study' have a 'common origin and end' – the 'common principle', which is ignored when knowledge is 'bargained away' in 'an age of intellectual commerce', but for which a man of genius necessarily yearns (*CW*, III: 12, 19). For Green, 'the outer world and the opinion of men' are 'feeble expressions' of this divine idea (*CW*, III: 12). The knowledge of the man of genius, therefore, is never 'merely a generalisation from external facts, nor is his belief filtered from the stream of ordinary thought'; rather, 'he has himself a truth from above to reveal to mankind' and thereby becomes 'an original man' (*CW*, III: 12). Knowing its 'true fountain', he is capable of 'loving truth for its own sake' (*CW*, III: 18, 12). Green qualifies the remark by conceding that a 'long and laborious culture on our part' is requisite to be immune to the encroaching influence of civilization (*CW*, III: 12).

This Romantic concept of genius as a celestially inspired medium with a prophetic calling is characterized by its receptivity, which Green clarifies by quoting a line from Wordsworth: the man of genius resigns himself 'in a wise passiveness' to the heavenly influences (*CW*, III: 15).[49] The corollary of this is that 'it is on him of all men that the intellectual tendencies of the age have in one sense the most potent influence', for genius 'goes hand in hand with sympathy' (*CW*, III: 18). He grasps the 'spirit of his age' as a whole and 'feels the pulse of the whole nation beating in his own veins' (*CW*, III: 18, 17). This partly demystifies the greatness of Shakespeare, who 'walked this earth' with a 'free spirit', 'drinking every hue of many-coloured life, and plunging into the common stream of human existence unfettered by the consciousness of superiority' (*CW*, III: 18). This characterization of the relation of Shakespeare's creativity to his age reminds us of

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[49] 'Expostulation and Reply', l. 24.

Arnold's (or Hallam's) view of Elizabethan England, in which a 'poet lived in a current of ideas in the highest degree animating and nourishing to the creative power' and society itself was 'permeated by fresh thought, intelligent and alive' (*CPW*, III: 263). There is a sense in which Arnold's critical programme concedes the sacrifice of genius and creative imagination in favour of critical intelligence, supposing that the work of genius is a product of an isolated individual while that of critical intellect flourishes under the oversight of the State as a cultural authority and ensures the continuity of a national culture.[50] Green does not overtly suggest a way to literary regeneration in modern times, concentrating on the diagnosis as to how the working of genius has ceased in his age. Alongside the loss of belief in the unity of knowledge, the evils of which are more salient in science and philosophy, he thinks the birth of the 'reading public' and 'its attendant reviewers' particularly obstruct the literary activity of genius (*CW*, III: 17). Literature is 'degraded to the purpose of amusing the public' and the 'eager critics' are always 'hanging on' the words of a poet, diverting his attention from concentrating on his work (*CW*, III: 18). For fear of infection from 'the spur of competition' and the pressure to bargain away the 'inspiration of heaven' in 'the dearest market', it is understandable that modern poets choose 'a life of seclusion' (*CW*, III: 19). Blinded by 'the dust that rises from the hubbub of modern life', poets fix their gaze upon 'the minutiae of individual life', satisfying themselves that they can at least catch 'at isolated beauties' (*CW*, III: 17). 'They have many noble thoughts and happy expressions', concedes Green, 'but they lack the power of combining them all to produce one grand impression' (*CW*, III: 17).

Arnold wrote in the 'Function of Criticism' that it may first seem strange that 'out of the immense stir of the French Revolution and its age should not have come a crop of works of genius equal to that which came out of the stir of the great productive time of

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[50] See the next chapter.

Greece, or out of that of the Renascence' (*CPW*, III: 263). It was because, he thought, while these former movements were 'disinterestedly intellectual and spiritual movements' – 'movements in which the human spirit looked for its satisfaction in itself and in the increased play of its own activity' – the Revolution in France took 'a political, practical character' (*CPW*, III: 263–64). In this sense, for Arnold, the age of Voltaire and Rousseau, or the France under the *ancien régime*, was more akin to the moral atmosphere which made the Renaissance possible. Nevertheless, Arnold was an admirer of the French Revolution after all, making it clear that it was by far more powerful, successful, and influential as a spiritual event than 'the English Revolution of Charles the First's time' (*CPW*, III: 264). Although it erred in 'quitting the intellectual sphere and rushing furiously into the political sphere', it rested ultimately upon an appeal to 'an order of ideas which are universal, certain, permanent' (*CPW*, III: 266, 264). Green dissented in at least two points. Never immobilized under the filial anxiety of influence from the strong poets of the preceding generations, he had a more straightforwardly positive view of 'the authors of that new birth in literature of which the French Revolution was either the cause or the counterpart' (*CW*, III: 12). He claimed that 'the strange revulsion' occurred somewhere during the seventy years from the Revolution, and it is clear that he had 1848 in mind as the watershed, for he saw the first sixty years as characterized by 'human progress' (*CW*, III: 12–13).

After this, some went into 'complete seclusion', others indulged in fanciful nostalgia for 'the old feudal system' or 'a theocracy of hero-worship' (*CW*, III: 13).[51] 'This isolation', an outcome of the decay of political radicalism, signifies 'the death of genius' for Green; when the natural sympathy in a man of genius with his fellow-men loses its outlet, the possibility of 'fuller manifestation' of the organizing divine idea

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[51] Green probably had Carlyle's *Past and Present* in mind here, although its publication (1843) predated the political deadlock in Green's scheme.

through 'the history of mankind' is no longer expected (*CW*, III: 18, 17). Poets after 1848, in effect, had to 'withdraw their gaze from the struggling progress of mankind and fix it on the narrower sphere of their own sufferings and destiny' (*CW*, III: 17). However, a Golden Age that Green conjures up to conceive his version of Past and Present dichotomy is the days of Puritan ascendancy, in which Cromwell 'seemed about to embody' the 'splendid political theories' erected by Henry Vane, and Milton's 'stern spirit shrank not from the loudest turmoil of life' (*CW*, III: 17, 18). This again makes the second point on which he differed from Arnold. The concept of poetic genius as a radical man of *engagement* seems another Romantic inheritance, this time echoing Shelley's idea of poets as 'the unacknowledged legislators of the world'.[52] Green's later use of Shelley's lines as an illustration of 'a vague aspiration' in the impossible quest for the knowledge of God seems to have conformed to the critical consensus of the age, which championed Shelley the lyrical, imaginative poet at the expense of Shelley the radical (*CW*, III: 268). Green saw in Shelley's poetry an expression of the 'rapt unreasoned form of poetic utterance, not professing to do more than represent a mood of the individual poet' (*PE*, §1). Arnold's famous dismissal of him as a 'beautiful and ineffectual angel' has been taken as the representative of the Victorian reaction to the poet in reception history (*CPW*, XI: 327).

This essay on civilization authored by Green in his most Arnoldian mood anticipates some of his mature viewpoints. Firstly, the ascription of the death of genius not least to the decline of radical politics implies the possibility of the regeneration of the latter reactivating the working of genius. We are here reminded of his lifetime commitment to such political movements as Italian unification and the American

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[52] Michael O'Neill writes that Shelley, in *A Defence of Poetry* (1821), 'argues for an association between periods of political reform and great poetry, yet refrain from urging a causal link' (his *ODNB* entry on the poet).

abolitionist cause of the North abroad, and the extension of the franchise, educational reform, and the Temperance movement at home. Through these movements, sympathy of genius could find itself manifested in 'the common affections of men', where we 'most lovingly and reverently apprehend the divine idea' (*CW*, III: 18). Second, the image of a post-revolutionary poet as leading an isolated life of 'a morbid quietism or an intellectual epicureanism' will later be projected onto Arnold himself, a critical attitude which, as we shall see in a later chapter, Green shared with other University Liberals (*CW*, III: 13). Last and most importantly, the essay also contains Green's comment upon his own *speciality*. He does not only lament the loss of the 'principle of unity' among 'the several divisions of knowledge', or what we now call disciplines; he also addresses the situation in which philosophy itself has been subdivided into different pursuits and lost the centre to which its practitioners refer as a common principle they could reasonably expect all their colleagues to share:

> They are astonished at the mere thought of seeking any absolute identity between their moral and intellectual natures, between wisdom and religion, for they learnt moral philosophy and the laws of thought as separate things in their youth, and they have never dreamt of connecting them since. (*CW*, III: 16)

This last aspiration, to 'bridge over the chasm' between epistemology (the enquiry into 'the laws of thought') and moral philosophy, is what he would later attempt in *Prolegomena to Ethics* as we shall see more fully in a later chapter (*CW*, III: 15). Green sets out from establishing an epistemology that grounds its principle of unity on a firm metaphysical basis, as we will examine shortly. The project had its basis in Green's belief in the 'absolute identity' between the 'moral and intellectual natures' of human beings,

contrary to the Intuitionist assumption of the distinct moral faculty in man, or to the Tractarian rejection of reason in theological affairs.

It is clear that Green's stress on praxis distinguishes his version of *Kulturkritik* from Arnold's attempt to cultivate the serene spirit of disinterested criticism. In addition, labelling Green as an advocate of liberal education who shrank from the autonomous pursuit of different branches of knowledge is an historical inaccuracy. Rather, it was Green and his fellow university tutors who first seriously embarked on the specialization of philosophy as an academic discipline in England, despite the common assumption that it was the analytic school that made philosophy a pure technical speciality in parting with all the theological concerns that had occupied the minds of preceding Idealist philosophers. There is a sense in which Green paradoxically attempted to specialize philosophy to such a degree that it would surpass the capacity of competing intellectual pursuits to meet the spiritual malaise of his time. According to Melvin Richter, 'Green was certainly the first Fellow of his College, and possibly the first in his University, to conceive of himself as a professional philosopher'.[53] He was dissatisfied with the situation of Oxford in which, as he testified to the Royal Commission on the University in 1877, 'we confine ourselves to the work of helping undergraduates to get up certain books and subjects, and testing the result by examination' (*CW*, V: 206). The upshot of this, according to Richter, was that,

> [c]ompared to a Continental scholar, the Oxford Fellow lacked technical
> competence at the age of twenty-five, and ten years later, would fall behind
> irretrievably. Where under the existing organisation could a man find opportunity
> or reward for becoming a specialist in his subject? By keeping men at exactly the

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[53] *Politics of Conscience*, p. 140.

same work for all their lives, Oxford made it inevitable that in time tutors' lectures would hold the interest neither of themselves nor the men they taught. (pp. 150–51)

Green set up an occasion for the advanced teaching of his own speciality, and it was reported that around half the attendees were students who had already completed their degrees (*CW*, V: 214). His vision of the university as a place for specialized research alongside teaching, moral and intellectual, never failed to get on the nerves of Benjamin Jowett. As T. W. Heyck writes, Jowett still 'continued to think of the university as a place where future statesmen, civil servants and professional men were cultivated on a nourishing intellectual diet' at a time when the ancient universities were undergoing reform as part of the general process of the radical 'transformation of intellectual life' taking place in late-Victorian England.[54] Jowett was not alone in this; for many of the university Fellows in the last decades of the century, 'one was a "tutor" first, a Fellow of a particular college, and a "philosopher" or "historian" second'.[55]

There are other ways in which Green contributed to the establishment of academic philosophy as we practice it today. As Peter Hylton states, '[a]n important characteristic of Green's philosophy is that it presents a picture of the history of philosophy, and presents itself, in part, by so doing'.[56] His chief target in depicting the history of philosophy was a group of philosophers belonging to the single school of what we now call Empiricism, although the word was not frequently employed by Green himself and never as signifying our contemporary philosophical meaning.[57] Of particular importance for Green were John Locke, George Berkeley, and David Hume. He paid less attention to

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[54] *The Transformation of Intellectual Life in Victorian England*, pp. 174–75. See also A. J. Engel, *From Clergyman to Don*.
[55] Collini, *Public Moralists*, p. 209.
[56] *Russell, Idealism, and the Emergence of Analytic Philosophy*, p. 22.
[57] See Alexander Klein, 'On Hume on Space: Green's Attack, James's Empirical Response', p. 418 (n. 8).

their followers in England or Scotland after Hume because, for him, Hume's true successor did not appear in Great Britain but in Germany, in the figure of Immanuel Kant. Green collaborated with T. H. Grose in the editorial work of Hume's *Treatise on Human Nature* (1739–40), which was brought to publication in 1874. Appended to the first volume of the edition was a 300-page introduction authored by Green. There, he presents a progressivist scheme of 'the history of philosophical opinion', according to which the history oscillates between 'rare epochs' in which 'there appear men, or sets of men, with the true speculative impulse to begin at the beginning and go to the end' on the one hand, and more banal, 'interval' periods which 'are occupied by commentators and exponents of the last true philosopher' on the other. The former is illustrated by the situation of German philosophy after the death of Leibniz; the latter by that of English and Scottish philosophy after the death of Hume, Britain's 'last true philosopher' (*CW*, I: 1–2). It is to this context that John Skorupski refers when he writes in his 1993 history of *English-Language Philosophy* covering the period from 1750 to 1945 that:

> It was pre-eminently Green who laid down the Great Tradition of modern philosophy which is still with us in our syllabuses. According to this canon, the advance locomotive of philosophy was switched by Kant onto a new main line (through the Channel Tunnel), leaving the whole British debate between common-sense and radical-empiricist forms of naturalism stranded on side rails.

That he conceived the history of philosophy in this way was not totally happy for Green, not least because this blinded him to the development of naturalism in Thomas Reid or led to his underestimation of the renovated utilitarianism of J. S. Mill. Yet the 'fact remains', continues Skorupski,

that his definition of the canon had an influence well beyond his idealist construction. The cloud of mediocre obscurity into which it cast the naturalism of the 19th century remained in place during the modernist phase of philosophy – even when Green's idealist critique, which gave the canon its rationale, had collapsed. (pp. 82–83)

Green thought it worthwhile to edit the four volumes of *The Philosophical Works of David Hume* because the Scotsman was for him, as we have seen, 'the last true philosopher' in Britain to date, though he finally judged that Hume, according to his own logic, reached a philosophical deadlock.[58] He refused to dismiss Hume hastily as nothing more than a sceptic or a horrible example of impiety – a conventional indictment based on moral criteria external to the value of his philosophy itself – thereby placing his own treatment of Hume at the modern threshold of philosophical scholarship. Green sets himself the task of interpreting the works of Hume at face value on the assumption that he was a serious philosopher whose writings demand intrinsic textual analysis, and that a serious philosopher's writings should be read with a view to finding the greatest possible coherence.

Of pertinence here is the testimony of W. H. Walsh, a British philosopher who is particularly renowned for *An Introduction to Philosophy of History* (1951). He graduated from and later became a fellow and tutor of Merton College, Oxford, but in the 1950s he 'found the increasing dominance of linguistic philosophy in Oxford narrow and dispiriting', leaving for Edinburgh to hold the chair of logic and metaphysics there from

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[58] Don Garrett writes in his Routledge Philosophers title on *Hume* that the volumes Green edited with Grose 'became for several decades the standard four-volume edition of Hume's philosophical works' (p. 327).

1960.[59] According to Walsh, 'modern ideas' demand that 'a satisfactory study of a major philosopher must meet two basic requirements':

> [I]t must present the thoughts of the person concerned in a way which is at once coherent and authentic, and it must treat them for their philosophical interest, with an eye to whether the arguments are valid and the conclusions defensible. No one doubts that Green's work on Hume meets the second of these demands, and in my view no one should doubt that it also meets the first [...]. If that is correct, Green on Hume is, formally at least, very much a study in the modern manner. More important, it is the first such work on Hume to be published in English, and indeed one of the very first works of its kind on a major philosopher to appear in the language.[60]

This judgement concerning the true origin of modern specialized philosophy in Britain was particularly relevant for Walsh, one of whose achievements is said to have been to 'help keep a pre-analytic conception of philosophy alive in a period in which analytic philosophy was the dominant trend' as suggesting an alternative way of doing philosophy in the English-speaking world in the mid-twentieth century.[61] Walsh would publish a book on *Hegelian Ethics* in 1969 and another on *Kant's Criticism of Metaphysics* in 1975, later becoming the president of the Hegel Society of Great Britain, founded in 1979. W. J. Mander aptly treats Walsh as the 'last figure to mention' in the chronology with which he charts 'the long decline' of the philosophical movement that he delineates in the closing chapter of *British Idealism* (p. 541). But, as Frederick Beiser reminds us, the

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[59] Leon Pompa's *ODNB* entry on William Henry Walsh.
[60] 'Green's Criticism of Hume', p. 27.
[61] Popma in the *ODNB* entry.

1970s was also a decade that saw 'the dawn of the Hegel renaissance in the Anglo-phone world'.[62]

III. 'Metaphysics of Knowledge' as Cultural Criticism

Mander opens his comprehensive study of the Idealist movement in Britain with a survey of the role of the history of philosophy in the entire movement. The British Idealists, he argues, assumed that '[w]hatever ideas might be put forward, their proper assessment could only be as but the latest contribution to an ongoing dialogue'; the work of philosophy, for them, 'must be done in self-conscious understanding of its own history' (p. 38). Their approach to the topic can be seen as broadly Hegelian, regarding the history of the subject 'not simply as a compendium of ideas, but as a *story* or developing sequence in which no philosophy is ever strictly or simply "refuted" but rather "absorbed" into a higher viewpoint which takes up its insights while correcting its errors' (p. 39).

Green's critique of the British Empiricist tradition thus constituted an organic part of the process of presenting his own philosophical system. Green's own system, in fact, may have been unfinished, or prematurely interrupted midway. His *Prolegomena to Ethics*, which is now appreciated as constituting one of 'the twin pillars of idealist ethics' alongside F. H. Bradley's *Ethical Studies* (1876), was published in 1883 under the editorship of the latter's younger brother, A. C. Bradley, after the author's sudden death the year before.[63] The younger Bradley, to whom Green at his death 'left the charge of the manuscript', writes in the editor's preface that, although the author insisted not long before his death that 'some twenty or thirty pages remained to be added', the entire manuscript was nevertheless 'written out nearly ready for printing' (*PE*, v). Peter Nicholson regards the published form as exemplifying, in Green's words in a letter, 'a

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[62] *Hegel*, p. vii.
[63] Mander, *British Idealism*, p. 196.

tolerably complete statement of what I have to say' (*CW*, V: 484).[64] *Prolegomena to Ethics*, the major part of which was first tried out as lectures given as Whyte's Professor of Moral Philosophy from around 1877, comprises a short introduction and four books.[65] It is in the first book on 'Metaphysics of Knowledge' that Green embarks on the critique of the Empiricist epistemology.

Green's engagement with problems in epistemology and metaphysics cannot be separated from his ethical concerns; the former was, it may be argued, a preliminary to the latter. The philosophical orthodoxy in mid-century England was, decidedly, naturalism. As John Skorupski argues, at one end of the naturalist spectrum was 'religious and Whiggish common sense', which found its most prominent expression in Sir William Hamilton's 'Natural Realism'.[66] The Intuitionist school of common sense at first may seem to have been congenial to the British Idealists, arguing for some a priori principle in human knowledge. In fact, the Idealists did not affiliate themselves with those Scottish philosophers. This was not least because Intuitionism in the mid-century was associated with High-Church Toryism; it was intended to consolidate ecclesiastical authority and was firmly opposed to Green's liberal temperament in religion.[67] Mark Pattison saw the 'fresh invasion of sacerdotalism' since the Franco-German war of 1870–71 as intertwined with a 'renewed attempt to accredit an *a priori* logic' in Oxford; it was thus an 'anomaly' for Green, 'a staunch Liberal', to have imported 'this new *a priori* metaphysic'. This could not be accounted for, according to Pattison, but 'by a certain puzzle-headedness' on Green's part.[68]

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[64] 'Green's "Eternal Consciousness"', p. 140 (n. 1).

[65] The first Book, with the beginning sections of the second, was first published in *Mind* serially in three instalments, all appearing in 1882. The greater part of the Introduction (§§3–8) was included in the first instalment of January. The list of the subjects on which Green lectured, including those which form the bulk of *Prolegomena*, is provided by Nettleship in his memoir of his mentor (*CW*, III: cxxv).

[66] *English-Language Philosophy*, p. 76. On Hamilton and his relation to the Scottish School of Common Sense, see Gordon Graham, 'Hamilton, Scottish Common Sense, and the Philosophy of the Conditioned'.

[67] See den Otter, pp. 14–19.

[68] *Memoirs*, p. 167.

Green dismissed the positing of intuition as a special faculty for ethical truth, which must threaten to 'undermine the unity of knowledge and of the moral agent'.[69] For him, instead, '[t]he will is simply the man' and cannot be seen as 'a faculty which a man possesses along with other faculties – those of desire, emotion, thought, &c. – and which has the singular privilege of acting independently of other faculties' (*PE*, §153). Green was harsh on the Intuitionist interpretation of Kant, which was anticipated by Coleridge, who he saw did little more than convey 'the grotesquely false impression that Kant had sought to establish the existence of a mysterious intellectual faculty called reason, the organ of truths inaccessible to the understanding' (*CW*, III: 127). This, he argues, set the tone for later Intuitionist constructions, illustrated by H. L. Mansel's attempt to 'extract from Kant an "agnostic" apology for the acceptance of ecclesiastical dogma', which 'justifies our belief in miraculous perturbations of phenomena' (*CW*, III: 127). Their reactionary move was radically at odds with Green's project for a rational reconstruction of faith.

At the other end of the naturalist spectrum, according to Skorupski, was 'philosophic radicalism, agnostic and utilitarian, along with other forms of atheistic "materialism"'.[70] J. S. Mill introduced Auguste Comte's positivism to English readers in his *System of Logic* (1843). G. H. Lewes, under the encouragement of the Utilitarian philosopher, then went on to bring an 'evolutionary turn' to English positivism in *Comte's Philosophy of the Sciences* (1853) and *Physiology of Common Life* (1859). The nub of Lewes's reconstruction was that he refused to view consciousness as 'a uniquely human characteristic' (as in Comte's *Religion de l'Humanité* with its vision of 'Man as the master of the universe'), redefining it as 'an aspect that the human psyche shared with other

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[69] Mander, *British Idealism*, p. 201.
[70] *English-Language Philosophy*, p. 76. See also a survey of 'Nineteenth-Century British Philosophy' by the same author.

animals'.[71] Evolutionary thinkers tended to commit what G. E. Moore would label in 1903 as a 'naturalistic fallacy', expecting to deduce ethical imperatives from the laws of evolution. Some thought they found in the writings of Herbert Spencer a rationale for the *laissez-faire* view of society, which allowed natural forces 'full and unfettered scope' to act upon individuals.[72] Despite Skorupski's expedient classification, these two versions of naturalism were not unrelated. Although the term 'agnostic' was coined by T. H. Huxley in 1869, and even though it was Spencer's *First Principles* (1862) which was retrospectively seen as the Bible of Agnosticism, the Agnostic Controversy during the three decades between 1860 and 1890 was initiated neither by Spencer nor by Huxley. As Spencer himself wrote, one of his aims in *First Principles* was just to carry 'a step further the doctrine put into shape by Hamilton and Mansel' into the philosophy of the 'Unknowable', a development from Hamilton's notion of the 'Unconditioned'.[73] James Livingston, an historian of Victorian religious thought, even claims that Spencer's essays were 'the prosaic counterpart to Tennyson's *In Memoriam*', ascribing his popularity largely to his 'reverent humility before the mystery of existence':

> Spencer's significance to modern religious history lies then in the crucial role that he played, primarily with Huxley, in the popularization and transformation of agnosticism from a rather arcane philosophical doctrine into a more inchoate but pervasive moral sensibility held by large numbers of people raised in religious homes but imbued with the scientific ethos and a new sense of the limits of religious and speculative thought.[74]

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[71] Mark Francis, 'The Evolutionary Turn in Positivism', pp. 299–300, 302. See also Daniel Brudney, 'Nineteenth-Century Ideals: Self-Culture and the Religion of Humanity'.
[72] Michael Ruse, 'Evolution and Ethics in Victorian Britain', p. 237. Moore introduced the term 'naturalistic fallacy' in his *Principia Ethica*.
[73] Spencer, *First Principles*, p. v.
[74] *Religious Thought in the Victorian Age*, p. 25.

The 'radical scientific agnostics' such as Huxley and Leslie Stephen were certainly more stoical about drawing 'theistic inferences from the evolutionary process' than were overtly religious agnostics like Richard Bithell and Samuel Laing, who posited an optimistic theodicy whereby to justify economic struggle as a means for progress and to oppose radical reform (p. 26). Yet, the phrase 'reverent Agnosticism', as a contemporary clergyman had it, was never an oxymoron.[75]

Green did not spare the time to address contemporary Empiricists because, for him, they blindly repeated errors committed by their predecessors, which he tackled in the introduction to Hume's *Treatise*. Some accused him of this omission, prompting him to write a series of articles on two exemplary Empiricists of his age, Lewes and Spencer.[76] What is interesting in the present context is the fact that Arnold recorded in a notebook his reading of one of these articles that appeared in *Contemporary Review*. In an entry of 1877, he reproduced sentences from the article, in which Green defined the 'primary question of metaphysics' as '*How is knowledge possible?*' He added in note form:

> 'Kant set himself to ascertain what the relations are which are necessary to constitute any intelligent experience', or (which is the same) 'any knowable world'. Green on H. Spencer.[77]

Themes and concerns addressed in these 1877–79 articles were elaborated upon in the lectures that would be incorporated into *Prolegomena to Ethics*, to which we will now turn.

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[75] W. J. Dawson in *Christian World*, 31 March 1892, quoted in Livingston, *Religious Thought in the Victorian Age*, p. 25. See also Livingston, 'British Agnosticism'.
[76] See Mander, *British Idealism*, pp. 66–67.
[77] *The Note-Books of Matthew Arnold*, p. 284.

Green saw 'the general opinion of modern English "culture"', insofar as it bore on moral philosophy, as favouring the predominance of a natural-scientific model of enquiry into matters of ethics (*PE*, §2). The 'general opinion' in the educated circle of modern England as Green saw it was that:

> a physical science of Ethics is not intrinsically impossible, however difficult it may be rendered by the complexity, and inaccessibility to direct experiment, of its subject-matter; that there are no intelligible questions – no questions worth asking – as to human life which would be beyond the reach of such a science.

'It is natural that it should be so', he continues, because '[t]he questions raised for us by the Moral Philosophy which in England we have inherited, are just such as to invite a physical treatment'. The Utilitarian school was a salient manifestation, of which Hume was allegedly a great originator.[78] For those 'English writers on the subject', the business of the 'moralist' was solely to do with 'the nature and origin of the pleasures and pains'; ethics thus was a synonym for 'a science of health', and the moralist for the 'physiologist' (*PE*, §2). Once he identifies the 'national system of ethics' as versions of naturalism, Green sets out to redress those deficiencies inherent in English intellectual life (*PE*, §4).

A naturalist ethics was self-defeating, thought Green, because, if humanity only belongs to the realm of nature, there could be no room for genuine human freedom and, therefore, morality itself: 'Now it is obvious that to a being who is simply a result of natural forces an injunction to conform to their laws is unmeaning' (*PE*, §7). The fact that

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[78] As Don Garrett writes, Hume himself cannot be described as a utilitarian; nevertheless, he was 'an important inspiration for its defining principle', particularly in his emphasis on 'the central importance to morality of pleasure, pain, and public utility', as well as in his 'firm rejection of any attempt to ground morality in religion or the obligation of allegiance to government in a supposed social contract'. (*Hume*, p. 325)

we can talk about such a thing as an injunction itself 'implies that there is something in him independent of those forces, which may determine the relation in which he shall stand to them'. Green's entire philosophy will be centred around this Kantian 'something', which cannot be reduced to or deduced from any combination of natural forces, but rather serves as a condition for our experience of nature. Ethics itself is redundant, in his premise, for a being who sustains themselves under the tyranny of nature, 'a being who looks before and after over perpetual alternations of pleasure and pain' (*PE*, §7).

Green's *Prolegomena* roughly follows the scheme of Kant's critical philosophy – though commonly labelled as a 'British Hegelian', Green is at least as Kantian as he is Hegelian. He sets out by enquiring 'whether a being that was merely a result of natural forces could form a theory of those forces as explaining himself' (*PE*, §8). In defiance of the naturalist theory of man, he rather proposes

> to return once more to that analysis of the conditions of knowledge, which forms the basis of all Critical Philosophy whether called by the name of Kant or no, and to ask whether the experience of connected matters of fact, which in its methodical expression we call science, does not presuppose a principle which is not itself any one or number of such matters of fact, or their result.

The first question, therefore, should be: 'Can the knowledge of nature be itself a part or product of nature, in that sense of nature in which it is said to be an object of knowledge?' This belongs to the field of 'the Critique of Speculative' Reason, which is expected to reveal that man, as far as the function of knowledge is concerned, is not 'merely a child of nature'; there must be ascertained 'the presence in him of a principle not natural' that makes knowledge possible at all. The discussion of the human condition of knowledge,

of the necessity of a transcendental subject, is expected to pave the way for the critique of 'Practical Reason', which should establish that the same spiritual principle finds another expression in the practical sphere, i.e., in 'the consciousness of a moral ideal and the determination of human action thereby' (*PE*, §8).

The first book of *Prolegomena* thus addresses problems in the 'Metaphysics of Knowledge', where he presents a critique of the British Empiricist tradition, particularly in its engagement with the problem of 'the origin of "ideas" in the individual man, and their connection as constituting knowledge' (*CW*, I: 6).[79] Green identifies two principal features of Empiricist philosophy, particularly that of Locke and Hume. First, methodologically, what characterizes the Empiricists is introspection, where the object of observation is one's own mind. Introspection will reveal that there are either simple or complex ideas in our minds, ascertaining that complex ideas are composed of and can be analysed into simple ones. This simple/complex distinction is called 'psychological atomism'.[80] According to Peter Hylton, psychological atomism assumes that simple ideas are 'discrete', i.e., that 'each one of them is independent of all others, and complex ideas are dependent only upon the simple ideas which compose them. In all cases the occurrence of any one idea is distinct from, and independent of, the occurrence of any other' (p. 23). Second, the Empiricist thinking distinguishes ideas, the acquisition of which is via the purely passive and receptive mind, from those that are created by the active mind through the process of composition or abstraction. Their 'common-sensical view' holds that the mind is 'wholly distinct from the (extra-mental) reality which it seeks to know; so the mind, in knowledge, is passive and receptive rather than active and creative'.[81] This assumption yields what Klein calls the 'reality principle', according to

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[79] In what follows, I heavily draw on Peter Hylton's chapter on Green in *Russell, Idealism, and the Emergence of Analytic Philosophy* (pp. 21–43) and Alexander Klein, 'On Hume on Space'.
[80] Klein, pp. 419–21.
[81] Hylton, p. 24.

which 'the distinction between reality and fantasy matches the distinction between what the mind receives passively from sensation and what it actively creates in thought' (p. 418). Thus, for Empiricists, relations between 'atoms' are not given to, but imposed by, the mind.

To anticipate our argument, Hylton's synoptic outline of the nub of Green's contention against the native philosophical tradition is instructive. In the words of Hylton, Green's counterargument is that 'certain "formal conceptions" are presupposed by even the simplest kind of knowledge or claim to knowledge – and thus by all judgement and all (knowable) facts'. Among these 'formal conceptions', which is Green's counterpart for what Kant names 'categories', are included, for example, 'subject and object, substance and quality, cause and effect, spatiality, and temporality'. In Green's scheme of interpretation, the Empiricists attempt to explain our acquisition of formal conceptions 'on the basis of simpler, more directly sensory, knowledge' (p. 24). But this is an impossibility, because 'the supposedly simpler kinds of knowledge which they assume as unproblematic in fact already presuppose the formal conceptions' (p. 25). Thus, Green concludes (in Hylton's summary):

> a succession of feelings or sensations can amount to experience, in the relevant sense, only if each feeling is present to a relatively permanent self-conscious mind, which distinguishes itself from those feelings. Only for such a mind can the transitory feelings be related to one another; since the formal conceptions – cause and effect, substance and quality, and so on – are all ultimately relational in character, they are constituted by the action upon the feelings of the self-conscious mind to which they are present. (p. 26)

What concerned Green was the problem of 'the basis of the unity of the diverse, how things come to be put together to form a whole' (p. 27). If reality is 'the unity of the manifold', writes Green in *Prolegomena*, there must be 'something other than the manifold things themselves, which combines them without effacing their severalty' – which is how Green looks for a 'rooftop' perspective from which to comprehend, using Arnoldian terminology, confused multitudinousness in modern times (*PE*, §28).

Let us substantiate this outline by starting from Green's argument for the relational character of reality as we experience it. He presents 'a conception of the world as a single system of relations', or 'the idea of a world as a single and eternal system of related elements', to substitute for what he sees as the Empiricist view of the world as an aggregate of independent and distinct sensory atoms (*PE*, §14). For him, such a thing as *mere* sensation is just 'an abstraction which may be put into words, but to which no real meaning can be attached', since 'mere sensation' in fact presupposes the intervention of an intelligent agency which makes nature possible in the sense of 'the system of connected phenomena' as the object of experience (*PE*, §§44–45). Empiricists failed to explain how we acquire the idea of relation, thought Green. Even if the mind passively receives discrete feelings via the senses, a relation between feelings 'is neither itself feeling nor represented in our consciousness by a feeling' (*PE*, §25). Besides, feelings are transitory and fleeting: 'one is past or passing before the other begins, and this other has no sooner begun than it is over' (*CW*, II: 218). How then could two distinct feelings be related? The reasonable explanation may seem to be that one feeling is recollected when the other is present, or that both are recollected at once. But the function of recollection implies the capacity to discern resemblance, that is, the *relation* of resemblance between feelings.[82] Green at one point defines experience in terms of 'a consciousness of events

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[82] See Hylton, p. 27.

as a related series' (*PE*, §18). This cannot be 'explained by any natural history', nor is it 'a product of a series of events'. In order that they are related, every part of a succession of events needs to be present to the single consciousness at once, when the consciousness itself must be above or beyond those events of which it is conscious. Defining nature as 'a process of change', Green stresses the same point by writing that

> neither can any process of change yield a consciousness of itself, which, in order to be a consciousness of the change, must be equally present to all stages of the change; nor can any consciousness of change, since the whole of it must be present at once, be itself a process of a change.

It is thus asserted that the consciousness of the process of change is somehow timeless or *eternal*, for 'within the consciousness itself there can be no change' (*PE*, §18).

Let us take an instance of spatiality, one of those 'formal conceptions' that constitute what Green sees as the a priori condition of experience. In his view, Hume (but not Locke in this case) failed to account for our conception of space on the basis of psychological atomism; according to his own logic, the idea of space had to be a construction of the mind and therefore unreal.[83] For Hume, as Klein argues, the simple impressions that compose, say, 'a visual perception of a red apple' are 'only a collection of red, extensionless, colored points', which are sometimes called '*minima sensibilia*'.[84] Green goes on to demonstrate that 'the combination of two Empiricist commitments – the reality principle and psychological atomism – forces Hume to admit an absurdity, that there are

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[83] The discussion here does not apply to Locke, for his 'simple ideas' included spatial extension. See Klein, p. 420. In what follows, I draw heavily on Klein's discussion.
[84] This reading of Hume is not necessarily the majority view today, but this interpretation finds an advocate in Green as well as in Don Garrett more recently. See Klein, pp. 420–21.

no real ideas of space'.[85] 'The idea of extension' for Hume, according to Green, was just a 'copy' of 'an impression of coloured points disposed in a certain manner', conveyed to us by our senses (*CW*, I: 203). But how can we get the information as to the *manner* in which a mere collection of extensionless points are disposed via the senses? What this information concerns is not a bare accumulation of *minima sensibilia* themselves, but their disposition, or relations, in this case spatial, between those perceptual atoms. It seems improbable, for example, that we can have enough information from impressions of a certain amount of black and white *minima sensibilia* to decide whether the outcome will be a black globe and white cube or a black cube and white globe.[86] We wonder here whether Hume, writes Green, 'is not introducing a "fiction of thought" into the impression' (*CW*, I: 203).

Hume must thus concede that relations are products of the mind. But he and other Empiricists cannot consistently assume the reality of those relations while sticking to the passive conception of mind in representing reality at once. It was Locke, according to Green, who was more emphatic than anyone else 'in opposing what is real to what we "make for ourselves," the work of nature to the work of the mind' (*PE*, §20). This, however, cannot avoid resulting in the admission that 'nothing is real of which anything can be said', because relations, in the Lockean scheme, 'fall under the head of the work of the mind, which is opposed to the real':

> [I]f we take him at his word and exclude from what we have considered real all qualities constituted by relation, we find that none are left. Without relation any simple idea would be undistinguished from other simple ideas, undetermined by its surroundings in the cosmos of experience. (*PE*, §20)

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[85] Klein, p. 421.
[86] See Klein, p. 422.

In Green's view, there is no such thing as mere sensation undetermined, unqualified, unmediated by thought, which is the source of relations. In speaking of a sensation, we generally ascribe to it at least the relation of time, or sequence, and that of degree as implied in its 'minimum of qualification' (*PE*, §46). The relation of time between a succession of sensations, or that between a sensation and 'other possible modes of itself which is implied in its having a degree', could not exist without 'a subject for which several sensations, or modes of the same sensation, were equally present and equally distinguished from itself' (*PE*, §46). Relations spring from this intelligent subject, which Green variously calls 'a unifying and self-distinguishing subject', 'a combining intelligence', 'a thinking consciousness', 'a unifying principle', 'a single active self-conscious principle', and so on (*PE*, §§45; 51; 32; 38). Thus, contrary to Locke and other Empiricists, the binary opposition between what is real and the work of the mind should be deemed invalid.

Then, if it is invalid to oppose what is given to the mind (i.e., what is 'real') to the work of the mind, is it no more possible to talk meaningfully of the antithesis between the real and the unreal? Green rejects the correspondence theory, according to which something is true when it mirrors objectively the external reality, but he does not abandon the real/unreal distinction. There is a sense in which a dream, a vision, or a hallucination is real to a consciousness that has the experience of it. Despite its status as a false experience, the reality of the appearance itself cannot be disputed. The question 'What is real?' is a misleading one, argues Green, since 'it implies that there is something else from which the real can be distinguished', some unreal class of things that can be contrasted to that of real ones (*PE*, §21). Rather, the criterion of whether something is judged real is whether it coheres within 'a single and unalterable system of relations'. The contrast

between what is real and its opposite in Green's system, according to Mander, is synonymous with that 'between the permanent or unalterable order of things and their temporary or changeable order':

> A thing is real precisely in so far as it can be fitted into the one enduring systematic relational matrix – the more numerous, stable and fundamental its relations to everything else, the greater its claim to the title – and reality extends just as far as does that integrated and permanent complex of relations. Relationality then is the very foundation of reality. Without relations there would be no reality at all. (pp. 90–91)

This 'unalterableness', says Green, 'belongs not to any simple feeling', but 'to the relation between it and its conditions or between it and other feelings'; and such a relation, again, 'is neither itself a feeling nor represented in our consciousness by a feeling' (*PE*, §25). Relations are mind-dependent and constitutive of reality at the same time.

The next question we need to address is whether relations are arbitrary constructions by individual minds. This concern often leads to objections to a form of Idealism which, by reducing facts to relations, in effect reduces facts to feelings and obliterates 'the distinction between illusion and reality' (*PE*, §37). This yields a misunderstanding to the effect that Idealism asserts that 'we can perceive what we like; that the things we see are fictions of our own, not determined by any natural or necessary order' (*PE*, §64). Green finds this apprehension understandable, because it is due to 'our cognisance of the successiveness or transitoriness of feelings' that we 'object intuitively to any idealism which is understood to imply an identification of the realities of the world with the feelings of men' (*PE*, §37). It must allegedly fall short of the demand of

objectivity. But Green's point is the contrary. His Idealism is one which 'interprets facts as relations', seeing these relations 'as constituted by a single spiritual principle', and what motivates his brand of Idealism is 'the consciousness of objectivity':

> Its whole aim is to articulate coherently the conviction of there being a world of abiding realities other than, and determining, the endless flow of our feelings. The source of its differences from ordinary realism lies in its being less easily satisfied in its analysis of what the existence of such a world implies. (*PE*, §37)

Green thus postulates what he calls an 'eternal consciousness' or an 'eternal intelligence', which 'renders both the nature that we know and our knowledge of it possible', a 'unifying principle' analogous to our finite consciousness (*PE*, §§9; 29). This principle, in Mander's view, is 'a relative of Hegel's Absolute, the world-mind which manifests itself through everything' – although Green's argument here draws more on Kant's epistemological discussions on 'the synthetic unity of apperception' in his Transcendental Deduction.[87] In Green's understanding, 'what may be called broadly the Kantian view' is different from 'the ordinary view', in that

> whereas, according to the latter, it is a world in which thought is no necessary factor that is prior to, and independent of, the process by which this or that individual becomes acquainted with it, according to the former it is a world already determined by thought, and existing only in relation to thought, that is thus prior to, and conditions, our individual acquaintance with it. (*PE*, §36)

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[87] Mander, *British Idealism*, p. 94; Green, *PE*, §33.

