CHAPTER VI
ELIOT'S CONCEPT OF CULTURE AS DISCLOSED IN HIS 'NOTES TOWARDS THE DEFINITION OF CULTURE'.

T.S.Eliot exerted a vast amount of influence over the literary world and so may be said to have moulded the literary taste of the Twentieth Century. His editorship of the important quarterly 'The Criterion' contributed also its share in this direction. The Journal aimed 'bringing together the best in new thinking and new writing in its time, from all the countries of Europe that had anything to contribute to the common good.' Eliot adopted British nationality in 1927 after a residence of nearly twelve years, following it with his oft-quoted statement that he had become 'a classicist in literature, royalist in politics and an Anglo-catholic in religion.' These factors have to be kept in mind when we try to elucidate Eliot's view of culture. A general observation that can be made at the beginning is that all his writings are noteworthy because of the juxtaposition of topicality with timelessness.

A knowledge of the state of England at the beginning of the Twentieth Century which made Eliot think of its future and the state of its cultural level may be relevant. The circumstances which led directly to the enquiry of England's state of culture are described by Eliot in 'The Idea of a Christian Society.': 'You cannot, in any scheme for the reformation of society, aim directly
at a condition in which the arts will flourish: those activities are probably by-products for which we cannot deliberately arrange the conditions. On the one hand, their decay may always be taken as a symptom of some social ailment to be investigated.¹ He goes on to observe further: 'the steady influence which operates silently in any mass society organized for profit, for the depression of standards of art and culture. The increasing organisation of advertisement and propaganda - or the influence of masses of men by any means except through their intelligence - is all against them. The economic system is against them; the chaos of ideals and confusion of thought in our large-scale mass education is against them; and against them also is the disappearance of any class of people who recognize public and private responsibility of patronage of the best that is made and written.'² Eliot's personal distress after the Munich crises of September, 1938 is also to be considered. His growing doubts about the validity of Western civilisation are also to be thought of. We find here an echo of the question the great 19th century social critics like Coleridge, Carlyle and Ruskin raised: 'was our society, which had always been so assured of its superiority and rectitude, so confident of its unexamined premises, assembled round anything more permanent than a congeries of banks, insurance companies and industries, and had it any beliefs more essential than a belief in compound interest and the

maintenance of dividends? Such thoughts as these formed the starting point, and must remain the excuse, for saying what I have to say. 3 Nothing more analytical than this of the creeping scepticism of the age need be noted.

Eliot's pre-occupation with political subjects became evident in several of the essays in 'For Lancelot Andrews', the composition of which lasted from 1925 to 1928. The commentary in 'The Criterion' for those years was also increasingly taken up with contemporary politics. He felt that the problem in the modern state was caused by the apathy of all elements in society to the responsibilities of intelligent representative government. The wide extension of franchise in modern democracies led to a steady dwindling of its individual value. Eliot noted in the spring of 1929: 'If, as we believe, the indifference to politics as actually conducted is growing, then we must prepare a state of mind towards something other than the facile alternative of communist or fascist dictatorship.'

In the summer of that same year, he issued a rejoinder to two essays in 'The Criterion' defining the philosophic positions of those alternatives. He indicated there more exactly what he meant by the philosophy behind the Action Francaise: 'the reintroduction of the idea of loyalty to a king, who incarnates the idea of the Nation.

And in this idea is, I think, the alternative to Nationalism. Fascism seems to me rather (in the form in which it has succeeded unto date) to represent the Napoleonic idea. The latter, in contrast to the idea of Monarchy, is a familiar conventional modern idea; it is the doctrine of success.\textsuperscript{5} Eliot thus clearly expressed his desire for a change in the mental attitude of his age.

The modern worship of success is objected to by Eliot as it exalts man's petty triumph, losing all view of anything more important than the individual. Eliot believed that man should realise his inevitable limitations and finding his perfection only in something greater than himself. This view of man is symbolized in the comparative myths Eliot drew upon for 'The Waste Land' and 'Ash Wednesday'. As Eliot reached his Catholic position, he became more and more acutely conscious of the violent extremes which threatened society. He strongly believed that the individual must be sacrificed to society.

