CHAPTER FOUR

"IDEAS" AND LITERATURE

All his life Matthew Arnold was engaged in the task, as he put it, of trying "to pull out a few more stops in that powerful but at present somewhat narrow-toned organ, the modern Englishman." What made the Englishman so narrow-toned, so provincial, was his imperviousness to ideas, especially new ideas. Arnold was particularly exercised by this deficiency in Englishmen because the success of a liberal democracy depended solely on the people's receptivity to ideas. A similar concern for democracy is also at the basis of Trilling's preoccupation with ideas. In fact Trilling's job was all the harder because there was, in the very nature of things, a deep strain of anti-intellectualism in America, founded as the colony had been by the English dissenters whose general suspicion of new ideas had been the refrain of Arnold's laments about British society.

But we are concerned in this chapter not with the importance of ideas to a liberal democracy but rather with the relation of ideas to literature as this relation.

Arnold, "Preface" to Essays in Criticism, p. 4.
presents itself to these two critics. As we shall see, the relation that Trilling sees and desiderates is at once even closer and even more complex than that Arnold proposed.

Arnold's views on this matter find the most detailed expression in "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time." At the present time it was a time when there was neither a "national glow of life" (such as had obtained in Periclean Athens and Elizabethan England) nor a "current of true and fresh ideas" (such as had prevailed in Goethe's Germany). In other words, the conditions were absent which alone could lead to the creation of great literature. At such a time it was the function of criticism to create those conditions, to create, that is,--for you cannot "create" a national glow of life which depends on so many other factors--a current of fresh ideas, to create an atmosphere where powerful ideas become current in the sense that they get dissolved and become the living environment as it were for the creative artist to function in. Criticism does not discover ideas either; it is left to philosophy to do that. Criticism examines these ideas, and makes the best ideas prevail. Thus criticism "tends . . . to make an intellectual situation of which the creative power can profitably avail itself." What is important for us here is the

2Arnold, "The Function of Criticism," in Essays in
direction of the traffic between ideas and literature, or rather between philosophy and literature:

creative literary genius does not principally show itself in discovering new ideas; that is rather the business of the philosopher. 3

And Arnold went on:

the grand work of literary genius is a work of synthesis and exposition, not of analysis and discovery; its gift lies in the faculty of being happily inspired by a certain intellectual and spiritual atmosphere, by a certain order of ideas, when it finds itself in them; of dealing divinely with these ideas, presenting them in the most effective and attractive combinations,--making beautiful works with them in short. 4

Once again, towards the end of the essay, Arnold demands, as a condition of great literature, that the true man of letters should "come into possession of a current of true and living ideas, and ... produce amidst the inspiration of them." 5

Now the important point for us here is that Arnold

Criticism, p. 12. Arnold says "an intellectual situation," but later on he calls it "an intellectual and spiritual atmosphere," and says the poet deals "divinely" with these ideas (Ibid.)

3Ibid., p. 11. 4Ibid.

5Ibid., p. 34. We may cite, as an example, Shakespeare being inspired by the ideas of Catholicism and the Reformation, such as the concept of the Chain of Being.
thinks of the creative writer as a recipient of ideas (from philosophy through criticism) rather than as an originator of ideas. In fact he would seem to rule out the latter possibility altogether. Ideas are what is given to the poet, they are what he builds on, not what issues from his work.

Now the whole content and tendency and even methodology of Trilling's criticism would seem to question and contradict the one-sided nature of the traffic that Arnold posited between ideas and literature. In his seminal essay "The Sense of the Past" Trilling joins issue with Professor Lovejoy for saying that "the ideas in serious reflective literature are, of course, in great part philosophical ideas in dilution." Arnold would have objected to the words "in dilution," he would have perhaps replaced them by "in synthesis," but otherwise he would have agreed with Lovejoy's statement. But Trilling deplores what he considers an attempt to make literature "a dependent art."