On this assumption, 'the growth of knowledge on our part' needs to be seen as a 'reproduction' via our finite, animal organism of the eternal consciousness:

> [T]he concrete whole, which may be described indifferently as an eternal intelligence realised in the related facts of the world, or as a system of related facts rendered possible by such an intelligence, partially and gradually reproduces itself in us, communicating piece-meal, but in inseparable correlation, understanding and the facts understood, experience and the experienced world. (*PE*, §36)

This eternal consciousness is also a 'divine' principle: 'Through certain *media*, and under certain consequent limitations, […] the one divine mind gradually reproduces itself in the human soul' (*PE*, §180). Our rational self-consciousness, which is the basis of 'the existence of knowledge and nature', and is 'communicated to us in a mode which does not allow of its being itself in a strict sense known', implies 'a perfect being, who is in full realisation what we only are in principle and possibility' (*CW*, III: 267–68). We can say '[t]*hat* God is' as assuredly as 'that the world is or that we ourselves are' (*CW*, III: 268). This divine principle, as we will see, provides the foundation for Green's religious as well as politico-ethical thought.

Our consciousness has two dimensions. As animal organisms, we have history in time; by contrast, 'in growth of our experience, in the process of our learning to know the world', we gradually become 'the vehicle of an eternally complete consciousness', which 'in itself can have no history', being by definition independent of time (*PE*, §67). When we say 'our consciousness', it could refer either to this function as the animal organism, which works as a 'vehicle' or 'medium' for 'the realisation of an eternal consciousness', or to the latter consciousness, which constitutes our knowledge by 'realis[ing] in or

communicat[ing] to us' itself 'through modification of the animal organism' (*PE*, §67). Here, there arises a problem for Green, in his characterization of the growth of knowledge in the individual consciousness as a 'reproduction' or 'realization' of the eternal mind, with an individual mind working as a vehicle: is there room for individual agency or creativity in this scheme? This could be of crucial importance, because Green's arguments in epistemology for the constitutive role of mind were intended as a preliminary for the second critique, that of practical reason, which would address the nature of human freedom. The presence in consciousness 'of a principle not natural', in respect to 'the function called knowledge', was expected to be found in the realm of practice, taking form in 'the consciousness of a moral ideal and the determination of human action thereby' (*PE*, §8).

IV. The Novelist as Unconscious Reformer

In an essay entitled 'Popular Philosophy in its Relation to Life' (1868), Green finds an inchoate form of Idealist philosophy unconsciously adumbrated in the poetry of Wordsworth. What Green thought was lacking in 'the "culture" of England' was a theoretical standpoint from which to counteract the 'philosophy resting on the mere passivity and individuality of man' (*CW*, III: 117, 119). It was Wordsworth who, in the field of literature, brought liberation 'from bondage to the philosophy that had naturalised man', thereby contributing to '[t]he practical reconstruction of moral ideas in England' (*CW*, III: 118; 117). The Lake poet was aware that it is not 'he that is natural', but 'nature that is unconsciously spiritual', believing that 'he is not the passive result of outward impressions, but self-determined, and therefore partaker of the divine infinity' (*CW*, III: 118). As partaker of the divine infinity, the individual self was universalized 'up to the measure of the universe of man's affairs (*CW*, III: 118). Green imposes his own

philosophical purpose upon Wordsworth's poetics as the telos towards which it unknowingly aspired – as he says in a different context, 'it is only what he gives to it that he receives from it' (*CW*, III: 5). Green writes in 1880 that we are all related to 'one spiritual self-conscious being', not merely 'as parts of the world which is its expression, but as partakers in some inchoate measure of the self-consciousness through which it at once constitutes and distinguishes itself from the world' (*CW*, III: 146). This 'participation', he continues, is 'the source of morality and religion'. In the words of the *Prolegomena*, the consciousness must be more than 'a part of the world' that it 'co-operates in making' (*PE*, §10).

Poetry, however, was too patrician a form of art to answer to his political programme. He addressed this point in another essay he wrote during his undergraduate years, 'An Estimate of the Value and Influence of Works of Fiction in Modern Times' (1862) – one which has received some recognition in literary studies because of Ian Watt's reference in *The Rise of the Novel* (1957). In this essay, Green concedes the novelist's 'essential inferiority as an artist' in comparison to the poet (*CW*, III: 41). For him, it was 'to those only who can lift the curtain' that 'a poem speak[s] intelligibly'; a real poet speaks only 'to the inward ear of a few' (*CW*, III: 41, 45). In his discussion, the distinction of the ideal poet was characterized from an epistemological and metaphysical, rather than from a social and political, viewpoint. An ideal poet presents a distinction between 'nature as it is' and 'nature as we make it to be', revealing that 'the world of nature' is in reality 'a world of man's own creation' (*CW*, III: 21). Humanity alienates itself by reifying nature, by making it something external, when it is really 'a friend', 'another himself', 'a child which was never other than its own' (*CW*, III: 22). In this context, what he presents as the condition of modern times in his essay on civilization seems to be de-temporized as a transhistorical, 'necessary condition of humanity'. The 'true conquest of nature' could be

attained if only 'the mind has come to see in the endless flux of outward things, not a succession of isolated phenomena, but the reflex of its own development into an infinite variety of laws on a basis of identity' (*CW*, III: 22). The philosophical mind sees its own development in every fraction of the confused multitudinousness, and then the confusion passes away. But this epistemic sleight of hand, Green knew, was useless for the 'cultivation of the masses' (*CW*, III: 45).

For the latter purpose, the 'inferior form of art' is better equipped. For better or worse, the novel is a 'leveller' (*CW*, III: 44). First, it levels intellects. The 'literary food' it supplies is of a kind which 'the weakest natures can assimilate as well as the strongest' and, by consuming it, 'the former sort lose much of their weakness and the latter much of their strength':

> While minds of the lower order acquire from novel-reading a cultivation which they previously lacked, the higher seem proportionately to sink. They lose that aspiring pride which arises from the sense of walking in intellect on the necks of a subject crowd; they no longer feel the bracing influence of living solely among the highest forms of art; they become conformed insensibly to the general opinion which the new literature of the people creates. (*CW*, III: 45)

This passage implies Green's recognition that the distinction in intellect is interwoven with the feeling of 'aspiring pride' that is based on the difference in social position, the consciousness of superiority to the 'subject crowd', and it is in the fictional levelling of situations, breaking within the imaginary sphere the barriers demarcating classes in society, that Green thought the hope of the 'literature of the people' largely lay.

Green rejects the possibility of the existing class structure remaining intact while

doing necessary reform works: 'Reforming and levelling are indeed more closely allied than we are commonly disposed to admit' (*CW*, III: 41). His belief was that '[m]ost wounding social wrongs more often arise from ignorance than from malice, from acquiescence in the opinion of a class rather than from deliberate selfishness' (*CW*, III: 42). This conviction illustrates that the universe for Green was much more benevolent a place than it was for Carlyle, for whom 'the world was always on the verge of going to the Devil'.[88] In Carlyle's conviction, the world conspires and says to itself: 'Sin against God's Laws was always prevalent: Let us give up the notion of anything else but sinning against them'.[89] In contrast, social abuses for Green were 'nearly always the result of defective organisation' (*CW*, III: 41). However, he does not think this 'defective organization' will be reformed solely by meddling with political machinery or wealth distribution. It has more to do with 'the social force', to which the novel is expected to be a great contribution. It is a force which, working upon classes and individuals, merges 'distinctions of privilege and position in the one social organism'. The novel embodies this force more strongly than poetry because its materials are more various and it addresses more 'ordinary minds' – this indeed was 'the strongest practical proof' of the 'essential inferiority' of the novelist as an artist, insists Green. Yet the twofold characteristics of 'universal intelligibility and indiscriminate adoption of materials' give this literary genre its peculiar strength and guarantee 'its place as the great reformer and leveller of our time' (*CW*, III: 41).

The inferiority of the novel for Green lies in its epistemic banality. The 'main texture' of the literary genre is 'a web of incidents' that are 'consistent with the observed sequences of the world'; it presents 'man not as self-determined, but as the creature of circumstances, as phenomenon among other phenomena' (*CW*, III: 32). Besides, it does

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[88] John Morrow, *Thomas Carlyle*, p. 136 (emphasis removed).
[89] *Collected Letters of Thomas and Jane Welsh Carlyle*, XXV, p. 89.

not offer a grand idea or a 'master-passion' that simplifies 'the phenomena of life' and brings them to the harmonious unity (*CW*, III: 34). The reader travels through 'the whole three volumes' in 'an atmosphere of ordinary morality and every-day aspiration', without assurance of reaching 'the air of a higher life' in the last chapter (*CW*, III: 33). In contrast, under the other-worldly influence of a great poem, the spirit returns to itself, gains 'a fresh assurance of its *own* birthright', and purifies itself 'for an ideal transition to its proper home', amid – he again resorts to Wordsworth – 'the fretful stir / Unprofitable, and the fever of the world' (*CW*, III: 36)[90]. The novel is 'the reflex of "the fretful stir unprofitable"', showing man 'his own sickly experience modified in an infinite variety of reflections' (*CW*, III: 36–37).

Nevertheless, the 'phenomena of life' the novel presents are colourful and multifaceted; the novel, as a this-worldly genre, 'carries our thought into many a far country of human experience' (*CW*, III: 40). Defoe depicts thieves and harlots with 'the minuteness of affection' and, through those characters, shows us 'what we ourselves might have been' (*CW*, III: 43). In our everyday experience, facts are sometimes 'too close to us for discernment', not least due to the 'influence of class and position' (*CW*, III: 43). Every great novelist, simply by making us see the facts, thus delivers us from the 'despotism of situations' (*CW*, III: 41). A great novel allures us into considering the possibility that 'crime does not always imply sin, that a social heresy may be the assertion of a native right, that an offence which leads to conventional outlawry may be merely the rebellion of a generous nature against conventional tyranny' (*CW*, III: 42). The novelist 'cannot show the prisoners the way of escape from their earthly confinement', which is the test of the great poet; nevertheless, 'by breaking down the partitions between the cells', the novelist enables prisoners 'to combine their strength for a better arrangement of the

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[90] 'Tintern Abbey', ll. 54–55.

prison-house' (*CW*, III: 42). This optimistic faith in the sinners' potentiality in reforming their earthly confinement is very Greenian. His spirit here is not very far from that of Oscar Wilde when he wrote that '[t]o Dissenters we owe in England Robinson Crusoe, Pilgrim's Progress; Milton: Matthew Arnold is unjust to them because "not to conform to what is established" is merely a synonym for progress'.[91]

The novelist for Green is thus an unconscious reformer, irrespective of political positions. Scott, though 'a Tory of the purest water', was made 'a reformer against his will' by his 'genial human insight' – a fertile spring of 'his pictures of the Scotch peasantry' (*CW*, III: 43–44). In his essay on civilization, Green argued that poets had been hindered from disclosing their natural sympathy in 'the political life of mankind' (*CW*, III: 17). There is a sense in which Scott, according to Green, 'popularised the work which the Lake poets had begun' (*CW*, III: 44). The post-1848 writers' nostalgic imagination was partly a surrogate politics, Green believed – they sigh 'for the simple great ones that are gone, another for the old feudal system, another for a theocracy of hero-worship', now that '[s]ixty years of "human progress" are past and gone' and 'the dream has fled' (*CW*, III: 13). Henceforth, paradoxically, novelists' uninspired mimetic skills may have a potential to supersede poets' sublime sympathy, the natural object of which was 'the struggling progress of mankind' in political history (*CW*, III: 17). They cannot outdo poets' spiritual undertaking; yet they can make a sociological contribution, as it were, to the progress of humanity. The novel 'cannot give a new birth to the spirit', nor

> initiate the effort to transcend the separations of place and circumstance; but it is no small thing that it should remove the barriers of ignorance and antipathy which would otherwise render the effort unavailing. It at least brings man nearer to his

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[91] Quoted in Ellmann, p. 42.

neighbour, and enables each class to see itself as others see it. And from the fusion of opinions and sympathies thus produced, a general sentiment is elicited, to which oppression of any kind, whether of one class by another, or of individuals by the tyranny of sectarian custom, seldom appeals in vain. (*CW*, III: 44)

Again, class antagonism for Green originates from 'the want of common understanding'; limits inflicted by 'the authority of class-convention' with class-specific habits and ideas can no longer sustain themselves 'if once placed in the light of general opinion' – before the tribunal of the 'general sentiment' (*CW*, III: 42).

However, the novel is not only accorded a sociological function by Green; it also assumes a positive role within his metaphysical scheme that promises the final unity of different forms of intellectual pursuits or subdivisions of knowledge. The spirit pervades human history and social organization, and the rise of the novel is not immune to its movement. The spirit 'descends' when the inferior form of art becomes popular, quitting the higher sphere dominated by a select few, and the same process is to be observed 'in every department of man's activity':

The history of thought in its artistic form is parallel to its history in its other manifestations. The spirit descends, that it may rise again; it penetrates more and more widely into matter, that it may make the world more completely its own. Political life seems no longer attractive, now that political ideas and power are disseminated among the mass, and the reason is recognised as belonging not to a ruling caste merely, but to all. (*CW*, III: 45)

Nobleness may have been lost; but Green is convinced that 'the "cultivation of the

masses", which has for the present superseded the development of the individual, will in its maturity produce some higher type even of individual manhood than any which the old world has known'. The same faith may well be placed in the history of literature. The spirit's 'temporary declension' in the less creative literary genre can be seen as

> preparatory to some higher development, when the poet shall idealise life without making abstraction of any of its elements, and when the secret of existence, which he now speaks to the inward ear of a few, may be proclaimed on the house-tops to the common intelligence of mankind (*CW*, III: 45).

This is not a moment when the scheme of Arnold's *Kulturkritik* has been overthrown, but when its potential relevance to the wider population has been considered to subvert its implication, by incorporating the 'inferior' literary genre that largely evaded Arnold's attention into a metaphysical construction on history and society. But we have seen Arnold's own commitment to the 'cult of the People' prompted by the French novelist George Sand. Arnold's ambiguity was closely related to his ambivalence towards the indigenous inheritance of whiggish political thinking, which in his case was greatly mediated by the French historian and public figure François Guizot, the central topic of the next chapter.

Chapter 4. Culture and the *gouvernement des esprits*: Arnold's Political and Social
Thought

I. The French *Doctrinares* and the Idea of the Academy

When John Stuart Mill valorized mental cultivation as an essential component of an ideal

civilization, he was indebted not only to the 'Germano-Coleridgian' school but also, and

less famously, to François Guizot.[1] For this French historian, the idea of civilization

denoted two distinct realms of human improvement. In the *History of Civilization in

Europe* (1828), Guizot asserts that the 'great fact' of civilization comprehends '[t]wo

facts', 'subsists on two conditions', and 'manifests itself by two symptoms': 'the

development of social activity, and that of individual activity'; or, in a different

formulation, 'the progress of society and the progress of humanity' (p. 18). The first is

equated with 'the perfecting of civil life', or 'the extension, the greatest activity, the best

organization of the social relations', by way of 'an increasing production of the means of

giving strength and happiness to society' on the one hand, and 'a more equitable

distribution, amongst individuals, of the strength and happiness produced' on the other

(pp. 16–17). The second is 'the development of the individual, internal life, the

development of man himself, of his faculties, his sentiments, his ideas', by which

'immense intellectual and moral conquests are accomplished' and '[l]etters, sciences, the

arts, display all their splendour' (p. 18). When Guizot deemed his own country the most

highly civilized in Europe, it was because the France he saw had developed itself in both

directions more harmoniously than any other nation. England sacrificed one for the other:

in the words of Mill on Guizot, 'Society, in England, has developed itself more nobly and

more brilliantly than *man*', and the great minds of England do not 'bear a due proportion

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[1] 'Coleridge', in *Collected Works*, X, p. 125.

to the colossal growth of the external, the social civilization of the country'.[2]

Georgios Varouxakis has summarized Mill's views on French life and civilization, which developed from his reading of Guizot, into three arguments. First, for Mill, intellect was valued in France much more than in England. Second, the commercial spirit in France was not as prevalent as in England, so the French people could afford to enjoy life more fully. And third, the French tended to have 'openness and receptivity to enlarged views and generalized conceptions', in contrast to 'the English tendency to attend only to narrow applications and to reject anything that did not admit of immediate proof or did not lead to immediate practical results'.[3] Mill began to develop these views in the 1830s at the latest, preceding Matthew Arnold's similar diagnosis of English national deficiencies by about three decades.

Under the influence of his father, Arnold was also immersed in Guizot's writings on civilization. They had impressed the elder Arnold to such a degree that he made up his mind to take his children to France as soon as they grew old enough. The son's own fascination lasted long after his Rugby years, resulting in his recommendation of Guizot's *History of Civilization in France* (1829–32) as part of the Oxford curriculum reform as late as 1875.[4] Arnold saw some contemporary attempts at defining the idea of civilization as arbitrary and inadequate. 'Business and material well-being are signs of expansion and parts of it', he concedes, 'but civilisation, that great and complex force, includes much more than even that power of expansion of which they are parts. It includes also the power of conduct, the power of intellect and knowledge, the power of beauty, the power of social life and manners' (*CPW*, IX: 271). Culture, as Arnold sees it, 'places human perfection in

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[2] 'Guizot's Lectures on European Civilization', in *Collected Works*, XX, p. 375. See Varouxakis, *Victorian Political Thought on France and the French*, pp. 35–47.
[3] *Victorian Political Thought*, pp. 46–47.
[4] *Histoire de la civilisation en France*. See Arnold, *Letters*, IV, p. 292; Honan, p. 42; Varouxakis, *Victorian Political Thought*, p. 47.

an *internal* condition'; it characterizes perfection not as 'a having and a resting, but a growing and a becoming' (*CPW*, V: 94). Culture thus defined is essential for humankind generally and particularly so in the modern world and in Britain in Arnold's age. This is because, in the modern world, 'the whole civilization' tends to become 'mechanical and external' to a much greater extent than in ancient Greece and Rome and the 'mechanical character' of civilization, for Arnold, is most salient in his own country (*CPW*, V: 95). Hence the 'powerful tendency' in Britain that threatens to thwart the enterprise of culture, or perfection:

> The idea of perfection as a *general* expansion of the human family is at variance with our strong individualism, our hatred of all limits to the unrestrained swing of the individual's personality, our maxim of 'every man for himself'. Above all, the idea of perfection as a *harmonious* expansion of human nature is at variance with our want of flexibility, with our inaptitude for seeing more than one side of a thing, with our intense energetic absorption in the particular pursuit we happen to be following. (*CPW*, V: 95)

The culture/civilization dichotomy thus does not hold even in Arnold's most influential critical writings of the 1860s; culture as inward cultivation is seen, in the wake of Guizot, as an element of an ideal civilization itself.

Guizot's influence on Arnold's oeuvre appears to have been much more profound than has been hitherto acknowledged. As an historian of European civilization, Guizot's influence is relatively well known, but the same does not hold true for his political thought, despite the fact that he was a leading public figure during the July Monarchy (1830–48). As minister of public education from 1832 to 1837, he created the national primary

education system through the Great Schools Law of 1833, the so-called Guizot Law, which Arnold referred to in *The Popular Education of France* (1861). The 1859 errand for school inspection in France brought Arnold the chance to meet this educational authority, now retired from the realm of politics to a life of research and writing. In 1840, Guizot helped Louis-Philippe form a new government, leading to the establishment of the Soult-Guizot cabinet that lasted until 1848, in which Guizot held various positions, even serving as prime minister for a short period.[5]

As a political theorist, Guizot was a representative figure among those thinkers collectively known as the French *Doctrinaires*, who were active and influential during the Bourbon Restoration (1814–30) and the July Monarchy. They were *liberal* thinkers who, as Aurelian Craiutu argues in his 2003 study, 'have been systematically neglected by political theorists and historians of political thought'.[6] The *Doctrinaires*, according to Jeremy Jennings, 'were writers, scholars and men of action, throwing themselves into the political fray for three decades or more'. Their historical thinking convinced them that 'there could be no return to the *ancien régime*', for the French Revolution was not an accidental but a necessary and inevitable outcome of 'a long evolution of European society'. The *Doctrinaires* were largely Anglophiles, believing that learning from English political history could be of enormous benefit to their own country. They realized that a 'new France' had emerged, 'a France divested of privilege and of absolutism', which meant for them that 'a "new means of government" was required for this new order'.[7]

Given their Anglophile bent – Arnold thought of Guizot alongside Tocqueville as 'the truest friends of England' (*CPW*, I: 95) – the *Doctrinaires*' political goal was a constitutional monarchy combined with limited suffrage. This goes a long way to explain

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[5] See Aurelian Craiutu, *Liberalism under Siege*, pp. 32–39.
[6] *Liberalism under Siege*, p. 3.
[7] 'Constitutional Liberalism in France', p. 361.

why they lost the interest of the succeeding generations, for their vision, writes Craiutu, apparently 'lost its legitimacy in 1848 and was replaced by the Second Republic' (p. 14). In the words of Charles de Rémusat, another *Doctrinaire*, who held various ministerial positions during the July Monarchy, they were dismissed as 'the government of the bourgeoisie'.[8] They failed to respond to social questions, causing workers to congregate in secret and socialist treatises, including Pierre-Joseph Proudhon's *What is Property?* (1840), to proliferate. Karl Marx, who read some of those treatises in Paris before being expelled by the government led by Guizot in 1845, began the *Communist Manifesto* (1848) with the description of the 'Holy Alliance', in which Guizot shared his place with Pope, Czar, and Metternich, all struggling to exorcise the spectre of Communism.[9]

Their brand of liberalism is commonly distinguished from one represented by Madame de Staël and Benjamin Constant, which could be seen as more orthodox by Anglo-American standards. As Jennings has argued, the latter was a liberalism 'that stressed the constitutional protection of individual rights, if necessary against the state'. By contrast, the *Doctrinaires*' liberalism emphasized 'the importance of governability and the subordination of the individual to the state'.[10] Guizot thus claimed that the rationale of the modern state was the '*gouvernement des esprits*', which I argue anticipated Arnold's critical programme. Victor Cousin, another *Doctrinaire* intellectual whom Arnold met in Paris, concurred, attributing to the state 'an educational function' and 'an obligation to develop and protect the "moral life" of the individual'.[11] In what sense their statist, elitist, and anti-individualist liberalism was liberal at all we will see shortly – and the answer in turn would clarify Arnold's liberalness.

Although the association of France with political centralization and a strong state

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[8] See Rosenblatt, *Lost History of Liberalism*, p. 90.
[9] See Rosenblatt, pp. 100–105; Rosanvallon, pp. 118–19.
[10] 'Constitutional Liberalism in France', p. 360.
[11] Jennings, *Revolution and the Republic*, p. 322.

as political and cultural authority in contrast to England appears to have been too diffuse to be attributed to a single source, it is probable that Arnold's reading of Guizot's histories of French and European civilization contributed to this central motif in his oeuvre. Awareness of the divergent paths of English and French political histories helped define the political programme of many French liberals, not least the *Doctrinaires*. The heart of the matter was that, in the transition from feudal to modern society, 'the state in France – but not in England – was regarded as "emancipatory"', as Lucien Jaume has remarked.[12] Drawing on Guizot's *History of Civilization in France*, Jaume continues:

> Ever since the kings had progressively constructed the nation through a series of measures directed against feudalism, the state was almost unanimously perceived as the guardian of the general interest, and therefore as the entity that could best appreciate, define, apply and control it. […] The state […] represented the nation and stood up to local and private interests, which were long held to be the prerogative of privilege and feudalism. The expression 'private interests' was in itself derogatory in the French political vocabulary of the time. (p. 37)

This situation was created by the historical alliance between the monarchy and the rising bourgeoisie in France, in their joint battle against the provincial aristocracy to destroy the feudal system. In England, by contrast, the local aristocracy could find allies in the new boroughs in its battle against the central government, which was relatively stronger than in France as a consequence of the Norman Conquest; thence the establishment of 'a common panoply of "liberties" in opposition to the crown' and 'the creation of the English constitution in which the rights of the crown were balanced by the rights of Parliament'.[13]

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[12] 'Unity, Diversity, and Paradoxes', p. 39.

[13] Jaume, 'Unity, Diversity, and Paradoxes', pp. 38–39; Siedentop, 'Two Liberal Traditions', p. 25. See

Localism, thought Guizot, was an accomplishment of feudalism. As he maintained in *History of Civilization in Europe*, feudalism 'altered the distribution of the population over the face of the land', replacing the ancient form of civilization where the population 'had lived united in more or less numerous masses of men', characteristically 'sedentarily in cities', with a rural society in which 'men lived isolated, each in his own habitation, and at great distances'; the 'social preponderance' then 'passed suddenly from the towns to the country' (p. 68). One outcome of this, according to him, was 'the thin spread of population over the whole national territory which we take for granted'.[14] It was at the expense of local liberty and local autonomy that in France 'the inhabitants of the communes [...] turned to the kings in their struggle against local feudal lords', accomplishing their aim through political centralization: 'through the concentration of power in the French Crown and creation of a bureaucratic form of the state'.[15] Thus, as Siedentop notes, the 'concern with the devolution of power and authority – with countering the trend towards centralization – became the badge of the French liberals'.[16] Guizot was no exception. However, different brands of liberalism placed different degrees of emphasis on the point. According to Jaume, the *Doctrinaires* 'chose to consolidate rather than limit or overhaul the state' while 'liberalizing' its institutions; liberals like Constant and Madame de Staël, by contrast, emphasized 'a constitutional order that would curtail the state's powers over society, and favoured both decentralization and the rights of the individual' (pp. 37–38, 43, 38). The *Doctrinaire* liberals stressed the benign role the state had historically played in serving the general interest by helping the commons to fight 'the contest of classes', in the words of Guizot in the *History*: to be free from 'the

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also Collini, Winch, and Burrow, pp. 157–58.

[14] Siedentop, Introduction, p. xxiv.

[15] Siedentop, 'Introduction', pp. xxix, xvi.

[16] 'Two Liberal Traditions', p. 29.

dominion of the personal and capricious will' of feudal lords (pp. 130, 73).[17] The kings' 'influence in the movement of communal enfranchisement' resulted in 'a frequent relation, and sometimes a rather intimate one, between the burgesses and the king', making it easier for 'the minds of nations' to imagine 'royalty' as 'the personification of the sovereignty of right, of that will, essentially reasonable, enlightened, just, and impartial, foreign and superior to all individual wills' (pp. 128, 155). All this, I argue, is the implication of the notion of 'provinciality' as Arnold's critical terminology, which apparently amounts to nothing more than a pejorative term with which to deride an English middle-class vulgarity that was immune to the influence of the mainstream of European civilization. This idea needs to be seen as a transposition from the politico-historical vocabulary of Guizot and other *Doctrinaire* thinkers into the field of literary criticism.

While Guizot, an Anglophile, hailed the English system of representative government as a model for his country, Arnold presented an idealized France as a mirror to reflect English parochialism and complacency, at a time when Victorian society was 'not used to having some of its most cherished beliefs treated with scornful mockery, and still less to having the virtues of other nations held up for emulation'.[18] The fact that Arnold's most influential critical writings were written in the 1860s is suggestive because, as Peter Mandler has noted, it was '[b]etween the advent of Napoleon III in 1851 and his defeat by the Germans in 1870' that England's 'hostility to the French and admiration for the Germans was at a peak'.[19] It was after 1870, by contrast, that Arnold started to qualify his admiration for France, ascribing its national degradation to the worship of 'the great

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[17] Marx acknowledged his debt to French 'bourgeois literature', i.e., the works of such historians as Thierry, Guizot, and John Wade, in his conception of the past 'history of classes' (Siedentop, 'Introduction', p. xxxiii). See also Craiutu, pp. 60–61.
[18] Collini, Introduction, p. xvi.
[19] *English National Character*, pp. 86–87.

goddess Lubricity' (*CPW*, X: 155). Instead, Prince Bismarck was commended for having made Germany 'esteemed, strong, and with her powers all at command', a situation which was 'a great deal more solid' than 'advanced liberals' in Britain were inclined to think – at a moment when Britain experienced a 'nadir of liberalism' (*CPW*, XI: 60). Before the Prussian victory over France, Arnold ridiculed 'Teutomaniac' historians, some of whom were starting to go beyond the patrician implications of what would later be called the Whig interpretation of English history towards an historiography of a more populist kind. Such Teutonist historians as E. A. Freeman, Williams Stubbs, and J. R. Green made no small contribution towards 'a study of History for its own sake' as an emerging modern academic discipline.[20] It may be unexpected that their historical sense was initially cultivated by the Oxford Movement, with its emphasis on the study of ecclesiastical history and church architecture for its own sake. Tractarianism, it can be seen, provided an English equivalent of German historians' 'romantic affection for past ages', each equipped with 'its own spirit or frame of mind' that had motivated historians like Niebuhr, Mommsen, and Ranke to form a 'scientific school of history'.[21] In addition, their orientation towards non-partisan history – Stubbs rejected the reduction of history to 'a mere political weapon' – never collided with Arnold's celebration of 'the German belief in *Wissenschaft*'.[22] Nonetheless, these Germanophile historians retained the use of history for moral and political education. In this, they firmly followed the most widely read Whig historian of the nineteenth century, T. B. Macaulay, who probably remained the most popular historian until he was surpassed by G. M. Trevelyan in the 1940s.[23]

According to the Whig interpretation of history, 'developments in the past' tend to be judged 'by considering whether they may be seen as congenial to institutions and

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[20] Stubbs, *Seventeen Lectures*, p. 103.
[21] Heyck, *Transformation of Intellectual Life*, pp. 139, 128.
[22] Stubbs, p. 103; Heyck, p. 139.
[23] See Mandler, p. 88–89; Heyck, pp. 141–45.

beliefs that are valued today'. '[C]ertain men, movements, and decisions' are thus praised 'as contributing to the emergence of beliefs and institutions that prevail at the present time, whereas others are judged harshly for having been obstacles to the developments that led to present-day arrangements'.[24] More specifically, the Whig interpretation celebrates the exceptional felicity which has coloured English political history. Whig history is, 'by definition, a success story: the story of the triumph of constitutional liberty and representative institutions'.[25] It presents 'a providential account of English history' that pays tribute to England's 'possession, by divine grace, of constitutional liberty and a continuous history', which 'marked England off from her unhappy continental rivals, subjected alternately to despotism and revolution'.[26] Macaulay was not necessarily a simple Whig historian of this sort – he complained of contemporaries 'who produced distorted histories to serve their partisan purposes' – yet his image as a 'complacent, arrogant, insensitive, optimistic, and materialistic' believer in progress was 'firmly established by late Victorian writers such as Matthew Arnold, Leslie Stephen, and John Morley'.[27] For Arnold, in fact, Macaulay was 'the great apostle of the Philistines' (*CPW*, III: 210). It was Arnold's impatience with the self-conceit and lack of sound intelligence in his countrymen, embodied for him in the Whig historian, that prompted his thoughts on the *Académie Française* and the possible effect a similar academy would have upon the literary sensibility and practice in England. The essay 'The Literary Influence of Academies' (1864) begins with a slighting reference to a remark by Macaulay on the state of the national literature, according to which 'the literature now extant in the English language is of far greater value than all the literature which three hundred years ago was

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[24] Hamburger, *Macaulay and the Whig Tradition*, p. 111.
[25] Burrow, *A Liberal Descent*, p. 3.
[26] Jones, *Victorian Political Thought*, p. 54.
[27] Hamburger, pp. 112, ix.

extant in all the languages of the world together' (*CPW*, III: 232).[28] This alleged 'national superiority' was, for many, due to the absence of an academy like the French one and the freedom the situation created in the literary sphere.

Arnold sees this assumption as a typical expression of what he calls the 'provincial spirit', which 'exaggerates the value of its ideas for want of a high standard at hand by which to try them' or 'gives one idea too much prominence at the expense of others' (*CPW*, III: 249). He was continuing this attack against one-sidedness when he later lamented too much Hebraism at the expense of Hellenism and too much cherishing of the Bible at the expense of a wider culture. We have seen his devaluation of the Romantic poets for their lack of intelligence, or the guiding Idea, in 'The Function of Criticism'. In his essay on the academy, Arnold concedes the achievements of the English genius, which produced Shakespeare in poetry and Newton in science. Genius here is 'an affair of energy', a moral character of the English people, as opposed to the 'openness of mind and flexibility of intelligence' of the French (*CPW*, III: 237–38). The establishment of an English equivalent of the French Academy would not help further the work of genius, according to Arnold, because

> what that energy, which is the life of genius, above everything demands and insists upon, is freedom; entire independence of all authority, prescription, and routine, – the fullest room to expand as it will. Therefore, a nation whose chief spiritual characteristic is energy, will not be very apt to set up, in intellectual matters, a fixed standard, an authority, like an academy. (*CPW*, III: 238)

People of genius are surely best left to themselves, though not without potential ill effects.

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[28] Macaulay's remark appeared in George Otto Trevelyan, 'Letters from a Competition Wallah', p. 3.

First, they tend to be left in 'habits of wilfulness and eccentricity', assuming that 'there is no such thing as a high, correct standard in intellectual matters; that every one may as well take his own way', a notion which is 'at variance with the severe discipline necessary for all real culture' (*CPW*, III: 243). The problem is more serious in prose, which cannot rely solely on the work of imagination and poetic inspiration, and 'a supposed centre of correct information, correct judgement, correct taste' is more crucial (*CPW*, III: 245). Arnold sees the effect of the lack of a 'centre' in the poor quality of 'the *journeyman-work* of literature' in England – the scholarship in philology, biography, translation (*CPW*, III: 257).

According to Arnold, prose in England, whether critical or scholarly, suffers from the writer's 'isolated position in the country'; that is to say, 'his feeling himself too much left to take his own way, too much without any central authority representing high culture and sound judgment' (*CPW*, III: 252). The situation is different in France, where a writer can feel 'himself to be speaking before competent judges', empowered by 'a force of cultivated opinion for him to appeal to' (*CPW*, III: 254). In England, a writer cannot help feeling 'himself to be speaking before a promiscuous multitude, with the few good judges so scattered through it as to be powerless', which leads to his loss of confidence and self-control and his eventual reliance on extravagance and 'big words'. There is a sense in which Arnold here calls for a centre or rallying point for intellectuals to rely on to act as a collective body amid England's provincial culture, contributing to the image of France as *the* place for intellectuals.[29]

Another unfortunate consequence of the *laissez-faire* handling of literature, which could be beneficial to the production of works of genius, is that it does not guarantee the continuous growth of a national culture. Arnold believes that 'the power of English

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[29] On the extended history of the English view of the intellectual as a French species, see Collini, *Absent Minds*.

literature is in its poets', whereas '[t]he power of French literature is in its prose-writers'; the national spirit of the English people performs much better in 'the qualities of genius than in the qualities of intelligence' (*CPW*, III: 239). The problem here is that 'the qualities of genius are less transferable than the qualities of intelligence; less can be immediately learned and appropriated from their product'. As intellectual agencies, they are 'less direct and stringent' (*CPW*, III: 239). They could be 'more beautiful and divine'. After all, 'Shakespeare and our great Elizabethan group were certainly more gifted writers than Corneille and his group' (*CPW*, III: 240). But what happened to their respective followers? The 'sequel to this great literature, this literature of genius, as we may call it, stretching from Marlow to Milton', was 'our provincial and second-rate literature of the eighteenth century'. The 'sequel to the literature of the French "great century", to this literature of intelligence', on the other, was 'one of the most powerful and pervasive intellectual agencies that have ever existed, – the greatest European force of the eighteenth century' (*CPW*, III: 240). The same holds true for the field of science; the immediate followers of Newton, thought Arnold, were less prominent than modern mathematicians on the Continent who worked in the wake of Leibnitz.

The essay concludes with the remark that 'all mere glorification by ourselves of ourselves or our literature, in the strain of […] Lord Macaulay, is both vulgar, and, besides being vulgar, retarding' (*CPW*, III: 257). For James Fitzjames Stephen, a jurist and a staunch Benthamite, Arnold was one of those Englishmen whom he could not envy, 'whose heart does not beat high as he looks at the scarred and shattered walls of Delhi or at the union jack flying from the fort at Lahore'.[30] A self-conscious patriotic liberal, Stephen was an admirer of the Whig historian, writing that despite 'the blemishes of the most popular history that ever was written' – Macaulay's unfinished *History of England*

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[30] *Liberty, Equality, Fraternity*, p. 113.

(1848; 1855) – 'we neither regret nor wonder at its popularity'. '[I]f he had been spared to complete it', according to Stephen, the outcome 'would have done more than almost any other to delight his countrymen, and to teach them to love as he did the land over which he rejoiced and exulted with an admiration as passionate as it was manly'.[31] As Julia Stapleton has argued, Stephen aimed 'to prise liberalism away from the destructive, radical, populist' programme exemplified by the Manchester School, redirecting it 'toward the patriotic upholding of a fine, enduring, and distinctively English inheritance'. His attempt to 'invigorat[e] the liberal creed by annexing it to the high-conservative themes of patriotism, religion, and empire' could be seen as 'a "right" […] renewal of liberalism following the exhaustion of Radicalism', in contrast to the collectivist reorientation of the 'left' alternative.[32]

In his article 'Mr. Matthew Arnold and his Countrymen' (1864), Stephen's target was mainly 'The Function of Criticism', which had appeared the same year, but he also had in mind Arnold's overall project of chiding English Philistinism from the 1863 article on Heinrich Heine onwards. Arnold, thought Stephen, overlooked a crucial fact about English intellectual life, a fact on which English critical practice rested. An English theory of what is now called Empiricism was indeed conscious and deliberate enough to present itself as superior to Continental alternatives:

> [T]here is in England a school of philosophy which thoroughly understands, and on theoretical grounds deliberately rejects, the philosophical theory which Mr. Arnold accuses the English nation of neglecting, and that the practical efforts of the English people, especially their practical efforts in the way of literary criticism, are for the most part strictly in accordance with the principles of that philosophy. (p. 684)

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[31] 'Lord Macaulay', pp. 9–10
[32] 'James Fitzjames Stephen', p. 259–60.

Arnold believes in a 'transcendental theory of philosophy', the very theory of which English thinkers from Hobbes and Locke to J. S. Mill and Alexander Bain have 'utterly denied the truth'. It is because the English nation is the most logical in the world that its belief in a general principle of political economy has been successfully translated into the practical sphere, in the promotion of free trade or the administration of the new Poor Law. Bentham, Newton, and Mill all argued abstractly and were at once influential among the nation. After all, Arnold needs to recognize that the English theory, true or false, 'is just as much entitled to be called philosophy as anything else' (p. 684).