Eliot became the editor of 'The Criterion', a quarterly magazine, in 1922 and contributed editorial notes called 'Commentaries' and also wrote occasional articles and book reviews for it. Over a period of seventeen years, the commentaries revealed his views on many topics - religious, cultural, political and personal. In the last number of 'The Criterion', he wrote 'of the state of public affairs -

which has induced in myself a depression of spirits so
different from any other experience of fifty years as to be
a new emotion - ' With the result that he no longer 'felt
the enthusiasm necessary to make a literary review what it
should be.' However, co-operation with members of various
Christian committees and conferences began with the closing
down of 'The Criterion'. The events leading to the Second
World War induced a depression in him and this is reflected
in the conclusion of 'The Idea of a Christian Society.'
Eliot described the Munich Settlement of September, 1938 as
something 'to demand an act of personal contrition, of
humility, repentance and amendment; what had happened was
something in which one was deeply implicated and responsible.
It was not, I repeat, a criticism of the government, but the
doubt of the validity of a civilization.' In a postscript
added after the outbreak of War, he emphasized that 'the
alignment of forces which has now revealed itself should
bring more clearly to our consciousness the alternative of
Christianity or Paganism.'

He analyses the causes for the cultural decline.
The processes of democratization, with their consequent
levelling of standards, are obvious factors. Coming to
the precise social mechanisms through which this levelling
has operated, Eliot seems to think that the political
actualities and liberalism might be cited as the causes.

Faber and Faber, 1967), P.64.
His own thinness of social background is filled out by a few references to primitive culture and anthropology. Technology has created masses but has not give them the leisure to acquire the disciplines of a decent or higher culture. Technology has merely provided means to supply the masses with entertainment and to conceal from them their boredom and their vacuity. A class of clever entrepreneurs exploit for their own profit through these mass media the rest of society. Eliot is unable to push his thought so far as Nietzsche has done in to thinking of the advent of a new and vigorous aristocracy to conquer the masses. Eliot merely hints, as practical means, that perhaps there will be no hastening of extension of opportunities of education and literacy. This would be a measure, which, at best, leaves us exactly with the culture we now have.

The question of England's place in the European Comity exercised Eliot's mind very greatly. Around 1927, England occupied only the periphery and had lost its importance. Eliot wanted to see England regain its old importance and play the role of ideal cultural mediator between Europe and the rest of the world on account of its geographical and historical position. It was also best suited for this role by its spirit of moderation and temperament which in the opinion of Eliot, were the salient features the Church of England. There were debates in important newspapers and
important circles to prompt this line of thinking in Eliot. Eliot wished to see England as a bridge between Europe and the rest of the world. He wished Britain to select, what was worthy of adoption by the movement of civilisations, from the values of Europe and to effect a diffusion through the medium of the common language, English. The hope of reconstruction of the war-stricken European culture had faded away very quickly when he wrote the last words in the Quarterly in 1939. He clung to his ideal of a culturally effective Britain, despite facts to the contrary, and said that European organism must be concerned in any civilising development. That is why, after 1948, he gave three broadcast talks, 'The Unity of European Culture', where he spoke earnestly about Europe.

The Second World War had a great impact on Eliot. He was shocked out of his Christian fatalism as the entire organisation of society itself became the subject of intense debate. Several theories of economic and social development emerged as the United States became the most powerful force of industrial capitalism in the world. Europe and England were pulling themselves together and moving towards change and recovery. Prominent among the new theorists was Karl Mannheim, whose work 'Man and Society in an age of Reconstruction' was first available in English in 1940. Eliot's 'Notes towards the Definition of Culture', appearing in 1948, is seen by some critics as a late rejoinder to the idea of
reconstituting society through conscious planning. Eliot's declaration of acknowledgment is clear: 'My debt to (Mannheim) is much greater than appears from the one context in which I discuss his theory.' Mannheim stands for all the modern tendencies that most repelled Eliot and most threatened, in his opinion, the social interests that he would like to defend.

Eliot declares emphatically in the Introduction that 'we can assert with some confidence that our own period is one of decline; that the standards of culture are lower than they were fifty years ago; and that the evidences of this decline are visible in every department of human activity.' His poetry represents the experience of agony of War. It reflects also the agony and the horror of modern life. Thus, the influential intellectual circles, despairing of the present and fearing the future turned from secular to religious solutions for the crises of our times. The state of affairs prevalent in England of his days made Eliot a pessimist, losing all hope of salvaging England out of its mire except through intellectualism. He applied his sharp powers of mind to analyse the prevalent situation and the result is the composition of the two books - 'The Idea of a Christian Society' and 'Notes towards the Definition of Culture'. He suggests in both the books religious and secular solutions to the ills of society.

A detailed analysis of 'The Idea of a Christian Society' shows that his conversion to Anglo-Catholicism entirely changed his attitude towards the society of his own day. A formidable public platitude of his day is criticised by Eliot in this regard: 'The current terms in which we describe our society, the contrasts with other societies by which we - of the "western democracies" - eulogize it, only operate to deceive and stupefy us. To speak of ourselves as a Christian society in contrast to that of Germany (1939) or Russia, is an abuse of terms. We mean only that we have a society in which no one is penalized for the formal profession of christianity; but we conceal from ourselves the unpleasant knowledge of the real values by which we live.'