Certainly we must question the assumption which gives the priority in ideas to the philosopher and sees the movement of thought as always from the systematic thinker, who thinks up the ideas in, presumably, a cultural vacuum, to the poet who "uses" the ideas "in dilution."

Ideas are, on the contrary, suggested to the philosopher by a certain cultural environment, by certain cultural forces—and this environment and these forces are as much
the product of the creative writer as they are factors influencing him. 6

It is this perception—that the movement of thought may be as much from the creative writer to the systematic thinker as the other way about—that enables Trilling to observe, for example, even while acknowledging and illustrating literature's indebtedness to Freud, that "psychoanalysis is one of the culminations of the Romanticist literature of the nineteenth century." It is not a question of particular influences, it is "nothing less than a whole Zeitgeist, a direction of thought." And,

if there is perhaps a contradiction in the idea of a science standing upon the shoulders of a literature which avows itself inimical to science in so many ways, the contradiction will be resolved if we remember that this literature, despite its avowals, was itself scientific in at least the sense of being passionately devoted to a research into the self.

Freud himself, as Trilling notes, was aware of the reciprocal nature of the relationship between psychoanalytical theory and literature:

When, on the occasion of the celebration of his seventieth birthday, Freud was greeted as the "discoverer of the unconscious," he corrected the speaker and disclaimed the title. "The poets and philosophers before me discovered the unconscious," he said, "What I discovered was the

And Trilling goes on to enumerate the writers and works who might possibly have influenced Freud, starting even earlier than the nineteenth century: Diderot's *Rameau's Nephew* (in its perception of "the hidden element of human nature and of the opposition between the hidden and the visible"); Blake (who struggled to "expound a psychology which would include the forces beneath the propriety of social man in general"); Wordsworth and Burke (for whom "what was hidden and unconscious was wisdom and power, which work in despite of the conscious intellect"); Shelley, Schlegel and George Sand (in their "demanding a sexual revolution"), Stendhal (in his investigation of sexual maladjustment), Novalis (for his preoccupation with the death wish), Shelley again, Poe and Baudelaire (all of whom felt and expressed a fascination by the horrible), Gerard de Nerval (who had declared, what was to be so crucial to psychoanalysis, that "our dreams are a second life"); and Rimbaud and the later Symbolists (in whom the interest in the nature of metaphor reaches its climax). Psychoanalysis would then seem to be, among other things of course, a well-ordered complex of


8 Ibid., pp. 48-50.
ideas and insights which had been at least partly provided by the creative writers. It may not be too much to say that here is one case in which literature provided the elements—the ideas as experiences—and philosophy and science did the synthesizing!

Other examples could be found of Trilling perceiving the mutual interaction of literature and ideas. In fact the whole of Sincerity and Authenticity could be said to be an attempt to establish such a connexion. If modern literary manifestations of the self-estranged spirit, such as Conrad's Kurtz, owe much to Hegel's Phenomenology, Hegel himself had "co-opted to serve as the presiding genius of the section of his work called 'Spirit in Self-Estrangement,'" the protagonist of Diderot's Rameau's Nephew. Arnold's Scholar Gipsy is the individual standing in an adversary relationship to society. In fact we may go further and say that Trilling's conception of great literature as something that is active, something that is a

9We say "partly" because we cannot ignore the influence on Freud of nineteenth-century science and nineteenth-century habits of thinking in other branches of activity. Louis Fraiberg ("Lionel Trilling's Creative Extension of Freudian Concepts," in Psychoanalysis and American Literary Criticism (Detroit: Wayne State Univ. Press, 1960), p. 204) points out Trilling's mistake in ignoring Freud's debt to these other sources.

10Trilling, S&A, p. 34.

subject and not an object, suggests the force of ideas that, according to him, literature would generate.