For Stephen, then, the critic's 'self-imposed mission' was virtually nothing but to 'give advice to the English people' as to 'their one great fault of being altogether inferior, in an intellectual and artistic point of view, to the French' (p. 684). Stephen's 'epistemological preference' sided with 'the "English" penchant for rooting the principles of knowledge in logic and testing maxims by practical experience'; hence his denouncement of Arnold's 'literary aestheticism' alongside Newman's Catholicism as pretending to command 'the lofty intellectual heights of no-man's land' from which to have exclusive access to the transcendent realm of esoteric truth.[33] However, Stephen's Burkean defence of 'the existence of stable traditions, loyalties, and rules' as guaranteeing the 'flourishing state of health' of England as 'the embodiment of an invigorated nation' was not alien to Arnold's own temperament.[34] We have seen that one rationale for the academy was that it would guarantee the continuous growth of a national culture, and the essay on academies was intended 'to make up our shortcoming' by 'learn[ing] to perceive clearly what we have to amend' (*CPW*, III: 241). Arnold's position appears to have been what Varouxakis has called a 'cosmopolitan patriotism', according to which 'it was part

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[33] Stapleton, 'James Fitzjames Stephen', p. 257.
[34] Stapleton, 'James Fitzjames Stephen', p. 247.

of being a good patriot to strive to improve the way one's country was perceived abroad, to make its voice heard and respected', and this effort had to be grounded in the country's 'commendable achievements, distinctions and contributions to the common fund of "civilization"', which would be recognized in front of 'some sort of international tribunal of public opinion'.[35]

Paradoxically, France could offer a model of patriotism even for an English patriot like Stephen, whose assertions of English superiority could be almost xenophobic.[36] Drawing on a distinction made by Paul Langford, Stapleton has argued that 'Stephen's patriotism may be seen as an attempt to convert the *individual* pride that Englishmen had increasingly taken in being English over the previous two centuries into the *collective* national pride that could be found in France'.[37] In fact, chief among the things that Arnold found enviable in French education was precisely that it 'tends to foster that admirable unity of patriotic spirit which pervades France from one end to the other, and which is the great force of the nation' (*CPW*, II: 132). Arnold ascribed to Burke his favourite definition of the State as '*the nation in its collective and corporate character*', to which we will return shortly (*CPW*, II: 26).

The essay on the academy does not present the idea of the State *per se*, but the crucial fact for Arnold was that casual, unofficial meetings of literary-minded persons in Paris came to assume 'a public character' under the auspices of Cardinal Richelieu, the all-powerful minister who had 'a noble passion for letters, and for all fine culture', at a time – the early seventeenth century – when 'a great century for France' was about to begin (*CPW*, III: 232–33). The King's letters patent to authorize the new society were

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[35] '"Patriotism", "Cosmopolitanism" and "Humanity"', pp. 103–4. See also Jonathan Parry, p. 13.

[36] See Varouxakis, *Victorian Political Thought*, p. 29.

[37] Stapleton, *Political Intellectuals*, p. 25. She refers here to Langford's *Englishness Identified*, where the author quotes an observation made in the early nineteenth century that the English, in contrast to the French, 'are vain of themselves as individual Thompsons and Johnsons, and of the English nation because it is *their* nation; not of themselves because they are members of it' (p. 315).

granted in 1635 and verified by a reluctant Parliament two years later, which felt suspicious of 'the apparition of a new public body in the State' (*CPW*, III: 233). The Academy thus established acted practically as a 'centre of correct information', which institutionally guaranteed the quality of the literary culture of the nation; it functioned as a '*literary tribunal*' or a 'high court of letters for France' with its peer-reviewing practices (*CPW*, III: 245, 234). But, thought Arnold, the existence of the Academy entailed more than an immediately practical benefit. Established by Richelieu, the 'man in the grand style', it was expected to enable 'the lucidity of a large and centrally placed intelligence', which implied certain ethical imperatives (*CPW*, III: 232, 249).

The foundation of such an institute, 'a recognised authority' which imposes 'a high standard in matters of intellect and taste', is not a natural thing, according to Arnold, for there are tendencies in human nature which go against such an enterprise (*CPW*, III: 235). 'We all of us like to go our own way, and not to be forced out of the atmosphere of commonplace habitual to most of us'; we are constantly allured 'to lie comfortably in the old straw of our habits, especially of our intellectual habits, even though this straw may not be very clean and fine'. However, our effort 'to limit this freedom of our lower nature' could find 'auxiliaries' in our human nature itself. In this, Arnold relies on Cicero, whose idea of 'the *honestum*, or good' included 'the fixing of a *modus* and an *ordo*, a measure and an order, to fashion and wholesomely constrain our action, in order to lift it above the level it keeps if left to itself, and to bring it nearer to perfection' (*CPW*, III: 235–36). Other living creatures 'submissively follow the law of their nature'; the distinction of humanity lies in that it goes after 'the discovery of an *order*, a law of *good taste*, a *measure* for his words and actions', according to which 'to control the bent of his nature' (*CPW*, III: 236).[38]

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[38] Cicero, *De Officiis*, I, iv–v.

In his *History of the Origins of Representative Government in Europe* (1851), Guizot ascribes 'the establishment of absolute power' in France to Richelieu and Louis XIV (p. 433).[39] 'Richelieu, Louis XIV, the Revolution, Napoleon' all 'seem to have inherited the same projects and moved in the same direction'. They all promoted 'centralization in France', uniting the legislative, executive, judicial, and administrative powers and vesting those powers in the same individuals (p. 246). For Arnold, the *Académie Française* was associated not only with Richelieu but also with Guizot. He continued to stay in Paris after fulfilling his inspector's duties in August 1859 to attend a lecture by Guizot at the Academy, after which he wrote in his diary: 'Guizot very striking' (*Letters*, I: 497). Guizot himself was a proponent of state cultural policy. As minister of public education from 1832 to 1837, he 'reestablished the prestigious *Académie des sciences morales et politiques* and gave generous financial assistance to publishing houses (such as Hachette), libraries, and publications'. The foundation of *La Société de l'histoire de France* in 1834 was also his achievement, a society intended to 'coordinate the publication of scholarly historical materials in conjunction with the newly established *Comité des travaux historiques*'. The same year saw the creation of 'the first chair in constitutional law in France', an initiative also led by the minister.[40] These cultural policies were grounded in what Guizot called '*le gouvernement des esprits*', which required 'an active state' to be 'a public educator', to promote and disseminate knowledge in society, to undertake 'the creation of the conditions necessary for the full development of individuality'.[41] Arnold records his reading of Guizot's *Mémoires* in 1861 (*Letters*, II: 49), in which the latter presented his idea of the 'government of minds' as the 'grand problem of modern society':

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[39] *Histoire des origines du gouvernement représentatif en Europe.*
[40] Craiutu, p. 175.
[41] Craiutu, p. 174.

It has frequently been said in the last century, and it is often repeated now, that minds ought not to be fettered, that they should be left to their free operation, and that society has neither the right nor the necessity of interference. Experience has protested against this haughty and precipitate solution. It has shown what it was to suffer minds to be unchecked, and has roughly demonstrated that even in intellectual order, guides and bridles are necessary.[42]

It is easy to see in this passage a stimulus for Arnold's thinking on the English genius flourishing under the *laissez-faire* principle in the literary sphere with its own deficiencies due to a lack of 'guides and bridles'; hence, his thought experiment of an English equivalent of the *Académie Française*. Mill, alongside Walter Bagehot, was impervious to this aspect of Guizot's thought. For both, as H. S. Jones has written of Bagehot, 'the Arnoldian quest for entrenched intellectual authority' threatened to 'stultify intellectual and literary growth' by suppressing 'variation and diversity as the seeds of progress'.[43] All the major issues in *Culture and Anarchy* have been gathered around the discussion on academies; all that was missing was catchier wording.

II. Culture and the 'Sovereignty of Reason'

On 3 May 1865, Robert Lowe, the 'most notorious opponent' of extending the franchise in the mid-1860s, addressed the House of Commons and denounced a 'fatalistic argument' about democracy, which he argued threatened to paralyze the 'spirit and feeling' of Englishmen, reducing the work of politics to mere adjustment.[44] This was 'a line of

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[42] *Memoirs to Illustrate the History of My Time*, III, p. 14.
[43] *Victorian Political Thought*, p. 67.
[44] Harvie, *Lights of Liberalism*, p. 121; Lowe, *Speeches and Letters on Reform*, pp. 39, 40.

argument' which formed 'the foundation and the blemish of the great work of De Tocqueville':

> M. de Tocqueville assumed that democracy was inevitable, and that the question to be considered was, not whether it was good or evil in itself, but how we could best adapt ourselves to it. This is *ignava ratio*, the coward's argument, by which I hope this House will not be influenced.[45]

Arnold's article 'Democracy', which first appeared in 1861 as an introductory essay for the published version of his Newcastle Commission Report, *The Popular Education of France*, supports the view that Tocqueville's idea had become 'a pervasive contemporary cliché'.[46] In this essay, Arnold argues that the 'dissolution of the old political parties which have governed this country since the Revolution of 1688' implies the end of the 'tenure' of the rule of aristocracy, which was guaranteed by 'the substantial acquiescence of the body of the nation in its predominance and right to lead' (*CPW*, II: 4, 7). This acquiescence was fast giving away; the lower classes were no longer willing to recognize unimpeachable superiority in the upper class. For Arnold, 'natural and inevitable causes' brought about this change; it was a 'movement of democracy' that deserved 'neither blame nor praise', just as 'other operations of nature' did not (*CPW*, II: 7). One outcome of this view was his appeal to the State as a replacement for the aristocracy in its role of 'exercis[ing] an influence' that was 'elevating and beneficial' as an embodiment of '*the grand style*' (*CPW*, II: 16; 5). The state would work as a countervailing influence against democracy by helping to 'find and keep high ideals' in place of an aristocracy that once supplied 'one ideal of greatness, high feeling, and fine culture' (*CPW*, II: 17).

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[45] Lowe, pp. 39–40.
[46] Burrow, *Whigs and Liberals*, p. 21.

There is a sense in which Arnold's 'aristocratic liberalism' can be seen partly as an extension of the traditional Whig argument, in its preoccupation with institutionalizing a counteracting mechanism against 'popular, extra-parliamentary "opinion"', if not against 'royal or executive "influence"'.[47] According to J. W. Burrow, '[t]he English liberal enthusiasm for Tocqueville' from the 1830s to the 1860s 'introduced themes far more congruent with an eighteenth-century Whig heritage than with deductive utilitarianism'.[48] As Varouxakis has argued, some elements in J. S. Mill's thought that have been traced to Tocqueville in fact derived from Guizot, whose lectures Tocqueville regularly attended.[49] Mill was inspired by Guizot's historical thesis that modern European civilization owed its ceaseless growth and consistent progress to the existence of 'a continuous struggle between different forces, ideas, principles, values, groups, with each trying to prevail and take exclusive hold of society but none of them ever succeeding in doing so'; Mill subsequently 'read Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* through the spectacles already provided by his acquaintance with Guizot's main historical works', identifying democracy as 'just *one* of the tendencies that should not be left to reign uncontrolled', alongside others that needed counterbalancing, including the commercial spirit, which Mill saw as 'the most dangerous'.[50]

Of course, Arnold's fear was more about anarchy than about the 'Chinese stationariness' that frightened Mill at a time when the anxiety of 'stagnation', as Burrow writes, became 'a stressed note in the three decades or so after 1850'.[51] We cannot assume that Arnold shared 'the view of many nineteenth-century liberals – Guizot, Mill, Bagehot – that diversity was the best guarantee of innovation and vitality'.[52] However, it

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[47] Collini, Winch, and Burrow, p. 106. On 'aristocratic' brands of liberalism in nineteenth-century Europe, see Alan S. Kahan's *Aristocratic Liberalism* and 'Arnold, Nietzsche and the Aristocratic Vision'.
[48] *Whigs and Liberals*, p. 19.
[49] 'Guizot's Historical Works and J. S. Mill's Reception of Tocqueville'.
[50] Varouxakis, 'State and Individual', p. 14; 'Guizot's Historical Works', pp. 294, 301.
[51] Collini, Winch, and Burrow, p. 203.
[52] Jones, *Victorian Political Thought*, p. 63.

is inaccurate to see Arnold as deviating from Guizot's political rather than historical lessons. It was Mill who did so; he was 'vociferously critical of Guizot's refusal (in his capacity as a politician) to widen the franchise during the July monarchy', although his own plan for electoral reform retained the progress-on-diversity principle.[53] In fact, Guizot's liberalism had a closer affinity to Arnold's than to Mill's. According to Rosanvallon, the Bourbon Restoration, the period in which Guizot's political and intellectual career commenced, 'was a true golden age of political reflection', despite being long neglected by scholars:

> After the excesses of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Empire, all writers began to pose the question of what would both achieve stability and protect liberties. From this came a central preoccupation: to allow politics to leave behind the domain of the passions and to enter the Age of Reason, and to substitute for the vagaries of the will the regularities of a scientific order. From all quarters sounded a critique of the dogma of popular sovereignty, accusing it of having created the intellectual framework making the Terror possible. The search was on for a rational government and a scientific politics.[54]

In this moral environment, it was natural for a French liberal like Guizot to denounce the 'vagaries of the will', which he saw as originating from a noxious notion of the sovereign individual, and to question its natural associate, the 'dogma of popular sovereignty', without discarding the title 'liberal'. *Doctrinaires* were liberal in that they opposed every form of despotism – reverting to the pre-revolutionary period was inconceivable – but the forms of despotism they opposed included despotism in the name of the people. Their

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[53] Varouxakis, 'State and Individual', p. 14.
[54] 'François Guizot and the Sovereignty of Reason', p. 117.

liberalism demanded, in the words of Rosanvallon, the creation of 'a *culture of government*' in France, which was desperately needed to prevent the rights of the individual from being trampled amidst anarchy or political instability (p. 122). Guizot's alternative to the idea of the sovereign individual was that of 'the sovereignty of reason'. The rest of this chapter, then, attempts to demonstrate that this idea anticipated and possibly influenced Arnold's conception of the State as 'summing up the right reason of the community', attending to 'Idealist' characteristics of Arnold's socio-ethical thinking (*CPW*, V: 123–24).

In *Culture and Anarchy*, Arnold opposes the 'familiar praise of the British Constitution' as 'a system of checks' (*CPW*, V: 117). In this interpretation, which is illustrated by the Whig theory of a balance of powers and a mixed constitution but is also reiterated by a more democratic or populist one, the Constitution is hailed as 'a system which stops and paralyses any power in interfering with the free action of individuals'. James Mill had discussed 'checks' with his Whig opponents in view, redefining the word as signifying 'direct representation of individuals seen as a device for protecting the interests of a numerical majority from the actions of the few', rather than as a mechanism for maintaining equilibrium.[55] In either case, for Arnold, freedom has been worshipped as 'machinery', as an end in itself, when people should instead look 'beyond it to the end for which alone, in truth, it is valuable'. He assumes that 'the central idea of English life and politics is *the assertion of personal liberty*', a remark he ascribes to John Bright. Paradoxically, Arnold concedes, a system of checks was of benefit to the subordinate population while feudal lords held sway over the nation. However, now that feudalism and 'its ideas and habits of subordination' have died out, the outdated notion that it is 'the great right and happiness of an Englishman to do as far as possible what he likes' is

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[55] Collini, Winch, and Burrow, p. 108.

beginning to drive England to the verge of anarchy. What is required for English political life at the present time is the idea of the State, which he sees as occupying a more eminent place both on the Continent and in antiquity, in charge of 'controlling individual wills in the name of an interest wider than that of individuals' (*CPW*, V: 117). Guizot's history taught that France assumed a strong executive power as soon as its feudalism died out with the provincial lords; England, on the other hand, retained a 'system of checks', whiggish or populist, after the demise of feudalism, due to the rural aristocracy's prolonged ascendancy in politics. However, again, now that the aristocracy of England is losing the 'acquiescence' of society necessary to 'conduct and wield the English nation', there is nothing other than the State which might work as a countervailing influence to the emerging forces of democracy (*CPW*, II: 6–7).

Freedom, as Arnold discusses it here, is the Englishman's freedom 'to do as he likes'; it is synonymous with 'an Englishman's right' to 'march where he likes, meet where he likes, enter where he likes, hoot as he likes, threaten as he likes, smash as he likes' (*CPW*, V: 119). For the most part, Arnold identifies freedom with anarchy and the State with authority (*CPW*, V: 117). (A series of articles that comprise *Culture and Anarchy* was initially conceived under the title 'Anarchy and Authority'.) However, Arnold at one point goes beyond the negative conception of liberty, asserting that 'the only perfect freedom' is 'a service' (*CPW*, V: 207). By this Arnold does not means 'a service to any stock maxim', anticipating his polemic against Bibliolatry from *St. Paul and Protestantism* onwards, but 'an elevation of our best self, and a harmonizing in subordination to this, and to the idea of a perfected humanity, all the multitudinous, turbulent, and blind impulses of our ordinary selves'. He denounces freedom as 'mere liberty' for one's 'ordinary self'; the 'only perfect freedom' is the 'development of his best self', the liberation of 'his true humanity' (*CPW*, V: 207). The State – '*the nation in*

its collective and corporate character' – is expected to serve this purpose, for the 'State-power' which the nation employs 'should be a power which really represents its best self' (*CPW*, II: 26; 28). This notion of the State could be 'made instrumental to tyranny', yet the consequences of the common assumption that 'every individual is the best judge of his own interests' were no better: the principles of 'voluntaryism' in education and of 'non-interference of the State between employers and employed' were among the most salient (*CPW*, V: 117, 128). For T. H. Green, the latter indicated the deadlock of the liberal obsession with the principle of freedom of contract, which was indeed an obstacle to 'real freedom'. His attempt at a positive, perfectionist definition of freedom would be more deliberate and self-conscious than Arnold's, as we will see in the next chapter.

Culture, which Arnold equates with '*a study of perfection*', 'brings us light', revealing that 'there is nothing so very blessed in merely doing as one likes' and that 'the really blessed thing is to like what right reason ordains, and to follow her authority' (*CPW*, V: 123). It is the State that 'sum[s] up the right reason of the community'; it works as 'organ of our collective best self, of our national right reason' (*CPW*, V: 123–24, 136). Arnold thus asserts that 'culture suggests the idea of *the State*': 'We find no basis for a firm State-power in our ordinary selves; culture suggests one to us in our *best self*' (*CPW*, V: 135). For Arnold, popular philosophy in Britain was of no use for this purpose. He saw that a 'kind of philosophical theory' had become widespread 'to the effect that there is no such thing at all as a best self and a right reason having claim to paramount authority' (or, at least no such thing ascertainable and available). According to this theory, continues Arnold:

there is nothing but an infinite number of ideas and works of our ordinary selves, and suggestions of our natural taste for the bathos, pretty nearly equal in value,

which are doomed either to an irreconcilable conflict, or else to a perpetual give and take (*CPW*, V: 155–56).

Arnold regards this theory, which sanctions the natural inclinations of our lower selves, as 'a peculiarly British form of Atheism', which clings to 'what is' instead of making room for 'what should be' (*CPW*, V: 156). He does not specify any school of philosophy, but various forms of naturalist ethics, including Utilitarian ones with no room for the distinction between poetry and pushpin, are implied. For James Fitzjames Stephen, Arnold's polemic assumed 'the truth of the transcendental theory of philosophy' and he was 'like other transcendentalists' in being 'shy of giving us an eternal truth to look at'. Henry Sidgwick – Green' schoolmate at Rugby in the early 1850s and one of his public interlocutors on philosophical matters until Green's death in 1882 – was convinced that Arnold was more familiar than him with the German Idealist philosopher who conceived '"the reconciliation of antagonisms" as the essential feature of the most important steps in the progress of humanity'.[56] Contemporary association of Arnold with modern philosophical Idealism, Hegel in this case, appears to have been common.

For Arnold, one chief problem of an ethics grounded on the endorsement of ordinary, inferior selves is that it necessarily leads to perpetual conflict among individuals and classes. The English people are jealous of State action because, in their view, State power represents the interests of the hegemonic class, occupying the seats of the executive government. This assumption persists because it has been their habit for so long, as he puts it, to 'live in our ordinary selves, which do not carry us beyond the ideas and wishes of the class to which we happen to belong' (*CPW*, V: 134). Each class has 'their likings and dislikings' in their ordinary selves, which are naturally different from those of the

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[56] Stephen, 'Mr. Matthew Arnold and his Countrymen', p. 684; Sidgwick, 'The Prophet of Culture', p. 274.

other classes. Thus, in our 'everyday selves', we are 'separate, personal, at war'. In order to prevent the 'tyranny' of a dominant class, the English people deem it safe that 'no one has any power' (*CPW*, V: 134).

The best self in each of us is said to be 'the truest friend we all of us can have', so this does not pose any danger to anyone in each class. Rather, by this ideal self, 'we are united, impersonal, at harmony' (*CPW*, V: 134). By the best self that *potentially* exists in us, we are *actually* united. The agency which transforms the potentiality into actuality is culture:

> [T]his is the very self which culture, or the study of perfection, seeks to develop in us; at the expense of our old untransformed self, taking pleasure only in doing what it likes or is used to do, and exposing us to the risk of clashing with every one else who is doing the same! So that our poor culture, which is flouted as so unpractical, leads us to the very ideas capable of meeting the great want of our present embarrassed times! We want an authority, and we find nothing but jealous classes, checks, and a dead-lock; culture suggests the idea of *the State*. We find no basis for a firm State-power in our ordinary selves; culture suggests one to us in our *best self*. (*CPW*, V: 134–35)

Here, as Ben Knights argues, Arnold starts to perform 'a dialectical conjuring trick by which the ideal is found to be latent in the *status quo*'.[57] The same trick was specified by Sidgwick, who regretted finding the critic 'dropping from the prophet of an ideal culture into a more or less prejudiced advocate of the actual' (p. 280). The easy 'shift from ideal to real' was perilous, according to Knights, because it could have consequences for 'the

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[57] *The Idea of the Clerisy*, p. 112.

processes of legitimation within society', leading the critic into 'claiming a higher reason on behalf even of the existing state' (p. 139). One symptom was Arnold's notorious reference to the Hyde Park demonstration of the Reform League on 23 July 1866. He believed that the Barbarian aristocracy and the Philistine middle class together needed to convince themselves: 'it is not really in behalf of their own ordinary self that they are called to protect the Park railings, and to suppress the London roughs, but in behalf of the best self of both of themselves and of all of us in the future' (*CPW*, V: 224). This makes a striking contrast to Green's response to the same event. In his speech at the Oxford Reform League on 25 March 1867, Green sneered at a 'kid-gloved politician, calling himself a Liberal-Conservative, who dislikes demonstrations because they block up Pall-Mall' (*CW*, V: 226).

It may be *apparently* directed towards the satisfaction of their ordinary selves or towards their class interest, but it is *really* for the benefit of our collective best selves. In Arnold's social criticism, as Knights points out, '"[r]eal" and "really" can be seen to undergo a semantic shift on several occasions' (p. 128). This could be seen as a characteristically Idealist strategy, which will be clarified by Collini's discussion of the use of certain ordinary words in an unordinary sense in philosophical Idealism. In criticizing Bosanquet's metaphysical theory of the state, Hobhouse, a New Liberal, 'pointed out how misleading the Idealist use of the "real" could be'. The word 'real' could easily be used, writes Collini, 'to obscure the way in which having our actions directed to accord with our real – meaning ideal – self could involve considerable coercion against the wishes of our real – meaning existing – self'.[58] Hobhouse was aware that Green himself was immune to this charge, attentive as he was to the distinction between the ideal and the actual. Green regretted the extent to which Hegel regarded 'most empirical

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[58] 'Hobhouse, Bosanquet and the State', p. 104.

states' as a 'fairly faithful embodiment of the ideal'; for Green, the imperfection of existing states and the suffering imposed by them were *real* enough.[59] He makes it clear that 'under the best conditions of any society that has ever been […] realisation of freedom is most imperfect':

> To an Athenian slave, who might be used to gratify a master's lust, it would have been a mockery to speak of the state as a realisation of freedom; and perhaps it would not be much less so to speak of it as such to an untaught and under-fed denizen of a London yard with gin-shops on the right and on the left. (DSF, §6)

'Hegel's account of freedom as realised in the state', Green insists, thus cannot be seen as 'correspond[ing] to the facts of society as it is, or even as, under the unalterable conditions of human nature, it ever could be' (DSF, §6). Nevertheless, Hobhouse believed that the failure was 'inherent in Idealism'.[60] In Collini's argument, the root of the 'failure' lay in the fact that 'Idealism recognizes no standard by which the present may be criticized that is not already implicit in the present, and yet it has no way of arbitrating disputes over the extent to which the ideal is actually realized' (p. 109). Culture is bent on seeing things as they really are; it fixes 'standards of perfection that are real' to combat an Englishman's faith in machinery – but culture presents no earthly standard by which to offer a critique of the empirical, existing State except the State itself (*CPW*, V: 97).

Arnold often depicts culture as an active agent like *Geist*, a spirit which works on and manifests itself in the world: thus, culture 'believes in making reason and the will of God prevail' (*CPW*, V: 93); culture could leave its 'aspirations' unsatisfied (*CPW*, V: 96); '[c]ulture tends' to assign 'to system-makers and systems a smaller share in the bent of

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[59] Tyler, *Civil Society, Capitalism and the State*, p. 165.
[60] Hobhouse, *Democracy and Reaction*, p. 276.

human destiny than their friends like' (*CPW*, V: 109); and culture helps England with 'its single-minded love of perfection, its desire simply to make reason and the will of God prevail, its freedom from fanaticism' (*CPW*, V: 104). When it assumes an earthly guise, culture is said to serve the world-historical purpose of the spirit of humanity:

> it is in making endless additions to itself, in the endless expansion of its powers, in endless growth in wisdom and beauty, that the spirit of the human race finds its ideal; to reach this ideal, culture is an indispensable aid, and that is the true value of culture. (*CPW*, II: 318)

Despite his disparagement of system-makers and the allegation of the 'want of coherent philosophic method' in Arnold made by Frederic Harrison, an English Comtist, it is no wonder that Stephen and Sidgwick found an affinity between the critic and Continental metaphysics (*CPW*, V: 139). Indeed, Arnold could mock himself for the ironic kinship between his critical programme and a German philosophy of *Geist*, inventing a fictional account in *Friendship's Garland* (1871) in which he was studying German philosophy with his imaginary Prussian friend Arminius. While they were 'engaged on Hegel's "Phenomenology of Geist"', Arminius, 'always irritable', suddenly had his temper 'burst from all control' and 'flung the *Phänomenologie* to the other end of the room' (*CPW*, V: 76–77). Arminius had stated that 'Geist' begot democracy in France and education in Prussia, which we can safely take as Arnold's own argument if '*Geist*' is replaced with 'culture'. Prussians, says Arminius himself, will set out to make themselves strong 'in our steady German way, by culture, by *forming* our faculties of all kinds, by every man doing the very best he could with himself' (*CPW*, V: 46).

Arnold's use of 'right reason' has been attended to by several scholars. Walter

Houghton found its source in 'the tradition of natural law' represented by 'the Stoics, Senancour, and Hooker'.[61] And Douglas Bush has developed this argument, claiming that the concept of right reason was 'formulated by the ancient Stoics (and codified, more literally, in Roman law), and was readily assimilated into Christian thought'. The church father Lactantius 'pronounced well-nigh inspired Cicero's assertion that morality is founded on the universal law of right reason written in every human heart'. The basic premise of this concept, continues Bush, was that

> there are ethical absolutes which man can comprehend. Right reason (*recta ratio*) is a kind of philosophic conscience implanted by God in all men, pagan and Christian alike, which can distinguish right from wrong. The right reason of mankind, its collective wisdom through the ages, has agreed upon fundamental principles, and these constitute natural law, which is universally binding.[62]

In Arnold's statement that 'poor disparaged followers of culture' try to 'find in the intelligible laws of thing a firmer and sounder basis for future practice', there is an element of Stoicism, particularly one mediated by Étienne Pivert de Senancour, whose epistolary novel inspired Arnold's Obermann poems. Senancour wrote in the 'Manual of Pseusophanes', a pseudo-treatise he invented and attributed to an ancient moral philosopher of the Cyrenaic school of hedonistic ethics, that:

> All is vanity for man if he [does] not advance with equable and tranquil pace in harmony with the laws of his intelligence […].
>
> Consider only the understanding which is the principle of the world's order, and

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[61] *Victorian Frame of Mind*, p. 151 (n. 60).
[62] *Matthew Arnold*, p. 153.

man who is the instrument thereof; the understanding which must be conformed to, and man who needs our succour.

Whether the 'order of the world' or 'the will of Nature', our welfare 'follows only in conformity' to this principle, because '[t]his law of the universe is also that of individuals'.[63] Warren Anderson believes that what 'Hellenistic and Roman philosophy meant' for Arnold was encapsulated in the teaching of Stoicism.[64]

Green does not often name Arnold in his writings, so it seems a little unexpected that a reference to Arnold occurs in a discussion of Stoicism in modern times in a series of lectures delivered in the late 1860s.[65] The lectures are an outline of the history of moral and political philosophy in which the greatest emphasis is given to Hegel. The Stoics were important for Green not least because they were 'the first to make' the 'synthesis of the antithesis of Subject and Object' (*CW*, V: 130). They attacked selfishness and subjectivity for the ignorance of one's own place in the universe as a whole, advocating for living according to the law of nature and reason. The Stoics, states Green, 'held the universe to be a great animal of which man is but a part'; if a part 'chooses to act against the whole, it will be thwarted. The way to get rid of the antithesis is to fight it out. Merge the Subjective in the Objective Will. Conform your will to the Objective Will' (*CW*, V: 129). However, according to Green, the Stoics' 'Objective Will' has no content: 'it teaches you to submit and make your ways as God's ways', but without prescribing what God's ways are (*CW*, V: 130).

When Green goes on to discuss Stoicism in modern times, he first mentions Carlyle. However, for him, Carlyle is distinct in that he 'has a plan of the universe; he has a content

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[63] Quoted in Anderson, *Matthew Arnold and the Classical Tradition*, pp. 154–55.
[64] *Matthew Arnold and the Classical Tradition*, p. 166.
[65] Notes of these lectures were kept by F. H. Bradley, now among the Bradley Papers at Merton College, Oxford. See Green, *CW*, V, pp. 105–7.

to the Divine Will' (*CW*, V: 130). A modern Stoic is more likely to be found in Arnold, though Green concedes that this sounds strange (note Anderson's observation that 'Edwardian critics, like certain of their successors, called Arnold a Stoic and were little concerned with proving their claim').[66] The point of Green's argument that Arnold's 'attitude towards Philistinism is Stoical' is not totally clear, but it turns out that his overall appraisal is not positive:

> The Stoic didn't know what the Objective Will was, and Matthew Arnold doesn't know where the necessity for culture comes from. His notion is purely negative. This was how Roman Stoicism fell, into mere abuse of the non-philosophic, and culture may degenerate into mere abuse of Philistinism. When Stoicism could find nothing to do but satirize it was on its last legs. (*CW*, V: 130)

This negative judgement paradoxically indicates that Green saw something congenial in Arnold's critical programme, finding it inadequate to fulfil his own aspiration for a metaphysical underpinning of the 'Objective Will'. A more constructive doctrine was needed.

Although it might not clarify 'where the necessity for culture comes from' for Arnold, I argue that one neglected source of his politics of 'right reason' could be Guizot's idea of 'the sovereignty of reason'. Guizot develops this idea in opposition to Rousseau's theory of the social contract in the *History of the Origins of Representative Government in Europe*, a series of lectures Guizot gave in Paris in the early 1820s that were not published until 1851. Guizot's fundamental objection to Rousseau resides in the latter's idea of the sovereign individual. In Rousseau's understanding, according to Guizot,

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[66] *Matthew Arnold and the Classical Tradition*, p. 167.

[l]iberty means a man's sovereignty over himself, the right to be governed only by his individual will. And sovereignty cannot be represented, just because the will cannot be represented […]. Who has certified you that your representative will always and on all occasions have the same will as yourself? […] So far then from your being represented, you have surrendered to him your will, your sovereignty, your liberty. You have given yourself up not to a representative, but to a master. (p. 286)

However, individual wills are mutable and arbitrary; my will tomorrow may not give consent to the decisions made by my will today. The principle of sovereignty residing in individual will cannot give rise to any stable society nor to 'any standing place for organized power', Guizot remarks (p. 288).

The premise then must be deemed invalid: 'It is not true' that 'man is the absolute master of himself – that his will is the only legitimate law – that no one, at any time, under any circumstances, has any right over him unless he has consented thereto' (p. 291). Philosophers who consider 'man in himself' apart from society have all recognized that the laws which he obeys are not his own creation:

The individual considered in himself, may not dispose of himself arbitrarily and according to his solitary will. Laws which are obligatory are not created or imposed upon him by his will. He received them from a higher source; they come to him from a sphere that is above the region of his liberty – from a sphere where liberty is not – where the question to be considered is not whether a thing is willed or not willed, but whether it is true or false, just or unjust, conformable or contrary to

reason. (p. 292)

The legitimacy of power depends on whether it has access to 'this sublime sphere' and the legitimacy of laws in 'the material world' on whether they conform to 'the law of God' (pp. 292, 294). For Guizot, liberty for an individual man is nothing but 'the power to conform his will to reason' and, in his relation with others, liberty means that he owns 'the right to obey nothing that is not reason' (p. 296).

Representation, therefore, is not a matter of representing individual wills, upon which any stable society he argues cannot be founded; it rather concerns the mechanism of mediation between the two worlds. The divine law of reason, truth, and justice cannot be perfectly realized in the earthly realm, but every society has partial access to those divine ideas in the form of 'just ideas and loyal wills' possessed by some individuals (p. 295). The problem is that they are 'dispersed' and 'unequally diffused' among the individuals who compose society. 'The grand concern' of society, therefore, is that

> so far as either abiding infirmity or the existing condition of human affairs will allow, this power of reason, justice, and truth, which alone has an inherent legitimacy, and alone has the right to demand obedience, may become prevalent in the community. The problem evidently is to collect from all sides the scattered and incomplete fragments of this power that exist in society, to concentrate them, and from them, to constitute a government. (p. 295)

The idea of representation is thus redefined not as 'an arithmetical machine employed to collect and count individual wills' but as a means 'to discover all the elements of legitimate power that are disseminated throughout society, and to organize them into an

actual power' (pp. 295–96). In other words, it is aimed at extracting 'public reason and public morality' from 'the bosom of society itself'. Election is a test 'applied to individual reasons', which 'assume to be interpreters of the reason of the community' (p. 296). This is an idea that finds a palpable echo in Arnold's characterization of the State as 'summing up the right reason of the community' (*CPW*, V: 123–24). In the realm of cultural production, Arnold appealed to the idea of an academy to represent the scattered fragments of reason that are powerless when left to themselves in a provincial society like England.

For Guizot an institutional outcome of this theory of representation was 'limited suffrage based on property and capacity'.[67] 'A consistent thread running through Guizot's entire work', as Jennings has claimed, 'was the contention that some form of inequality was an inevitable aspect of all societies and that to ignore this was to commit oneself to acts of unpardonable political folly'.[68] Writing after half a century, Arnold did not endorse this practical outcome of his position. In the 1883 lecture he delivered in front of American audiences, he announced:

> It may be better, it is better, that the body of the people, with all its faults, should act for itself, and control its own affairs, than that it should be set aside as ignorant and incapable, and have its affairs managed for it by a so-called superior class, possessing property and intelligence. Property and intelligence cannot be trusted to show a sound majority themselves; the exercise of power by the people tends to educate the people. (*CPW*, X: 145)

However, as late as the 1880s, Guizot, who was ready to 'attribute popular protest and

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[67] Rosanvallon, p. 126.
[68] *Revolution and the Republic*, p. 180.

dissatisfaction' to nothing but 'moral disorder', was not out of place in the politico-ethical universe of Arnold.[69] If it is understood that Guizot's version of liberalism was not uncommon in France in the period between 1815 and 1848, shared among the *Doctrinaires*, what Arnold meant by the 'Liberal of the future' may become less ambiguous. A moment before he characterizes himself with this label in the 1886 essay 'The Nadir of Liberalism', he remarks that he finds solace in Joseph Chamberlain's 'instincts of government – what M. Guizot used to call "the governmental mind"' (*CPW*, XI: 76). This is a reference mainly to Chamberlain's attitude towards Irish Home Rule, the debate on which caused him to resign a cabinet post. Home Rule was a consequence not only of the maltreatment of Ireland by England but also of 'the cardinal principle of Liberalism' as 'Mr. Fox proclaimed it'; this principle held, according to Arnold: 'Let the Irish have what the majority of them like. It is the great blessedness for man to do as he likes; if men very much wish for a thing, we ought to give it them if possible' (*CPW*, XI: 66). Facing the 'danger of civil war', which is reminiscent of the collision between 'the old *régime* and Jacobinism', Arnold calls instead for the 'mediating power of reason to reconcile' the 'two impossible parties' (*CPW*, XI: 71). 'The laws which govern the course of human affairs', he continues, 'are not of our making or under our power' – like the laws of reason, truth, and justice as Guizot formulated them (*CPW*, XI: 72). For Arnold, the 'future of liberalism' belongs to 'politicians', but politicians of 'that commonwealth of which the pattern […] exists perhaps somewhere in heaven, but certainly is at present found nowhere on earth' (*CPW*, IX: 138). Those politicians who recognize that their 'true and legitimate masters' are 'the heavenly Gods' are 'scattered throughout all these classes' – Barbarians, Philistines, and Populace – and they are the remnant who represent 'public morality' on earth (*CPW*, VIII: 283). The pattern of the celestial commonwealth is to be

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[69] Jennings, *Revolution and the Republic*, p. 179.

mediated by those with a governmental mind, actualized through the *gouvernement des esprits*; the liberalism of the future is to be a liberalism of government.

Chapter 5. Becoming Something 'for the Sake of Becoming it': Green's Political and Social Thought

In contrast to Arnold's ambivalence towards the Whig heritage, Green had a clear consciousness that he was in favour of a more democratic polity. The first section of this chapter looks at Green's political writings as a 'University Liberal' in the words of Christopher Harvie, alongside those of contemporary academic liberals and radical democrats including A. V. Dicey, James Bryce, Henry Sidgwick, and Frederic Harrison. Green's suspicion of the 'cant' of culture and his sympathy towards Nonconformity will be clarified. However, it is too simplistic to view Green as a 'Hebraist' with social conscience in contrast to Arnold as a 'Hellenist' apostle of culture. Section II addresses this point by highlighting the Greek heritage in *Prolegomena to Ethics*, thereby confirming that Green's *moral* conception of the state implied his allegiance to the 'broader Greek tradition of the cultivation of human "excellence" (*aretae*)'.[1] Besides, despite Green's plebeian sympathies, it is equally important to note that the 'imperative of the idealism' for Green lay in the 'provision of minds which see beyond the phenomena, which penetrate into principles where ordinary minds leave off'.[2] To illustrate this point, this section also attends to his affinity with nineteenth-century discussions about the clerisy addressed by Ben Knights and suggests that Green's ambiguity derived not least from 'cultural critics' including Carlyle. Section III confirms that Green's moral philosophy was organically interlinked with his epistemological arguments in *Prolegomena*, before concluding that his famous discussions about the 'different senses of freedom' witnessed a remarkably similar standpoint of politics and society to Arnold's despite their divergent intellectual setups.

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[1] Mander, *British Idealism*, p. 230.
[2] Ben Knights, p. 208.

I. Green among University Liberals

The publication of *Essays on Reform* in 1867, which J. W. Burrow has described as 'the democratic manifesto of the University Liberals', marked the ancient universities' retreat from blind adherence to 'the old Whig arguments for representation by interests rather than numbers'.[3] Burrow here refers to those academic liberals that Christopher Harvie addressed in *The Lights of Liberalism*, a generation of Oxbridge graduates who were born around the period from 1828 to 1838 and grew to political maturity in the 1860s. Affiliated to the ancient universities, they made no small contribution towards 'the assimilation by the English upper middle class of the new vocabulary of political democracy', in the words of Harvie, and strived for 'the coordination of the endowed institutions of higher education with the new national politics' (p. 13). Under the seminal influence of the liberal Anglicans internally and Giuseppe Mazzini externally, they attacked the 'sectional, deferential and sectarian' politics of the 1860s in favour of a democratic nationalism defined in moral, rather than pragmatic, terms. To this generation of young Liberals, 'Whiggism', writes Burrow, was not so much 'a scorned opponent, as for the Philosophical Radicals earlier'; it appeared to them more like 'a senior partner whose day was done and whose continuing presence was an anachronistic encumbrance' (p. 10). These academics, according to Burrow, assumed 'a more idealistic, egalitarian, and even at times republican character than earlier Whig notions of mild and orderly government, secured by flexible constitutional adjustment and an adequate representation of diverse social interests' (p. 46).