A crisis of feeling gave rise to the enquiry in September, 1938: 'It was not a disturbance of the understanding; the events themselves were not surprising. Nor, as became increasingly evident, was our distress due merely to disagreement with the policy and behaviour of the moment'.

Eliot's belief in tradition was reinforced by his conversion to Anglo-Catholicism and his adoption of British nationality. Eliot's adherence to tradition in every sphere of life is summarised in the oft-quoted passage in the preface to Eliot's volume of essays entitled 'For Lancelot Andrews' which appeared in 1928. Christian

religion, he believed, was the only panacea to all the ills of modern society. It was also the only alternative to a faithless society and a totalitarian democracy.

The connection between religion and culture of a society, as conceived by Eliot, was criticised mainly on one account. The criticism insisted that he assimilated the two by omitting the essential features of religion and retaining only those that are common to it and to culture. One instance is cited. Eliot remarks that 'bishops are a part of English culture and horses and dogs are a part of English religion.' This passage lends support to the above contention. Eliot's thinking seems to be running along these lines: Horse races are social events and thus form important elements in the culture of a society. Certain religious people equate these social events with religious observances, as observed by their behaviour. Thus, these social events are part of 'what makes life worth living' for the members of the society in question and this is what 'culture' means. But religions give an apparent meaning to life and 'protect the mass of humanity from boredom and despair.' Thus, religion and culture appear to have the same function in society. Of course, religion is thus emptied of much of its normal significance and meaning. But this is the only way in which the charge can be met.


11. Ibid., P.34.
In 'Notes towards the Definition of Culture', two mutually inconsistent views about the connection of culture with religion are expressed by Eliot. First, there is the view according to which religion is not an element of culture but its basis or framework or that of which culture is the 'incarnation'. He observes: 'So while we believe that the same religion may inform a variety of cultures, we may ask whether any culture could come into being, or maintain itself without a religious basis. We may go further and ask whether what we call the culture and what we call the religion, of a people are not different aspects of the same thing; the culture, being, essentially, the incarnation (so to speak) of the religion of a people.'

Secondly, there is a view according to which it is in primitive societies only that religion and culture are thus approximated. Thus Eliot will not allow identification of religion and culture. It is only in the 'New Jerusalem' that they can regain their old intimacy. He observes: 'I asserted in the first chapter, that in the most primitive societies no clear distinction is visible between religious and non-religious activities; and that as we proceed to examine the more developed societies, we perceive a greater distinction and finally contrast and opposition, between these activities. The sort of identity of religion and culture which we observe amongst peoples of very low development cannot recur except in the New Jerusalem.'

13. Ibid., P.67.
their old togetherness only at a higher level. The contradiction lies in the fact that Eliot would like to have it both ways. In his opinion, religion is the spirit of culture and in some highly developed cultures, it plays a subordinate part only. This could be observed in some contemporary societies. An interesting fact to be noted in this context is that Eliot does not mention religion as one of the elements of culture when he makes out a list of them. Then we have to conclude that religion is not an element of culture but is that of which culture is the 'incarnation'. He writes: 'Hence, for the purposes of this essay, I am obliged to maintain two contradictory propositions: that religion and culture are aspects of one unity, and that they are two different and contrasted things.'

He holds that it is at 'the unconscious level' that they are contrasted. He observes: 'The identity of religion and culture remains on the unconscious level, upon which we have superimposed a conscious structure wherein religion and culture are contrasted and can be opposed..... To the unconscious level, we constantly tend to revert, as we find consciousness an excessive burden.' But the difficulty comes when we come across a view like this: 'To ask whether the people have not a religion already, in which Derby Day and the dog track play their parts, is embarrassing. He is trying to show how religion and culture are thus intimately

15. Ibid., P.68.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid., P.32.
connected. Hence he is willing to extend the term religion to include such social phenomena as 'Derby Day and the dog track.' A developed, but a decadent, society alone might be composed of such institutions. According to this first view, religion is the spirit of all culture and hence must be fostered. According to his second view, civilised society shows religion and cultural phenomena divided. Their union is a possibility only in a primitive society. The two views are contradictory and it is difficult to reconcile them.