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Throughout *The Liberal Imagination* we find an Arnoldian emphasis on ideas. But it is in two essays, "Art and Fortune" and "The Meaning of a Literary Idea" that Trilling deals most explicitly with the relationship between ideas and literature. The two essays (the former in part and the latter in full) are a rebuttal of the modern, especially the Formalist, view that literature is not within its proper function in dealing explicitly with ideas. This attitude is summed up in two statements of T.S. Eliot's. Eliot says, in his essay on Shakespeare, that he could see no reason for believing that either Dante or Shakespeare did any thinking of his own. "And in his essay on Henry James Mr Eliot makes the well-known remark that James had a mind so fine that no idea could violate it."12

Trilling characteristically begins by noticing the

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background to these statements, the factors that had impelled Eliot to proclaim a total divorce as it were between the analytical intellect and the creative sensibility. "The impulse to spirited phrase" that Eliot betrays here is perhaps understandable as an extreme reaction against the nineteenth-century way of "looking at poetry as a heuristic medium, as a communication of knowledge."^13 We are reminded immediately of the Browning Societies, the kind that Max Beerbohm has so well caricatured; the old self-satisfied man of letters sitting amidst a bevy of prosperous ladies and listening to learned discourses on his "philosophy," with nothing in the proceedings to suggest even remotely the power that Browning's own verse could achieve. One thinks also of the innumerable "Developments of Minds and Arts" that abstracted and intellectualized poetry out of all sensitive apprehension. In such a context we can understand what Eliot is trying to do. He is trying to "save for poetry what is peculiar to it, and for systematic thought what is peculiar to it."^14 He is trying to preserve the view of literature as an agent of power rather than as an object of knowledge.

Secondly, in saying that James "had a mind so fine


^14 Ibid.
that no idea could violate it," Eliot is perhaps deliberately employing a sexual metaphor for he seems to think of the poet's mind as a sort of Clarissa Harlowe and ideas as a sort of Colonel Lovelace. This again is understandable in the light of the modern, the Romantic and post-Romantic, fear "that the whole nature of man stands in danger of being brutalized by the intellect, or at least by some one of its apparently accredited surrogates." Eliot has in mind rationalism (in the pejorative abstract sense of the term) swamping and submerging the creative imagination. Coleridge had been aware of the danger. "A whole Essay might be written on the Danger of thinking.

15 Trilling, "The Meaning of a Literary Idea," in LI, p. 284. For the sake of completeness we must point out, as Trilling does not, that what Eliot meant here was that no single idea could seduce James's mind which could rest in uncertainties. Not that Trilling is not aware of this implication of Eliot's statement. In fact, his explanation of Eliot's attitude to the matter shows that he was very much alive to the implication. One wishes, however, that Trilling had stated it explicitly too. Incidentally, Trilling's own view of Henry James's mind is not far different from that of Eliot indicated in the quotation here.


17 Eliot's fears have also to be understood in the context of his definition of sensibility, thinking, reflection, ideas, all in connexion with the dissociated sensibility (See F.W. Bateson, "Dissociation of Sensibility," in Essays in Critical Dissent (London: Longman, 1972), pp. 143-52).
without images," he had said. Wordsworth had warned against "the meddling intellect." Arnold himself had seen its ill effects on the poetry of Clough. Eliot therefore is "simply voicing his horror at the prospect of life being intellectualized out of all spontaneity and reality."

But what the Romantics had objected to in life as in poetry was only the use of the rational faculty in an abstract, image-less way. If, as Freud does, we see the mind as an essentially image-making faculty, if at least we think of metaphor-making and association as indigenous to mind, then we would not make the kind of thorough separation that Eliot makes between poetry and the thinking mind. Eliot's view of the matter would in fact seem to imply a division between that part of the mind which thinks and revels in ideas and another part which is rooted in sensations and moves from image to image and employs the logic of sensations rather than the logic of the intellect.