T. H. Green, who had been born in 1836, was one of these University Liberals alongside such would-be eminent Victorians as A. V. Dicey, Leslie Stephen, Goldwin

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[3] *Whigs and Liberals*, pp. 10, 12.

Smith, James Bryce, Henry Sidgwick, and another British Idealist who succeeded Benjamin Jowett as the Master of Balliol College in 1893, namely Edward Caird. There was even a plan for a chapter by Green on bribery in *Essays on Reform*, though it seemingly aborted due to his notorious laziness (Bryce wrote that he was 'constitutionally lethargic' and 'found it hard to rouse himself to exertion').[4] In a public speech at an Oxford Reform League meeting on 25 March 1867, Green made clear his intention to go beyond the Whiggish adherence to constitutional balance: 'The truth is', he says, 'we have reached that stage in our history which Lord Macaulay, I think, is said to have prophesied, when the conflict is no longer between the House of Commons and the Crown, or the Lords, but between the people and the House of Commons' (*CW*, V: 227). When he denounced the overrepresentation of the landed aristocracy even in the lower House, reminding the audience that they needed to 'deal with a House of Commons which is little else than a House of Lords in disguise', the argument could lead to a plea for a preventive reform, which would restore the ideal balance reflecting the actual social conditions (*CW*, V: 227). However, the speaker's tone was more combative. '[W]e shall have to alarm them a little more before we get what we want', Green proclaimed:

> We are the last people to threaten physical force. If we took our opponents, the 'philosophical Liberals', at their word, we should have to resort to it, for they tell us that it is absurd to claim representation as a right; but, if the idea of right is not listened to, the plea for force alone remains. (*CW*, V: 230)

Robert Lowe had dismissed the '*a priori* assumption' of all men having 'a right to the franchise' as 'inadmissible in political discussion'.[5] In his contribution to the *Essays on*

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[4] *Studies in Contemporary Biography*, p. 88. See Harvie, *Lights of Liberalism*, p. 130.
[5] *Speeches and Letters on Reform*, p. 5.

Reform, a volume prompted not least by Lowe's *Speeches and Letters on Reform*, published a month before, Dicey focused on 'so-called philosophic Liberals' as his target. In discussing parliamentary reform, 'philosophic Liberals' drew upon what for Sir Hugh Cairns was 'the principle of the English Constitution'. This principle, according to Dicey, decreed that:

> Parliament should be a mirror, – a representation of every class; not according to heads, not according to numbers, but according to everything which gives weight and importance in the world without; so that the various classes of this country may be heard, and their views expressed fairly in the House of Commons, without the possibility of any one class outnumbering or reducing to silence all the other classes in the kingdom.[6]

The class theory of representation was partly problematic for Dicey because of its assumption that 'national progress is best attained by ingeniously balancing class against class, and selfish interest against selfish interest' (p. 84). The system would encourage 'class representatives' to fanatically 'display and intensify class feeling', resulting in the further consolidation of their class identity (p. 80). Its 'fundamental fault' was the 'tendency to intensify differences which it is an object of political Reform to remove' (p. 81). The aim of political reform for the academic liberals was the creation of 'a Commonwealth' that 'knows nothing of classes', as Bryce wrote in the same volume. The 'idea which lies at the root of the Constitution', for Bryce, was that 'the State is not an aggregation of classes, but a society of individual men, the good of each of whose members is the good of all'. This idea he saw as 'the condition and the pledge of national

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[6] 'The Balance of Classes', p. 67.

unity'.[7] Frederic Harrison, a democratic liberal, described the same object as 'the incorporation of the entire population', including those 'still in the *quasi* servile or pupillary state', into 'the common society'.[8]

Dicey saw that the political arrangement that theorists of class representation desired was such 'as would enable a minority, in virtue of their education, wealth, &c. to carry out their views, even though opposed to the sentiments of the majority of the people' (p. 70). They devised 'schemes for effecting an hypothetical balance of power', whose very complexity in turn 'has given an appearance of philosophic profundity to the theory which makes such devices necessary' (pp. 75–76). What chiefly concerned Dicey here was the fear of plutocracy; however, it was not just opponents of the enfranchisement of the masses, identifying the latter with 'the disfranchisement of the rich', who devised schemes for counteracting the homogenizing tendency of a democratic government (p. 69). James Lorimer, whom Dicey picks out as an advocate of plural voting, whereby 'giving votes to every man in proportion to his merits', was commended by Thomas Hare, whose idea of personal or proportional representation, in turn, found its way into J. S. Mill's *Considerations on Representative Government* (1861).[9] Either Hare or Mill was less than enthusiastic about restricting the franchise; nevertheless, it was clear to both that 'though every one ought to have a voice – that every one should have an equal voice is a totally different proposition'.[10] Hare's scheme of proportional representation as summarized in Mill's work proposed that electors 'who did not wish to be represented by any of the local candidates' could 'aid by their vote in the return of the person they liked best among those throughout the country', so as to 'give reality to the electoral rights of the otherwise virtually disenfranchised minority' (XIX, p. 453). Mill asserted that the

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[7] 'The Historical Aspect of Democracy', pp. 277–78.
[8] *Order and Progress*, p. 379.
[9] Dicey, p. 78. See F. D. Parsons, *Thomas Hare and Political Representation in Victorian Britain*, p. 61.
[10] Mill, *Collected Works*, XIX, p. 473.

inevitable result of democracy 'as commonly conceived and hitherto practised' was virtually 'the complete disfranchisement of minorities' (XIX, p. 448). Dicey, for his part, was alert to this sort of figure of speech, arguing that 'as a matter of fact, no man is disfranchised by the enfranchisement of another' (p. 70).[11]

The scheme of proportional representation was unfavourably reviewed by Walter Bagehot, whose criticism of Mill's work in the *Economist* University Liberals could not agree with more. For Bagehot, 'the mere preference for intellectual and thoughtful men' in Hare and Mill was too frail in the face of 'the special ties of sectarian and commercial interests'. Their scheme, thought Bagehot, 'would split up Parliament' into 'sharply-divided sections' by securing for 'sectional, religious or commercial interests' the 'power of drawing together from all parts of the country in order to elect special representatives'. The upshot would be a situation in which 'the common interests of Englishmen' were subordinated to '*specialités*' or the 'special fanaticisms'.[12] After all, although the scheme was intended to secure a place for intellectual elites in political life, the principle of 'minority representation', as Christopher Kent has put it, would be utterly 'repugnant to the assumptions and ideals of a clerisy', the 'Coleridgean emphasis on national unity' among them. The 'aspiring national élite' would never be pleased with this divisive measure, which they thought almost celebrated 'the prospect of multiplying minorities and the exacerbation of sectarian strife'.[13]

As Burrow argues, referring to Macaulay, there is a sense in which the Utilitarians were 'an anachronism, an anomaly in the development of an increasingly empirical, historically and comparatively grounded, but thoughtful and comprehensive political

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[11] All the same, it is remarkable how Dicey, as Stapleton has argued, 'rewrote the terms of the success story which Whiggism told of English history', stressing that 'English liberties were rooted in English law and the legal profession as much, if not more, than political institutions' (*Englishness and the Study of Politics*, p. 51). See also Stapleton, *Political Intellectuals*, pp. 26–27, 51–53.

[12] Review of *Considerations of Representative Government*, pp. 540–41.

[13] *Brains and Numbers*, p. 45.

culture'. In an historical narrative of the gradual development of what Macaulay called the 'noble science of politics', the Philosophic Radicals could be seen as 'something of a hiatus, an odd resurgence of a mode of political reasoning akin to seventeenth-century rationalism'. [14] Bentham disregarded the whiggish twaddle about the constitutional balance or mixture; for James Mill, representation of interests defined in terms of classes or groups was a 'motley Aristocracy', which should be substituted simply by 'a majoritarian definition of the interests of the Many'.[15]

T. H. Green's philosophical worldview was largely determined by its antagonism towards Utilitarianism, but he was at one point sympathetic to this philosophical tradition otherwise uncongenial to him. In discussing the practical value of 'a hedonistic moral philosophy' in *Prolegomena to Ethics*, Green insists that 'the theory of an ideal good, consisting in the greatest happiness of the greatest number, as the end by reference to which the claim of all laws and powers and rules of action on our obedience is to be tested, has tended to improve human conduct and character' (*PE*, §331). The chief contribution of the Utilitarian theory, he conceded, was its principle that 'every one should count for one and no one for more than one' (*PE* §213). This principle took account of 'the widest possible range of society that can be brought into view' (*PE*, §332). It had a corrosive effect on 'fixed class-distinctions', for it made 'men watchful of customary morality, lest its rules should be conceived in the interests of some particular class of persons', helping them to go through 'the great struggles' in modern society 'between privileged and unprivileged classes' (*PE*, §§214, 332). What counted there were heads or numbers.

For Green, the extension of the range of people whose claim to well-being was acknowledged indicated 'the ethical progress of our own age' (*PE*, §271). What made modern Christendom morally superior to ancient Greek civilization? In the wake of the

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[14] *Whigs and Liberals*, p. 19.
[15] Collini, Winch, and Burrow, pp. 94, 107–8.

mid-century rehabilitation of Athenian democratic polity inaugurated by George Grote's epoch-making *History of Greece* (1846–56), Green accepts that the Greeks already had the 'idea of a society of free and law-abiding persons, each his own master yet each his brother's keeper' (*PE*, §271).[16] However, he goes on to qualify the statement by pointing to the historical fact on which Grote was silent: the Athenian idea of a free society was crucially restricted to 'select groups of men surrounded by populations of aliens and slaves' (*PE*, §271). The small group of Greek freemen, Green argues, were not hesitant to use 'a much larger body of men with no such recognised claims as instruments in their service' (*PE*, §270). The case was also advanced by his literary executor, A. C. Bradley, who was convinced of the 'organic connection' that had been often overlooked by English commentators between the institution of 'Slavery' and the implied 'contempt even for free labour' on the one hand, and 'the strength and beauty of this civilisation' itself on the other. The fact was that 'the life of "leisure", devoted to politics and culture or to war, would have been impossible without them, and general conclusions drawn from Greek history which do not take them into account are inevitably vitiated'.[17] This new perspective on Greek political heritage reflected 'the awakening of genuine social concern and a sense of social guilt' among university men in the late-Victorian period.[18] Even the *fin-de-siècle* proponent of a 'new Hellenism' was receptive to the trend. For Oscar Wilde, Socialism would help the 'new Individualism' flourish, which 'express[es] itself through joy' in 'perfect harmony' – it was this enterprise that 'the Greeks sought for, but could not, except in Thought, realize completely, because they had slaves'.[19]

When Green argued that the 'enfranchisement of all men' created a situation in

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[16] See Turner, *Greek Heritage*, pp. 213–34.
[17] 'Aristotle's Conception of the State', pp. 185–86.
[18] Turner, *Greek Heritage*, p. 247.
[19] 'The Soul of Man', in *Criticism*, pp. 267–68. Iain Ross suggests a direct influence of Green's *Prolegomena* on Wilde's essay on socialism (*Oscar Wilde and Ancient Greece*, pp. 154–61).

which 'the responsive conscience' could not fail to recognize 'a claim on the part of all men to such positive help from all men as is needed to make their freedom real', it was easy for contemporary readers to take it as a comment on current affairs as well – an intervention in what J. S. Mill called 'the aristocracy of skin' in the American democracy (*PE*, §270).[20] One moment that consolidated the group consciousness of the University Liberals was when they supported the cause of the North in the American Civil War, dissenting from the dominant opinion of the class to which they belonged. Green blamed the outbreak of war not on the republican institutions, as anti-democrats in England did, but on the 'slave-holding, slave-breeding, and slave-burning oligarchy, on whom the curse of God and humanity rests' (*CW*, III: xliii). He ascribed the misplaced moral sense of his compatriots to inadequacy in the intellectual setup of England:

> The hedonism of Hume has been turned into utilitarianism, the Jacobinism of Rousseau into a gentle liberalism, but neither *ism* could save the 'culture' of England, in the great struggle between wilfulness and social right across the Atlantic, from taking sides with the wilfulness. Whatever might be the case practically, it had not learnt speculatively that freedom means something else than doing what one likes. A philosophy based on feeling was still playing the anarch in its thought. (*CW*, III: 117)

Arnold wrote to Jane Forster on 28 January 1861 that the Southern States 'will do better by going' and expected that 'the baseness of the North will not be tempted too strongly' into the use of force (*Letters*, II: 48–49). It was a common reaction among the educated classes in Britain, which caused Mill to be 'horrified that his fellow countrymen were

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[20] 'De Tocqueville on Democracy in America [I]' (1835), in *Collected Works*, XVIII, p. 55.

making such a poor showing during the Civil War'.[21] Green nevertheless seems to assume here that the author of *Culture and Anarchy* suggested a proper way to stop the 'culture' of England from going with an 'anarch', envisaging how freedom could be other than 'doing what one likes'.

Melvin Richter set the tone for later discussions when he wrote that Green 'was a Hebraist who cared little for the cultured gentleman proud of his classics'. Green's comparative argument of 'the Greek and modern ideals of virtue', he insists, was conceived as a condemnation of 'the intellectualism of the Greeks and, in particular, Aristotle's high estimation of the contemplative man' – a classical heritage which was 'precisely what Arnold most esteemed and associated with Oxford'.[22] Green felt he was on the defensive in arguing for 'the life of service to mankind, involving so much sacrifice of pure pleasure'; in his assumption, it was generally thought to be inferior to 'the life of free activity in bodily and intellectual exercises, in friendly converse, in civil debate, in the enjoyment of beautiful sights and sounds', which was a life that 'we commonly ascribe to the Greeks' (*PE*, §274). Nevertheless, those who led 'the nobler lives of Christendom' could no more afford the pure 'pleasures of the souls':

> It is no time to enjoy the pleasures of eye and ear, of search for knowledge, of friendly intercourse, of applauded speech or writing, while the mass of men whom we call our brethren, and whom we declare to be meant with us for eternal destinies, are left without the chance, which only the help of others can gain for them, of making themselves in act what in possibility we believe them to be. (*PE*, §270)

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[21] Prochaska, *Eminent Victorians on American Democracy*, p. 44. See also Bellows; Butler, pp. 79–80; Caufield, pp. 49–50.
[22] *The Politics of Conscience*, p. 219. See also Mandelbaum, p. 204; Leighton, pp. 177, 179–80, 190, 195; Skorupski, 'Green and the Idealist Conception of a Person's Good', p. 72.

It is tempting to see his endorsement of work for 'social deliverance' as a polemic against what Arnold had in his inaugural lecture termed as 'intellectual deliverance' (*PE*, §270). It is conventional in the secondary literature to ignore the Arnold of the 1870s, to which we will turn in the next chapter, in this context. Nevertheless, an image of Hellenist Oxford was consolidated by Swinburne and Pater, both Old Mortality fellows, and completed by Wilde. In effect, it was the Arnold of the late 1860s, alongside Mill, who 'had lifted the lid of Pandora's box' and encouraged *fin-de-siècle* decadents 'to extend the boundaries of experience by the exercise of a perverse imagination', endorsing 'what they were fond of calling "sin"'.[23] Pater recognized the contribution of philosophy, religion, and culture to 'the human spirit' only insofar as they quicken it for the experience of 'a variegated, dramatic life' with 'the finest senses'. Systematic thought is useless if it hinders us from approaching 'strange dyes, strange flowers, and curious orders, or work of the artist's hands, or the face of one's friend' in a fleeting moment when they expose themselves in 'their purest energy'. In Pater's eyes, Green's system must have been a striking specimen of 'theories' which require of us 'the sacrifice of […] this experience, in consideration of some interest into which we cannot enter, or some abstract morality we have not identified with ourselves, or what is only conventional'.[24]

Green surmised in a letter of October 1869 that 'Culture' sprang from 'the same disease of modern life as the High-Church revival' (*CW*, V: 430). Though the context is unclear, this makes sense as a reference to Arnold, who had recently extolled Newman's battle against 'the hardness and vulgarity of middle-class liberalism'; the Oxford Movement, nourishing the sentiment for beauty and sweetness, had 'the same end as culture' (*CPW*, V: 107). Aversion to 'culture', however, had become pervasive among University Liberals, even before the publication of *Culture and Anarchy*. In a *Fortnightly*

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[23] Burrow, *The Crisis of Reason*, p. 171.
[24] *Renaissance*, pp. 119–20.

Review article published in March 1867, Frederic Harrison denounced Lowe's anti-Reform polemic that attacked 'social vices' of the unenfranchised working-men as a class; in a 'flash of intellectual antipathy', Lowe's curse disclosed 'that innate disdain of uncultivated people, which men of high cultivation, conscious power, and narrow sympathies possess'.[25] After pointing to the perennial malfunctioning of the present House of Commons as a rationale for the transfer of power from the existing class of rulers to another – for the privileged class, 'the grand glory of Parliament is that it does nothing' and 'does that nothing in a highly patriotic and constitutional manner' – Harrison moves on to ridicule the nonsense talked as to the 'requisites for the elective franchise' (pp. 271, 276). It was often asserted that a vote should be secured by 'a fund of moral virtue and refined culture', but electors, he insists, did not need to be a trustee of the British Museum nor an authority on Political Economy to be good voters:

> Perhaps the silliest cant of the day is the cant about culture. Culture is a desirable quality in a critic of new books, and sits well on a professor of 'belles lettres''; but as applied to politics it means simply a turn for small fault-finding, love of selfish ease, and indecision in action. The man of culture is in politics one of the poorest mortals alive. […] [T]he active exercise of politics requires common sense, sympathy, trust, resolution, and enthusiasm, qualities which your man of culture has carefully rooted up, lest they damage the delicacy of his critical olfactories. (pp. 276–77)

Rather, what qualified men as electors were 'gifts of a very plain and almost universal order', such as social sympathies and habits of action. Harrison saw that 'the best working

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[25] 'Our Venetian Constitution', p. 266.

men' possessed these qualities 'in a far higher degree than any other portion of the community', which in turn proved their suitability as 'arbiters' or 'ultimate source' of political power.[26]

It is indeed misleading to see Lowe as a 'man of culture'.[27] As Robert Saunders remarks, Lowe was 'a utilitarian, a free trader and a champion of the middle classes, a low Churchman with no respect for rank or precedent'; lacking any 'love of tradition', he was never a Conservative.[28] For Arnold, the force against whom Newman fought was one 'whose achievements fill Mr Lowe with such inexpressible admiration, and whose rule he was so horror-struck to see threatened' (*CPW*, V: 107). It was no one other than Lowe as Vice-President of the Committee of Council on Education who introduced the notorious system of 'payment by results' for the Revised Code of 1862, which Arnold vehemently attacked for failing the nature of school as 'a living whole with complex functions, religious, moral, and intellectual' (*CPW*, II: 224).[29] Before Harrison's ridicule of the culture cant, Arnold had presented the ideal of criticism as 'a disinterested endeavour to learn and propagate the best that is known and thought in the world', aiming at 'truth and culture' that elude men of practical life (*CPW*, III: 282, 276). In the same essay on 'The Function of Criticism', Bishop Colenso was chided for failing to speak to the 'highly-instructed few', the organ of 'higher culture' – among whose masters he counted Hegel and Renan – attempting instead to enlighten vainly 'the great mass of the human race', rather than edifying them through heart and imagination (*CPW*, III: 44, 49). 'Human culture', writes Arnold, will not be 'advanced by a religious book conveying intellectual demonstrations to the many' (*CPW*, III: 44).[30] Harrison, according to

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[26] Harrison, *Order and Progress*, p. 151.
[27] Sidney Coulling wrote that the House of Commons' 'sins of omission' Harrison discussed were 'perpetuated by Robert Lowe's "cant about culture"' (*Matthew Arnold and his Critics*, p. 182).
[28] *Democracy and the Vote in British Politics*, p. 205.
[29] On 'payment by results' and Arnold's opposition to it, see Walcott, chap. 3.
[30] On his polemic against Colenso, see the next chapter.

Christopher Kent, recognized in Arnold 'one of Comte's despised class of pedants and *littérateurs* – that retrograde body of destructive critics who impede society's progress into the positive stage'. Arnold, in turn, believed that 'flattering the proletariat was a very serious sin for a Comtist'.[31]

Another University Liberal who reacted against the 'prophet of culture' was Henry Sidgwick. His *Macmillan's* article on Arnold's final lecture at Oxford, delivered on 7 June 1867, calls into question Arnold's assumption of a 'paradisaical state of culture' in which 'there is no conflict, no antagonism, between the full development of the individual and the progress of the world'.[32] After all, maintains Sidgwick, '[l]ife shows us the conflict and the discord: on one side are the claims of harmonious self-development, on the other the cries of struggling humanity' (p. 273). What the latter demands is self-sacrifice, not self-development; and what stimulates self-sacrifice is religion. Besides, according to Sidgwick, Arnold was wrong to oppose culture to enthusiasm. Rather, 'Culture, like all spiritual gifts, can only be propagated by enthusiasm' (p. 279). To propagate itself, Culture needs to shed 'the light of its sympathy liberally' and learn 'to love common people and common things, to feel common interests' (p. 278). In this educational and missionary function of culture, Arnold failed to come up to the 'provincial' literature of Macaulay. A 'Philistine's heart is opened by' Macaulay's imagery of the historical Italy, believes Sidgwick, and 'through his heart a way is found to his taste'; the Philistine 'learns how delightful a melodious current of stirring words may be'. How was this cultural transmission possible for Macaulay? Loving literature, he also loved 'common people and common things, and therefore he can make the common people who live among common things love literature' (p. 278). Sidgwick's caricature of Arnold as 'a cheerful modern liberal' who shudders 'aloof from the rank exhalations of vulgar enthusiasm' and

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[31] *Brains and Numbers*, pp. 94, 95.
[32] 'The Prophet of Culture', p. 273.

holds up 'the pouncet-box of culture betwixt the wind and his nobility' illustrates Sidney Coulling's argument that the reception of 'Culture and its Enemies' did not escape the conventional association of the word 'culture' with 'the cloistered and ineffectual man of letters'.[33] The academic liberals generally received 'Arnold's "kid-gloved" dandyism' with suspicion.[34]

Accordingly, Arnold and Green differed remarkably on their attitudes towards Nonconformism. Though he preferred 'congregationalization' to disestablishment or disendowment, Green was palpably more sympathetic towards 'many excellent men whose opinions virtually disabled them from ministering to the wants of a great congregation through not being willing to make a declaration'. There were, he believed, 'many men who would not express a dogmatic agreement with the Church, but who were nevertheless filled with a thorough Christian feeling, and whose work would be thoroughly Christian-like' (*CW*, V: 376). *Culture and Anarchy* opens with a glance at the current hostility towards 'the friends and preachers of culture', picking out Harrison and John Bright as chief exemplars of this (*CPW*, V: 87). A pious Quaker, Bright for Arnold was an embodiment of middle-class vulgarity, an idolater of machinery, an advocate of personal liberty as the secret of English life and politics, and an admirer of America as a progressive country that dispensed with religious establishments and was doing well for all that (*CPW*, V: 108, 117, 241). Green, in contrast, admired Bright as 'a sober man among drunkards' and a great 'brick' (*CW*, III: xxiv).[35] Green's contemporary biographer recorded an episode at the Oxford Union in 1858 in which Green proposed a motion that eulogized Bright only to find himself being 'frantically opposed' and relegated to a

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[33] Sidgwick, p. 280; Coulling, p. 192. A pouncet-box is 'a small box with a perforated lid, used for holding perfumes' (*OED*).

[34] Harvie, *Lights of Liberalism*, p. 53. Bart Schultz regards the philosophical Idealism represented by Green and Bradley, which 'exercised Sidgwick as a philosophical and political rival', as 'a more serious rendering of the perfectionist alternative than Arnold's' (*Henry Sidgwick: Eye of the Universe*, p. 338).

[35] A brick is 'a person regarded as decent, generous, helpful, or reliable' (*OED*).

minority camp. Green felt 'almost ashamed to belong to a university which is in such a state of darkness'. Bright was 'a statesman after his own heart' because of the radical statesman's 'belief in the moral responsibility of nations, his love of the people, his unclerical piety, the noble simplicity and restrained passion of his eloquence' (*CW*, III: xxiv).[36]

Bright's 'love of the people' was cultivated by his Quakerism and its historical consciousness of martyrdom in English history as well as by his adolescent experience of working with his father's employees in a cotton-spinning mill at Rochdale, where mill owners were often closer to their workers than in larger cities like Manchester.[37] This quality of Bright's was congenial to Green, whose lenience to 'ordinary people' is recorded by Bryce. A true believer in social equality and the 'dignity of simple human nature', Green

> liked to meet farmers and tradespeople on their own level, and knew how to do so without seeming to condescend; the belief in the duty of approaching the people directly and getting them to form and express their own views was at the root of all his political doctrines.

It delighted him to be addressed by people of the 'humbler classes' *mistakenly* as one of themselves, which happened due to 'the manner of his talk to them' and 'the extreme plainness of his dress'.[38] Charles Alan Fyffe, one of his pupils, recollected how Green often insisted on travelling by third-class on their excursions and how he chaffed the pupil for sticking to second-class, saying: 'You will be an aristocrat as soon as you get your

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[36] See de Sanctis, pp. 30–31; Harvie, *Lights of Liberalism*, pp. 112–15; Richter, pp. 80, 94.
[37] See Bill Cash, *John Bright*, pp. 5–6.
[38] Bryce, *Studies in Contemporary Biography*, pp. 87–88.

Fellowship, and will want to travel First'.[39] When Green visited Fyffe's family at Fownhope on the River Wye in the summer of 1868, Fyffe discovered how well his mentor was able to converse with poor people in the neighbourhood naturally and courteously. Fyffe records an episode when they made an excursion to Tintern Abbey during their stay at Fownhope:

> [W]hile we were climbing the Wyndcliff, some young women came running down, and one of them said to me in rather an off-hand way 'What's the time?' I did not make any answer, but walked on. He said 'Why didn't you answer the young woman?' I said 'because she didn't ask properly'. He looked quite vexed, and said 'That's what comes of being at Oxford. Up at Oxford we entirely lose the ordinary power of communication with our fellows, and think they mean to be rude when they do not speak like ourselves. It is you who were rude.'

Green's 'simple, respectful intercourse' with people from the lower classes made a great impression on Fyffe, who thereafter 'systematically tried to learn how to converse and deal with poor people'.[40]

The admiration for Bright and the sympathy for Nonconformity in general, however, cannot be ascribed solely to Green's personal inclinations. As part of their programme to transcend the politics of competing sectarian interests to national democracy, University Liberals had as one of their goals to 'nationalize' the two ancient universities. Oxford and Cambridge in the first half of the century were 'in a state of psychopathic withdrawal from society'; academic Liberals' sense of guilt in being 'the pensioners of conservative and socially exclusive institutions' urged them to aspire for 'the coordination of the

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[39] Tyler, ed., 'Recollections Regarding Thomas Hill Green', p. 75.
[40] Tyler, ed., 'Recollections', p. 75.

endowed institutions of higher education with the new national politics'.[41] Green feared that the 'artificial system of expense' of the endowments caused the educated class to gain 'a great deal of the spirit of protection and exclusion', helping to create 'an oligarchy of wealth', which made every effort 'to keep the mass of the people abject and ignorant, in order to secure the supremacy of a class' (*CW*, V: 228–29). In a short essay written in his undergraduate years entitled 'The Duties of the University to the State', he presented a Broad Church conception of higher education, claiming that 'all ranks and degrees of men should be admitted to the Universities' (*CW*, V: 21). When he compares university learning to the Constitution, whose 'eternal principles embodied in law' are set against 'the transient will of the majority' – the growing superiority of popular opinion was 'a constant tendency in modern times' – he does not propose universities as an institutional antidote to democracy. Rather, universities are expected to work as school of citizenship. University education, preventing men from 'splitting up into rival crafts or guilds, solely bent on pursuing class interests, and inflamed against each other by professional jealousy', would inculcate 'the common duties of a citizen' and empower tradesmen and artisans to 'work with full energy and intelligence of citizens' (*CW*, V: 21). For this purpose, Green aspired to a national system of secondary education which 'open[ed] to the youth of one class the intellectual advantages of that above it' (*CW*, III: 389). It did not need to be universal, compulsory, nor (in most cases) free, but based upon a truly meritocratic principle. As an actualization of T. H. Huxley's ideal of a 'ladder of learning', it was expected to help to place 'the real scholar in place of the mere gentleman' and prevent 'the limit of class requirements from being the limit of education open to young men who have special capacity for literature or science' (*CW*, III: 393, 390). While his biographer assumed that Green's 'strongest sympathies were with the education of the middle

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[41] Harvie, *Lights of Liberalism*, pp. 14, 95, 13.

classes', his educational thought was nevertheless motivated by a vision of society in which 'everyone, whatever his station, whether peer or peasant, capitalist or labourer, townsman or countryman, should have a fair chance of making the best and most of himself' (*CW*, III: lvi; V: 385).

Disappointed by the hopeless sluggishness of the ancient universities, Green and other academic Liberals found an external ally in Nonconformist political agitation. A decade of political alliance between Oxbridge and provincial cities culminated in the repeal in July 1871 of the religious Tests, according to which the posts and emoluments had been restricted to their own Anglican graduates. Harvie insists that the achievement of the repeal was no less important as 'a constant point of reference' in consolidating the academic Liberals' otherwise volatile 'group-consciousness' than in its immediate political outcome. [42] In Green's lectures on the *Principles of Political Obligation*, delivered in 1879–80, what came first in his categorization of laws which 'check the development of the moral disposition' were 'legal requirements of religious observance and profession of belief' (PPO, §17). These legal prescriptions were impermissible for him because they 'tended to vitiate the religious source of morality' (PPO, §17). In this, Green firmly followed Jowett, whose lifetime job was to 'create an academic institution, free from religious tests but nevertheless genuinely religious in spirit', looking to 'the state connection as a protection for theological freedom'.[43]

School inspection offered an opportunity for academic liberals to establish contacts with provincial Nonconformists. When Bryce inspected schools for the Taunton Commission in 1865, he approached R. D. Darbishire, a leading Unitarian in Manchester, asking for his support for the Tests campaign in Northern England. Darbishire would become one of the closest associates for the University Liberals, alongside James

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[42] *Lights of Liberalism*, p. 96.
[43] Hinchliff, *Benjamin Jowett and the Christian Religion*, pp. 2, 98.

Martineau, another Unitarian intellectual who held professorship of mental and moral philosophy and political economy at Manchester New College from 1869 to 1885 (then located in London), where he once served as principal.[44] Martineau, a philosopher whose contribution to ethics was in Sell's view 'among the weightiest and most thorough to emerge from the Nonconformist stable', is particularly relevant in our context because he was attracted by Green both personally and intellectually.[45] As his pupil and later colleague in the Unitarian college C. B. Upton recollected, Martineau 'cherished a warm and much valued friendship' with Green, 'the noblest of the British Hegelians', being 'delighted to recall his visits to Balliol and the conversations he there enjoyed'.[46] According to Upton, Martineau concurred with his 'brother thinker' in the conviction that 'the eternal Thinker, of whose thought the universe is the expression, progressively reveals Himself and His character in the human soul' (p. xviii). Martineau's view of Jesus as 'a man vastly more inspired than any other by the spirit of God, thereby revealing the potentiality for fellowship with God that lies in us all', was congenial to Green, whose immanentist interpretation of Christianity we will address in the next chapter.[47] Green, the son of an Anglican rector, once even went so far as to confess that 'a modified unitarianism suits me very well', although he does not seem to have ever seriously considered joining any Nonconformist body (*CW*, III: xxxv).

Green was another school inspector for the same commission. His report for the commission displayed such a 'marked capacity for social analysis and flair for determining facts' that Richter insists that '[w]hoever assumes that Idealist philosophers must be uninformed and uninterested in the real world will go […] wrong in Green's

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[44] See Harvie, *Lights of Liberalism*, p. 86; Sell, *Philosophy, Dissent and Nonconformity*, p. 138.
[45] Sell, *Philosophy, Dissent and Nonconformity*, p. 163.
[46] Upton, *Dr. Martineau's Philosophy*, p. xviii. On the Unitarian Manchester College and the involvement of Martineau and Upton, see Sell, *Philosophy, Dissent and Nonconformity*, pp. 137–41.
[47] Mander, *British Idealism*, p. 32. See also Leighton, pp. 164–65.

case'.[48] In his report on King Edward VI Free School in Birmingham, Green ascribed the 'immobility' in the management of the school to the fact that the Board of Governors excluded dissenters, radicals, or 'men of liberal politics' who were active in municipal affairs and 'would be disposed to move, and likely to move with discretion':

> The dissenting congregations in Birmingham are not only as numerous as those of the Establishment, but […] include at least as many persons of intellect and education. Among their ministers are several men of great ability, and specially qualified to give an opinion of the educational wants of the town, as being in intimate contact with the middle class. Among the dissenting or liberal laymen, again, are to be found those who would be best able to commend any desirable change in the scheme under which the school is at present managed to the approval of the citizens.[49]

Nettleship records that Green's reception by the Dissenting intelligentsia in Birmingham was friendly enough to answer 'to the favourable predispositions with which he came to the constituency of John Bright' (*CW*, III: xlvi).

Nevertheless, it is crucial here to observe that Green concurred with Arnold in his rejection of denominationalism and his recognition of the failure of voluntarism in education. Indeed, as the authors of a book on the influence of philosophical Idealism on educational thought and practice have claimed, Arnold's vision of 'a total reformation of national life' via 'a system of national education' was 'very close to Green's'.[50] Despite his sympathies with the Dissenters' 'emphasis upon parental responsibility and voluntary

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[48] *Politics of Conscience*, p. 353.
[49] Green, 'Report on the Schools', p. 92.
[50] Gordon and White, *Philosophers as Educational Reformers*, p. 71.

association' in the provision of elementary education, Green's recognition was that 'Voluntarism has had a fair trial and has failed', which he saw was salient in the shortage of schools in the rural areas.[51] Besides, those who would benefit most from elementary education were those who were most unlikely to attend when left to themselves. The voluntarist principle did not square with 'the actual state of English society', according to Green: 'under the modern system of labour in great masses, which draws all who have to work for their living more and more away from their homes', Green saw it as unthinkable that 'the fate of the children can ever with safety be left solely in the hands of the parents' (*CW*, III: 432). Hence, individual action needed to be substituted for by 'the collective action of society': 'The whole body of citizens ought to be called upon to do that as a body which under the conditions of modern life cannot be done if everyone is left to himself, but cannot be left undone without the whole body suffering' (*CW*, III: 432). This is his rationale for a State-organized system of elementary education, which was universal, free, and compulsory. He also hoped that publicly funded schools should avoid denominationalism in teaching, aiming for a 'common education' as a 'true social leveller' that transcends social divisions due to class, sect, or even gender (*CW*, III: 457). 'Men and women who have been at school together', Green remarks, 'will always understand each other, will always be at their ease together, will be free from social jealousies and animosities however different their circumstances in life may be' (*CW*, III: 457–58). Likewise, the school-system of England could stop fostering 'the spirit of social exclusiveness', ending the situation in which 'there has been no fusion of class with class in school or at the universities' (*CW*, III: 460, 458):

A properly organised system of schools would level up without levelling down. It

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[51] Nicholson, *Political Philosophy*, p. 166.

would not make the gentleman any the less of a gentleman in the higher sense of the term, but it would cure him of his unconscious social insolence just as it would cure others of social jealousy. It would heal the division between those who look complacently down on others as vulgar, and those who angrily look up to others as having the social reputation which they themselves have not, uniting both classes by the freemasonry of a common education. (*CW*, III: 460)

It is no wonder that the author of this passage had sympathy for Arnold, who insisted that 'the intervention of the State in public education' would help imbue the middle classes with 'the sense of belonging to great and honourable seats of learning' and of breathing 'the best culture of their nation', thereby 'truly fus[ing] them with the class above' and bringing about 'the equality which they are entitled to desire' (*CPW*, II: 21, 23).

Initially, John Bright was not a natural ally for the University Liberals. In the early 1860s, those sympathetic towards the radicalism of the Manchester School were restricted to a minority in the group, including Green and some Comtists in Oxford. Academic liberals found their virtual leader in Goldwin Smith while he was the Regius Professor of Modern History at Oxford – although he was one of an older generation who, alongside Arnold, Clough, Jowett, and A. P. Stanley, formed the discussion society known as the Decade. Smith's personal connections in politics were predominantly with Peelites and, to a lesser extent, Whigs. The American Civil War then arrived as a turning point. A key player in what Leslie Butler has called 'transatlantic liberal reform', Smith crossed the Atlantic as a pro-Unionist and made interchanges with American liberal intellectuals represented by Charles Eliot Norton – interchanges 'more serious than the easy bantering back and forth' of such figures as Leslie Stephen and Thomas Hughes. For Smith, the Civil War was a 'proxy struggle between inherited privilege and democracy', a battle

which had a far echo in 'the forces of liberation and reaction that had begun with the fight of Royalists and republicans during the Cromwellian period'. His American experiences were so profound that he decided to 'leave the Old World for good in 1867, after which he chose to spend nearly all the rest of his life in either the United States or Canada'.[52] Smith was disappointed to see how the propertied class responded to the war, describing the political principle of his country as 'the balanced selfishness of the landowners and the commercial capitalists'.[53] An important outcome of the disappointment was his approach to those affiliated with Manchester – i.e., Cobden, Bright, and several northern manufactures led by Thomas Bayler Potter – who remained, as he saw it, 'faithful to the full social and moral implications of the Free Trade Movement'.[54] His alliance with Manchester commenced with his attendance at a public meeting of Potter's Manchester Union and Emancipation Society and culminated in the invitation of Bright to Oxford in 1864, an opportunity that Green did not miss – Green was then impressed by the senior Radical's simplicity 'as a boy, full of fun, with a very pleasant flow of conversation and lots of good stories' infused with strong feelings and scattered humour (*CW*, III: xxiv). The inclusion of the radical politics of Bright within the Established circles was furthered by the death of Palmerston in 1865, after which point Lord John Russell and Gladstone turned their attention to Bright, in their attempt to consolidate a confused party that lacked any unifying causes or principles.[55]

II. Greek Heritage and Patrician Arguments

Despite the above argument, the contrast between Green and Arnold should not be overstated. We have seen that Arnold, refusing to see it as the organ of ruling classes,

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[52] Leslie Butler, *Critical Americans: Victorian Intellectuals and Transatlantic Liberal Reform*, pp. 83–84.
[53] An 1864 letter to Alexander Macmillan, quoted in Harvie, *Lights of Liberalism*, p. 111.
[54] Harvie, *Lights of Liberalism*, p. 112.
[55] See Asa Briggs, *Victorian People*, pp. 235–36.

looked to the ideal of the State as '*the nation in its collective and corporate character*' or '*the representative acting-power of the nation*' (*CPW*, II: 26–27). A chief inspiration here was Burke, whose organicism was also influential among Idealists at the turn of the century, including Green.[56] Another was George Sand. Arnold found in the contemporary French both a source for the rearmament of quasi-aristocratic balance mechanism and an inspiration for the idea of national homogeneity transcending it at once. Green generally drew more from the German sources than from the French; however, when he conceived the state as the embodiment of the national will, he was thinking in the wake of Rousseau. After a century of general neglect in Britain, Rousseau experienced something of a revival in the 1880s, as illustrated by the publication of a new English translation of *The Social Contract* in 1895, the first time in more than a hundred years. T. H. Huxley complained of the spread of '*a priori* political speculation' that he found exemplified in Rousseau. Henry Maine too was much alarmed at the new Rousseauism, which deemed 'every form of government, except Democracy, illegitimate' with recourse to a fictitious primitive State of Nature – 'a golden age' in which 'men lived, like brothers, in freedom and equality'.[57] Maine, indeed, according to Collini, 'attributed a quite absurd causal power to the ideas of Rousseau' in his attempt to diagnose the ongoing disease of political decline.[58]

Green did not commit himself to the 'natural rights' argument – nor did Arnold, as we will see later – which Henry George, for one example, employed in his vindication of equal rights to land. Green makes it clear that 'the doctrine of natural rights and the consequent conception of government as founded on compact are untenable' (PPO, §77).