Eliot's religious attitude and his determination to adhere to the Christian tradition had a firm foundation. He was brought up in a Unitarian home that respected tradition. But his religious needs were not satisfactorily fulfilled by Unitarianism. His inclination was towards an older tradition of classicism and humanism during the eight years of his study at Harvard University. He was much influenced in this by the French Symbolists, Irving Babbitt, Bradley, Henry Bergson and Dante. He denounced the liberal Anglican theology and moved towards Anglo-Catholicism, even as early as 1923. By 1927, he confessed that Humanism can never be a substitute for religion and he confessed conversion to Anglo-Catholic faith. From then on, Anglo-Catholicism directed his views in all the fields of interest like politics, economics, education and literature. His Anglo-Catholicism is clearly the controlling factor in his analysis of the
relationship of Christianity to society and to literature. His early poems reveal a sensitive soul struggling through scepticism and futility. 'The Waste Land' proves that the values which he sought were found in the Christian tradition. Eliot's acceptance of the values offered by Anglo-Catholicism can be seen from 'Ash Wednesday' to 'Four Quartets' and from 'The Rock' to 'The Cocktail Party'. Even with regard to imagery and phrasing, we can trace the source to his Catholicism: Catholic theologians, Catholic mystics, Catholic liturgy, the Bible and Dante. The Catholic concepts of Sin and Grace are creatively used by him in modern vernacular to analyse individual and social ills and suggest a remedy for them. His relationship to the Christian tradition is total and without any reservations.

Eliot's religious development seems to have passed through three stages. These were, first, the idea of a civilisation in which Classicism was inseparable from faith. Secondly, there was the hypotheses of accepting values of religion, though not being able to believe. Thirdly, he was driven to believe out of a sense of dogma and out of a Dantesque vision of eternity. His deep Christian temperament prevented him from becoming a Fascist, inspite of his close association with Ezra Pound. His tolerance, genuine humility, sympathy and considerateness for everyone with whom he had dealings could be traced to this tradition, inspite of his polemical criticisms. His severe discipline
was largely directed against himself. What concerned Eliot most was the unalterable truth as 'an immutable, object or reality' outside time.

A further link between the two works, 'The Idea of a Christian Society' and the 'Notes towards the Definition of Culture' is provided by Eliot's use of unconsciousness in the contexts of both religion and culture. Eliot presses for a return to a Christian society by appealing to the quality of unconsciousness in a common life. This is especially important in the context of a disbelief in the ability of most people to believe very much at all. In the later work, the communal instinctive life becomes a major part of what is meant by 'culture'. A distinction between conscious and unconscious degrees of life is still the decisive factor in the structure of a society, even though the stress on the intellectual levels has differed. Eliot is arguing for a common culture, a way of life shared organically by a whole people. The grades of consciousness will decide the levels at which the culture will be shared. He says: 'According to my view of culture, the whole of the population should "take an active part in cultural activities" - not all in the same activities or on the same level.' Corresponding to these levels, the society will be stratified into social classes. The strength of culture depends on the fulfilment of its particular function by each class.

The theme of the book 'The Idea of a Christian Society' is the role that Christians and the Church should play in the world. This is important, according to Eliot, as civilisation is at a critical stage, presenting a choice between Paganism and Christendom. Liberalism is the obstacle in the path of realisation of this crisis. This was a frequent topic for Eliot for discussion with fellow Christians. An informal organisation called 'The Moot' discussed this issue at length. A desperate war of survival between the forces of democratic powers and the powerful forces of authoritarian Fascist and Communist states was being fought during the Nineteen-thirties. The members of the Moot felt that a return to the truths of Christendom was a distinct possibility when once the people learnt the dreadful lessons of materialism. Statesmen and influential leaders of public opinion should realise the basic values of their society being Christian. The Liberals were the only threat in this regard. Thus Eliot links culture with religion as the two important basic factors of the social fabric. Eliot considers even the humanist position to be a derivative of religion. But Humanism cannot claim the kind of tradition which religion has behind it.

The political situation in October, 1938 made Eliot announce a return to the soil as the only salvation. Eliot's withdrawal and negativism only indicated that he had carved
out a new way of working out his complex negations with
the world. He delivered lectures at the invitation of
Corpus Christi College, Cambridge and these lectures were
published in October, 1939 in the form of a book entitled
'The Idea of a Christian Society'. Here he returns to
politics and sociology with a new emphasis. He envisioned
a Christian society as he wished it to be. But the tone of
'The Idea of a Christian Society', written during the time of
war, is tentative and diffident. He loses the harsh, magis­
terial attitude adopted in 'After Strange Gods' and is once
again an amateur, attentive and self-effacing. Eliot's aim
is a modest one of definition and not a plea for religious
revival. The study is objective and even technical: 'I am
not at this moment concerned with the means for bringing a
Christian society into existence. I am not even primarily
concerned with making clear its difference from the Kind of
society in which we are now living.'

Modifying his aim, he makes a revolutionary plea
as he proceeds further: 'My primary interest is a change
in our social attitude, such a change only as could bring
about anything worthy to be called a Christian society.
That such a change would compel changes in our organisation
of industry and commerce and financial credit, that it would
facilitate, where it now impedes, the life of devotion for
those who are capable of it, I feel certain.'