18 Quoted by Trilling, MA, p. 24.

19 Though, we may add, he found fault with Tennyson's poetry for its deficiency in intellectuality. For Arnold's remark on Clough see The Letters of Matthew Arnold to Arthur Hugh Clough, ed. Howard Foster Lowry (London and New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1932), p. 81. The remark is quoted by Trilling, MA, p. 24. The comment on Tennyson is found in the same letter.

Putting it sharply, Eliot would seem to posit a divorce between emotions and ideas. But Plato in *The Symposium* represented ideas as continuous with emotions, both springing from the appetites. Wordworth himself, who in his time did all he could to halt the march of drab rationalism, was aware of the close connexion between emotions and ideas. "'Our continued influxes of feeling,' said Wordworth, 'are modified and directed by our thoughts, which are indeed the representatives of all our past feelings.'" Even *The Prelude* is sub-titled "The Growth of a Poet's Mind" (emphasis added). Middleton Murry says that every thought has its "emotional context" or "emotional field." The poet is "he in whom the vast majority of his 'thoughts' . . . occur with vivid emotional


23 Elsewhere in *The Liberal Imagination*, Trilling refers to the "philosophic mind" the coming of which Wordsworth celebrates towards the end of "The Immortality Ode." Trilling observes that the word "philosophic" here "does not have either of two of its meanings in common usage--it does not mean abstract and it does not mean apathetic. . . . The 'philosophic mind' has not decreased but, on the contrary, increased the power to feel" ("The Immortality Ode," in *LI*, p. 157).
Thus Epicurean metaphysics was a highly charged "thought" for Lucretius and Ptolemaic astronomy for Dante.

Eliot's anxiety over the "purity" of literature is also at the basis of Wellek and Warren's observation that literature can make use of ideas only when ideas "cease to be ideas in the ordinary sense of concepts and become symbols, or even myths." But ideas do not mean "concepts," or at any rate "concepts of such abstractness that they do not arouse in us feelings and attitudes":

... when we speak of the relationship of literature and ideas, the ideas we refer to are not those of mathematics or of symbolic logic, but only such ideas as can arouse and traditionally have aroused the feelings--the ideas, for example, of men's relation to one another and to the world.

Wellek and Warren also, like Eliot, seem to think of ideas as masculine and gross and art as feminine and pure. A union of the two is to be permitted "only when ideas give up their masculine, effective nature and 'cease to be...


ideas in the ordinary sense and become symbols, or even myths." "We naturally ask," says Trilling:

symbols of what? myths about what? No anxious exercise of aesthetic theory can make the ideas of, say, Blake and Lawrence other than what they are intended to be—ideas relating to action and to moral judgment.27

The inescapable fact, though we would like to deny it in our concern for the autonomy of literature, is that literature is very closely involved with ideas. In the early part of the essay "The Meaning of a Literary Idea," Trilling lists some of the ways in which this is so. Literature is by its very nature involved with ideas because it deals with man in society, "which is to say that it deals with formulations, valuations, and decisions, some of them implicit, others explicit." Secondly, it is an elementary fact that whenever we put two emotions into juxtaposition we have what we can properly call an idea. "When Keats brings together, as he so often does, his emotions about love and his emotions about death, we have a very powerful idea and the source of consequent ideas." Thirdly, "the very form of a literary work, considered apart from its content, so far as that is possible, is in itself an idea." For in poems as in syllogisms we deal with a developing series, a dialectic. "We judge the

value of the development by judging the interest of its several stages and the propriety and the relevance of their connexion among themselves."^28

Apart from these general considerations, if we consult our own experience as readers we shall not be inclined to postulate a thorough separation between the poetic mind and the philosophic mind. We shall be disposed rather to "put stress on their similarity and their assimilation to each other."^29 There are at least certain kinds of literary works, the novel and the drama especially, which "covet" as their chief aesthetic effect a peculiar quality which systems of ideas generally have. And we as readers look for, even demand, this quality in our literature: this is the "authority, the cogency, the completeness, the brilliance, the hardness of systematic thought."^30 There is, in other words, an aesthetic effect created by intellectual cogency.