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[56] See Emily Jones, pp. 161–62. J. A. Symonds recollects that what Green read most in English around the beginning of the 1860s was Burke, Milton, Wordsworth, and Shakespeare, besides the outstanding influence on the 'German direction of his mind', i.e., Carlyle. See Symonds, *Letters*, II, p. 774.
[57] Huxley, 'Natural Rights and Political Rights', p. 338; Maine, *Popular Government*, pp. vii, 75
[58] Collini, 'Democracy and Excitement', p. 94. For the 'Rousseau revival', see den Otter, pp. 34–35.

He was also skeptical about the myth of the freedom of 'the wandering savage', arguing that '[t]he actual powers of the noblest savage do not admit of comparison with those of the humblest citizen of a law-abiding state' (LLFC, 199). Nevertheless, Rousseau's idea of the general will was seen to be congenial to his social thinking when Green identified it with 'an impartial and disinterested will for the common good' (PPO, §69). The general will was 'that impalpable congeries of the hopes and fears of a people bound together by common interests and sympathy', and it was 'the state or sovereign' that represents the general will (PPO, §§86, 77). The state for Green was 'the community as acting through law' or 'a form society takes in order to maintain' rights of its members (PPO, §§209, 139). The state for him was 'the representative not of classes but of the nation'; therefore, it was among its duties to reform the system of education so that 'something else than the accidents of birth and wealth should regulate the intellectual development of the people' (*CW*, III: 461). The idea was shared and transmitted into the next century by James Bryce, who regretted that patriotism was often denigrated and reduced to the practice of wavering a flag or exulting in military achievement. It seemed imperative for him to redirect the patriotic instinct into the recognition of the fact that 'the nobility of the State lies in its being the true child, the true exponent, of the enlightened will of a right-minded and law-abiding people'. [59] His ambition was, in the words of Stapleton, the establishment of 'an ideal of citizenship that was linked closely to social reform', undermining 'jingoistic notions of patriotism'.[60] Green is also remembered as having said: 'Let the flag of England be dragged through the dirt rather than sixpence be added to the taxes which weigh on the poor' (*CW*, III: xx–xxi). As Colin Tyler has noted, 'the true patriot' for Green was one 'who seeks to help her flesh-and-blood compatriots at the

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[59] *The Hindrances to Good Citizenship*, p. 41.
[60] *Political Intellectuals and Public Identities*, p. 38.

prosaic level of what would now be called social policy and "low" politics'.[61]

The Hellenist-Hebraist dichotomy in Arnold and Green also needs to be qualified. For Green, the 'extraordinary efflorescence' of exceptional individuals in ancient republics was owed to 'the slavery of the multitude', a fact that he argued justified ranking modern Christendom above them in the development of the true freedom of man (LLFC, 200). His *moral* conception of the state – the teleological argument that '[t]he aim and whole rationale of the state is to make us *good*' – may look like a Hebraist polemic against a cultural State.[62] However, it is totally misleading to see British Idealism as a philosophical movement directed against an Arnoldian Hellenist project of *Kulturkritik*, opposing its emphasis on praxis in society against the cultural ideal of detached contemplation. J. H. Muirhead – a Glasgow-born Idealist philosopher who studied in Balliol – may not have had any sound ground in drawing a direct continuity between the turn-of-the-century school of British Idealism and the Cambridge Platonists in the seventeenth century. The aim of his 1931 book on *The Platonic Tradition in Anglo-Saxon Philosophy* was to give an alternative (i.e., non-empiricist) picture of 'the work of the national genius in the department of philosophy and of its contribution to Western thought', in order to show the continuity, 'the apostolic succession', which runs through 'that great tradition in Anglo-Saxon philosophy' (pp. 13, 15). Muirhead's revisionist interpretation of the Idealist movement, replacing the view of it as an alien foreign import, was that it developed from the native engagement with ancient philosophy and was nourished by the revival of classical studies in the nineteenth century. It was, alongside Coleridge's philosophy before it, 'a genuine product' of the 'essentially English genius', as he argued, rather than a brief digression in the natural growth of national philosophy impeded by an invasion of German Idealism (p. 14). Muirhead recognized that the British

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[61] *Civil Society, Capitalism, and the State*, p. 86. See also Green, *CW*, V, p. 352.
[62] Mander, *British Idealism*, p. 230.

Idealists were 'largely unconscious of this affinity' with their native predecessors, conceding that their allusions to this *tradition* were 'conspicuous by their absence'. Nevertheless, he was correct in stressing the importance of ancient philosophy for the entire movement; as Mander has argued, 'we misunderstand their philosophy unless we recognize' the fact that Greek philosophy worked for the British Idealists 'as vital a reference point as Kant and Hegel'.[63] This contention is no less true of Green. When it is argued that the aim of the state for Green is to make us *good*, the '"good" here must be understood', writes Mander, 'not in any narrow moralistic sense, but in the broader Greek tradition of the cultivation of human "excellence" (*aretae*)' (p. 230).

The Greek philosophical heritage, especially that of Plato and Aristotle, played an integral role in the 'important shift in ethical thinking' led by Green and other Idealists, according to Mander. 'Instead of asking with the utilitarian, intuitionist, and even Kantian philosophers of the day, "what ought I to do?"', Green 're-considered ethical inquiry in the mould of an older question "what kind of person ought I to be?"'. Their moral ideal, in short, was 'highly reminiscent of the eudaimonistic tradition of Plato and Aristotle' (p. 198). It was 'not by the outward form' that 'we know what moral action is', writes Green; 'We know it, so to speak, on the inner side. We know what it is in relation to us, the agents; what it is as our expression' (*PE*, §93). References to the two Greek philosophers, especially Aristotle, in *Prolegomena to Ethics* are not in the least trivial. Again, there was no doubt for Green that 'the Christian citizen' – a citizen in *modern* Christendom is implied – was capable of 'a higher moral standard' than 'the Greek of Aristotle's age', the range of persons who have claims of right being expanded and the substance of the moral ideal fuller and more determinate (*PE*, §253). Nevertheless, there was a sense in which the Greek philosophers had a claim to the 'completeness and finality' for 'the advance in

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[63] *British Idealism*, p. 74.

spiritual development' that they represented, as Green put it. The Greek philosophers '[o]nce for all […] conceived and expressed the conception of a free or pure morality, as resting on what we may venture to call a disinterested interest in the good', and it was this idea that 'was to govern the growth of all the true and vital moral conviction which has descended to us' (*PE*, §253). Aristotle defined the true good as 'the full exercise or realisation of the soul's faculties in accordance with its proper excellence, which was an excellence of thought, speculative and practical'; and the 'pure morality', in turn, was 'morality determined by interest in such a good' (*PE*, §254). This formal definition of the good as 'a realisation of the powers of the human soul or the perfecting of man' Green saw as 'true for us as for Aristotle' (*PE*, §280).

As Frank Turner has argued, Green was following the 'Anglican reading' of the *Nichomachean Ethics* presented by early nineteenth-century commentators such as William Sewell and R. D. Hampden in relating the work to 'the moral teachings of Christianity'. 'Green's tactic' was 'to locate the origins of those humane Christian values in the moral speculations of the Greek philosophers'.[64] Nevertheless, the late-Victorian Idealists in Oxford significantly dissented from earlier Anglican interpretations at one point. For them, as for Hegel, the ancient polis offered a 'conceptual model for a political and social life in which the individual citizen was thoroughly integrated with his society' – an alternative to the atomistic social theories advanced by contemporary Utilitarians. This 'shift of emphasis' among university philosophers is worth noting, continues Turner, in that their reinterpretation 'coincided with the transformation of Oxford from a stronghold of the Church into a school for statesmen and civil servants who would serve the liberal democratic state' (p. 358).

Aristotle's definition of the good was an empty conception in itself; however, the

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[64] *Greek Heritage*, pp. 326, 360.

'realisation of the soul's faculties had not to wait to begin', according to Green (*PE*, §254). In other words, before intellectual formulation, 'the desire for, the interest in, such a good' expressed itself in various social practices and 'a certain organisation of life': 'in certain pursuits and achievements', in 'arts and sciences', in 'families and states, with established rules of what was necessary for their maintenance and furtherance'. Green thus thought that the role of the philosopher was not 'to bring before men an absolutely new object of pursuit'; it was rather 'to bring them to consider what gave its value to an object already pursued' (*PE*, §254). He was in agreement with other Idealists on this. For F. H. Bradley, '[a]ll philosophy has to do is "to understand what is", and moral philosophy has to understand morals which exist, not to make them or give directions for making them'.[65] As Andrew Vincent has argued, the emphasis that Idealists placed upon 'ordinary established moral practices' or the 'concrete, lived process' was an outcome of 'a more general thesis about the nature of philosophy itself', i.e., their assumption that 'one must be beyond something in order to *know* it'. On this premise, the substance of ethics can 'only be known philosophically *ex post facto*' in its totality.[66] Green even went so far as to make a self-effacing assertion that 'a philosophy of the true good' is 'superfluous' (*PE*, §310).

This remark may sound unexpected from a philosopher whose strength is often seen to have lain in injunctive arguments, driving younger generations of university men to the realm of practical politics. As R. G. Collingwood famously recollected, the 'real strength' of what he called 'the school of Green' was found outside Oxford. Green's school, he wrote, 'sent out into public life a stream of ex-pupils who carried with them the conviction that philosophy, and in particular the philosophy they had learned in Oxford, was an important thing and that their vocation was to put it into practice'. In his view, Green's

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[65] *Ethical Studies*, p. 193.
[66] 'Metaphysics and Ethics in the Philosophy of T. H. Green', pp. 79–80.

Idealism was 'penetrating and fertilizing every part of the national life' at the turn of the century, through 'politicians so diverse in their creeds as Asquith and Milner, churchmen like Gore and Scott Holland, social reformers like Arnold Toynbee, and a host of other public men'.[67] This was not true just of Balliol, which provided the 'largest contingent' for Toynbee Hall, the renowned University Settlement, which Gertrude Himmelfarb has described as 'the existential realization of Green's philosophy' – 'it was the place', she writes, 'where the educators and the uneducated alike were to be educated to cultivate their "best self" and to pursue the "common good"'.[68] A. D. Lindsay, a latter-day Master of Balliol, noted the bearing on praxis of the philosophical teaching of Edward Caird and Henry Jones in Glasgow, stating that these Idealists were 'the inspirations of teachers and preachers, of administrators and statesmen, of men who through them did better service to their day and generation in all manners of ways'.[69]

Lindsay could be seen as the most remarkable of the inheritors of 'the school of Green' in the early twentieth century, not least for his 'concern to flag the Puritan contribution to democracy', as Stapleton has noted. He shared with Karl Mannheim the fear, in the words of Grimley, that 'a "neutralized" democracy' exemplified by Weimar Germany would be vulnerable to the allure of totalitarianism due to its 'lack of common values'.[70] Lindsay's conviction was that 'democracy was, and must be, based on religion' and that 'the doctrine of human equality is a religious doctrine or it is nothing'.[71] Lindsay is also relevant in our context for his recognition that a healthy democracy demands the maintenance of aristocratic virtues, which resonated with the pluralist development of the Whig tradition in such thinkers as F. W. Maitland and J. N. Figgis. Lindsay believed that

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[67] *Autobiography*, pp. 15–17.
[68] *Poverty and Compassion*, pp. 237, 243.
[69] Lindsay on 'Idealism', archived at the University of Keele, quoted in Mander, *British Idealism*, p. 269.
[70] Stapleton, *Political Intellectuals*, p. 66; Grimley, 'Civil Society and the Clerisy', p. 235.
[71] Introduction to Green's *Lectures on the Principles of Political Obligation*, p. ix.

'a democracy without aristocratic virtues, without a high sense of quality and distinction' cannot fail to result in 'a tyranny' no less than that 'an aristocracy which is not inspired by democratic ideals becomes selfish and arrogant, and eventually decadent and inefficient'.[72]

Green asserts that to be a reformer requires one to be an Idealist. As he argues in *Prolegomena*:

> No one doubts that a man who improves the current morality of his time must be something of an Idealist. He must have an idea, which moves him to seek its realisation, of a better order of life than he finds about him. That idea cannot represent any experienced reality. […] It is an idea to which nothing real as yet corresponds, but which, as actuating the reformer, tends to bring into being a reality corresponding to itself. It is in this sense that the reformer must be an Idealist. (*PE*, §299)

It is understandable that a theory of human perfection is difficult to absorb, according to Green, not least because of the 'impossibility of adequately defining an end that consists in the realisation of human capabilities, until the realisation is accomplished' (*PE*, §337). An upshot of this is necessarily the situation in which hedonistic theories are generally accepted even by those 'who are themselves by no means habitual pleasure-seekers'; for, as Green rhetorically asks, 'does not every one know what pleasure is and desire it, and cannot every one compare a greater with a less quantity of it?' (*PE*, §337).

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[72] Lindsay, farewell speech as Master of Balliol delivered in 1949, quoted in Stapleton, *Political Intellectuals*, p. 15 (see also pp. 66–71). For an interpretation that stresses the continuity between the Whig tradition and the political pluralism in the early twentieth century, see Burrow, *Whigs and Liberals*, chap. 6. Among recent revaluation of Lindsay as an inter-war liberal Anglican is Matthew Grimley, *Citizenship, Community, and the Church of England*.

Again, Green concedes that spokesmen for Utilitarianism 'had the great lesson to teach', namely 'that the value of all laws and institutions, the rectitude of all conduct, was to be estimated by reference to the well-being of all men', attaching no greater weight to any particular nation, class, or individual (*PE*, §351). It was almost coincidental for their practical purposes, in Green's view, that 'they held the well-being of society to consist simply of the nett aggregate of pleasures enjoyed by its members' and 'the sole object of every desire' to reside in some pleasure or other (*PE*, §351). Green saw that, *practically* speaking, the direction suggested by the Utilitarian principle that 'every one should count for one and no one for more than one' was virtually the same as that given by Kant's formula of the Categorical Imperative, which decreed: 'Act so as to treat humanity, whether in your own person or in that of others, always as an end, never merely as a means' (*PE*, §214). However, as a matter of fundamental principle, it was anathema for the Benthamite to speak of 'an absolute value in the individual'. It was not every person, but 'every pleasure', that was valuable in itself for them (*PE*, §214). Upon their view, neither 'the perfect man' nor 'a perfect society of men' could be an end in themselves (*PE*, §224). For them, '[m]an or society would alike be only perfect in relation to the production of feelings which are felt, with whatever differences of quantity, by good men and bad, by man and brute, indifferently' (*PE*, §224).

A theory which does not take account of a capacity for self-development in man, an entity that 'can find satisfaction' solely 'in himself as he may become, in a complete realisation of what he has it in him to be, in his perfect character', does not deserve to be called a 'moral ideal', insists Green (*PE*, §195). This is why Gordon and White argue that '[p]hilosophical idealism does not need a *separate* philosophy of education to go alongside its metaphysics, ethics and political philosophy'. Its prime aim, for them, is to teach 'the individual what it is to realize himself and how that self-realization is to come

about'; hence, '[i]ts whole *raison d'être* is educational'.[73] If such a thing as 'a growth of moral ideas' was intelligible at all to Utilitarians, it would mean no more than 'a progressive discovery of means to pleasure', writes Green (*PE*, §241). Moral development here does not entail any modification of the end itself that is aimed at, i.e., the 'maximum of pleasure'; it is identified with 'an increasing enlightenment as to what should be done' to achieve the self-same goal (*PE*, §241). J. S. Mill, whose modified Utilitarianism Green realized assumed that 'some *kinds* of pleasure are more desirable and valuable than others' in 'their intrinsic nature', was unaware of 'his virtual surrender of the doctrine that all desire is for pleasure' (*PE*, §§162, 167). Green proposed an alternative view of an idea of good that suits humanity's potential as a moral entity: 'an idea of something which man should become for the sake of becoming it, or in order to fulfil his capabilities and in so doing to satisfy himself' (*PE*, §241). This idea of good is distinct in that it is an idea 'which gradually creates its own filling'. While the idea of pleasure is retained from 'an experience that he has had and would like to have again', Green's idea of good is 'an idea to which nothing that has happened to us or that we can find in existence corresponds, but which sets us upon causing certain things to happen, upon bringing certain things into existence' (*PE*, §241). His alternative view regards a moral being as always actuated by a 'spiritual, as distinct from an animal or merely natural, interest', namely 'an interest in bringing about something that should be, as distinct from desire to feel again a pleasure already felt' (*PE*, §242). It is spiritual for Green in that its object is that 'which only thought constitutes'.

Theoretical confusions surrounding Hedonistic principles, Green believed, make one 'less confident in judging that men, as they are, should act otherwise than they do, less confident in any methods of increasing the enjoyments of mankind, and in

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[73] *Philosophers as Educational Reformers*, p. 48.

consequence more ready to let things take their course' (*PE*, §345). The 'practical effects of Utilitarianism' were primarily seen in 'its application to public policy rather than to private conduct', according to Green (*PE*, §334). The problem he saw was that it failed to guide the 'impulses after a higher life' felt by those stricken by 'honest doubt' to 'the right line of action to adopt' (*PE*, §351). Naturalist views of human actions and motives held by Utilitarians cast doubt upon one's belief in 'any self-denial or reforming energy on his part' (*PE*, §345). They tend to frustrate 'the belief that it can rest with him to exercise any initiative, whether in the way of resistance to inclination or of painful interference with usage, which may affect the result' (*PE*, §356). *Prolegomena to Ethics*, a series of lectures addressed to the young studying at Oxford, concludes by suggesting that his theory of ultimate good is intended to provide 'persons who have leisure and faculty' with some 'counsel of perfection', a criterion to assess the claims of conventional morality where the latter ceases to be convincing (*PE*, §382). It was primarily an exhortation to university intellectuals, whom the author encouraged to be equipped with a metaphysical principle to comprehend their society and its moral atmosphere in their totality, with a view to improving them via praxis. Green was confident that students of the ancient universities were being transformed as a reforming agency. He observed their spreading influence in the field of educational reform in the late 1870s:

> men are now forthcoming from Cambridge and Oxford who will enter, without any of the caste-spirit of the conventional university man, but with unabated zeal for the knowledge which 'does not pay', into the educational life of cities. The influence which such men may have in eliciting the latent capacity for learning in the less wealthy middle class, is what we are only just beginning to appreciate. (*CW*, III: 409–10)

Green's plebeian sympathies distanced him from much of what Arnold or Carlyle had to say about democratic government. Nevertheless, Green himself is not irrelevant to the genealogy of nineteenth-century discussions about the clerisy delineated by Ben Knights, who argues that the 'imperative of the idealism' which attracted Green was the 'provision of minds which see beyond the phenomena, which penetrate into principles where ordinary minds leave off' (p. 208). Knights refers to a passage from Green's 1866 article on 'The Philosophy of Aristotle', in which the author saw the 'anticipatory assimilation of the world as spiritual' as 'the privilege of the philosopher':

> As the poet, traversing the world of sense, which he spiritualises by the aid of forms of beauty, finds himself ever at home, […] so the philosopher, while he ascends the courts of the intelligible world, is conscious of a presence which is always his own […]. No longer a servant, but a son, he rules as over his own house. In it he moves freely and with that confidence which comes of freedom. (*CW*, III: 90)

Revealing in this context is Green's undergraduate essay on 'Loyalty', the Carlylean echoes of which testify to the seminal presence of the Scottish Germanist as a catalyst in the founding moment of British Idealism. Carlyle's polemic against the democratic polity in *Chartism* (1839), and his notorious views on race in the *Occasional Discourse on the Nigger Question* (1853), were utterly abhorrent to Green. Nevertheless, Green was one of those late-Victorian readers – alongside John Morley, Leslie Stephen, and T. H. Huxley among others – who 'could admire him in spite of what they saw as his totally unacceptable claims on issues such as parliamentary government, democracy, race or the

treatment of criminals'.[74] Green could agree no more with Carlyle's assertion in *Sartor Resartus* (1836) that 'there is in man a HIGHER than Love of Happiness' and that 'this same HIGHER' is nothing but 'the Godlike that is in Man'.[75] Green begins his essay on loyalty by noting that the human minds are 'not isolated mechanisms, but pervaded with a life' and that this life 'has its foundations in the life of an higher being' (*CW*, V: 12). People have been vaguely aware of these facts, assumes Green, and 'these instincts' have successively begotten throughout human history both 'the love of home' (which the author saw as 'a leading characteristic of the early Greeks') and, later, 'chivalry and the feudal system'. The latter was a higher manifestation, but 'a superior will' to which chivalry attached itself was 'generally confounded with a greater power of violence' and 'the reverence for it was blind and fitful' (*CW*, V: 12).

It is noteworthy that Green, in his 1879–80 lectures on political obligation, attributed 'the agglomeration of a proletariat' in Europe to 'the whole history of the ownership of land' rather than to malfunctioning of the market system (PPO, §230). It is precisely here that twentieth-century interpreters like C. B. Macpherson and I. M. Greengarten found the deadlock of Green's reformist philosophy, despite his recognition of self-realizing potential in humanity. For Greengarten, Green failed to see that the 'true dilemma of his society' was that of industrial capitalism itself, adhering to the 'possessive individualism', a view of human being as appropriator, which sustained the market system.[76] The 'appropriation of land', according to Green, was 'originally effected, not by the expenditure of labour or the results of labour on the land, but by force'; in short, the 'original landlords have been conquerors' (PPO, §228). He understood that the French

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[74] Morrow, *Thomas Carlyle*, p. 201. A. V. Dicey ascribed Green's interest in 'the state of the poorer classes' and his belief in 'the necessity of making their material & moral welfare a main object of politics' to the admiration he had for Carlyle (Tyler, ed., 'Recollections', p. 22).
[75] *The Works of Thomas Carlyle*, I, p. 153.
[76] *Thomas Hill Green and the Development of Liberal-Democratic Thought*, pp. 5–6.

Revolution ended up in leaving the feudalism and 'unrestrained landlordism' in England 'almost untouched' (PPO, §230). Hence, Green's hope was the end of primogeniture and the commodification of land: 'to put a stop to those settlements or bequests by which at present a landlord may prevent a successor from either converting any part of his land into money or from dividing it among his children' (LLFC, 195). Land-law reform was appealing to University Liberals in general, as Harvie notes, because it was expected to remedy the 'anomaly' of aristocratic predominance 'without suspending any of the principles of classical economics'.[77]

All the same, the feudal virtue of chivalry, Green saw, was generally succeeded by that of loyalty in English history as well. Loyalty too demands 'the same reverence and obedience', but they are now directed towards 'a settled law' (CW, V: 13). Loyalty is 'the observance of Law, but of its spirit rather than its letter – not so much the observance of laws as of the essence of Law generally'. An earthly power needs to be obeyed as 'the representation of the Divine authority among the affairs of men'. When this recognition is combined with 'a due appreciation of human worth' as heavenly born, 'a genuine hero-worship' emerges (CW, V: 13). It is 'the progress of mankind' that 'the law of honour' (chivalry) is superseded by 'that of justice' (loyalty), or 'the reverence of the persons of rulers' by 'that of the hidden powers which they represent' (CW, V: 14). However, according to Green, 'the feelings that have once prevailed among men' do not easily die out, and they are often supported by the existing written laws that have ceased to match the reality of the contemporary social life but 'have remained over from its days of dominant power'.

For Green, as for Carlyle, an episode in modern English history which dramatically manifested the mismatch between forms (or worn-out clothes) and realities was the Civil

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[77] *Lights of Liberalism*, p. 167.

War. 'In the time of Charles I', according to Green,

> one would see on the royal side the cavaliers, as the representatives of chivalry, supported by the conscientious adherents to the letter of the law, ranged against the truly loyal men who were fighting for the rules of universal law, as displayed in the spirit of English law and English religion. For obedience to the royal power is but an accident of loyalty. We should indeed be loyal to the king, but only as the symbol of law – and to the Church, but only as the symbol of spiritual government. If the symbol ceases to be such, our loyalty towards it is at an end. (*CW*, V: 14)

As the son of an Anglican rector, Green had no difficulty in sharing with a man raised in a Scottish dissenting church a viewpoint from which to criticize the established Church as a symbol, or 'Church-Clothes', which might have 'satisfied early ages' as 'the outward symbols of religious faith' but which now brought forth 'a radical lack of fit' with the needs of the present generation.[78] Carlyle was especially congenial to Green in that he seemed to consolidate his reforming spirit, imbibed from the liberal Anglican tradition, in such a way as to unleash his dissenting, rebellious temperament. His denigration in this essay of 'bow[ing] down' before the Pope as a chief example of 'idol-worship', or blind, chivalric 'subjection to an existing potentate', will later be reiterated with a typically Broad-Church rhetoric, as is salient in his letters to Henry Scott Holland, one of the Anglo-Catholic clergymen who were equipped with a social conscience under the influence of Green's philosophy (*CW*, V: 13).[79]

Two more points deserve mention here. First, Green thought that loyalty was not only 'the natural enemy of tyranny', it was 'no less opposed to a selfish seeking for

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[78] *Works of Thomas Carlyle*, I, p. 172; Morrow, *Thomas Carlyle*, p. 53.
[79] See the next chapter.

individual gain' (*CW*, V: 14). The loyal man is one who looks beyond the existing laws to 'the universal law of the common reason of men', and this law must be 'endowed with the authority of the Creator of that nature' of man; in short, loyalty has its rationale 'in the life of an higher being' (*CW*, V: 14, 13, 12). It follows that 'the loyal man' is one who recognizes 'the duty owed by all to the supreme power and common good of the state' – he is 'bound to his fellow-citizens in the unity of a common object, which gives to the private pursuits of his daily life their value and spiritual meaning' (*CW*, V: 14). His mature idea of the common good is adumbrated here, and the 'supreme power' that gives authority to it will be later formulated as the eternal, self-distinguishing consciousness.

Besides, when Green writes that the loyal man always obeys the law with 'a reverent consciousness of its authority, origin, and object', he concedes that 'such a consciousness can only dwell in higher and more religious minds than are commonly found among men' (*CW*, V: 13). It was indeed a recurrent theme in his early writings, as we have seen in an earlier chapter when discussing his view of the decay of genius in a declining scheme of modern history. Also relevant in this context is another undergraduate essay, 'Legislative Interference in Moral Matters'. Turner's claim that the ancient polis served for British Idealists as a 'model for a political and social life in which the individual citizen was thoroughly integrated with his society' needs to be partially qualified in view of this short piece. Here, Green starts by pointing to 'false analogies' between a Greek polis and a modern state (*CW*, V: 31). It was appropriate to describe a Greek state as 'an intensified and expanded individual', according to Green, or as 'a unified whole, pervaded by a spirit "one and indivisible", of which government is the controlling conscience, and legislation the highest expression'. It had 'a common political-religion', while it knew no 'spiritual religion' – by which Green means an inner religion which gives birth to the individual conscience, typically a post-Reformation

Christianity (*CW*, V: 31). A Greek polis had 'a common state-property to defend' and 'no essentially antagonistic interests', comparable to modern 'distinctions of classes'. A modern state, in contrast, has 'a perpetual internal struggle between those who have and those who wish to take', and this struggle 'seems irreconcilably to divide the mind of a nation' (*CW*, V: 31–32). More crucial for Green was the birth of a spiritual religion. Unlike ancient times, when religion was basically 'an outward thing' and 'there was no antagonism between the law of society and that of the individual conscience', modern societies have 'a religion, which was sent as a sword upon the earth' and this 'not only separates the many from the few, and sect from sect, but also sets a gulf between the inner life of the individual and his life in society' (*CW*, V: 32). One outcome is the alienation of the individual, to whom the law of society no more appears 'as an act of human will with which he can sympathize' but 'as a positive rule imposed "ab extra"'.

A liberal solution could be to restrict the role of the state to that of 'a policeman on a grand scale', one whose end does not exceed 'the protection of life and property against force and fraud' (*CW*, V: 33). This was preferred by anti-collectivist polemists like Herbert Spencer but rejected by Green. People often fail to recognize the 'moral ends' the state has, according to Green, due to the false identification of the state with 'the civil government' and the tendency to regard 'secular laws, written on sheep-skin' as 'its sole expression' (*CW*, V: 33). For Green, the state in modern times should be conceived as operating through three distinct organs: 'the civil government, the national church, and the voice or usage of society' (*CW*, V: 33–34). The outcome of this extended definition and the resultant moral conception of the state was, paradoxically, a semblance of *laissez-faire* view of government. It remains Green's premise throughout the rest of his life that 'the voluntary action of society serves the purpose' of 'promoting morality' better than 'the interference of the civil government' (*CW*, V: 34). 'The object of the civil

government', for Green, was to 'give full play to the energies, and fair room for the development, of the individual' by removing 'obstacles which impede the free action' of church and society. The 'direct interference' of the government could be fatal in matters of moral energies. Dicey thus remarked on Green's politics that '[a]lmost all his definite opinions might be endorsed by Bright or Cobden', but neither of them 'could understand the process by which Green's opinions are obtained, nor the arguments by which they are defended' (*CW*, III: xx).[80] Melvin Richter even surmises that '[h]ad Green not been at Balliol, everything in his outlook and sympathies would have disposed him to adopt the negative individualism of Nonconformity, its distrust of the state that went along with an insistence upon the voluntary principle even in education'.[81]

Therefore, contrary to the persistent allegation of Idealist philosophy as a justification for an authoritarian political regime, Green's moral view of the state, like his truly loyal man, was that it is 'the natural enemy of tyranny' (*CW*, V: 14). The state was 'but society gathered into an unit by certain common laws and institutions' (*CW*, V: 33). This Green saw as 'the society of societies' (PPO, §141). By 'placing the state above the individual', society would 'rivet the chains of its own bondage', for 'the moral good of society' wholly depends upon 'the activities both of genius and religion' (*CW*, V: 33). What saves society from degrading into 'a lifeless mechanism' – another echo of Carlyle – is nothing less than 'the spiritual freedom of the few':

Once or twice in a century there arises some great reformer, literary or religious, who seems placed above the earth and born of heaven alone, and who thus exercises an independent influence on the circumstances and destiny of mankind. Such a man

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[80] This observation is anonymously cited by Nettleship but is confirmed to be Dicey's. See Nicholson, *Political Philosophy*, p. 111 (n. 46).
[81] *Politics of Conscience*, p. 201.

can scarcely conform to the ordinary manners of man, or to the 'status quo' of society. Often he exercises rather freely the privileges of Christian liberty. (*CW*, V: 33)

Green's philosophy thus makes room for a conscientious rebel, 'a true reformer' as 'the corrector and not the exponent of the common feeling of his day' (*CW*, III: 10). How is this position compatible with his *ex post facto* view of philosophy? The association of British Idealism with the political philosophy of 'my station and its duties' was consolidated by Bradley's *Ethical Studies*, but Green had argued in the *Prolegomena* that 'we can seldom go wrong' in 'fulfilling the duties' that belong 'to his station in life' (*PE*, §313)[82]. In modern Christendom, indeed, 'the margin' within which '*bona fide* perplexity of conscience' could arise was 'not really very large', Green thought (*PE*, §313). His emphasis on 'thick, local relationships', which allegedly led to an easy 'valorisation of the status quo', was a concomitant of his moral theory of human perfection.[83] Again, the difficulty of Green's theory of human perfection was that it could not give the final description of an object which an agent presents to itself as absolutely desirable, because, contrary to the case of pleasure, there is nothing in reality that corresponds with this object. 'Of this object', writes Green, 'it can never be possible for him to give a sufficient account, because it consists in the realisation of capabilities which can only be fully known in their ultimate realisation' (*PE*, §193). But it is not that we have no clue, argues Green, because 'the moral capability of man' never remains in the 'wholly undeveloped state' (*PE*, §172). The state of 'its complete realisation' cannot be conceived 'under any forms borrowed from our actual experience', for we have no direct access to 'the divine plan of the world'

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[82] Mander regards Green's ethical system as 'a key impetus to Bradley', the publication of whose *Ethical Studies* (1876) preceded that of *Prolegomena* (1883), for he attended Green's lectures that gave materials to the latter (*British Idealism*, pp. 195–96).
[83] Tyler, *Civil Society*, p. 78.

(*PE*, §172). Green's conviction, however, is that 'we can form at least some negative conclusion' as to 'directions of our activity' in which this realization can be attained by reflecting on the 'actual achievement' in various social institutions and established morality broadly conceived (*PE*, §172). Green assumes that 'practical reason' expresses itself in 'institutions, usages, and judgments of society', each contributing to 'the perfection of life' (*PE*, §179). These are fruits of the 'practical struggle after the Better' and their 'effect in the world of man's affairs' is such as 'makes the way by which the Best is to be more nearly approached plain enough to him that will see':

> In the broad result it is not hard to understand how man has bettered himself through institutions and habits which tend to make the welfare of all the welfare of each, and through the arts which make nature, both as used and as contemplated, the friend of man. And just so far as this is plain, we know enough of ultimate moral good to guide our conduct; enough to judge whether the prevailing interests which make our character are or are not in the direction which tends further to realise the capabilities of the human spirit. (*PE*, §172)

Green concedes that established morality cannot be final. The 'very essence of moral duty' for him was 'to be imposed by a man on himself' (*PE*, §324). However, before he can be fully conscious of what duty is, he imposes upon himself the 'moral duty to obey a positive law', whether of the State or of the Church. Reified external authorities then acquire lives of their own, and an apparent 'conflict of duties' arises. In fact, this is not a conflict of duties *per se*, states Green, but just 'a competition of reverences for imagined imponents of duty'. In most cases, the 'perplexity of conscience' results from 'the habit of identifying duty with injunctions given by external authorities' (*PE*, §324).

The task of a conscientious citizen is 'to distinguish what is essential in the duties from the form of their imposition', like those who fought against the royal power in the Civil War, and to find out 'the common end to which they are alike relative' (*PE*, §326). How is this possible? Green's argument seems to become a circuit at this point. An individual conscience does not emerge *ex nihilo*; it is another medium of the 'self-objectifying spirit' alongside social morality and institutions:

> The individual's conscience is reason in him as informed by the work of reason without him in the structure and controlling sentiments of society. The basis of that structure, the source of those sentiments, can only be a self-objectifying spirit; a spirit through the action of which beings such as we are, endowed with certain animal susceptibilities and affected by certain natural sympathies, become capable of striving after some bettering or fulfilment of themselves, which they conceive as an absolute good, and in which they include a like bettering or fulfilment of others. Without such spiritual action, in however elementary a form, there can be no society, in the proper human sense, at all […]. (*PE*, §216)

The individual conscience might try to distinguish itself from external authorities, thereby 'disentangl[ing] the operative ideas from their necessarily imperfect expression' (*PE*, §319). However, it has no clue to the working of the self-objectifying reason other than its concrete manifestations in the structure and sentiments of society surrounding it. The problem is that the conflict of duties *is* 'a competition of reverences for imagined imponents of duty', among which the moral agent is at a genuine loss. Green concedes that it depends on 'his special gifts and circumstances' whether the consciousness of there being the ideal to be attained would 'lead to a man's making any original contribution to

the perfecting of life' (*PE*, §176). In most cases, indeed, 'he has no chance of leaving the world or even the society immediately about him observably better than he found it' (*PE*, §176). It is true that Green's idea of an 'intelligent patriot' who recognizes 'the duty of resistance' against a state which exercises a coercive power 'in a manner apparently detrimental to general well-being' was welcomed even by such a radical intellectual as Harold Laski (PPO, §§121, 108, 124).[84] Nevertheless, when Green tries to convince readers by saying that the uninspired majority share 'the goodness of the man who devotes a genius to the bettering of human life' by loyally maintaining the status quo, by doing 'the work that lay nearest him', it is not immediately clear how Green's philosophy is more benevolent than Carlyle's (*PE*, §176).[85]

III. 'Metaphysics of Moral Action' and Different Senses of Freedom

'One of the least understood areas of Green's system', as Greengarten insists, 'is the relationship between his epistemology and his moral philosophy'; or, in Green's words, the relationship between 'the metaphysics of experience or knowledge' and 'the metaphysics of moral action' (*PE*, §85)[86]. It was argued in a former chapter that Green's epistemology presupposed as the condition of knowledge the permanent presence of a self-distinguishing consciousness that stands outside time throughout the succession of feelings or natural events and relates the latter into a unified whole. In the words of Greengarten, 'to know a natural object or event', for Green, is 'to know it in terms of its relations to other objects or events in the system of nature'. Likewise, in Green's moral philosophy, 'to experience a desire is really to experience it in terms of its relations to the individual's perceived personal good' (p. 22).

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[84] See Laski, *The Grammar of Politics*, p. 289.
[85] See *Works of Thomas Carlyle*, I, p. 156.
[86] Greengarten, *Thomas Hill Green and the Development of Liberal-Democratic Thought*, p. 22.

When 'the desire is transformed from an isolated feeling to a member of a related whole', writes Greengarten, 'its character is fundamentally altered' (p. 23). Mediated by consciousness, wants cannot be mere wants in human experience. Wants are different from 'the consciousness of wanted objects'; impulses to satisfy those wants from 'the effort to give reality to the objects thus present in consciousness as wanted' – just as discrete 'sensations of sight and hearing have to be distinguished from the consciousness of objects to which those sensations are conceived to be related' (*PE*, §85). Green is clear about the continuity he presents between the analysis of 'the apprehension of a world which *is*' and that of 'one which *should be*'. The overarching principle is 'the self-conditioning and self-distinguishing mind', which his epistemology contends is implied in the experience of 'a connected world'. Likewise, 'the transition from mere want to consciousness of a wanted object, from the impulse to satisfy the want to an effort for realisation of the idea of the wanted object, implies the presence of the want to a subject which distinguishes itself from it and is constant throughout successive stages of the want'. The action of this subject is operative in 'the way of comparing various wants that arise in the process of life', but the subject itself is 'other than the process, not itself a stage or series of stages in the succession which it observes' (*PE*, §85). As his epistemology confirms that '*mere* feeling combines with thought to mould a world experience for man', in his moral philosophy, '*mere* appetite' is transformed 'by virtue of its presence to human consciousness' and, via this process, 'a world of moral activity' is created.[87]

However, 'the conception of something that *should be*', of 'a world of practice', has a different nature from the conception of 'that which *is*', of 'that world of experience' (*PE*, §86). It is true that Green's epistemology was an attempt to establish that

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[87] Greengarten, p. 22.

'independence is not to be ascribed to nature', repudiating the possibility that 'there would be nature at all without the action of a spiritual self-distinguishing subject'; it is irrational to assume that 'there could be a nature for us, for our apprehension, but for a further action of this subject in or as our soul'. However, it is undeniable that for Green 'the world of practice depends on man in quite a different sense from that in which nature, or the world of experience, does so'. Nature is so far independent of us that 'it does not depend on any exercise of our powers whether the sensible objects, of which we are conscious, shall become real or no' (*PE*, §86). The sensible objects, as it were, carry their reality with themselves in perceptive experience. Thus, as David Brink remarks, although Green was in agreement with post-Kantian critics like Fichte in thinking that the 'Kantian dualism' that distinguished between phenomena and noumena was 'an unstable resting point between empirical realism and idealism', he nevertheless seems to have retained the 'dualism between appearances and things-in-themselves'. Hence, his assumption of 'the bearers of conscious experience' to be noumenal existence 'outside of space and time'.[88]

For Green, the world of practice is distinct from that of experience in that 'its constituents are objects of which the existence in consciousness, as wanted, is prior to, and conditions, their existence in reality' (*PE*, §86). It depends on 'a certain exercise of our powers' whether the 'ideas of the objects as wanted' will 'become real or no'. In other words, continues Green, 'the world of practice – the world composed of moral or distinctively human actions, with their results – is one in which the determining causes are *motives*' (*PE*, §87). A motive, for Green, is 'an idea of an end, which a self-conscious subject presents to itself, and which it strives and tends to realise', and this he sees as the cause of moral action. The 'causality of motives' is distinct from that of efficiency – the

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[88] *Perfectionism and the Common Good*, pp. 14, 16.