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Bruce, Harcourt, 1939), P.6.
20. Ibid., P.8.
never gave up the belief that altered consciousness could alter society. Liberalism is dismissed in an imperious tone and the advantages of Christianity are put forth as irrefutable. The existing society was described by him in 'After Strange Gods' in 1933 as one 'wormeaten with liberalism'. He described liberalism, which he detested, as: 'It is something which tends to release energy rather than accumulate it, to relax, rather than fortify. It is a movement not so much defined by its end, as by its starting point; away from rather than towards, something definite.'

Liberalism acts against the positive elements in a strong and permanent civilisation. Eliot equates 'positive' with 'Christian' and maintains: 'a society has not ceased to be Christian until it has become positively something else.' Modern society, as viewed by Eliot, is composed of these two essentially opposing elements - the Christian tradition and its adversary, the liberal tradition. As things stand, Christianity is not so powerful as the negative forces working in the society. He tells us in his book 'The Idea of a Christian Society' what a positive Christian society, free from all negative elements, would be like.

A structure is conceived by him composed of the Christian State, the Christian Community and the community of Christians. Faith is of utmost importance in this

22. Ibid., P.10.
imaginary society. Each of the three elements would come to faith in its own way: 'and it is only from the much smaller number of conscious human beings, the community of Christians, that one would expect a conscious Christian life at its highest social level.' The most significant term here is 'conscious' as it crops up, in a variety of important ways, in the course of the discussion. The leaders can be kept aside as they only lead the masses but need not necessarily believe. This leaves us with two faithful groups. These are 'unconscious' beings who are 'occupied mostly by their direct relation to the soil, or to the sea, or the machine.' They find their faith in rituals and traditions, having little capacity for thinking about the objects of faith. Formed habits are also necessary as the Christian direction of thought and feeling can only occur at particular moments during the day and the week for them. The 'conscious' and believing Christians act as a check to political leaders. They can be compared with the 'Clerisy' of Coleridge who are able to provide ethical leadership through guidance in education and a revival of monastic orders.

Eliot recognises the fact that his imagined Christian society is liable to be attacked as too frail and a fanciful conception. Such criticism is met by him by

24. Ibid., P.23.
saying that he is not presenting a picture of an idealized rural retreat. He is aware of the forces working against a truly Christian orientation of society. He says: 'A great deal of the machinery of modern life is merely a sanction for un-Christian aims.... not only hostile to the conscious pursuit of the Christian life in the world by the few, but to the maintenance of any Christian society for the world.' Uniform Christian belief alone satisfies him in a Christian organisation of society. This is the instrument of his proposed society. A Christian society thus acquires a directing role. In 'Notes towards the Definition of Culture', it becomes the ground for positive culture. The concern here is the centrality of Christianity in the organisation of social fabric. The three elements in his proposed society - the Christian State, the Christian community and the community of Christians - constitute a hierarchical order bound together by varying degrees of consciousness of roles and functions. The prosperity and prestige of the country can be advanced only in such a Christian State.

Thus the mass of people live a Christian life in an unconscious manner through religious observances and behaviour. The last category, the conscious, practising Christians, forms the elite and the governing class of the society. The relationship between the second and the third

elements involves a closely knit fabric of social, economic and cultural functions. The elites naturally dominate by virtue of their social position. Thus two groups, privileged and non-privileged, are formed. All possible political implications in his structure of Christian society are disclaimed by Eliot. But such a society remains static. The inequalities of economic status in society are thus indirectly supported by Eliot. This assumption underlying his structure of a Christian society provides the clue to Eliot's distrust of general public education as well as of social mobility between the classes. A good deal of equivocation and authoritarian tendencies are evident here as his ideal must be imposed. It cannot evolve itself through a mutual interaction of social and economic forces.

Eliot does not provide a direct answer to the question of the practical working of such a society. His supposition is that in a world, the basis of which is not a spiritual but materialistic, each group would unconsciously act in a Christian manner, feeling it the best thing to do. Especially, the intellectuals would be able to form the conscious mind and the conscience of the nation. This conscience of the nation would be the answer to brute force and coercion. Eliot, however, admits the fragile nature of such a state when he states that there would be 'no safeguard against its proceeding, from unchristian acts, to action on implicitly unchristian principles, and thence to action on
unavowedly unchristian principles.' The factor of supremacy of power is being indirectly admitted by Eliot, when he states regretfully that 'we have no safeguard for the purity of our Christianity, for, as the State may pass from expediency to lack of principle, and as the Christian community may sink into torpor, so the community of Christians may be debilitated by group or individual eccentricity and error.'