Even taking poetry, it is true, as most modern critics have insisted, that the language of poetry is very largely that of indirection and symbolism. But "poetry is closer to rhetoric than we today are willing to admit."^31 Most

28 Ibid., pp. 281-82. 29 Ibid., p. 281.
30 Ibid., p. 288. 31 Ibid., p. 289.
of the significant effects of modern poetry, especially, are achieved by syntax. And syntax connects poetry with rational thought, for, syntax "is the work of thought, which makes its categories distinctly visible therein." Further, the poets of our time who have made the greatest impress upon us have done so on account of the intellectual content of their work. Trilling mentions that Eliot and Yeats for example "have been at great pains to develop consistent intellectual positions along with, and consonant with, their work in poetry."33

To Trilling's arguments thus far we find ourselves giving what he would himself call "intellectual assent"; we would even substantially agree with him when he says that we ought not to imagine such a wide separation between the poet and the philosopher as that which Eliot proposes. Eliot certainly flew in the face of his own experience as a reader and a poet when he said that he could see "no reason for believing that either Dante or Shakespeare did any thinking on his own." It must indeed, as Trilling says, "puzzle us to know what thinking is if Shakespeare and Dante did not do it."34

32 Trilling, "The Meaning of a Literary Idea," in LI, p. 289. (Trilling is quoting from Hegel.)
33 Ibid.
34 Ibid., p. 285.
In all fairness to Eliot, it must be said that the emphasis in the sentence is on "on their own." After all, the fodder for the creative imagination or even the intellect of Dante and Shakespeare was provided by the ideas of medieval Catholicism—or, to use Trilling's own words later on in the essay, "the detritus of pieties" that carried "a strong charge of intellect." If all that Eliot means is that no man need be an original philosopher in order to be a poet, Eliot's position would be unexceptionable. But if he means that there is no intellectual content, no kind of thinking involved in Shakespeare's or Dante's writing, we must say with Trilling that we are not sure what Eliot at all means by "thinking" or "ideas."

But it must cause us at least some slight discomfort when Trilling proceeds further to a position which is as extreme as Eliot's. Trilling is illustrating "the aesthetic effect of intellectual cogency" by instancing two "statements." He cites two lines from Yeats,


36This view of Eliot's position is confirmed by an observation Murray Krieger makes in his Theory of Criticism: "With Eliot too [as with Arnold], poetry was to find its function by turning aside from any direct responsibility for world views or systems of belief" (Murray Krieger, Theory of Criticism: A Tradition and Its System (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1976), p. 142).
We had fed the heart on fantasies
The heart's grown brutal from the fare
and says that the force they have for him lies not in any metaphor there—"for only the dimmest sort of metaphor is to be detected"—but rather in the "relevance and cogency, in part conveyed to me by the content, in part by the rhetoric." The other "statement" is Freud's An Outline of Psychoanalysis "which gives me a pleasure which is no doubt different from that given by Yeats's couplet, but which is also similar; it is the pleasure of listening to a strong, decisive, self-limiting voice uttering statements to which I can give assent." And Trilling concludes:

The pleasure I have in responding to Freud I find very difficult to distinguish from the pleasure which is involved in responding to a satisfactory work of art.37

This, if we may employ Trilling's own words in another context, "offends our deepest pieties." All our modern critical sensibility, all our sophistication, jibs at this. Even in these two lines from Yeats, there is, for example, the effect wrought by alliteration. Trilling refers to "the pleasure of relevance and cogency" conveyed by the