'key point' we need to observe here is 'a transition from efficient to final causation', according to Mander.[89] Green's emphasis is laid on the fact that the 'causality of motives effectually distinguishes the world which moral action has brought, and continues to bring, into being, from the series of natural events' (*PE*, §87). If motives, ideas of an end, have 'natural antecedents', being 'of natural origin' and 'links in the chain of natural phenomena' themselves, moral action is not 'denaturalised' and caught 'within the series of natural phenomena'. When this assumption is properly refuted, there will be room for 'a Moral Philosophy which shall not be a branch of natural science', establishing 'the freedom of moral agents'.

Green of course attempts a refutation. The chief aim of his moral philosophy was to oppose 'any kind of view of morality as but the progressive articulation of animal instincts or sympathy', illustrated by the programme of philosophers like Hume and Spencer, 'for whom to account for the moral consciousness it is enough to give a naturalistic historical description of its origins and growth'.[90] Green thus denies that 'animal impulse is one component of the motive, while self-consciousness is another' or that 'the moral agent is partly an animal, partly a rational or self-realising subject' (*PE*, §91). Even though 'animal impulses' are indispensable to the formation of elementary motives and may 'survive along with' the resulting motives, they cannot be seen to 'survive *in* the result' (*PE*, §91). Hunger, for instance, cannot be the motive itself nor a part of it. In the words of Greengarten, 'hunger is not *mere* hunger' in human experience, because

> I can think about the hunger, distinguish myself and my other desires from it, and
> realize that it is *I* who am hungry. That is to say, in satisfying myself, I take into

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[89] *British Idealism*, p. 196.
[90] Mander, *British Idealism*, p. 197.

consideration a whole range of elements other than the hunger. Thus, if I am ill, I

will likely not eat certain foods; if I am in a hurry or occupied with an important

matter, I might refrain from eating altogether; and so on. The appetite, in short, […]

does not exist in a vacuum but is related to other factors, and in fact, Green contends,

it cannot be experienced otherwise. (p. 23)

In this case, as in every other case of the 'imputable act', the motive is 'a desire for

personal good in some form or other'; even though 'the idea of what the personal good

for the time is may be affected by the pressure of animal want', like hunger, 'this want is

no more a part or component of the desire' (*PE*, §91).

Again, what is at stake here is 'the freedom of moral agents' (*PE*, §87). In willing,

a man must be 'necessarily free', since 'in all willing a man is his own object to himself,

the object by which the act is determined' (DSF, §1). A man is his own object in that to

will is to be motivated by 'an idea of an end, which a self-conscious subject presents to

itself, and which it strives and tends to realise' and this motivating idea is 'always some

idea of the man's personal good' (*PE*, §§87, 95). He identifies this elsewhere with the

conception of 'the "better", the "higher", the "true" self', which he asserts is a

presupposition for a 'true interpretation of our moral nature' and even for 'a true theology'

(*CW*, III: 223). For Green, moral action is 'an expression at once of conscious contrast

between an actual and possible self, and of an impulse to make that possible self real'; it

is, in short, 'a process of self-realisation' (*CW*, III: 224). In this process, a man 'seeks not

merely to satisfy momentary wants but to become "another man"', and 'wants and desires

that have their root in the animal nature become an impulse of improvement' (*CW*, III:

269). Thus, in Green's system of moral philosophy, '[e]thical life is explained not

historically by the forces that make us what we are but teleologically by the potential we

have to become something more'. Moral action is accounted for 'by a future ideal which calls it forth', not 'by prior factors which push from behind' as in naturalist ethics.[91]

In presenting a teleological interpretation of moral action, Green embarks on his famous discussion of three different senses of freedom, for which he is greatly remembered in the history of Western political thought. The first definition he presents is: '*formal* as distinct from *real* freedom' (*CW*, II: 95). Formal freedom he argues is the basis of any moral action as distinct from natural events:

> Whereas in the order of nature events happen in a determinate series […], in the moral world [each action] depends on the presentation by the individual of an object to himself, as one which will yield him personal satisfaction, whether an action is done or no. In other words, it is characteristic of moral action to be *free*, in a way in which no event in nature is free, and which differences the philosophy of moral action from any natural science. (*CW*, II: 95)

When it is misleadingly said that a man is determined by 'a strongest motive', he is in reality 'determined by himself', because the motive is not something external to him but 'an object of his own making' (DSF, §11). In this sense, it is untenable to 'think of the will as determined like any natural phenomenon by causes external to it' (DSF, §11). The will is nothing other than 'the self-conscious man', and 'the self-conscious man has no *outside*' (DSF, §13). Thus, formal freedom means '*mere* self-determination' and is ascribed 'equally to the man whose will is heteronomous or vicious, and to him whose will is autonomous'; it is formal in that it 'is equally characteristic of the worst act and the best' (DSF, §7; *CW*, II: 95). In this context, 'free will' is a 'pleonasm', which literally

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[91] Mander, *British Idealism*, pp. 196–97

means 'free freedom' (DSF, §1).

Green concedes that this use of the word 'freedom' is a metaphor, noting that 'every usage of the term to express anything but a social and political relation of one man to others involves metaphor' (DSF, §2). The 'primary meaning of the term' expresses 'that relation between one man and others in which he is secured from compulsion' and all this implies is 'that a man should have power to do what he wills or prefers' (DSF, §7). This is the second sense of freedom: 'outward or juristic freedom' (DSF, §8). The juristic sense of freedom, which corresponds with Arnold's freedom of 'doing as one likes' worshipped as machinery, decrees that 'he can do what he likes, that he has the power of acting according to his will or preference' (DSF, §8). Peter Nicholson argues that '[i]n modern European States juristic freedom is the same as legal freedom' and that Green here, like Kant and Hegel, 'is spelling out what is involved in freedom considered exclusively from the viewpoint of law'. Hence, Nicholson continues, what limits juristic or legal freedom is 'legal freedom itself', that is, 'the necessity of securing others' freedom equally, either directly, or indirectly through the maintenance of the system of law and government'.[92] This idea is epitomized by Herbert Spencer's 'general principle' of freedom that 'every man may claim the fullest liberty to exercise his faculties compatible with the possession of like liberty by every other man'.[93] The legal conception of freedom, writes Nicholson, 'marks a divide between law and morality, since law is concerned with the legality rather than the morality of acts' (p. 118).

The key concern of *real* freedom is nothing but the *morality* of acts. Alongside formal freedom, real freedom is another 'extension' of the term and the third, and most important, of Green's different definitions of freedom (DSF, §8). Even though every person is *formally* free, in the sense that the motive of action is always the person's self-

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[92] *Political Philosophy of the British Idealists*, p. 117–18.
[93] *Social Statics*, p. 78.

satisfaction – i.e., the realization of the desired state of self – it often happens that the motive is misguided. In other words, we often find ourselves in a situation in which 'the object in which self-satisfaction is sought is such as to prevent that self-satisfaction being found, because interfering with the realisation of the seeker's possibilities or his progress towards perfection' (DSF, §1). What prohibits self-satisfaction from being found in an intended object is 'the law of his being':

> His will to arrive at self-satisfaction not being adjusted to the law which determines where this self-satisfaction is to be found, he may be considered in the condition of a bondsman who is carrying out the will of another, not his own. From this bondage he emerges into real freedom, not by overcoming the law of his being, not by getting the better of its necessity […] but by making its fulfilment the object of his will; by seeking the satisfaction of himself in objects in which he believes it *should be* found, and seeking it in them *because* he believes it *should be* found in them.

What is to be achieved in pursuing such objects is not 'the satisfaction of this or that desire, or of each particular desire'; rather, it is that satisfaction of 'the whole man', who is to find his object in fulfilling the law of his being (DSF, §1).

In thus presenting the idea of real freedom, Green does not pretend to invent a new usage; it is rather an established usage, he argues, which has a philosophical origin in Plato and the Stoics, flows into the doctrines of the Christian Church, and is then incorporated into the modern philosophical discourse via the systems of Kant and Hegel. How did this 'metaphorical' usage of the term take root? It is due to the 'power of self-distinction and self-objectification' exerted when people reflect on their 'inner life', according to Green (DSF, §2). Whenever a man says 'I', he can, by this faculty, 'set over

against himself his whole nature or any of its elements, and apply to the relation thus established in thought a term borrowed from relations of outward life'. Plato thus employed the freedom-bondage metaphor to express 'a relation between the man on the one side, as distinguishing himself from all impulses that do not tend to his true good, and those impulses on the other'. Since any impulse or interest in ourselves can be singled out as 'an alien power', an element which goes against the law of our being, the metaphor can be applied quite arbitrarily. An extreme case Green presents is one in which 'the only freedom' is thought to be found 'in a life of absolute detachment from all interests, a life in which the pure ego converses solely with itself' (DSF, §2). The phrase reminds us of Arnold's turning his back on moderns' 'dialogue of the mind with itself' (*CPW*, I: 1); however, Green's formulation – he probably has the Stoics in mind – seems to be directed to Arnold the cultural critic as well, for he had characterized Arnold in an 1867 lecture as a modern Stoic. According to Green, the practical upshot of this 'absolute detachment' view is 'absorption in some one interest with which the man identifies himself in exclusion of all other interests, which he sets over against himself as an influence to be kept aloof' (DSF, §2). This judgment about the practical implication of the Stoic doctrine makes sense as another illustration of his critical stance towards indulgence in Culture, an obsession disguised as disinterestedness, in line with allegations by other University Liberals including Harrison and Sidgwick.

'If it were ever reasonable to wish that the usage of words had been other than it has been', hypothesizes Green, 'one might be inclined to wish that the term "freedom" had been confined to the juristic sense of the power to "do what one wills"' (DSF, §8). However, for Green, this 'extension' was a natural and inevitable course of development. The establishment of legal freedom 'as a relation between man and man' is one form in which 'the self-distinguishing, self-seeking, self-asserting principle' expresses itself; in

virtue of this principle, a man is led to 'assert himself against others' – claiming their recognition of him as their equal – and there comes 'to be such a thing as (outward) freedom'. The extension of the meaning is caused by the action of the same principle, which goes on to urge a man to distinguish himself from his preference and reflect upon his relation to it: 'Is he free to will, as he is free to act; or, as the act is determined by the preference, is the preference determined by something else?' (DSF, §8) Thus, Green insists, there is 'a real community of meaning' between the two senses as different forms of self-enjoyment (DSF, §17). The feeling of a *possibility*, of what the subject 'has it in itself to become', cannot alone satisfy a 'grown man' who has attained civil liberty and subdued nature as his instrument (DSF, §18). Just the 'feeling of a boundless possibility of becoming' may be precious and 'give real joy' to 'a captive on first winning his liberty, as to a child in the early experience of power over his limbs and through them over material things' (DSF, §18). However, with 'a citizen of a civilized state', there remains a forecast of the *reality*, the realization of 'what it actually is'. Unsatisfied with a mere possibility, a mere 'consciousness of freedom as exemption from external control', he gets gradually laden with a 'sense of what it is not – of the very little that it amounts to' (DSF, §§17–18). 'Freedom', then, comes to his mind as the 'natural term' to describe his object:

> Just as the consciousness of an unattainable ideal, of a law recognised as having authority but with which one's will conflicts, of wants and impulses which interfere with the fulfilment of one's possibilities, is a consciousness of impeded energy, a consciousness of oneself as for ever thwarted and held back, so the forecast of deliverance from these conditions is as naturally said to be a forecast of 'freedom' as of 'peace' or 'blessedness'. (DSF, §18)

It was thus natural for philosophers to appropriate the word freedom to describe a man's inner state 'in which he shall have realised his ideal of himself, shall be at one with the law which he recognises as that which he ought to obey, shall have become all that he has it in him to be, and so fulfil the law of his being or "live according to nature"' (DSF, §18). Green could have added in his genealogy of real freedom Guizot, who saw the individual liberty as 'the power to conform his will to reason', or Arnold, for whom 'the only perfect freedom' was 'a service' to 'an elevation of our best self'. Other recent exponents of *real* freedom included Carlyle and Mazzini. Mazzini, a favourite among University Liberals alongside more moderate seniors like Jowett, originally published *The Duties of Man* in Italy in 1858, and the English translation appeared in 1862. This book included a refutation of the negative conception of liberty that proved highly congenial to Green. Some of the 'sophistical doctrines' that Mazzini saw perverting the 'sacred idea of Liberty' reduced the latter to 'a narrow and immoral egotism'. 'Mak[ing] *self* everything', these doctrines 'declared the aim of all social organization to be the satisfaction of its desires' – the upshot of this was 'the egotism of class'.[94] In this view, 'all Government, and all authority' was 'a necessary evil' which would be better 'to be restricted and restrained as far as possible' and 'the aim of all society' was identified with 'indefinitely promoting liberty, which man has the right of using or abusing provided his doing so result in no direct evil to others'. Society was regarded as 'naught better than the soldier or police officer commissioned to maintain an external and apparent peace', when in fact, if properly organized, it 'would be the representation of your Collective Life and Aim'. All these doctrines tended to 'convert liberty into anarchy', they refused to recognize 'the idea of collective moral improvement' and 'that mission of Progress which

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[94] *The Duties of Man*, p. 137.

society ought to assume' (pp. 137–38). Liberty would never be sacred unless 'governed by and evolved beneath an Idea of Duty, of Faith in the Common Perfectibility' (p. 138). '[T]rue liberty', wrote Mazzini, 'is not the right to choose evil, but the right of choice between the various paths that lead to good' (p. 149).

Mazzini's idea of liberty was probably an inspiration for Green; nevertheless, this does not make H. S. Jones's contention that Green 'owed heavy debts to Carlyle, from whom his critique of the negative concept of liberty was largely derived' unsound.[95] Mazzini recognized that 'an Italian nation would hardly come into existence unless the clash of individual rights was transcended by a readiness for self-sacrifice and a greater assertion of collective responsibility'. In thinking that something more than freedom of conscience, freedom of the press, and free trade was needed, he regretted that 'only Carlyle and Emerson realised as much'.[96] During his life in exile in London following the Swiss federal authorities' order of expulsion in June 1836, Mazzini fostered a warm friendship with Carlyle. The latter's positive conception of liberty appears in *Past and Present* (1843), in which he remarks that '"Liberty to die by starvation" is not so divine' and this term 'requires new definitions':

> Liberty? The true liberty of a man, you would say, consisted in his finding out, or being forced to find out the right path, and to walk thereon. To learn, or to be taught, what work he actually was able for; and then by permission, persuasion, and even compulsion, to set about doing the same!

No one will 'allow a palpable madman to leap over precipices', he continues, and since '[e]very stupid, every cowardly and foolish man is but a less palpable madman', the 'true

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[95] *Victorian Political Thought*, p. 89.
[96] Denis Mack Smith, p. 29.

liberty' for him consists in being caught hold of 'when he was going wrong' and 'order[ed] and compel[led] to go a little righter'.[97] These curses could never be expected from Green; still, Carlyle alongside Mazzini was a powerful presence for him when Green attempted a *communal* redirection of freedom.

In a lecture Green delivered on 18 January 1881, entitled 'Liberal Legislation and Freedom of Contract', he enriched his notion of real freedom as 'freedom in the positive sense', i.e., freedom as 'the liberation of the powers of all men equally for contributions to a common good' (LLFC, 200). In this new definition, the hitherto dominant form of freedom, 'freedom of contract' or 'freedom in all the forms of doing what one will with one's own', was justifiable 'only as a means to an end'. What Green attempted in the lecture was to show that a series of legislation which interfered with freedom of contract – not only the recently passed Ground Game Act and Employers' Liability Act (1880) but also a cluster of factory acts, education acts, and laws concerning public health – did not vitiate the principle of freedom itself.

The first reform of Parliament marked the beginning of 'the struggle of free society against close privileged corporations', when the realization of freedom was virtually synonymous with the destruction of monopolies and 'the liberation of trade' (LLFC, 196). The 'special object of this reforming work' was the 'realisation of complete freedom of contract' (LLFC, 196–97). No one should be restrained from 'doing anything that did not directly check the free dealing of some one in something else'; the only interference permitted was one 'to prevent interference' (LLFC, 197). However, particularly after the establishment of a more democratic suffrage in 1867, 'reforming legislation' started to take 'a seemingly different direction', which was not 'readily identifiable with the work of liberation' (LLFC, 197). Rather, what this constructed was 'a great system of

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[97] *Works of Thomas Carlyle,* X, pp. 212–213.

interference with freedom of contract' or 'a great system of restriction' (LLFC, 198). With the education act of 1870 – 'a wholly new departure in English legislation' – compulsory schooling was introduced, thereby establishing that 'parents were not to be allowed to do as they willed with their children'. In other words, '[f]reedom of contract in respect of all dealing with the labour of children was so far limited' (LLFC, 197–98). Male adult labour was not beyond restriction either. On grounds of health and safety, the 'free sale of his labour' was now interfered with: 'The most mature man is prohibited by law from contracting to labour in factories, or pits, or workshops, unless certain rules for the protection of health and limb are complied with' (LLFC, 198). The 'free sale or letting of a certain kind of commodity' was also prevented, in such a case as where one was 'prohibited from living in a house which the sanitary inspector pronounces unwholesome' (LLFC, 198).

Green is confident that 'hardly any impartial person wishes to see reversed' this course of development; but the problem is that 'we have never thoroughly considered the principles on which we approve it' (LLFC, 198). Did the liberal project make way for other political ideologies like socialism? Was the principle of freedom abandoned in favour of social justice? Green denies either. For him, liberalism has been consistent in its 'same old cause of social good against class interests', whether its target is privileged corporations which restricted the free exchange of commodity or the hard-won freedom of contract which tends to prevent the disadvantaged party from making the best of its human capacities (LLFC, 196). Besides, liberals are still fighting for the same cause of freedom, according to Green. 'But when we thus speak of freedom', he notes, 'we should consider carefully what we mean by it':

We do not mean merely freedom from restraint or compulsion. We do not mean

merely freedom to do as we like irrespectively of what it is that we like. We do not mean a freedom that can be enjoyed by one man or one set of men at the cost of a loss of freedom to others. When we speak of freedom as something to be so highly prized, we mean a positive power or capacity of doing or enjoying something worth doing or enjoying, and that, too, something that we do or enjoy in common with others. (LLFC, 199)

It is in the light of this positive sense of freedom that we rightly reject slavery even when it is built upon 'a voluntary agreement on the part of the enslaved person', for such contracts as deal with human persons as commodities 'of necessity defeat the end for which alone society enforces contracts at all' (LLFC, 200–1). The same objection applies to other areas, particularly where contracts relate to labour. Labour, abstracted from human persons, can be seen as a commodity, concedes Green; but it is one 'which attaches in a peculiar manner to the person of man', hence restrictions are required, lest labour is sold 'under conditions which make it impossible for the person selling it ever to become a free contributor to social good in any form' (LLFC, 201). It is permissible for society to restrain one from bargaining to work in an unventilated factory, for instance, for '[e]very injury to the health of the individual' is 'a public injury' or 'an impediment to the general freedom; so much deduction from our power, as members of society, to make the best of themselves' (LLFC, 201).

An implication of this argument is that any right for Green was something relative to the historical circumstances and based on social recognition. As Nicholson writes on Green's theory of rights, he saw rights as 'the creation of society' and required them to be 'justified teleologically in terms of a social good'; therefore, his theory was 'in clear and sharp contrast to that of the social contract writers' like Hobbes and Locke, whose

'abstract individualism produces a conception of each man having natural rights which are his prior to society'.[98] Even a claim to property cannot be unconditional for Green. Anyone has property or 'any right to his possessions' at all 'only through the guarantee which society gives him', and '[t]his guarantee is founded on a sense of common interest', according to Green (LLFC, 200). The common interest can be articulated as 'the ideal of true freedom', that is, 'the maximum of power for all members of human society alike to make the best of themselves'. Society secures to its members 'the free use and enjoyment and disposal of his possessions', intending that 'such freedom contributes to that equal development of the faculties of all which is the highest good for all'. In sum, the 'institution of property' is 'only justifiable as a means to the free exercise of the social capabilities of all'. The corollary of this is that 'there can be no true right to property of a kind which debars one class of men from such free exercise altogether' (LLFC, 200). Land ownership is no exception. Land, like labour, has a nature distinct from ordinary commodities, as we obtain natural resources from it, live on it, move across it. Therefore, the state is within its right when it puts 'some restraint on a man's liberty of doing what he will' with his own land 'in the interest of that public freedom which it is its business to maintain' (LLFC, 205). Green saw the settlement of primogeniture, which prevented 'the nominal owner from either dividing his land among his children or from selling any part of it for their benefit', as against the public interest. It hindered the formation of 'a class of small proprietors tilling their own land', which he saw as 'that mainstay of social order and contentment' absent in his country; and it also kept the agricultural productivity of England low, burdening a tiny portion of the population with 'debts or family charges to improve' their land (LLFC, 205). Green's proposition is simple: 'we ask that legal sanction should be withheld for the future from settlements which thus interfere with the

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[98] *Political Philosophy of the British Idealists*, p. 84.

distribution and improvement of land', for 'no man's land is his own for purposes incompatible with the public convenience' (LLFC, 206).

However progressive this argument may look, it contained nothing that Arnold could not give his consent to. In his lecture on 'Equality' which was given three years before Green's, Arnold took care not to offend his English audience, which he saw as composed of the upper-middle 'class of gentlemen in the professions, the services, literature, politics', by clarifying he had no intention to commend the allegedly French abstract notion of 'right to equality' (*CPW*, VIII: 284). Rousseau went back to 'a state of nature where all were equal', assuming that we reserve 'always a natural right to return' to this primitive state. For Arnold, Robert Lowe was right in refusing this presumption: 'The natural right to have work found for one to do, the natural right to have food found for one to eat – rights sometimes so confidently and so indignantly asserted – seem to me quite baseless' (*CPW*, VIII: 285). If the English reacted against this doctrine and held it orthodox that 'all rights are created by law and are based on expediency, and are alterable as the public advantage may require', Arnold could agree no more with 'that orthodox doctrine', he acknowledges. He goes on to attempt to extract a radical implication from the orthodoxy, for it is not only peasants and workmen that have no natural rights, but also kings and nobles. According to Arnold, '[l]egal society creates, for the common good, the right of property; and for the common good that right is by legal society limitable' – a sentence which could be transplanted in the lecture by Green with no sense of incongruity (*CPW*, VIII: 285).

Drawing on Henry Maine and J. S. Mill, Arnold claims that the right of bequest was rare in early times – Maine's comparative method was originally intended as a weapon to attack the 'regression' to Collectivism, but Arnold appropriated his discussion in the wake of those who had interpreted Maine's argument as revealing private ownership to be a

form of usurpation disguised as natural and advanced when it in fact was established by historical contingency.[99] However, England had models to emulate in the contemporary world as well, most remarkably France with its *Code Napoléon*. This 'actual law of France' forbade 'entails' except in rare cases in which a man with only one child could have 'that child take the whole of his father's property' (*CPW*, VIII: 280). The law left 'a man free to dispose of but one-fourth of his property, of whatever kind, if he have three children or more, of one-third if he have two children, of one-half if he have but one child'. Thus, '[i]f there are two children, two-thirds of the property must be equally divided between them; if there are more than two, three-fourths'. This was how France 'sought to bring equality about' after 'the great Revolution' (*CPW*, VIII: 280). In England, by contrast, 'we are trying to live on with a social organisation of which the day is over', hence the sense of 'standstill' often felt on the 'line of advance' (*CPW*, VIII: 304). The shortcomings of English civilization, for Arnold, were 'due to our inequality', or 'the great inequality of classes or property, which came to us from the Middle Age and which we maintain because we have the religion of inequality' (*CPW*, VIII: 299). Such a social arrangement has lived out its life. A feudal aristocracy was essential to supply '[n]umerous centres of material force' in 'a world disintegrated after the ruin of the Roman Empire, and slowly re-constituting itself', but in 'our modern world the function is gone' (*CPW*, VIII: 300). A 'perfect civilisation' in modern times cannot afford 'such inequality as ours' (*CPW*, VIII: 304). It was this belief that urged Arnold to hope for the adjustment of the polity to match the actual social condition and to reach the same conclusion as Green's, allowing no rights to pretend to be beyond time and natural.

We have discussed affinities and divergences between Arnold's and Green's political and

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[99] See Collini, Winch, and Burrow, pp. 218–19.

social thought in Chapters 4 and 5. It is clear that Green's political thinking was grounded in his religious concerns, while Arnold's discussion of cultural authority in the essay on the academy or *Culture and Anarchy* does not appear to have had overtly religious motivations. However, when we take into account Arnold's reflections on Christianity in the 1870s, it becomes clear that he harboured remarkably similar ideas to Green even in the field of religion and theology, as we will see in the next chapter.

Chapter 6. *Poesie des Lebens* for a 'New Man in the Moral Life': Arnold and Green on Christianity

I. Liberal Anglican Project of Rational Reconstruction of Christian Faith

Melvin Richter, in his intellectual biography of Green, mentions Arnold's 1857 inaugural lecture as Oxford's Professor of Poetry, the audience for which, he writes, 'no doubt included Green'. Richter ascribes the 'craving for integration' in the lecture to 'the crisis of conscience' that haunted the doubting spirits of the mid-Victorian period.[1] He finds its most symptomatic expression, not unexpectedly, in lines from 'Dover Beach', which was not published until 1867 but is likely to have been written as early as late June 1851, when the poet visited Dover with Frances Lucy, who had just become his wife.[2] It disclosed the poet's 'private sensibility', according to Richter, which would be later repressed in his 'more robust public utterances as a Victorian sage'[3]:

The Sea of Faith

Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore

Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furled.

But now I only hear

Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,

Retreating, to the breath

Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear

And naked shingles of the world. (ll. 21–28)

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[1] *The Politics of Conscience*, p. 166.
[2] Nicholas Shrimpton does not reject the alternative possibility that the poem was written between 1857 and 1867, 'which would explain why the poem was not published in any of the five editions of Arnold's poetry between 1852 and 1857' (Everyman edition of *Matthew Arnold*, p. 102).
[3] Richter, p. 166.

The world is not 'a land of dreams', but '[h]ath really neither joy, nor love, nor light, / Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain' (ll. 31, 33–34). The poet's sense of his being in a darkling plain, '[w]andering between two worlds, one dead, / The other powerless to be born', was genuine; but the extent to which his alleged nostalgic plea for the once-full 'Sea of Faith' emanated from his emotional spring of agonized 'private sensibility' is not totally clear ('Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse', ll. 85–86). The nostalgic imagination may rather have been related more to his intellectual diagnosis of the *Zeitgeist* because, as Collini among others has written, he was unlike other early and mid-Victorians in that he seems 'to have slid out of belief in orthodox Christianity at an early age without experiencing any great emotional turmoil'.[4] R. H. Super argued as early as 1970 that there prevailed an unwitting misrepresentation concerning Arnold's relationship with Christianity in early life, one based on the a priori assumption that '[t]he son of a clergyman *ought*, of course, to have been brought up in an atmosphere of piety and unquestioned literal adherence to creeds and dogmas from which, if he has any spirit in him, he *ought* to revolt'. On this unsound premise, continues Super, 'much has been made of the spiritual crisis Arnold is assumed to have undergone'.[5] Arnold's clerical household, in fact, was not necessarily typical in that his Churchman father was a liberal, not an evangelical, Anglican. As Frank Turner has illustrated, the evangelical faith often provoked a filial revolt disguised as a religious-cum-intellectual one, precisely because the evangelical revival in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century had 'transformed the family into a major religious institution' far more important than the

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[4] *Matthew Arnold*, p. 20.
[5] *The Time-Spirit of Matthew Arnold*, p 61. This misrepresentation seems to have been reiterated recently by the popular historian Simon Heffer, who asserts that Arnold suggested by plunging his Empedocles into the volcano his own 'deep-seated unhappiness' and 'possibly profound religious doubt' and that he had to 'shake off his father's obsession with Christianity' before beginning '*instead* to deal with social questions' (*High Minds*, pp. 174, 169, 175; emphasis added).

Church itself. This situation, in turn, ironically 'transformed religion into a vehicle whereby young persons could establish some personal psychological independence through modifying that family religion'.[6] The irony was that a 'crisis of conscience' in the 1840s was all the more intense for the consolidation of the evangelical faith throughout the preceding half-century. In this scheme of Victorian intellectual history, Turner finds it worth noting that Arnold 'did not undergo a personal crisis of faith' not least due to the fact that, growing up in a liberal Christian family, he 'encountered the higher criticism of the scripture within his immediate family circle' (p. 88n). His own adolescent endeavour to establish an independent selfhood may have been partly mediated by his flirtation with Tractarianism, or by his pose as 'a Disraelian dandy – gay, careless, cocky' – which led even his intimate friends in Oxford into thinking of him as 'the very antithesis of the father'.[7] But the seeming prodigal son in fact appears never to have lost his faith, even if it was not a straightforwardly orthodox one. '[P]recisely for that reason', assumes Super, 'he became a sounder spiritual guide than almost any of his contemporaries' (p. 61).

Green, another would-be spiritual guide for doubting Victorian minds, shared Arnold's diagnosis of the spiritual vacuum of the age. He believed that Christianity would not survive as it was, but at the same time abhorred the idea of its extinction. Some have found his solution unacceptable from the standpoint of Christian belief, but Green did not see it as breaking the essence of the Christian religion. Symbolic is the fact that he belonged to the first generation who took up the position of tutor at Balliol as a layman and that he decided to preach *as* a layman in the college chapel. Arnold Toynbee, one of Green's most faithful disciples, who is now remembered chiefly for his lectures on the Industrial Revolution, wrote as follows in his preface to the posthumous collection of his

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[6] *Contesting Cultural Authority*, p. 85.
[7] Trilling, *Matthew Arnold*, pp. 21–22, 76.

mentor's lay sermons, which he edited for private circulation in 1883:

> He was the first layman who had filled the office of tutor, and he had to consider whether he would follow a custom maintained by former clerical tutors, of speaking on a religious subject to their pupils on the evening before the administration of Holy Communion. After some hesitation he resolved to use the opportunity to meet some of the religious difficulties which haunt the minds of men who are beginning the study of philosophy and the laws of historical evidence.[8]

Green regarded it as essential to grasp and describe those religious difficulties in terms of high intellectual matters or scholarly arguments, even if it cannot be justified to say the latter caused or triggered the crisis of faith in the mid-century.[9] His conviction was that faith could be restored even when men and women had no choice but to tread the way of reason, which led them inevitably to 'the study of philosophy and the laws of historical evidence'. As he touches on the matter in a sermon:

> We talk, perhaps, half-sorrowfully, half-complacently, of the demoralising, or unchristianising, tendencies of modern life. Opinion, it is said, is fundamentally unsettled, science keeps encroaching on the old faith; the lineaments of the God whom our fathers worshipped are blurred by philosophy; and meanwhile an enlightened hedonism seems competent to answer all practical questions. It is no fault of the individual if, amid such influences, he loses the thought of God's presence and the consciousness of his love, which indeed can only be retained by

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[8] Preface, pp. iii–iv.
[9] The nub of Turner's argument already referred to was to pinpoint the insufficiency of discussions which concentrate on the purely intellectual sphere in matters of religious faith, particularly the causes of its decline. See also Murphy.

taking refuge in mysteries or going out of the world. (*CW*, III: 248)

The backward-looking solution of mystery and seclusion was one that Green saw as adopted by Tractarian sympathizers, who followed the lead of Newman. It captured the hearts of straying youth in the ancient university including a pupil of Green's, Gerald Manley Hopkins. This position, thought Green, was self-defeating. The upshot of the combined forces of encroaching modern intellectual life on the one hand, and, on the other, reactionary religious apologetics, becoming more and more hardened, dogmatic, and antithetical to reason, was a situation in which 'we are left in a state of moral triviality than which the darkest despair of doubt is far more noble' (*CW*, III: 271). His philosophical reconstruction of Christianity, as we shall see, had to be grounded in the synthesis, not the opposition, of reason and faith.

Green's intellectual output was from the start more overtly religious than Arnold's. In general, the resurgence of German Idealist, particularly Hegelian, philosophy in the Anglophone world on both sides of the Atlantic from the 1870s onwards was perceived as intertwined with the influence that the Idealist school would exert upon the liberal-theological project of religious rehabilitation. Writing to the French philosopher Charles Renouvier in 1880, William James observed that the 'resurrection of Hegel' in England and his own country 'after his burial in Germany' was 'a strange thing'. He speculated that Hegelian philosophy 'will probably have an important influence on the development of our liberal form of Christianity. It gives a *quasi* metaphysic back-bone which this theology has always been in need of'.[10] In Britain, at least, this association was present from the outset. When that outset *was*, the point at which the history of British Idealism commenced, is contestable, but the most viable candidate for the watershed in the

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[10] 27 December 1880, in *The Correspondence of William James*, V, p. 149.

reception history of Hegel in Britain is probably the publication in 1865 of J. H. Stirling's *The Secret of Hegel*.[11] Written under the spell of Carlyle, this two-volume work was composed of 'curious amalgam of differing elements' ranging from a biographical sketch of the author's encounter with the philosopher to textual commentary and direct translation, and joined by a mass of 'exclamation and mock-quotation' – a formal eccentricity that placed the entire book on the verge of sheer incomprehension.[12] J. H. Muirhead recalled that it was rumoured that 'if Hutchison Stirling knew the secret of Hegel he had managed to keep it to himself'.[13] A recent commentator concurs, suspecting that a 'more unlikely publishing success can hardly be imagined'.[14] Nevertheless, this work in several points anticipated the traits that would characterize the philosophical movement of British Idealism in general, the most notable of which was its apologetic intention. For Stirling, Hegel 'had not only completed philosophy; but, above all, reconciled to philosophy Christianity itself'.[15] Both Kant and Hegel had 'no object but to restore Faith – Faith in God – Faith in the immortality of the Soul and the Freedom of the Will – nay, Faith in Christianity as the Revealed Religion'.[16] Among his many admirers was Green, who, in his 1868 testimonial on the occasion of Stirling's unsuccessful candidacy for the Chair of Moral Philosophy at the University of Edinburgh, wrote that '[o]n his election or rejection […] depends the question whether this Professorship shall contribute something real to the progress of European thought'. He concluded by insisting that 'I should expect his tenure of an academic chair to stimulate

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[11] John Passmore, in his classical history of modern philosophy, reckoned that it was *The Secret of Hegel* that 'first presented Hegelianism to Great Britain in a relatively intelligible and coherent form' (*A Hundred Years of Philosophy*, p. 51). More recently, W. J. Mander insists in the same vein that 'it is the first work in English seriously to engage with Hegel and to present before its readers the details of his words and arguments. In many ways it heralds the start of the Idealist movement' (*British Idealism*, p. 19). For more on the topic, see J. Bradley; Willis.

[12] Mander, *British Idealism*, p. 18.

[13] *The Platonic Tradition in Anglo-Saxon Philosophy*, p. 171.

[14] Kirk Willis's entry on Stirling in *ODNB*.

[15] Amelia Hutchison Stirling, *James Hutchison Stirling*, p. 115. See also Muirhead, p. 165.

[16] Stirling, *The Secret of Hegel*, p. xii.

true philosophical culture in Scotland for generations to come' (*CW*, V: 454–56n).

There is thus some truth in Muirhead's observation that 'British Idealism from the first has been in essence a philosophy of religion' (p. 197). Green's father was a clergyman in a Yorkshire village named Birkin, although he himself remained unordained, becoming a first lay tutor at Balliol. Like Arnold, Green does not seem to have experienced emotional turmoil concerning religious doubt. According to a friend's testimony, Green was 'sound and heart-whole' in 'religious convictions' and 'felt very little' of the '*pain* of doubt':

> [Green] advanced naturally from one point to another with no loss, by the way, of strength or of necessary equipment. His steadiness of mind was, in so speculative a man, quite remarkable; he knew nothing of mental cataclysms, and had none of the qualities which make interesting converts. (*CW*, III: xxxvi–xxxvii)

In a significant sense, for Green, philosophy was a substitute for theology. True to the liberal Anglican tradition he imbibed in particular from F. D. Maurice, Green attempted to save the essence of the Christian religion in an age of science and criticism through the restatement of Christian belief – in his case, in terms of an Idealist philosophy. Richter argues that the '*a priori* foundation of Green's thought was meant to serve as the secure base on which to build a new structure of belief embodying the essentials of Christianity' (p. 180). 'Christian dogma', Green writes in an early essay, 'must be retained in its completeness, but it must be transformed into a philosophy' (*CW*, III: 182); or as he argues elsewhere, philosophy transcends theology only in that the two are related 'simply as the critical and uncritical methods of dealing with one and the same question' (*CW*, III: 133). What Green sought to establish in the lay sermons, in the words of Toynbee, was 'an

intellectual position for the Christian faith which should not be called in question by every advance in historical evidence and in physical science':

> It is with no eagerness to impair the existing religious creeds that he insists on the incorrectness of the theories on which they are professedly based; other thinkers have assailed the orthodox foundations of religion to overthrow it, Mr. Green assailed them to save it. (p. vi)

Even Green's metaphysical principle of the 'eternal consciousness', which is 'a relative of Hegel's Absolute' and the core of his overall philosophical system, is sometimes referred to interchangeably as 'God'.[17] This is why we can safely say his intellectual career was more consistently religious than Arnold's and the arguments on Green's religious thought in this chapter cannot avoid being somewhat repetitious.

Idealist religious thought generally tends to attenuate the God of Christianity into an *idea*, a metaphysical principle. One palpable case is that of Edward Caird, a fellow of the Old Mortality who succeeded Jowett as Master of Balliol in 1893. In his Gifford Lectures published as *The Evolution of Religion* in the same year, Caird equated the 'idea of God' with 'the idea of an absolute principle of unity which binds in one "all thinking things, all objects of all thought", which is at once the source of being to all things that are, and of knowing to all beings that know'. God for him was 'the ultimate essential principle of our intelligence', which 'manifest[s] itself in the life of every rational creature'. An intellectual principle necessitated by an epistemological speculation, this demands to be acknowledged by every rational being by definition, hence Caird's assertion: 'Every creature, who is capable of the consciousness of an objective world and

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[17] Mander, *British Idealism*, pp. 94, 139.

of the consciousness of a self, is capable also of the consciousness of God'.[18] As Alan P. F. Sell has claimed, this metaphysical God 'makes religious faith into a matter of intellectual assent'. What is particularly problematic about Caird is his 'tendency to leave out of his primary definition of God everything that makes God lovable, adorable, worthy of being worshipped'.[19] The Idealist emphasis on divine immanence risks erasing 'genuine personal relations', thereby 'undermin[ing] both ethics and worship', according to Sell; an absolute or eternal consciousness seems to leave no 'room for *personal* communion between God and his worshippers' (p. 128).

A similar allegation has been directed towards Arnold's notorious description of God as the 'stream of tendency by which all things seek to fulfil the law of their being' in *St. Paul and Protestantism* (1870) or the 'Eternal that makes for righteousness' in *Literature and Dogma* (1873) (*CPW*, VI: 10, 215; emphasis removed). Arnold was suspicious of metaphysical construction in this sphere as well, ridiculing Herbert Spencer's reduction of God to the 'abstract and vacuous Unknowable': '"The Unknowable is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble", is what would occur to no man to think or say' (*CPW*, VII: 396). But for Leslie Stephen, as Livingston has written, it was precisely 'a case of the pot calling the kettle black'.[20] G. W. E. Russell, Arnold's early editor, concurs – despite Arnold's repeated dismissal of view of God as 'a magnified and non-supernatural man', Russell believes that a '"Stream of Tendency" can never satisfy the idea of God, as ordinary humanity conceives it. It is not in human nature to love a stream of tendency, or worship it, or ask boons of it'.[21] Green and Arnold each reached their own unlovable God via different routes, starting as they did from the

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[18] *The Evolution of Religion*, I, p. 68. The embedded quotation is from Wordsworth's 'Tintern Abbey', l. 101.
[19] *Philosophical Idealism*, pp. 114–15.
[20] *Matthew Arnold and Christianity*, p. 144. See Stephen, *Studies of a Biographer*, II, p. 112.
[21] *Matthew Arnold*, pp. 257–58.

common liberal Anglican inheritance among the Rugby-Balliol circle.