The importance of history is thus reduced by the supremacy of power. History, for him, is simply the arena time provides for power. He states: 'Christendom has remained at the stage of development suitable to a simple agricultural and piscatorial society, and that Christian social forms are thus ill-suited to the complex modern world.' A position of stalemate has been reached. The society should return to a much more basic and primitive life. The alternative to this is that it has to 'accept the modern world as it is, and simply try to adapt Christian social ideas to it.' But at the same time, he says in an authoritarian tone: 'The Christian can be satisfied with nothing less than a Christian organisation of society..... a society in which the natural end of man - virtue and well-being in community - is acknowledged for all, and the supernatural end - beatitude - for those who have eyes to

27. Ibid.
28. Ibid.
29. Ibid., P.27.
The apparent contradiction between the two views is resolved by him by merely stating that the society he has in mind 'can only be realised when the great majority of sheep belong to one fold.' He states also that: 'a great deal of the machinery of modern life is merely a sanction for un-Christian aims.... it is not only hostile to the conscious pursuit of the Christian life in the world by the few, but to the maintenance of any Christian society in the world.' A Christian society will not result by a mere change of this 'machinery'. But this should lead one to a change in society with fairness and justice ruling instead of exploitation and profit-making in every sphere of life. Thus unregulated industrialism leads to weakening of a Christian organisation of society and results in the creation of a mob. He adds further: 'In an industrialised society like that of England, I am surprised that the people retains as much Christianity as it does.... In its religious organisation, we may say that Christendom has remained fixed at the stage of development suitable to a simple agricultural and piscatorial society, and that modern material organisation - or if "organisation" sounds too complimentary, we will say "complication" - has produced a world for which Christian social forms are imperfectly adapted.'

There is a charge that Eliot himself is having little faith in his conception of a Christian society as

31. Ibid., P.37.
32. Ibid., P.33.
it is either too big or too vague. One is sceptical of it ever coming into existence inspite of the accumulation of details mentioned. The book is full of generalisations. Eliot states his political philosophy as: 'not merely even the conscious formulation of the ideal aims of a people, but the substratum of collective temperament, ways of behaviour and unconscious values which provides the material for the formulation. What we are seeking is not a programme for a party, but a way of life for a people....' This thinking leads him to the composition of 'Notes towards the Definition of Culture' which is central to his cultural thinking. The main pre-occupation of contemporary discussion was the future direction of a disintegrating society. A consciously Christian society cannot come into existence because of the incapacity to possess any significant conscious belief. The unconscious habits of behaviour determine the spiritual values of a society. In the opinion of Eliot, an aware Christian, struggling with his sense of inadequacy to the ideals, can alone make a Christian society vibrant and vigorous. A society, full of tensions, is superior to any other society with unity of belief and behaviour. Thus dislocation of consciousness and behaviour can become a standard by which human superiority can be judged. Eliot knows, of course, that the two are unified only in a saint or savage. He remarks later: 'The reflection that.... even the most conscious and developed of us live also at the

level on which belief and behaviour cannot be distinguished, is one that may, once we allow our imagination to play upon it, be very disconcerting.  

According to Eliot, a Christian society will incarnate Christian values through its common and unconscious rhythms. He remarks: 'for the great majority of the people - and I am not thinking here of social classes, but of intellectual strata - religion must be primarily a matter of behaviour and habit, must be integrated with its social life, with its business, and pleasures..... for behaviour is as potent to affect belief, as belief to affect behaviour.' He explains thus what he means by common and unconscious rhythms. The conscious Christian will have the supernatural end of beatitude. This will be the community of Christians, a version of Coleridge's 'Clerisy'. They would be actively sustaining the values which the rest of the society lived unconsciously. They are the 'spiritual elite', from whom alone 'one would expect a consciously Christian life on its highest social level.' The faith of the rest of community would be 'communal before being individual.' Thus Eliot establishes a correspondence between levels of spirituality and levels of consciousness. This is comparable to his idea of levels within a theatre witnessing an Elizabethan play. All the members of the audience would not receive enjoyment at the same level even though it is one audience witnessing one play. One section of the audience would enjoy merely the theme of

35. T.S. Eliot, Notes towards the Definition of Culture, (London: Faber and Faber, 1963), P.32.
the play. Another would be impressed with the characterisation. The highest part of it would be interested in the profound philosophical insights the play provides. Still it would be one audience witnessing one play.