37Trilling, "The Meaning of a Literary Idea," in LI, p. 289. John Bayley supposes Trilling to mean that Freud "is not 'true,' but that like a work of art he works on us by art's deep inner confidence in being not true but something, on its own ground, much more effective" ("The Way Towards Sanity," TLS, 30 Dec. 1977, p. 1518).
content and the rhetoric. But he makes no mention of the effect organically created in the poem—the poem is "The Stare's Nest by My Window"—by the juxtaposition or contrast of two sets of images: the life-images of the stare bringing "grub and flies" and the bees building their hive by the poet's window—one is reminded of the "temple-haunting martlet" in Macbeth—and those images relating to the incomprehensible violence of the Civil War. And there is, as part of the effect of this poem, the whole penumbra of the significance of at least that part of Yeats's oeuvre which relates to the Nationalist Movement—the hardening of life, even sacrifice, into mere habit. There is the image of the moor-hen which lives and changes "minute by minute" by the side of the stone, in "Easter 1916," and alongside the "affable Irregular" in "The Road at My Door," the "heavily-built Falstaffian man" who goes cracking jokes of the Civil War "As though to die by gunshot were/The finest play under the sun."

And suppose we choose, instead of Freud, some other philosopher? For it is perhaps the unique feature of Freud's thought that not only his insights but even the

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39 Ibid., p. 94.

40 Ibid., p. 117.
ultimate sources of those insights are to a very large extent literary. What if there is the same quality characterizing the idea embodied in Yeats's line and the ideas embodied in Freud's work, ideas which Murry would call "poetic" by nature? That is sufficient stimulus for the same kind of response by the reader.

Or, to invoke the experience of readers, if the two pleasures are hard to distinguish, how is it that some readers prefer the one and some the other? How is it that poetry, even these two lines from Yeats, where "only the dimmest sort of metaphor is to be detected," should have for some readers a reality which neither An Outline of Psychoanalysis nor any book of philosophy can have? And, finally, may we not quote Trilling's own words against him: "To pass from the reading of a great literary work to a treatise of academic psychology is to pass from one order of perception to another"?\(^1\)

We may grant this much: there are "certain kinds of literary works," prose fiction and some types of drama (especially prose drama), which not only "covet" and achieve "the cogency, . . . the hardness of systematic thought,"\(^2\)

\(^1\)Trilling, "Freud and Literature," in LL, p. 47.

but also for that reason produce an effect and a pleasure similar to those produced by a work of philosophy. It is possible to say that every novel is a "romance of culture" if we mean by culture "not merely the general social condition to which the novel responds but also a particular congeries of formulated ideas. The great novels . . . deal explicitly with developed ideas." Flaubert, for example, "signalizes the ideological nature of modern life" by making books—representing ideas—"virtually the dramatis personae" of his novel *Bouvard and Pécuchet*. Even here, it is possible to join issue with Trilling. What are the ideas that *Pride and Prejudice* or even *Bleak House* explicitly deals with? How much less so is this of poetry? Moreover, it is also possible that the "ideas" sought to be conveyed even in a poem by means of dialectic and development may sometimes be repudiated by other devices peculiar to poetry. In Yeats's "Byzantium," for example, the supremacy of soul and art established by the development of the poem is violently negated by the sheer energy of verse-movement of the last few lines.

The answers to these questions must be found, if at all, only in Trilling's conception of ideas and the mind.


*Trilling, "Flaubert's Last Testament," in *OS*, p. 177.*
We may first of all observe that Trilling's concept of mind is Coleridgean. The mind is essentially an image-making faculty, capable of "conceiving," "generating" objects in the original sense of the terms. Ideas thus conceived and generated are not mere skeletons or abstractions; they are the flesh and blood of experience. What a poet conveys is not so much his thought as the thinking of his thought; it is not transferring mere thought without its emotional field but rather an organic transplantation. And "thinking" ideas is, for Trilling, as complex, as unified and as inclusive an activity as the working of the organic imagination is for modern poets. When he says for example that "Hamlet is not merely the product of Shakespeare's thought, it is the very instrument of his thought," we are reminded of the modern critical view that the poem is not for the poet just a means of communicating his experience; it is a device of defining his experience to himself.