II. Green and 'Christian Dogma […] Transformed into a Philosophy'

In a letter addressed to his pupil Henry Scott Holland, one of the future *Lux Mundi* authors who fused their High Anglicanism with a social conscience under the influence of Idealism, Green referred to the conversion to Catholicism of another Balliol student, Hopkins, expressing his vexation at the fact that 'a fine nature' like the young poet was 'being victimised by a system' that 'puts the service of an exceptional institution, or the saving of the individual soul, in opposition to loyal service to society':

> I imagine him [Hopkins] […] to be one of those, like his ideal J. H. Newman, who instead of simply opening themselves to the revelation of God in the reasoned world, are fain to put themselves into an attitude – saintly, it is true, but still an attitude. True citizenship 'as unto the Lord' (which includes all morality) I reckon higher than 'saintliness' in the technical sense. (*CW*, V: 424–25)[22]

Green rejected the Tractarian grounding of faith upon authority above reason, thinking that 'God is not wisely trusted when declared unintelligible' (*CW*, III: 239). In this, he followed in the footsteps of Thomas Arnold, who had been convinced that 'faith without reason, is not properly faith, but mere power worship; and power worship may be devil worship'.[23] His rejection of the wrong 'antithesis between Church and World, the religious and the secular' had its antecedents in the Liberal Anglican tradition (*CW*, V: 426). Following F. D. Maurice in particular, Green rejected the 'two-world' view. He

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[22] On Green's impact on the later Anglo-Catholic social reformers represented by Holland and Charles Gore, see Carter, chap. 4; Bevir, chap. 11.
[23] Quoted in Edward Alexander, p. 81.

believed that God revealed Himself as reason in human history and social institutions and that, therefore, men of the clerical profession were required to involve themselves with things of *this* world. This concept of an immanent God gave him a basis upon which to construct his ethics and political philosophy.

Rejecting authority for rational faith, Green abandoned dogmatic theology in a way reminiscent of Broad Church forebears. The vessel in which the essential ideas of Christianity were carried could be remoulded to meet the demands of a changing society. Green makes this point clear in his address on 'Faith', which was written in 1878 for the senior members of Balliol College.[24] 'It is not the reality of God or of the ideal law of conduct that is in question', says Green, 'but the adequacy of our modes of expressing them'; they were just 'passing through a period of transition from one mode of expressing them to another, or perhaps to an admission of their final ineffableness' (*CW*, III: 276). He was confident that philosophy did not collide with religion but could instead consolidate it. 'I never dreamt of philosophy doing instead of religion', he confessed to Holland; his interest in philosophy was rather 'wholly religious; in the sense that it is to me […] the reasoned intellectual expression of the effort to get to God' (*CW*, V: 442). What Green discarded was not Christianity *per se*, but a form of its dogmatic expression: 'I do recognise a competition between philosophy and dogmatic theology each claiming to be the true *rationale* of religion; and for my own part […] I have definitely rejected dogmatic theology for a certain sort of philosophy' (*CW*, V: 442).

His most explicit statement about dogmatic theology was given before the Old Mortality after he had been elected a member in May 1858. Edmund Gosse relates in his biography of Swinburne how Green, while presenting the 'Essay on Christian Dogma', 'happened to look up once from his paper, and nearly burst out laughing at the sight of

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[24] Toynbee, Preface, p. v.

Swinburne, whose face wore an expression compounded of unutterable ennui and naïf astonishment that men whom he respected could take interest in such a subject'.[25] The two Balliolites seem to have been on good terms in those days, but their 'once intimate connection' was to be 'broken by the publication of *Poems and Ballads* in 1866', according to Richter, because Green's 'Puritanism was deeply offended by Swinburne's revolt against the limits on frankness set by contemporary morality' (p. 83). A. C. Bradley testified to Gosse that Green 'adopted a very hostile and contemptuous attitude to Swinburne' from then onwards.[26]

Green makes it clear at the beginning of this essay that his aim is to find an alternative rationale for Christianity so as to replace an outmoded one:

> At a time when every thoughtful man, accustomed to call himself a christian, is asking the faith which he professes for some account of its origin and authority, it is a pity that the answer should be confused by the habit of identifying christianity with the collection of propositions which constitute the written New Testament. (*CW*, III: 161)

It will become clear, he says, that relying on the 'collection of propositions' is misleading as soon as we ask: 'was St. Paul a Christian, or was he not?' St. Paul himself was not acquainted with these propositions as such. The idea of 'inspiration', according to which 'every scriptural proposition' contains 'some absolute truth', has to be attributed to 'that enfeebled christianity which is all that mankind has yet been able to assimilate' (*CW*, III: 161). This was an invention at a later stage when St. Paul's original experience was lost and the voices of heresy started to be whispered:

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[25] *Life of Algernon Charles Swinburne*, p. 40.
[26] Gosse, *Life,* p. 37n.

Thus, when the spiritual community of christians was hardening into the visible church, when the vision of the risen Lord […] had faded from the believers' eyes, men began to feel the want from time to time of some fresh assertion to silence the objections, some new dogma to harmonise the contradictions, which the 'heresy' or controversy of each generation engendered. (*CW*, III: 162)

Before becoming theology, Christianity 'in its simplest primary form' was something 'involved in the divine consciousness of Jesus and in that of St. Paul' (*CW*, III: 164). The original 'immediate consciousness' held by 'these two parents of our faith' was capable of penetrating to its object by revelation or by intuition. In time, mediated by the 'theological consciousness', this made way for 'a connected system of ideas, each qualified by every other, each serving as a middle term by which the rest are held together' (*CW*, III: 164). Scholastic theology moved further away from the original spiritual experience, throwing itself into a situation in which '[t]hought spins the web, but is ignorant that it spins it out of itself', and this web is 'wrapped round it by the divine hands of the church', 'an outward and purely objective authority' (*CW*, III: 178, 177). The result was 'such a conscious entanglement in the yoke of bondage, holding back the believer from free intercourse with his Lord' (*CW*, III: 178). It was this situation that provoked the spiritual revolt of the Reformers.

With Luther, faith ceased to mean 'merely the implicit acceptance of dogma on authority' (*CW*, III: 179). This idea started to assume a different level of meaning, restored to St. Paul's original spiritual experience:

As with St. Paul it expressed the continuous act, in virtue of which the individual

breaks loose from the outward constraint of alien ordinances, and places himself in a spiritual relation to God through union with his Son, so with Luther faith is simply the renunciation, by which man's falser self, with its surroundings of observance and received opinions, slips from him, that he may be clothed upon with the person of Christ. (*CW*, III: 179)

Protestant theology thus attempted to reconcile the Christian experience, which had been hitherto encapsulated most fully as mysteries in the authoritative 'dogmatic expression', with individual freedom, which required the rejection of the church authority (*CW*, III: 181). How could this be attained? According to Green, the only popular theology that 'has sought to retain in freedom the fulness of the christian experience' was that of the 'inward light', which 'recognises in the truths of revelation the highest utterances of the reason that is in every man' (*CW*, III: 182). However, it had its own insufficiency, namely that it 'refuses to formulate'. Left alone without any definite formulation, '[t]he individual, consciously and unconsciously, will formulate the christian experience, and left to himself, will formulate inadequately'. The dogma of the church was simply replaced with 'a dogma of his own'. Whereas his fathers at least 'subdued a wide region to his use', the son must be satisfied that he just 'laboriously tills a little plat of his own' – and, what is worse, he is 'as much in bondage to the soil as they were' (*CW*, III: 182).

Green could have agreed with the Tractarian Hurrell Froude about the precariousness of private judgement, which might not be as spontaneous as Protestant theology assumed. People's opinions were often moulded by the prejudices of the times, which could be dogmatical themselves. When 'there are as many different prejudices and opinions as there are different turns of mind and different moral histories', how could

individual spontaneity be reconciled with objective validity?[27] Green avoids the Tractarian solution of the dogmatic principle and the sacramental system, replacing it with the Idealist alternative: 'Christian dogma, then, must be retained in its completeness, but it must be transformed into a philosophy' (*CW*, III: 182). It is obviously futile to cling to the specific 'collection of propositions' in an age of science, according to Green, for 'propositions concerning matters of fact, concerning the causation of events' are 'strictly within the domain of science' – and theological propositions are things that '*it* must inevitably reject' (*CW*, III: 265). Faith cannot keep room for itself if it 'stands or falls with the admission or rejection of certain propositions' (*CW*, III: 265). Dogmatic theology, nevertheless, is not without its own merits. The 'apparent ossification' of the Christian life into 'authoritative formulae', which began 'under the peculiar circumstance of Galilee during the Roman dominion', was 'a necessary condition for the fulfilment of its mission as a permanent and universal religion', because '[s]o long as it retained its primary form of a personal experience, it was liable to indefinite modifications and mutilation according to the personal tendencies of different times and situations' (*CW*, III: 184).

A general tension between Kantian and Hegelian ingredients in Green's philosophy appears here in a palpable form. As Reardon has observed:

He plainly cannot allow a system of belief imposed by external authority, he stands firmly on the Kantian principle of autonomy, yet he is well aware of the dangers of uncontrolled idiosyncrasy, and desiderates, in Hegelian fashion, such an objectification of belief as would express the affirmations of the religious consciousness in a consistent and stable manner. He demands, that is, both rational freedom in believing and the institutional forms necessary to articulate and preserve

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[27] James Pereiro, *Theories of Development in the Oxford Movement*, p. 29.

belief.[28]

Hence, the original intuitive, immediate experience, fundamental as it is, needs to be 'assimilated by the reason as an idea' to become objective and universal (*CW*, III: 182). In Green's historical consciousness, as he himself puts it,

> [t]he progress of thought in general consists in its struggle to work itself free from the mere individuality and outwardness of the object of intuition. The thing as sensible, *i.e.* as presented in an individual moment of time and space, must become the thing as known, *i.e.* as constituted by general attribute. (*CW*, III: 182–83)

An intuition needs to be sublimated into an idea. Likewise, 'Christ, as an object of intuition, must undergo a similar process' (*CW*, III: 183). He must be more than (or, it appears to some, less than) 'the historical Jesus', who was intuited merely sensuously by the twelve apostles as 'a saviour of the Jews only'. St. Paul made him more than this, recognizing in him the same attributes as could be ascribed to 'the spirit or wisdom of the world', when he first became the universal Christ. Jesus of Nazareth, the historical Jesus, was 'the reality of which the idea involving the attributes was the objective reflex'. The modern philosopher, like Green, goes further: 'To the modern philosopher the idea itself is the reality. To him Christ is the necessary determination of the eternal subject, the objectification by this subject of himself in the world of nature and humanity' (*CW*, III: 183).[29] The idea of God 'becomes more concrete as the intuition becomes more abstract' (*CW*, III: 184). This process leads to the recognition that 'God has died and been buried,

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[28] 'T. H. Green as a Theologian', p. 44.
[29] Recall Arnold's remark: 'for poetry the idea is everything' and '[t]he strongest part of our religion to-day is its unconscious poetry' (*CPW*, IX: 161).

and risen again, and realised himself in all the particularities of a moral life'. This 'eternal subject', of which Christ was a reflex or a determination, is Green's Absolute, 'the eternal consciousness' or 'the self-objectifying subject' as he rewords it freely in his philosophical writings, and this metaphysical principle is explicitly equated with God.

James Iverach, a Scottish divine, was unsettled by the theological implications of Green's position, in which 'the historical Christ has vanished, and has been succeeded by the idea'. 'The eternal subject', for Iverach, 'can never be accepted as a substitute for the living God':

> nor can mankind afford to take the 'idea' of the modern philosopher as a substitute for the living Christ. […] [O]f all things we are sure that, come what may, men will not give up the Christ, and if philosophy can exist only by attenuating Him to an idea, then so much the worse for philosophy.[30]

An allegation of this kind was a perennial one against a liberal theology. For Newman, the Christian dedicates their energies 'to the service of a person' or 'a Divine *Agent*', while the 'philosopher aspires towards a divine *principle*'. Newman's fear was about what Sell calls 'a blurring of the Creator-creature distinction'. '[I]n whatever degree we approximate towards a mere standard of excellence' hailed by philosophers, according to Newman, 'we do not really advance towards it, but bring it to us; the excellence we venerate becomes part of ourselves – we become a god to ourselves'.[31] Green's 'skirting of the historical', as Sell has put it, was inevitable, for what he sought was a religion which, in the words of Jowett, would be 'independent of the accidents of time and place'. Jowett conceded that '[t]he attempt is worth making', observing that 'something like this

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[30] 'Professor Thomas Hill Green', pp. 167–68. See Sell, *Philosophical Idealism*, pp. 205, 54.
[31] Sell, *Philosophical Idealism*, p. 152; Newman, *Sermons*, pp. 29–30.

is what the better mind of the age is seeking'. However, a metaphysics 'not based upon common sense' was 'intolerable' even for him. He finally warned against abstract system-building of a Hegelian kind, to the flourishment of which he had given an initial impetus.[32]

Green 'skirted' the historical because he recognized that the propositions 'asserting the actual occurrence' of the historical events contained in the New Testament, not least 'the historical record of Christ's work', had come under suspicion, and that this, misleadingly, had been perceived as a serious threat to faith (*CW*, III: 259, 261). If the occurrence of the miraculous events were the ground of faith, the discrediting of the former would result in the discarding of the latter. For Green, however, exactly the contrary was the case: the fact was that '"seeing" depended on "believing", not "believing" on "seeing"' (*CW*, III: 218). The miracle was not 'evidence' for religion, but rather an expression of it. For St. Paul, 'the one sole and sufficient evidence for religion' lay in the thought of God as 'nigh', as a presence who 'lives in our moral life', not in the occurrence of any external event:

> The belief in miracle was not its source but a mode, to him a natural mode, in which
> it found expression. Theologians […] have tried to find in this expression of it a
> proof of its truth, and the inevitable failure of this procedure has combined with that
> misinterpretation of the connection between the natural and the moral, which has
> hitherto accompanied the growth of physical science, to diffuse a suspicion that the
> thought itself is unwarranted or unmeaning. (*CW*, III: 221)

The fact was, argues Green, that 'God reveals himself through a state of the human mind

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[32] Sell, *Philosophical Idealism*, p. 199; Abbott and Campbell, *The Life and Letters of Benjamin Jowett*, II, p. 77.

to which under certain conditions a belief in miraculous events is incidental, instead of through the actual occurrence of such events' (*CW*, III: 218). A literal interpretation of the miraculous events thus can be beside the mark, for 'it was only an antecedent faith that could read them aright as a manifestation of eternal truths', whereas to the unbelieving 'they remained mere wonders, not a medium for the spirit that quickeneth' (*CW*, III: 255). Arnold followed a similar path as Green when he denied an evidential status to what he called *Aberglaube*, or 'extra-belief', as we will see shortly. As Livingstone argues, a cluster of the elements of 'the primitive Christian *mythos*', including 'the birth stories, or the resurrection accounts, or the eschatological prophecies' is for Arnold 'not the foundation, not what is first', but comprises 'rather the vehicles by which more fundamental moral and theological beliefs and religious experiences are envisioned and communicated'.[33] Hence, he prefaced his book vindicating Christian faith, *Literature and Dogma*, with the frank admission that '*miracles do not happen*' (*CPW*, VI: 146).

According to Green, again, St. Paul 'does not demand our faith in certain truths "above reason" on the ground of miraculous proofs of divine authority given by a revealer of these truths' (*CW*, III: 256). The death and resurrection of Christ is no exception. This point is crucial in understanding the whole system of Green's thought because his Christology works as the junction at which his religious and ethical thoughts converge. For St. Paul, the resurrection of Christ was 'not evidence of a revelation, but the thing revealed':

> The death of the believer to sin, which becomes a new life unto God, he regards as part of the same process by which Christ died and rose again – a process continued in the mighty deeds wrought in the christian congregation, and to be completed in

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[33] *Matthew Arnold and Christianity*, pp. 130, 132.

the deliverance of the 'creature itself from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.' (*CW*, III: 256; Romans 8:21)

It was because St. Paul 'seemed to himself to die daily and rise again with Christ' that 'the supposed historical events' were given reality in his eyes (*CW*, III: 258). There is no doubt that he believed in the 'objectivity' of the supposed facts, but a more crucial fact is that 'his attitude towards them was not that of a man believing certain events to have happened upon evidence' (*CW*, III: 258).

However, St. Paul's original understanding of the resurrection of Christ based on his personal moral experience 'changed its character in becoming a popular creed' (*CW*, III: 257). As time passed, '[t]he death and resurrection of Christ'

ceased to be looked upon as perpetually re-enacted in the surrender of the fleshy self and the substitution for it of a new man in the moral life. They became past events by which certain blessings had been obtained for us, or divine testimony given to an authority claiming our obedience. The identification of the believer with Christ was no longer realised through a consciousness operative in the christian society, but was supposed to be effected in some mode, mystical not moral, by the sacraments. (*CW*, III: 257)

The narrative of 'a life actually lived on earth', the life of Jesus of Nazareth, was essential for the purpose of presenting 'the highest thought about God in language of the imagination', i.e., for our need to 'imagine God' (*CW*, III: 215, 219). But this imagined 'life on earth' can never be adequate to the thought of God itself. 'Thus', Green insists, 'the religious imagination of God as Christ has to become the imagination of him as a

"glorified" Christ; a Christ such as Jesus of Nazareth was potentially, not actually' (*CW*, III: 219). This he implied in his insistence on transforming Christian dogma into a philosophy intact.

Green regards moral action, 'a process of self-realisation', as essentially a religious office. This process is one of 'making a possible self real'; and this 'possible self' or 'the ideal self', 'the realisation of which is the source of all action that can properly be called moral or immoral, is God', according to Green (*CW*, III: 224, 225). In other words, God for him was 'identical with the self of every man in the sense of being the realisation of its determinate possibilities, the completion of that which, as merely in it, is incomplete and therefore unreal' (*CW*, III: 227). In being conscious of himself, 'man is conscious of God, and thus knows that God is, but knows what he is only so far as he knows what he himself really is (*CW*, III: 227). As C. C. J. Webb, a later Idealist, observed, 'the new idealistic philosophy' led by Green thus reinterpreted 'the great doctrines of Christianity' not 'as the record or the anticipation of events miraculous and supernatural in a far distant past or in a remote future', but 'as statements of the inner significance of the spiritual life of man in every age, of the whole history of civilization itself'.[34]

Green denied Christianity an exclusive origin at a particular point in history, conceiving it as developing itself throughout the course of history. Christianity for him cannot be fixed into any single system of dogmatic theology, any particular historical event, or any existent society at a given age. The revelation 'is not made in a day, or a generation, or a century', for the divine mind reveals itself through a process 'of which the gradual complement is an unexhausted series of spiritual discipline through all the agencies of social life' (*CW*, III: 239–40). Green thought that 'the spirit of man' in his age 'has reached that stage' in which 'the consciousness of God is a consciousness of him, no

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[34] *A Study of Religious Thought in England*, p. 102.

longer as an outward power, but as one with itself, as reconciled and indwelling' (*CW*, III: 270). 'Such consciousness' of an immanent God 'has in manifold forms been the moralising agent in human society', or rather 'the formative principle of that society itself' (*CW*, III: 269). Under the influence of this divine consciousness, our animal instincts 'become an impulse of improvement', which holds before us 'an unrealised ideal of a best which is his God' and gives 'divine authority to the customs or laws by which some likeness of this ideal is wrought into the actuality of life' (*CW*, III: 269–70). The world into which we are born is thus one in which these processes ('God's expression of himself in the institutions of society, in the moral law, in the language and inner life of christians, in our own consciences') have been carried so far that 'the problem of faith' for Green is reduced to 'overcom[ing] the selfishness and conceit which prevent us from taking into ourselves individually the revelation of God which is everywhere about us' (*CW*, III: 270). Hence, as we saw in the last chapter, he stressed the redundancy of philosophizing. All the same, it is essential to recognize that, in the words of Webb, the British Idealists' 'discovery of the spiritual world *within* the natural instead of *beyond* it' entailed their 'distrust of any such withdrawal on religious grounds from the "world", in the sense of ordinary secular society, with its political and […] cultural activities' (p. 106). In this, again, Green followed Carlyle, who in *Past and Present* depicted a twelfth-century monastic world in which '[r]eligion is not a diseased self-introspection, an agonising inquiry'.[35] As Jocelin of Brakelond, on whose account of the Abbey of St. Edmunds Carlyle's work was based, wrote of Abbot Samson, '[w]hen he chanced to hear of any church leader resigning his pastoral work to become a hermit, he would not utter one word of commendation'.[36]

Green did not develop an extended discussion of 'a philosophy of history', which,

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[35] *Works of Thomas Carlyle*, X, p. 60.
[36] *Chronicle of the Abbey of Bury St Edmunds* (a modern translation by Greenway and Sayers), p. 37.

in his own words, addresses 'the process by which God's revelation of himself in the human consciousness has thus issued in the institutions by which our elementary moralisation is brought about' (*CW*, III: 270). But his brief outline of it could be characterized in comparison to those of German thinkers. He regarded the development of Christianity as a gradual process throughout history, one which he saw as incremental rather than purifying:

> The glory of christianity is not that it excludes, but that it comprehends; not that it came of a sudden into the world, or that it is given complete in a particular institution, or can be stated complete in a particular form of words; but that it is the expression of a common spirit, which is gathering together all things in one. […] We go backward, but we cannot reach its source; we look forward, but we cannot foresee its final power. (*CW*, III: 240–41)

This may smack of an orthodox Hegelian philosophy of history, but a more relevant figure is F. C. Baur, 'the Hegelian doyen of the Tübingen school of theology' whose *Geschichte der Christlichen Kirche* Green set about translating during his excursion to Germany in the summer of 1863.[37] According to Vincent and Plant, 'Hegel seems to have thought that the Absolute or God has come to full self-consciousness and full self-realization in the early nineteenth century'; in contrast, '[t]he crucial idea which Green seems to have derived from Baur', making 'his political philosophy more critical than that of Hegel', was that 'the self-realization of God in human history is never a finished process'.[38] This made his political philosophy more open-ended, less patronizing than otherwise, giving

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[37] Vincent, 'T. H. Green and the Religion of Citizenship', p. 53. The translation project did not see the final completion. See the editor's note to Green's letter to Mrs. Arthur Clough, dated 12 December 1869, in *CW*, V, pp. 431–33; Nettleship, 'Memoir', in *CW*, III, p. xxxvii.
[38] *Philosophy, Politics, and Citizenship*, p.12.

it a critical edge as reformers' philosophy. But the same quality made it vulnerable to an accusation that it could be impotent as a practical guidance for the straying conscience, which must be content with the telos of Christianity ever receding into the unattainable future.

III. Culture, Historicism, and the Demystification of *Aberglaube* in Arnold

J. H. Newman was a formative influence on, and himself a major presence in, the 'culture and society' tradition, and it has been widely acknowledged that his intellectual inheritance was essential for Arnold in a way it was not for Green. Raymond Williams attends to Newman's notion of the 'ideal perfection' of the intellect, presented in *On the Scope and the Nature of University Education* (1852), as 'virtually announcing the task which Arnold was about to undertake in *Culture and Anarchy*'. Newman, following Coleridge, set this educational ideal as an antidote to the 'Utilitarian tendency which conceived education as the training of men to carry out particular tasks in a particular kind of civilization'.[39] According to David DeLaura, who was writing about a decade after Williams, what appealed to Arnold in Newman's legacy was his 'image of European – and Christian – civilization as an enduring source of value satisfying the permanent ethical and aesthetic needs of man', which was the foundation of 'a culture superior to the anarchic individualism of the nineteenth century'.[40] While Green was inspired by Carlyle and his Puritan hero Cromwell in envisaging his version of the clerisy, i.e., the 'Idealist' class of reform-oriented university intellectuals, it was Newman among others who fuelled Arnold's 'concern for the special role in history of a small elite fraternity who possess a privileged insight into truth'.[41]

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[39] *Culture and Society*, pp. 152–153.
[40] *Hebrew and Hellene*, p. xvi.
[41] DeLaura, *Hebrew and Hellene*, p. 30.

Arnold's essay entitled 'The Bishop and the Philosopher' (1862) was occasioned by the publication of John William Colenso's *The Pentateuch and the Book of Joshua Critically Examined*, whose first volume had appeared in the same year. Overall the Colenso controversies may be seen to contain 'all the elements of the higher comedy' to a modern reader, as William Robbins wrote.[42] Nevertheless, according to a more recent commentator, those controversies 'rivalled those of *Essays and Reviews*' to the contemporary eyes. John Ruskin, for one instance, suspected that 'Essays & Reviews will [be] nothing to it'.[43] A bishop of the new diocese of Natal in Southern Africa from 1853, Colenso had a mission to translate the Scriptures into the Zulu tongue. He acquired 'sufficient knowledge of the language' to publish 'a Zulu Grammar and Dictionary' and 'to be able to have intimate communion with the native mind'. He got help from 'intelligent natives' with his translation project, which brought him to a difficult situation.[44] As he recalls in the preface:

> [w]hile translating the story of the Flood, I have had a simple-minded, but intelligent, native, – one with the docility of a child, but the reasoning powers of mature age, – look up, and ask, 'Is all that true? Do you really believe that all this happened thus, – that all the beasts, and birds, and creeping things, upon the earth, large and small, from hot countries and cold, came thus by pairs, and entered into the ark with Noah? (p. vii)

The contact with the native mind forced him to ask himself whether the Scriptural stories were superior to the Zulu legends in any way. Were they not nothing more than products

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[42] *The Ethical Idealism of Matthew Arnold*, p. 9
[43] Mark D. Chapman, 'Liberal Anglicanism in the Nineteenth Century', p. 225; a letter from Ruskin to John James Ruskin, 2 October 1862, in *The Winnington Letters*, p. 379.
[44] Colenso, *Pentateuch*, p. vi.

of the mythical thinking of the Jewish people, no less irrational than the Zulu? Immoral descriptions in the Old Testament were another difficulty for him. In his life in Natal, he became more and more reluctant to 'present Old Testament accounts of massacres as if these were in accordance with the will of God, while telling his African hearers that battle and murder were immoral'.[45] This moral concern led him into Biblical criticism. The outcome of the investigation driven by his 'universalism', initially kindled by the reading of F. D. Maurice in Cambridge and enlarged by his experience in Natal, was not at all a 'higher comedy' for Jowett either, who admired the Bishop as having 'made an epoch in criticism by his straightforwardness'.[46] Serious dimensions of the controversy included how Colenso disposed of Maurice's racial theories for the recognition of 'the capacity of those beyond Western civilization to share in an understanding of God'.[47] For Colenso, as Chapman argued, the 'universality of God's grace which had been purchased by the blood of Jesus Christ was available to all, whether in England or in the mission field, and was written on the heart of all human beings' (p. 226). This direction was anticipated by Maurice himself, whose 1847 work on *The Religions of the World and their Relation to Christianity* – allegedly the 'first significant work in comparative religions' by a Churchman – was inspired by 'the unorthodox religious thought that understood all religions as expressions of human beings' inborn relationship to God'.[48]

Colenso entered St. John's College, Cambridge, in 1832 with an allowance from the college to study mathematics. His talent for this subject was not totally absent in his Bible studies, particularly in the first part of his *Pentateuch*, and this was a major source of ridicule in its reception. Arnold illustrates Colenso's 'arithmetical demonstrations', which are meant to provide 'the *reductio ad absurdum*' of the Pentateuch:

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[45] Peter Hinchliff in his *ODNB* entry on John William Colenso.
[46] Abbott and Campbell, II, p. 65. See also Hinchliff, 'Ethics, Evolution and Biblical Criticism'.
[47] Chapman, 'Liberal Anglicanism', p. 226.
[48] John E. Wilson, 'Remaking Theology', p. 39.

'Allowing 20 as the marriageable age, how many years are required for the production of 3 generations?' The answer to that sum disposes (on the Bishop's plan) of the Book of Genesis. Again, as to the account in the Book of Exodus of the Israelites dwelling in tents – *'Allowing 10 persons for each tent (and a Zulu hut in Natal contains on an average only 3 1/2), how many tents would 2,000,000 persons require?'* The parenthesis in that problem is hardly worthy of such a master of arithmetical statement as Dr. Colenso; but, with or without the parenthesis, the problem, when answered, disposes of the Book of Exodus. Again, as to the account in Leviticus of the provision made for the priests: *'If three priests have to eat 264 pigeons a day, how many must each priest eat?'* That disposes of Leviticus. (*CPW*, III: 48)

Arnold felt a need to answer this book by 'an excellent arithmetician' not in terms of professional theology but as 'a humble citizen' of 'the Republic of Letters' (*CPW*, III: 45, 40). The primary task of a literary critic as Arnold sees it is 'to try books as to the influence which they are calculated to have upon the general culture of single nations or of the world at large' (*CPW*, III: 41). For Arnold, the work of the Bishop of Natal had no rationale for its existence because it did not offer anything to edify the ill-instructed many nor to enlighten or inform the well-instructed few. Colenso himself was conscious that the book was useless for religious edification of the general reader, conceding that 'a demand may be made upon me for something to supply the loss, for something to fill up the aching void which will undoubtedly be felt at first'.[49] Spinoza, a chosen object for comparison of Arnold's essay, was much wiser in that he wrote his *Tractatus Theologico-*

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[49] *Pentateuch*, p. 147.

Politicus (1670) in Latin and did not dare to disturb the ordinary faith of the multitude –
and after all, writes Arnold, the 'much-instructed' few had been fully aware for long of
those Scriptural discrepancies that Colenso's book targeted. Arnold recollected in later
years that 'if it had not been for the corks I had brought from the study of Spinoza', the
reading of German Biblical critics 'would have drowned me' (*Letters*, IV: 290; to T. H.
Huxley, 8 December 1875). Spinoza's metaphysics denied any 'distinction between the
creator and the created', identifying God with Nature, and on this the German theologians
'recognized their debt to Spinoza'.[50] In addition to this 'dismissal of anthropomorphic
deity' alongside 'miracles, plenary inspiration, and general Bibliolatry', Arnold's
religious thought, as William Robbins argues, probably owed Spinoza such critical ideas
as 'the treatment of the resurrection in a spiritual sense; the stress on the Bible as
addressing the experience and imagination of men, not the reasoning powers of
metaphysicians and theologians'; and 'the virtual equation of morality and religion' (pp.
68–69).

Arnold in this essay denies another possible rationale for a religious book: one
intended for the intellectual enlightenment of the many. He clarifies that it is the 'highly-
instructed few, not the scantily-instructed many' that 'will ever be the organ to the human
race of knowledge and truth':

The great mass of the human race have to be softened and humanised through their
heart and imagination, before any soil can be found in them where knowledge may
strike living roots. Until the softening and humanising process is very far advanced,
intellectual demonstrations are uninforming for them; and, if they impede the
working of influences which advance this softening and humanising process, they

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[50] Super, *The Time-Spirit*, p. 65.

are even noxious; they retard their development, they impair the culture of the world.

(*CPW*, III: 43–44)

In Arnold's view, the harm or futility of undigested knowledge for the mass has been realized by '[a]ll the great teachers, divine and human', from Plato and Pindar to Newman and Christ himself (*CPW*, III: 44). Newman and other Tractarians are particularly relevant here, for they stressed the impossibility of dissociating the apparently cerebral process of perceiving divine truth from what they called 'ethos', i.e., 'moral rectitude as a light guiding man to find his way to truth through the maze of possible answers offered to him'.[51]

Arnold followed Newman when he found it disastrous to proclaim whatever religious truths, whenever and wherever one likes, in disregard of the circumstances of the hearers. Despising what he called 'paper logic', Newman refused to equate an intellectual assent with a genuine 'realizing'. It is common, as James Pereiro has written in addressing this aspect of Newman's thought, to find people 'assent[ing] to a proposition without feeling, thinking, speaking or acting as if it were true'. Without 'realizing' the truth that they daily hear as 'little more than mere words', they have 'no full impression in the soul, the heart or the mind of what has been received by the reason', nor has their conduct been 'reshaped by that knowledge'.[52] This is particularly true of religious knowledge. As Hurrell Froude, another Tractarian, discussed in denigrating the Protestant ideal of private judgement, it is essential to keep alert to the 'influence of habit in moulding our opinions' and the concomitant 'probability that every evil habit we may have contracted, consciously or unconsciously, from the day of our birth to the present

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[51] Pereiro, *Theories of Development*, p. 23.
[52] *Theories of Development*, p. 45.

hour, has in its degree perverted our judgement'.[53] This leads to the Tractarian emphasis on the authority of 'theologian[s] with special gifts of piety and holiness' eligible to 'find the most appropriate words to describe the mystery and give it precise conceptual expression', according to Pereiro (p. 75).

Another outcome of their theory of religious knowledge was the principle of 'reserve'. In an additional note to the book version of *Apologia pro Vita Sua*, initially entitled as *History of My Religious Opinions* (1865), Newman addressed the 'principle of the Economy', namely the 'rule of practice' for the 'cautious dispensation of the truth'. As God did not reveal his truths all at once but 'accommodated' himself to the situation of the finite minds, so religious truths should be 'reserved' before communicated to the mass of people:

> As Almighty God did not all at once introduce the Gospel to the world, and thereby gradually prepared men for its profitable reception, so, according to the doctrine of the early Church, it was a duty, for the sake of the heathen among whom they lived, to observe a great reserve and caution in communicating to them the knowledge of 'the whole counsel of God.'[54]

The 'doctrine of the early Church' was the *Disciplina Arcani*, which Newman had addressed in *The Arians of the Fourth Century* (1833). This doctrine was invented as 'a system to be followed in the instruction of those who wanted to become Catholics or in disputation with the pagans'. Revealed truths should be unfolded 'in due order and within the proper context, so as not to expose beginners prematurely to doctrines for which they

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[53] 'Principles to be Observed', p. 359. See Pereiro, p. 29.
[54] *Apologia*, pp. 412–13.

were unprepared'.[55] As Newman wrote in *Arians*, 'those who are strangers to the tone of thought and principles of the speaker' are not ready to be 'initiated into his system' at once; the *Disciplina Arcani* was thus required as a way of 'accommodation to the feelings and prejudices of the hearer, in leading him to the reception of a novel or unacceptable doctrine' (p. 79). The moral dispositions of the hearers – their *ethos* – need to be ripe for the reception of divine truth, which is not a matter of mere intellectual assent. In this respect, the Tractarians found the Evangelicals devastating, for the latter did not hesitate to present 'solemn religious truths in public without consideration for the fact that they were to be attained slowly by the sober and watchful, following the light granted them'.[56]

The Tractarians' notion of reserve was intended not least as a bulwark against heresy. For them, doctrinal deviations often resulted from 'an over-intellectual approach to revelation divorced from spiritual advancement', according to Pereiro. Attempts at 'a systematic theology' were precarious, for they 'involved an effort on the part of the human mind to impose its law on revealed truths', access to which was in reality closed to 'the proud intellect' (p. 72). Arnold was at one with them in his awareness of the danger of an over-intellectual liberal theology. He appropriated their idea of reserve in the preface to *Literature and Dogma*, in which he observed that an 'inevitable revolution' was 'befalling the religion in which we have been brought up', adding that '[i]n no country will it be more felt than in England' (*CPW*, VI: 147). The revolution itself was inevitable, as was the advent of democracy according to him; his concern was that 'there is incumbent on every one the utmost duty of considerateness and caution':

There can be no surer proof of a narrow and ill-instructed mind, than to think and uphold that what a man takes to be the truth on religious matters is always to be

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[55] Pereiro, p. 51.
[56] Pereiro, p. 51.

proclaimed. Our truth on these matters, and likewise the error of others, is something so relative, that the good or harm likely to be done by speaking ought always to be taken into account. […] The man who believes that his truth on religious matters is so absolutely the truth, that say it when, and where, and to whom he will, he cannot but do good with it, is in our day almost always a man whose truth is half blunder, and wholly useless. (*CPW*, VI: 147)

One of those 'narrow and ill-instructed' minds was Bishop Colenso. 'The theology may be false,' continues Arnold, 'and yet one may do more harm in attacking it than by keeping silence and waiting. To judge rightly the time and its conditions is the great thing; there is a time […] to speak, and a time to keep silence' (*CPW*, VI: 147–48).

When Arnold criticized Colenso – a case of 'a liberal attacking a liberal' – most commentators regarded 'this violent attack by a brother "rationalist"' as 'irrational in the extreme'.[57] There was a similar ambiguity in his relationship with the Tübingen biblical scholars, whom Arnold, according to James Livingston, 'showed an increasing dislike of and alarm over'.[58] For Arnold, the so-called Higher Critics were indeed 'uncritical'; that is to say, they wanted critical tact that he found exemplified in the writings of the English Tractarians (*CPW*, III: 40). Liberal practitioners in England were uncritical in the same way, which he thought illustrated a deficiency of English national character. Goethe knew that *der Engländer* were uncritical, according to Arnold, meaning that 'an Englishman held and uttered any given opinion as something isolated, without perceiving its relation to other ideas, or its due place in the general world of thought' (*CPW*, III: 40). Arnold does not hesitate to acknowledge that scholarship in Germany was superior to that in England. 'In every study', he concedes, 'one has to commence with the facts of that

[57] Livingston, *Matthew Arnold and Christianity*, p. 110; William Robbins, p. 9.
[58] *Matthew Arnold and Christianity*, p. 110.

study':

> Now, English religion does not know the facts of its study, and has to go to Germany
> for them. […] And so overwhelming is the advantage given by knowing the facts
> of a study, that a student, who comes to a man who knows them, is tempted to put
> himself into his hands altogether; and this we in general see English students do,
> when they have recourse to the theologians of Germany. They put themselves
> altogether into their hands, and take all that they give them, conclusions as well as
> facts. (*CPW*, VI: 157)

The blunt accumulation of facts, however, does not promise a reassuring conclusion. D. F. Strauss was adept at 'a negative criticism' of 'what is unsolid' in the Scripture; however, in Arnold's view, 'to deal with the reality which is still left in the New Testament, requires a larger, richer, deeper, more imaginative mind than his' (*CPW*, VI: 158). This he calls '*perception*' or 'justness of perception' – a quality not possessed by 'a mere specialist' like a German biblical scholar but one pertaining to a man of culture (*CPW*, VI: 158). Collini has thus picked out Arnold's essay on Colenso as an early voice from 'the republic of knowledge' against the intellectual division of labour at a time when the term 'specialization' and its cognates were going into general use.[59]

There is a sense in which Arnold ranked Newman higher than German scholars as a *literary* critic, and this fact – a liberal in theology appreciating a High-Anglican turned Catholic divine for the sake of critical tact – helps to reinforce the allegation that his aspiration for a reconstructed Christianity was nothing more than a matter of social control. As Livingston has argued, drawing on the words of Arnold's brother Thomas,

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[59] *Absent Minds*, p. 453.

Arnold admired Newman's 'perfect handling of words, joined to the delicate presentation of ideas' as 'rhetorical means of persuading his audiences'; '[t]his Newmanian "disposition of mind" included the sense of the importance of tone, of the need for a delicate handling of words and ideas and the requisite moderation, prudence, and reserve in conveying religious ideas' (p. 121). However, it is crucial to understand that Arnold's Culture was more than just a deliberate choice of words and phrases, and that it was by no means antagonistic to the intellectual development represented by the Higher Criticism. Rather, it was forged by the writings of German Historicism, not least those of Johann Gottfried von Herder.

As Ruth apRoberts has demonstrated in her book on *Arnold and God* (1983), the German concept of *Bildung* is key to the understanding of Arnold's oeuvre, not least his religious writings. Arnold read carefully and marked lavishly 'Herder's greatest achievement' as a philosopher of history, *Ideas for a Philosophy of History of Mankind* (1784–91), so ambitious a project as attempting to encompass 'man's place in the cosmos, every culture on earth, and the entire history of humanity, from its very beginnings to the Middle Ages'.[60] Arnold's 'sense of the whole of culture', according to apRoberts,

> had its roots in German Historicism and the complex of developmental thought associated with it, of which Darwinian evolution may be perceived as part. The Higher Criticism was a recognition of development in religion; the great doctrine of *Bildung* was a recognition of man's ever-incomplete development and the cognate infinite capacities. To cultivate all our distinctively human powers harmoniously, always *becoming* because the process is infinite – this is the law of our being, of *Humanität*, and this is Arnold's Culture. (pp. vii–viii)

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[60] Beiser, *German Historicist Tradition*, p. 148; *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*. See apRoberts, p. 42.