To Eliot, political philosophy is less important than a people's whole way of life. He is interested only in the impact of politics on a Christian society. Western society of his day, he thought, was neutral towards Christianity. It was slowly moving towards paganism even. His opposition to Fascism is on this account: 'the fundamental objection to Fascist doctrine, the one which we conceal from ourselves because it might condemn ourselves as well, is that it is pagan.'\(^\text{38}\) He expressed the belief in 'After Strange God's' that there must be a close and harmonious relation between Church and State. In his opinion, the Church of England was the only valid media for Christian belief. He ignores the contribution and role of Roman Catholicism and Non-conformists in the making of English culture. He is also silent on the political form of his society as he has already laid down the broad outlines of such a society. Perhaps such a society, when once it has come into existence, would not need politics. We have to admit that only dictatorships have come close to his conception of society.

Another defect of his conception of a Christian society is that it is purely a theological one and not

sociological. But Eliot would like his society to be both a theological and sociological one, sometimes anticipating the city of God and sometimes appearing as an imperfect improvement of the existing system. Here we find a familiar part of the strategy of his prose: excessive qualifications which undermine much of what has gone before. We can cite an instance: 'But we have to remember that the Kingdom of Christ on earth will never be realised, and also that it is always being realised.' The implication is perhaps that he is not looking for a society of saints but a human one, where Christianity is communal before it is individual. The emphasis only differs. The underlying dilemma in 'The Idea of a Christian Society' can be stated in the following way. As a Christian believer, he had to look upon the Church as an ultimate transcendental order. But his temperament and personal myths made him look upon the Church as a social organism. The charge that he is confusing the theological and the sociological phenomena is laid against him because of this dilemma. Eliot, in his 'Notes towards the Definition of Culture', was clearly making a sociological emphasis as religion was supposed by him to be 'incarnated' in a people's culture. But, writing as a Christian, Eliot has great difficulty in making out a case for religion as of a transcendental order. Hence we find such a statement as 'bishops are a part of English Culture and horses and dogs are a part of English religion.' The statement can be, of course, explained with a little stretching of meaning. Eliot seems to have made

needless difficulties for himself as he refused to regard
culture and religion as separate entities. The best way
is to hyphenate them: religion-culture. He could not bring
himself to admit of the possibility of existence of a wholly
specifically attacks the totalitarian powers for setting up
a pagan counter-religion.

In the initial enthusiasm of conversion, Eliot
looked upon himself as a defender of the faith: 'Religion
can hardly revive, because it cannot decay. Without reli-
gion, the whole human race would die....'\textsuperscript{40} He concludes:
'The world is trying the experiment of attempting to form
a civilized but non-christian mentality. The experiment
will fail; but we must be very patient in awaiting its
collapse; meanwhile redeeming the time; so that the faith
may be preserved alive through the dark ages before us; to
renew and rebuild civilization, and save the world from
suicide.'\textsuperscript{41} At this stage, Eliot would have liked to see
the Church become the Church-militant in a battle between
the forces of false religion and those of the catholic faith.

\textsuperscript{40} T.S.Eliot, Selected Essays, (London: Faber and Faber,
1958), P.37.

\textsuperscript{41} Ibid., P.387.
Eliot seems to have no idea of the difficulties involved or of the opposition which Christian rule might provoke. He seems to forget also the fundamental factor of English aversion to being governed by the Church. He confines himself to England and surprisingly ignores Europe where several parties calling themselves Christian democrats or Christian socialists were in power. This becomes curious when we remember the interest which Eliot showed in European intellectual life in 'The Criterion'. It can be assumed that Eliot's Christian social thinking is a self-imposed task of discipline and humility. There is humility present in such a passage as this: 'I have tried to restrict my ambition of a Christian society to a social minimum; to picture, not a society of saints, but of ordinary men, of men whose Christianity is communal before being individual. It is very easy for speculation on a possible Christian order in the future to tend to come to rest in a kind of apocalyptic vision of a golden age of virtue.'

But the fact that religion forms an important part of the culture of a people cannot be brushed aside easily. A society's moral, aesthetic and spiritual aspirations are at least, partially, manifested through its religious ideals. Eliot's thesis is that culture is the incarnation of the religion of a people. Scepticism and Criticism, according to Eliot, are allowed by a truer religion. According to him, 'Faith can, and must, find room for many degrees of intellectual

imaginative and emotional receptivity to the same doctrines, just as it can embrace many variations of order and ritual.\footnote{T.S.Eliot, Notes towards the Definition of Culture, (London: Faber and Faber, 1963), p.29.}

He adds further: 'But one of the features of development, whether we are taking the religious or the cultural point of view, is the appearance of "scepticism" – by which, of course, I do not mean infidelity or destructiveness (still less the unbelief which is due to mental sloth) but the habit of examining evidence and the capacity for delayed decision. Scepticism is a highly civilised trait, though, when it declines into Pyrrhonism, it is one of which civilisation can die.'\footnote{Ibid.}

Eliot envisions a developmental process that aims at perfection, but need not necessarily succeed. A revitalization of its heritage is the need of the hour in the western world. The dissolution of taste and judgement and diminution of perspective may thus be hindered. This involves the development of culture also which implies the restoration of religion to its original standing and value. In the opinion of Eliot, Christianity was the primary abiding feature of European culture.