It must also be clear from this discussion that Trilling's conception of a literary "idea" is essentially in the Romanticist tradition. We have already cited Plato, Coleridge, Wordsworth and Arnold in this connexion. One of the more recent romantics to hold this view of the "ideas" of poetry is Middleton Murry. It is the greatness

\[\text{Trilling, "Freud and Literature," in LI, p. 63.}\]
of a poet, Murry says, that he "has enabled us to possess our own thoughts, not as we usually possess them, at once in the mechanic hardness of definition and the ambient vague-ness of the undefined, but in their warm immediacy with all the wholeness of activity which distinguishes thoughts from ratiocinations."\(^{46}\) Murry goes on to say that "high poetry and high religion are at one in the essential that they demand that a man shall not merely think thoughts, but feel them--that his highest mental act be done with all his heart and with all his mind and with all his soul."\(^{47}\) But when we have stated Trilling's position thus in all its implication, we find that this complex view of the mind is not far different from Eliot's "unified sensibility!"

But perhaps the best answer to or rather explanation of Trilling's views on this matter is to say that he sees the life of a highly civilized man as a continuum in which works of art and works of thought are not quite distinguishable in their force or appeal. For both have gone into his making. Robert Langbaum puts the matter lucidly:

In contrast to the New Critics who made a sharp distinction between creative and non-creative


\(^{47}\)Ibid., p. 326.
forms of writing, Trilling saw a continuum along which a great work of psychology or history or criticism would display more intelligence and imagination than a poor poem or novel. I agree with him and so would many other critics of my generation.

Any critic who refuses to call himself a mere literary critic, whose aim is, in Arnold's language, to make the best ideas prevail, would agree with Trilling. He would agree with Trilling when he says, elsewhere, for example, that "Keats was nothing if not a man of ideas." 49

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This chapter has aimed at showing the relationship between ideas and literature as the relationship was conceived by Arnold and Trilling. We have seen that the contexts for the two critics were different. Arnold was convinced of the importance of a current of ideas for the creative artist to function but he felt it was primarily the critic's job to create this current. The critic is thus the agent and his function as important as that of the creative artist. And Trilling was speaking of ideas

48 Robert Langbaum, "The Importance of The Liberal Imagination," Salmagundi, No. 41 (Spring 1975), p. 55. Thus Trilling finds that David Riesman's works of sociology exhibit a clear superiority to many works of literature because they "bring us the news of ideas," a duty and privilege which the literary intellectuals seem to have voluntarily surrendered (Trilling, "Two Notes on David Riesman," in AGF, p. 95).

49 Trilling, "The Poet as Hero," in OS, p. 5.
in the context of the New Critical insistence on form. We have seen how Trilling posits a reciprocal, a closer connexion between ideas and literature. In all our argument so far, we have supposed that the meaning Arnold and Trilling gave to the word "idea" is identical. But there is at least one occasion on which the very meaning that Arnold gave to the term would seem to be drastically different.

Elsewhere Arnold does say that poetry deals "beautifully" with "ideas." But in the first paragraph of "The Study of Poetry" he says:

> for poetry the idea is everything; the rest is a world of illusion, of divine illusion. Poetry attaches its emotion to the idea; the idea is the fact.  

By "idea" here Arnold certainly does not mean "great thoughts." Note also he uses the singular and with the definite article. Arnold here distinguishes clearly between "fact" and "idea." Poetry does not deal with "facts" but with "the idea." We may perhaps say, with Douglas Bush, that Arnold uses the term "idea" here somewhat in the sense of "myth" or "archetype." Trilling

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50 Arnold, "The Study of Poetry," in Essays in Criticism, p. 235. The paragraph is a quotation from the Introduction that Arnold had contributed to the volume dealing with poetry in a book called The Hundred Greatest Men (1880).

might again ask: "myth about what?" It is however possible to go a step further and say that Arnold perhaps means by "idea" here something allied to the Platonic essence.