According to Frederick Beiser, Herder's earlier tract on *Another Philosophy of History for the Education of Mankind* (1774) 'anticipates many basic themes of historicism'.[61] Following Giambattista Vico's counter-argument against Cartesianism, Herder presents a 'meta-critique' of Enlightenment historiography, arguing that 'its judgments are based upon not universal and necessary principles but the values and beliefs of the present age illegitimately generalized as if they held for all mankind' (p. 133). An alternative principle he substitutes is what Beiser sums up as the 'principle of individuality' (p. 135). Herder believes that 'we should judge each culture by its own standards and values rather than those of another culture', according to Beiser; 'there is no single uniform standard of happiness that we could apply to all culture', for '[h]uman nature is not static and fixed but variable and plastic' (pp. 135, 134). Herder had this sense of the uniqueness of each culture in mind when he made the celebrated remark that 'each nation has its centre of happiness within itself, just as every sphere has its centre of gravity'.[62] He warns against a presentist approach to human history, in which historians attempt to understand 'an early stage of human development' with 'general concepts' or 'universal laws' invented at a later stage. We should have recourse to empathy – Vico's *fantasia* and Herder's *Einfühlung* – rather than explanation to take hold of 'the concrete, determinate and particular' of each culture. While empathy for Herder is not a surrogate of, but a supplement for explanation, he finds it impossible to consummate a historical enquiry unless we 'intuit, relive or feel into the past'.[63]

Another principle upon which Herder grounds his 1774 tract is what Beiser calls the 'principle of progress or development'. Herder assumes, in the words of Beiser, that

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[61] *German Historicist Tradition*, p. 132; *Auch eine Philosophie der Geschichte zur Bildung der Menschheit.*
[62] *J. G. Herder on Social and Political Culture*, p. 186.
[63] Beiser, *German Historicist Tradition*, pp. 135, 136. See also Lyons, chap. 4.

'[a]ll major cultures of Western civilization are linked together as if they were so many stages in the development of a single person'. '[A]ll history' for him 'is an organism' (p. 136). Herder's historicism is thus interlinked with the notion of *Bildung*. *Bildung* is, in the words of apRoberts, 'the willed harmonious development in the individual of all aspects of the human – as distinct from animal – potential, which Herder calls *Humanität*' (p. 43). To the extent that he distinguishes *Menschheit*, mankind as 'empirical species being', from *Humanität*, humanity as 'the fullness of moral and spiritual development', Herder retains the 'enlightened idea of human exceptionalism', believing that 'man could command his own development by virtue of his emancipation from the bonds of instinct'.[64] The idea of *Bildung*, one germane to the realization of the distinctively *human* faculties, could thus be a powerful weapon to face the naturalist understanding of human mind that underpinned Utilitarian philosophy.

For Herder, 'we live in a world we ourselves create'.[65] Language is a most distinctively human capacity, and we live in an environment which is constituted by our cultural products, including both what we classify as sacred and as secular texts. Poetry and religion cannot or need not be severely demarcated, because they together are expressive of the spirit of the *Volk*. The Bible is one supreme expression. For Herder, according to apRoberts, the Bible 'contains the highest poetry of the human race, and the rationale for this has nothing to do with "Inspiration"'. Rather, it is appreciated on the basis of what Isaiah Berlin calls the 'expressionist' view of language and art, according to which, so apRoberts argues, 'the poetry of the "*Volk*" – myth, folk song, or Bible' is revered 'as the *making* of the human consciousness in all its varieties' (p. 142). Andrew Bowie thus regards Herder as an 'influential initiator of the "linguistic turn" in modern

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[64] Duncan, pp. 114–15.
[65] Berlin, *Three Critics of the Enlightenment*, p. 208.

philosophy'.[66] Herder reacted against the Enlightenment view of language as 'primarily the means of representing a ready-made world', Bowie writes, in favour of the view that 'language makes manifest aspects of things that would otherwise not be manifest' (pp. 53, 55). Herder thought that the language for a particular *Volk* is 'a tool of *their* organs, a content of *their* world of thinking and a form of *their* manner of designating'.[67] It is interesting to note that Arnold, in *Literature and Dogma*, ascribes the want of perception in German biblical scholars partly to what he sees as characteristics of their language. In the German language, he observes, 'there does seem to be something *splay*, something blunt-edged, unhandy and infelicitous', with 'some positive want of straightforward, sure perception, which tends to balance the great superiority of the Germans in special knowledge, and in the disposition to deal impartially with knowledge' (*CPW,* VI: 158).

Herder's 'expressionist' view of language gave grounds for his celebrated cultural pluralism, while it could be appropriated for justification of an assertion of nationalistic exclusivity.[68] Because Herder was writing 'at a time when there was no real political entity called Germany', it appears reasonable that he opted to elaborate on 'the until then largely ignored ways in which language can build culture and identity'.[69] Arnold was conscious of this aspect of Herder's thought, namely the idea that *Bildung* or Culture makes for social solidarity. Arnold doubly marked a passage in Heinrich Luden's introduction to the 1828 edition of Herder's *Ideen*, in which Luden explained the author's idea of the 'chain of culture':

It is culture [*Bildung*] alone which binds together the generations which live on

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[66] *Introduction to German Philosophy*, p.51.
[67] Herder, *Über die neuere deutsche Literatur. Fragmente*; translated and quoted by Bowie in *Introduction to German Philosophy*, p. 51.
[68] See Vicki Spencer's *Herder's Political Thought*, chap. 5.
[69] Bowie, p.51.

after the other as men who see [but] one day, and *it is in culture [Bildung] that the solidarity of mankind is to be sought*, since in it the strivings of all men coincide.[70]

This intellectual source confirms that Arnold's idea of culture was a *communal* ideal from its origin, a fact that was obscured by the following generation of University Liberals.

ApRoberts thus establishes Herder's thought as a vital inspiration for Arnold's idea of reading the Bible as *literary* text. Another better-known source for what apRoberts calls Arnold's 'poetry-religion continuum' is of course Carlyle, who wrote in 1831 that 'Literature is but a branch of Religion' and 'the only branch that still shows any greenness', suspecting that it must 'one day become the main stream' – but Carlyle was familiar with Herder's historicism himself.[71] Arnold owned a copy of Herder's *The Spirit of Hebrew Poetry*, which approached the Old Testament as poetic books.[72] Arnold, following Herder, invalidates the sharp distinction between literary and religious writings, seeing both as *Volkslieder* or folk poetry. The Old Testament needs to be appreciated as the poetry of the Hebrew people, as a record of their mythical way of thinking. This means that reading the Scriptures correctly requires placing them in their own context. The knowledge necessary for this would be provided by what Arnold called culture, which he identified as 'the acquainting ourselves with the best that has been known and said in the world, and thus with *the history of the human spirit*' (*CPW*, VI: 151; emphasis added). Arnold's stress on the *best* has been too often emphasized – what needs to be heeded more in our context is culture as the acquaintance with 'the history of the human spirit'.

At this point, it becomes clear there was no real disjunction between his Hellenist

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[70] Translated and quoted by apRoberts in *Arnold and God*, p. 45 (emphasis by Arnold).
[71] *Works of Thomas Carlyle*, XXVIII, p. 23. See DeLaura, 'Arnold and Carlyle' and Shine, 'Carlyle's Early Writings and Herder's *Ideen*'.
[72] *Vom Geist der Ebräischen Poesie*, trans. by J. Marsh (Burlington, VT.: E. Smith, 1832). See apRoberts, pp. 41–42.

project in *Culture and Anarchy* and the apparently converted Hebraist project in his religious writings in the 1870s. The latter was, as he claims in *St. Paul and Protestantism*, just 'to complete what we have already begun', namely the project in *Culture and Anarchy* 'to make reason and *the will of God* prevail'. *Culture and Anarchy* had denounced 'the over-Hebraising of Puritanism' and 'its want of a wide culture', which led to its bibliolatrous blunder (*CPW*, VI: 7). In Arnold's view, a literalist reading of the Bible persists due to the dominance of 'the *homo unius libri*, the man of no range in his reading' among priests and theologians (*CPW*, VI: 152). He observed 'the special moral feature of our times' in the fact that '*the masses* are losing the Bible and its religion' (*CPW*, VI: 362). The cause of the matter he found in those who predicated the essence of the Bible upon 'a story, or set of asserted facts, which is impossible to verify', such as 'the fairy-tale of the three supernatural persons', causing 'hard-headed people' to discard the religion itself which was allegedly based upon the veracity of those 'unverified and unverifiable facts' (*CPW*, VI: 363). Despite that, Arnold believes that the Bible remains 'the great inspirer' of conduct, which occupies 'more than three-fourths of human life' (*CPW*, VI: 363). For an accurate construction of the Bible, we need to have 'enough experience of the way in which men have thought and spoken, to feel what the Bible-writers are about; to read between the lines, to discern where he ought to rest with his whole weight, and where he ought to pass lightly' (*CPW*, VI: 152). In short, for Arnold, 'no man […] who know nothing else, knows even his Bible' (*CPW*, VI: 7). Only with culture, knowledge of 'the life of humanity', will we realize that 'the language of the Bible' is not 'rigid, fixed, and scientific' but rather 'fluid, passing, and literary' (*CPW*, VI: 152). Arnold goes so far as to insist that 'a scanty sense of the life of humanity' prevents us from perceiving 'the God of the Bible' and 'the salvation of the Bible' in a state of 'gradually and on an immense scale discovering themselves and *becoming*', instead of 'seeing them ready-made' and 'in

such precise and reduced dimensions' as suit those narrow spirits adhering to 'mechanical and materializing theology' (*CPW*, VI: 152). The idea of God in becoming was also harboured by Green, who wrote in the essay on Christian dogma that 'God has died and been buried, and risen again, and realised himself in all the particularities of a moral life' (*CW*, III: 184). Sell warns against this assertion by noting that 'the Godhead does not die'.[73] Sell's point, applicable to both Arnold and Green, is that 'the idealist emphasis on immanence' and its 'pantheistic tendency' put 'transcendence and the supernatural at risk', thereby posing serious consequences for Christian belief, not least by obliterating 'room for personal communication between God and his worshippers' (pp. 126–27, 128).

With culture, experience of 'the history of the human spirit and its deliverances', Arnold attempts to 'recast religion' and 'insist on the natural truth of Christianity' (*CPW*, VI: 378, 150, 143). This project of *Literature and Dogma* is addressed to 'those who feel attachment to Christianity, to the Bible, but who recognise the growing discredit befalling miracles and the supernatural' (*CPW*, VI: 142–43). But they can be reassured, for culture tells us that 'the real essence of Scripture' is nothing other than that '*To him that ordereth his conversation right shall be shown the salvation of God!*', for the Old Testament, and '*Follow Jesus!*', for the New (*CPW*, VI: 349). So far as this core 'Bible-dogma' is retained, all the 'dogma of our formularies' can safely go (*CPW*, VI: 349). To discern this, we need to start by tracing the emergence of the Biblical religion among the Hebrew people and 'relive' their religious experience.

As 'the Greeks' had the 'specialty' for plastic art and 'the Aryan' for science, so Israel, according to Arnold, had 'a specialty for righteousness, for making us feel what it is and giving us an enthusiasm' (*CPW*, VI: 370–71):

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[73] *Philosophical Idealism and Christian Belief*, p. 286n.

No people ever felt so strongly as the people of the Old Testament, the Hebrew people, that conduct is three-fourths of our life and its largest concern. No people ever felt so strongly that succeeding, going right, hitting the mark in this great concern, was the way of peace, the highest possible satisfaction. (*CPW*, VI: 180)

As a people who had 'their minds long and deeply engaged with' righteousness, continues Arnold, 'one thing could not fail to strike' the minds of the Hebrew people: 'the very great part in righteousness' that belongs 'to *not ourselves*' (*CPW*, VI: 180–81). This was 'a vast object of consciousness', which they could not fully grasp, so they tentatively *threw out* the word *Jehovah* at this object (*CPW*, VI: 187). The 'Hebrew people's mode of naming God', *Jehovah*, 'gives us the notion of a mere mythological deity', as its 'wrong translation', *Lord*, 'gives us the notion of a magnified and non-natural man' (*CPW*, VI: 182). However, what they had in their consciousness in thus naming was, thought Arnold, a sense of '*The Eternal*' (*CPW*, VI: 182).

Israel, however, 'had no talent for abstruse reasoning'; excelling in 'poetry and eloquence' but having 'no system', they could not 'express even abstract notions by other than highly concrete terms' (*CPW*, VI: 187). It is '[t]heologians with metaphysical heads' who 'render Israel's *Eternal* by *the self-existent*, and Israel's *not ourselves* by *the absolute*', attributing 'to Israel their own subtleties' (*CPW*, VI: 184). The Hebrew people just 'felt and experienced', they 'inferred nothing, reasoned out nothing' (*CPW*, VI: 184). They did not look 'out into the world' and discover 'everywhere the marks of design and adaptation' to their want, nor did they form a metaphysical 'theory of a first cause'; they did not 'scientifically predicate *personality* of God' and proclaim him as 'the moral and intelligent Governor of the universe (*CPW*, VI: 184, 188). They were all invented at a later stage. All that Israel had was their lived experience of righteousness and their

conviction that there exists 'the *not ourselves* which makes for righteousness' (*CPW*, VI: 189). In short, the language of 'the founder of our religion' or the 'language of the Bible' was 'literary, not scientific language'; it was poetic language '*thrown out* at an object of consciousness not fully grasped, which inspired emotion' (*CPW*, VI: 189).

The 'Bible is *literature*', insists Arnold; 'its words are used, like the words of common life and of poetry and eloquence, approximately, and not like the terms of science, adequately' (*CPW*, VI: 316). Even the word 'God' is 'a *literary* term' – not a term of 'exact knowledge' but 'a term of poetry' (*CPW*, VI: 171). These assertions may not sound surprising to hear from a literary critic who 'became retrospectively canonized as one of the presiding spirits of the new discipline' of English Studies from the middle of the twentieth century, etherealizing the literary canon as quasi-sacred text in a post-Christian age. [74] It is more unexpected to encounter a similar remark in Green's *Prolegomena to Ethics*, which stands at the core of his project of philosophical rather than literary reconstruction of Christian faith. We have seen that Green's eternal consciousness reproduces itself throughout social institutions and expresses itself through the individual conscience at once. The same spiritual principle, according to him, gives birth to the idea of 'something that human life should be, of a perfect being for whom this "should be" already "is"' (*PE*, §317). And this idea is often expressed in 'forms of the imagination', i.e., 'the imagination of a supreme invisible but all-seeing ruler', analogous to 'an earthly superior' like 'the head of a family or the sovereign of a state' – someone 'from whom commands proceed' and 'who punishes the violation of those commands' (*PE*, §317). However, it is essential to recognize that these 'figures of speech' employed to express the idea of a perfect being are 'derived *by metaphor* from sensible matters of fact' and do not convey 'literal truth' (*PE*, §319; emphasis added). It is a 'necessity' of 'our rational

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[74] Collini's *ODNB* entry on Arnold.

nature' that 'these forms of imagination' should be 'subject to criticism' (*PE*, §318). Now that Biblical criticism 'comes to do its inevitable work upon the language of imagination', Green believes that 'a counter-work is called for from philosophy', which, he continues echoing Arnold, 'has an important bearing upon conduct' (*PE*, §319). Philosophy's task is to 'disentangle the operative ideas from their necessarily imperfect expression' and to establish that 'the validity of the ideas themselves' is 'not affected by the discovery' that the imaginative language of ordinary religion 'has not the sort of truth which belongs to a correct statement of matters of fact'. Understanding our duty towards God's commands strictly in the same way as the servant's fulfilment of his master's orders is a categorical mistake, as is asking 'whether sleep is swift or virtue square'. The truthfulness of a religious pseudo-statement can only be reasonably addressed when it is understood as an imaginative expression of 'an emotion arising from consciousness of a relation which really subsists between the human soul and God':

> If the infinite Spirit so communicates itself to the soul of man as to yield the idea of a possible perfect life, and that consequent sense of personal responsibility on the part of the individual for making the best of himself as a social being from which the recognition of particular duties arises, then it is a legitimate expression *by means of metaphor* […] to say that our essential duties are commands of God (*PE*, §319; emphasis added).

Green concurs with Arnold in his denunciation of the Evangelical notion of a vengeful God as an external 'source of rewards and penalties', which Arnold variously ridiculed as 'a magnified and non-natural man who has really worked stupendous miracles' or 'a man in the next street' who is 'appeased by a sacrifice' and 'remit[s] in consideration of

it his wrath' against those who offend him (*PE*, §320; *CPW*, VI: 243, 9, 63). For both, these were caricatures of a spiritual truth begotten by the bibliolatrous reification.

The term that Arnold borrowed from Goethe to describe these caricatures was *Aberglaube*, a German word to mean '*extra-belief*, belief beyond what is certain and verifiable' (*CPW*, VI: 212). Unlike the English word 'superstition', Arnold asserts that the German term does not have a pejorative connotation – hence Goethe's remark that '*Aberglaube* is the poetry of life, – *der Aberglaube ist die Poesie des Lebens*' (*CPW*, VI: 212). When the Hebrew people's conviction that '*Righteousness tendeth to life*' appeared to collide with their political reality – in which '*[t]he ungodly prosper in the world*' with 'difficulties pressing the Jewish community on all sides, with a Persian governor lording it in Jerusalem' – the 'sceptical, epicurean' Book of Ecclesiastes was composed (*CPW*, VI: 207). These earthly difficulties could not fail to urge Israel, 'the depositary and upholder of the idea of righteousness', to 'look ardently and expectantly to the future, to some great change and redress in store' (*CPW*, VI: 209). Hence, the Messianic ideas were sung as 'the poetry of life'. However, they later started to believe these extra-beliefs to be propositions belonging to the realm of science, when Jesus Christ came to restore the original moral intuition of Israel.

The 'capital fact of the Old Testament' resided in the Hebrew people's 'intuition of God' as '*the Eternal that makes for righteousness*' (*CPW*, VI: 215). But as time went on, this revelation lost 'its nearness and clearness', until 'the mass of the Hebrews' came to imagine their God as 'a mere magnified and non-natural man, like the God of our popular religion now, who has commanded certain courses of conduct and attached certain sanctions to them' (*CPW*, VI: 215). Arnold's point is that the same process of reifying *Aberglaube* as scientific statements has happened to the Christian religion, now invested with 'a vast *extra-belief* of a phantasmagorical advent of Jesus Christ, a resurrection and

judgment, Christ's adherents glorified, his rejectors punished everlastingly' (*CPW*, VI: 231). The problem was that Christians in his own time 'more and more rested the proof of Christianity, not on its internal evidence, but on prophecy and miracle' (*CPW*, VI: 231). Now that the 'Zeit-Geist' and the 'spread of what is called *enlightenment*' made untenable 'the reliance on prediction and miracle as evidences of Christianity', it was clear for Arnold that there was an urgent need for the 'substitution of some other proof of Christianity for th[ese] accustomed proof[s]' (*CPW*, VI: 236, 232).

In 'the scientific language of Protestant theology' as Arnold understood it, faith meant 'a hearty consent to the covenant of grace and an acceptance of the benefit of Christ's imputed righteousness' (*CPW*, VI: 46). St. Paul had a different conception. With him, faith meant a powerful and potent influence from Jesus and an affectionate identification with him. Paul felt 'a wonder-working power of attachment' of Jesus 'penetrat[ing] him', and deeply realized

> how by perfectly identifying himself through it with Jesus, by appropriating Jesus, and in no other way, could he ever get the confidence and the force to do as Jesus did. He thus found a point in which the mighty world outside man, and the weak world inside him, seemed to combine for his salvation. The struggling stream of duty, which had not volume enough to bear him to his goal, was suddenly reinforced by the immense tidal wave of sympathy and emotion. (*CPW*, VI: 43)

To this power Paul assigned 'one unalterable object', his central doctrine of the *necrosis*: '*to die with Christ to the law of the flesh, to live with Christ to the law of the mind*' (*CPW*, VI: 47). The significance of resurrection should be retained according to this spirit, rather than as an extra-belief about a miraculous, external event. We cannot properly understand

Paul's ideas of life and death in the ordinary physical senses. For him, death means 'living after the flesh, obedience to sin', and 'life is mortifying by the spirit the deeds of the flesh, obedience to righteousness' (*CPW*, VI: 52). Resurrection for Paul is thus 'a rising, in this visible earthly existence, from the death of obedience to blind selfish impulse, to the life of obedience to the eternal moral order' (*CPW*, VI: 56). Arnold thinks that Jesus had died '[l]ong before his signal Crucifixion' in this sense, 'by taking up daily that cross which his disciples, after his daily example, were to take up also' (*CPW*, VI: 320). Likewise, Jesus 'had risen to life long before his crowning Resurrection', which 'he desired to see fulfilled in his disciples also'. The Christian faith therefore remains intact, for this does not require assent to any scientific statement (*CPW*, VI: 315). The Christian faith is thus identified with '*the being able to cleave to a power of goodness appealing to our higher and real self, not to our lower and apparent self*'. The nub of it for Arnold was 'the idea of *two lives*', 'the higher and permanent self' in conflict with 'the lower and transient self' (*CPW*, VI: 292).

With a full grasp of his religious output in the 1870s, Arnold's remark in *Culture and Anarchy* that 'the only perfect freedom' resides in 'a service' or 'an elevation of our best self' makes sense as more than just a 'kid-glove' scorn for Victorian Philistinism. Of course, 'the Manichaean view of the self' pervades the period's religious as well as political thought, not a monopoly of Arnold and Green.[75] Nevertheless, the fact that Goethe's line '*Stirb und werde!*' ('Die and become!') was cherished by Arnold as well as by British Idealists including Edward Caird as an essence of St. Paul's original moral experience is one indication that they worked in a similar intellectual environment (*CPW*, VI: 295)[76]. Caird epitomized what the fused influence of the liberal Anglican tradition and the Idealist school amounted to in religious thinking. Caird sought a 'science' of

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[75] Collini, *Public Moralists*, p. 97.
[76] See Mander, *British Idealism*, p. 218.

religion in his Gifford Lectures published in 1893, aiming to 'separate what is permanent from what is transitory in the traditions of the past'. What he had in view was a 'large and increasing class who have become alienated from the ordinary dogmatic system of belief, but who, at the same time, are conscious that they have owed a great part of their spiritual life to the teaching of the Bible and the Christian Church'.[77] Caird found a permanent element of the Christian religion in his non-supernatural view of Christ as 'divine *just because* he is the most human of men, the man in whom the universal spirit of humanity has found its fullest expression'. Christ he saw as 'the ideal or typical man' and 'the purest revelation of God in man' (II, p. 233). But as Hinchliff has argued, Caird's concept of 'development' – his rationale for a 'science' of *Evolution of Religion* – seems to have worked arbitrarily as 'a justification for choosing what was attractive to himself in the orthodox tradition and abandoning the rest'.[78] Neither Arnold nor Green is immune to the same indictment for attenuating the doctrinal particularities and the historical uniqueness of the Christian religion in their remarkably similar attempt to rescue its moral significance.

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[77] *Evolution of Religion*, I, p. viii.
[78] *Benjamin Jowett and the Christian Religion*, p. 215.

Conclusion

Literary critics from the twentieth century onwards have given the prime importance to *Culture and Anarchy* among Arnold's *oeuvre* and it is easily forgotten that it was *Literature and Dogma* that attracted the greatest attention of his immediate contemporaries. As soon as it was published, the sale of this book 'far outstripped his others', probably selling over 100,000 by the first decade of twentieth century, and it 'quickly became his most widely known book'.[1] It is equally obscured that one of the best-selling novels of the late Victorian period, *Robert Elsmere* (1888), was something that Oscar Wilde saw as 'simply Arnold's *Literature and Dogma* with the literature left out'.[2] The author, Mrs Humphry Ward, was a niece of Arnold – or a granddaughter of Dr Arnold – and she, as William Peterson writes, 'never allowed either herself or others to forget these family connections':

> she named her son Arnold Ward and urged him incessantly to live up to the family name; and her novels are conspicuously padded with quotations from her uncle and grandfather. Indeed, both publicly and privately she tended to interpret her own career as a writer very largely in terms of her family heritage, encouraging others to do so as well.[3]

Owing to the novel based on an 'Arnoldian dialectic', Mrs Ward, '[l]ike Byron […] awoke to find herself famous' in both sides of the Atlantic in the spring of 1888.[4] This dialectic – 'the destruction of orthodoxy by modern rationalism […] followed by a new

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[1] Super, *Time-spirit*, pp. 81–82.
[2] Wilde, *Criticism*, p. 80.
[3] Peterson, *Victorian Heretic*, p. 17.
[4] Peterson, pp. 136, 159.

synthesis which would offer a reasonable religion' to moderns – is lived out by the title character.[5] Robert Elsmere, an Anglican parson wedded to Catherine who symbolizes orthodox Christianity in the novel, is lured to the way of rational scepticism by the influence of the local squire in Surrey, Roger Wendover, in whom 'history repeats itself' by moving his interest 'from the Fathers to the Philosophers, from Hooker to Hume'.[6] Wendover, who is said to have been partially modelled on Mark Pattison, fills a whole bookcase with 'most of the early editions of the *Leben Jesu*, with some corrections from Strauss's hand, and similar records of Baur, Ewald, and other members or opponents of the Tübingen school' (I, p. 295). It is Mr Grey, 'a Greats tutor', who is responsible for the fascination Elsmere feels for the bookshelf (I, p. 85). Grey, says Elsmere, gave him a 'homily before I left Oxford on the absolute necessity of keeping up with books' and Grey's motto was that '*The decisive events of the world take place in the intellect*' (I, p. 297). His words were all the more striking for Elsmere for they came 'from one who has always had such a tremendous respect for practical life and work' (I, p. 297).

This character, Grey, was overtly modelled on T. H. Green – the wife of a Brasenose fellow, Mrs Ward had access to the inner coteries of Oxonian intellectuals inhabited by Pattison, Green, and Pater. Mr Grey, like Green, 'determined […] to carry on the practice' as a lay tutor of 'address[ing] their men once a term before Communion Sunday' and gave an address in a lecture room that would be stamped 'on Robert's minds with extraordinary intensity' (I, pp. 86–87). Although the sermon was 'clothed […] in metaphysical language' and 'beyond him', Elsmere recognized in the preacher 'a man in whom the generation of spiritual force was so strong and continuous that it overflowed of necessity into the poorer, barrener lives around him, kindling and enriching' (I, pp. 87–88). Questions that Grey addressed were exactly the same as those that we saw in the last chapter Green addressing

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[5] Peterson, p. 136.
[6] Ward, *Robert Elsmere*, I, p. 295.

in his religious writings. These were, in the words of Mrs Ward:

> What did the Apostle [St. Paul] mean by a death to sin and self? What were the precise ideas attached to the words 'risen with Christ'? Are this death and this resurrection necessarily dependent upon certain alleged historical events? Or are they not primarily, and were they not, even in the mind of St. Paul, two aspects of a spiritual process perpetually re-enacted in the soul of man, and constituting the veritable revelation of God? Which is the stable and lasting witness of the Father: the spiritual history of the individual and the world, or the envelope of miracle to which hitherto mankind has attributed so much importance? (I, p. 88)

Grey's words brought Elsmere 'near to the great primal forces breathing through the divine workshop' and he felt how 'the "pitiful, earthy self" with its passions and its cravings sank into nothingness beside the "great ideas" and the "great causes"' for which Grey 'claimed their devotion' (I, pp. 88–89).

If it was Grey who initially opened the door to Elsmere's recognition that '*miracles do not happen*', it was also Grey who brought to Elsmere 'an actual burning certainty of belief' that would save him from the noxious influence of Wendover's atheistic rationalism (II, p. 54; I, p. 89). Elsmere saw that science and criticism did not need to lead to atheism for, as Grey said, '[t]he thought of man, as it has shaped itself in institutions, in philosophies, in science, in patient critical work, or in the life of charity, is the one continuous revelation of God' (II, p. 75). Grey assured Elsmere that he 'ha[s] gone through the last wrench' and that he just needs to 'learn to seek God, not in any single event of past history, *but in your own soul*, – in the constant verifications of experience, in the life of Christian love':

You being what you are, nothing can cut this ground from under your feet. Whatever may have been the forms of human belief, *faith*, the faith which saves, has always been rooted here! All things change, – creeds and philosophies and outward systems, – but God remains! (II, p. 75)

This liberal Anglican lesson led Elsmere further than where Arnold and Green stopped. In fact, Mrs Ward also possessed 'Pattison's mood of militant, aggressive hostility towards the Church' and felt somewhat uncomfortable (until late in her life) with the Balliolite disparagement of 'separation from the Church' and view of the Eucharist as 'an emblem of Christian unity which transcend all credal differences'.[7] Mrs Ward made Elsmere leave the Church and discard his clerical vocation, founding instead the New Brotherhood of Christ in a warehouse on Elgood Street, which was modelled on Toynbee Hall, to serve the poor in the East End of London. In being suspected of his 'Theism' being 'a mere arbitrary hypothesis, at the mercy of any rival philosophical theory', Elsmere replied that 'the vital difference between Theism and Christianity' was that 'as an explanation of things *Theism can never be disproved*' (II, p. 154). Unlike Christianity, which was rested 'upon a special group of facts' and whose ground were 'literary and historical', Theism stood on *a prior* grounds, 'which the hostile man of science cannot destroy' (II, p. 154). Elsmere objected to the Broad Church 'policy of prudent silence and gradual expansion from within, to save the great "plant" of the Establishment from falling wholesale into the hands of the High Churchmen'; in effect, he saw, the Broad Churchmen got involved 'in endless contradictions and practical falsities of speech and action' (II, p. 162).

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[7] Peterson, pp. 75, 79.

These quotations confirm Charles Taylor's contention that Mrs Ward 'borrowed less from her uncle, and more from the philosopher T. H. Green' in granting Elsmere a new belief in 'something like an impersonal force'.[8] Elsmere confessed that the God that he believed in was 'an Eternal Goodness – and an Eternal Mind – of which Nature and Man are the continuous and the only revelation'; it was 'that force at the root of things which is revealed to us whenever a man helps his neighbour, […] whenever a workman throws mind and conscience into his works, or a statesman labours not for his own gain but for that of the State' (II, p. 280). At the same time, however, this characterization of God makes it clear that Mrs Ward 'takes up a crucial theme for Arnold' in forging a new religion as 'a way of binding together our society'.[9] Elsmere equated his new religion with 'a new social bond', or 'a new compelling force in man and in society':

> What are you economists and sociologists of the new type always pining for? Why, for that diminution of the self in man which is to enable the individual to see the *world's* ends clearly, and to care not only for his own but for his neighbour's interest, which is to make the rich devote themselves to the poor, and the poor bear with the rich. […] It is man's will which is eternally defective, eternally inadequate. Well, the great religions of the world are the stimulants by which the power at the root of things has worked upon this sluggish instrument of human destiny. Without religion you cannot make the will equal to its tasks. Our present religion fails us; we must, we will have another! (II, pp. 399–400)

It is palpable that Mrs Ward portrays religion here as 'the essential bulwark of Culture against Anarchy', which strongly illustrates the combined influence of Arnold and Green

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[8] *A Secular Age*, p. 385.
[9] Ibid.

in the late Victorian period.[10]

The question of Christianity largely evaded Raymond Williams's attention in his delineation of the 'culture and society' genealogy, and *Robert Elsmere* failed to find its place there (just as the novel failed to find its place in Leavis's 'Great Tradition'). The same fate fell upon Green and British Idealism in general. Even Basil Willey, the most attentive to the role of Christianity in the intellectual life of modern Britain among the major protagonists of the Cambridge English, did not do more than mention Green's name in his discussion of Mrs Ward's novel.[11]

However, the Idealist school in Britain in fact had much in common with Williams in his democratic reappropriation of the idea of 'common culture'. In his essay 'Democracy' (1861), Arnold appealed to the action of the State as an alternative authority to impart 'one ideal of greatness, high feeling, and fine culture' to the nation in place of the declining aristocracy (*CPW*, II: 17). The English people had benefited from the existence of the aristocracy in the 'grand style', according to Arnold, and what was responsible for the 'invaluable example of qualities' that the aristocracy held up in front of the 'common people' in England was 'the bond of a common culture', which comprehended the spectrum of '[a]ristocratical bodies' in spite of differences in 'their political opinions and acts' (*CPW*, II: 6, 5). Part of the aim of Williams in his polemical concluding remarks in *Culture and Society* was to redefine and revivify the idea of 'common culture' as a democratic and egalitarian ideal. 'The contrast between a minority and a popular culture cannot be absolute', according to Williams, for '[t]he area of culture' was 'proportionate to the area of a language rather than to the area of a class' (pp. 420, 421). 'English emerged as the common language', he continued, and 'great harm can be done to it by the imposition of crude categories of class' (pp. 421, 422). Likewise, English

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[10] Ibid.
[11] 'How "Robert Elsmere" Struck Some Contemporaries'.

as 'a national literature' is not consumed by 'the dominant language mode' associated with a dominant class in society but contains 'also elements of the whole culture and language' (p. 423).

Enclosure of a minority culture happens primarily because of 'a basic failure in communication', one sanctioned by 'a conception of society which relegates the majority of its members to mob-status' (pp. 413, 399). However, as Williams's celebrated remark has it, '[t]here are in fact no masses; there are only ways of seeing people as masses' (p. 393). The idea of 'masses' is intertwined with 'the dominative attitude to communication'; the 'formula' of the masses as 'gullible, fickle, herd-like, low in taste and habit' is required for the purpose of manipulation, i.e., 'the persuasion of a large number of people to act, feel, think, know, in certain ways' (pp. 413, 398). Williams saw the 'dominative' mode of communication as 'still paramount' even in 'democratic communities' (p. 413). A. D. Lindsay, who invited Williams into adult education as the chairman of the recruiting panel in the Extra-Mural Delegacy of the University of Oxford, judged the legacy of Utilitarianism for democratic practice in the same terms.[12] The Utilitarians, Lindsay asserted, 'approached the problems of democracy as superior persons', calculating 'the efforts of the masses whom their wisdom was to guide' from a high place – Bentham did so 'from the calm height of the scientific legislator', James Mill from the height of 'the civil servant at the India House'. The Idealist philosophers, by contrast, were 'real democrats' and 'approached the problem of democracy from the standpoint of the ordinary citizen'. Due to his own experience of participating in 'the running of politics' as 'an active citizen', Green was allowed an insight into 'what an amount of steady, disinterested devotion from ordinary men and women it takes to run a modern democracy'. Green knew 'what an unusual amount of idealism goes to the

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[12] Dai Smith, *Raymond Williams*, p. 226.

running of a practical democracy' not from an academic speculation but from the experience in 'the dull spadework of politics and social effort, grappling along with other ordinary men with difficulties arising from incompetence and complacence and fatalism'.[13]

The Utilitarians stuck to what Williams calls 'the bourgeois idea of society'. According to this idea, society is viewed 'as a merely neutral area' or 'an abstract regulating mechanism' within which 'each individual is free to pursue his own development and his own advantage' (pp. 429, 426). In contrast, the Idealists must be seen to have possessed the 'working-class idea' of society if we conform to Williams's taxonomy. According to this view, society is conceived as 'the positive means for all kinds of development, including individual development': 'the values of individual men' are seen to be 'rooted in society'; and 'the common interest' is identified as 'true self-interest' (pp. 427, 430, 435). In a quasi-Hegelian way, William observes this working-class idea being 'embodied in the organizations and institutions which that class creates' – irrespective of whether 'working-class people as individuals' are conscious or not – in the forms of 'the trade unions, the cooperative movement, or a political party' (pp. 427–28). Furthermore, Williams adopted the Greenian vocabulary when he claimed the necessity for a community 'to make room for, not only variation, but even dissidence, within the common loyalty' (p. 437). As Lindsay stressed, '[o]ne of the merits of Green' was his conviction that '[i]f the State normally merits the citizen's obedience there are times when it is the citizen's duty to disobey the State'.[14]

According to Williams, 'any real theory of communication is a theory of community' (p. 410). A 'transmission' must be 'an offering', not 'an attempt to dominate', and '[a]ctive reception' and 'living response' are impossible without 'an effective community

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[13] Introduction to Green's *Principles of Political Obligation*, pp. xi–xii.
[14] Introduction, p. xvii.

of experience' (p. 415). However, in Williams's view, 'effective communication' is impeded by the 'inequalities of many kinds which still divide our community', lacking in 'a genuinely common experience, save in certain rare and dangerous moments of crisis' – hence his appeal for 'a common culture'. An underappreciated fact is that Williams was not alone in his hope for a common culture. It was widely shared by progressive Christian authors who transmitted the legacy of Green and Idealism into an age of pluralism and hostile industrial relations. It was not only the conservative appropriation of the idea of culture led by T. S. Eliot that constituted the polemical context of *Culture and Society*. Green's influence was then not limited to liberal Anglicans like Lindsay, William Temple, and Ernest Barker; nor to the student of philosophy like Eliot, whose dissertation on F. H. Bradley is perhaps the single well-known episode of the literary reception of British Idealism. R. H. Tawney was another Balliolite who imbibed Idealism, which in his case was mediated by the 'Incarnationist' theology of Charles Gore and Henry Scott Holland. When he bemoaned the persistence of inequality in economic standards and educational opportunities among different classes, which hindered the formation of 'a common culture' and resulted instead in 'servility or resentment, on the one hand, and patronage or arrogance, on the other', Tawney wrote in the wake of Green.[15] Green, as we have seen, had aspired for a 'common education' as a 'true social leveller' that would free students from 'social jealousies and animosities' (*CW*, III: 457–58). A 'properly organised system of schools', in Green's reform programme,

would not make the gentleman any the less of a gentleman in the higher sense of the term, but it would cure him of his unconscious social insolence just as it would cure others of social jealousy. It would heal the division between those who look

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[15] Tawney, *Equality*, p. 29. See Carter, *T. H. Green and the Development of Ethical Socialism*, chap. 6.

complacently down on others as vulgar, and those who angrily look up to others as having the social reputation which they themselves have not, uniting both classes by the freemasonry of a common education. (*CW*, III: 460)

It was Green's hope to break off 'the spirit of social exclusiveness' with a 'properly organised system of schools'; and it was his system of Idealist philosophy that helped to preserve and transmit Arnold's educational ideal of culture to the generation of Tawney and Eliot, without which Williams's project would have been inconceivable.

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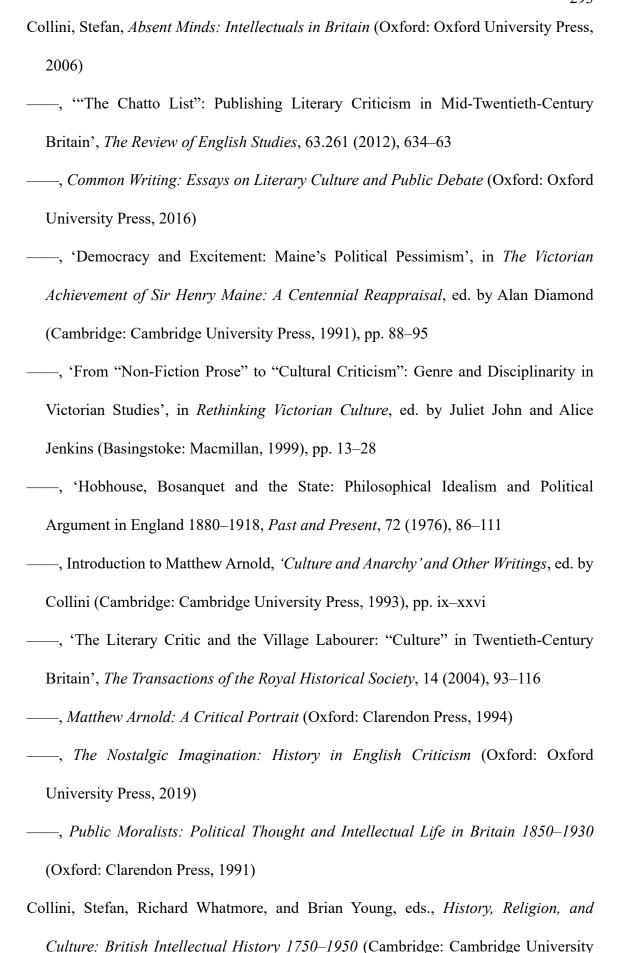
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