The charge that "'The Idea of a Christian Society' is indigestible" is based on the fact that Eliot uses a logic enforcing his separation from the world of reality and thus gets alienated. His exclusive reliance on consciousness guides him to despair only. His emphasis on faith enables him to 'skirt all philosophical discussion', a principal method with Eliot. Eliot's vision of order and
tradition involves a search for unity. It is a way of stopping the senseless fulx. Stabilization of a volatile world is possible only through such an order and tradition. Hence, for Eliot, Anglo-Catholicism was inseparable from Royalism and Classicism. These would stave off the chaos of middle class democracy involving the levelling elements of the modern age. But Eliot's theological position ignored the socio-economic reality of his time and hence proved itself to be powerless. Fascism was destroying many things considered to be the fundamental basis of the Christian society. In his B.B.C. broadcasts on 'Modern Dilemma' in 1932, Eliot saw communism, science and psychology as the three particular challenges to religious faith. Not being interested in political activism, Eliot merely wanted a dispassionate discussion of political philosophies and general problems of civilisation.

Eliot has a tempered religious sensibility which is disillusioned. But one can say that this has not led him to cynicism. In his opinion, the residual organising power in Christianity should save mankind from a debacle of western culture. But he sees a great deal of strength in what is already existing. He remarks that: 'The Western World has its unity in this heritage, in Christianity and in the ancient civilisations of Greece, Rome and Israel, from which, owing to two thousand years of Christianity, we trace our descent.'

He hopefully assures: 'But we can atleast' 45

45. T.S. Eliot, Notes towards the Definition of Culture, (London: Faber and Faber, 1963), P.123.
try to save something of those goods of which we are the common trustees; the legacy of Greece, Rome and Israel, and the legacy of Europe throughout the last 2000 years.  

Religion is introduced by Eliot as it is the only factor that is common to all the classes and specialisations of culture. As an instance, we can cite religious art which embraces all levels of the society who may like it for aesthetic purposes or for mere subject matter or for both. The conclusion then is that there is no possibility of existence of culture without a religious basis. The issue is here complicated by Eliot by equating religion with what people believe, consciously or unconsciously. He observes: 'yet there is an aspect in which we can see a religion as the "whole way of life" of a people, from birth to the grave, from morning to night and even in sleep, and that way of life is also its culture.' All our actions, impulses and unconsciously held beliefs then become aspects of culture. Religion provides the framework for culture. Further complication is introduced by Eliot's qualifications and refinements when he argues: 'The one more widely held is that culture can be preserved, extended and developed in the absence of religion. This error may be held by the Christian in common with the infidel....' So religion in necessary for the flourishing of culture. But a few sentences further on he argues that:

47. Ibid., P.31.
48. Ibid., P.30.
'a culture may linger on, and indeed produce some of its most brilliant artistic and other successes after the religious faith has fallen into decay. But this would not prove Christianity to be true. But unnecessary complication is introduced here as he had earlier stated: 'That would not be evidence that the new religion was true, and that Christianity was false. It would merely prove that any religion, while it lasts, and on its own level, gives an apparent meaning to life, provides that framework for a culture, and protects the mass of humanity from boredom and despair.' The argument that there can be no culture without Christianity has been abandoned. At least Eliot is honest enough to admit the difficulties: 'The way of looking at culture and religion which I have been trying to adumbrate is so difficult that I am not sure I grasp it myself except in flashes, or that I comprehend all its implications.'

Eliot speaks highly of the unity of Christendom and calls it an essential part of the highest culture the world has ever known. He is bringing pure faith to the forefront in speaking of Christendom so highly. Out of this severe doctrine comes a further sharpening of Eliot's own thinking about consciousness. According to Eliot, one of the obstacles to the progress of culture is excessive consciousness as it works to divide society and culture. It makes culture too aware of itself. Consciousness leads

50. Ibid., P. 34.
51. Ibid., P. 30.
to introspection which is dangerous. Hence Eliot objects to Karl Mannheim's suggestion that Elites can serve culture and society through technocratic manipulations by gifted minds.

There is an attempt by Eliot to articulate in supernatural terms secular beliefs. Christianity is made to exclude all other religions and their contributions, leading thus to a diffidence of intellect and uncertainty of feeling. The other religions, according to him, as revealed truths, need to be, perhaps, culturally superior to Christianity.

'Notes towards the Definition of Culture' appeared in November, 1948, nine years after 'The Idea of a Christian Society'. It is the last and fullest discussion of the problems that exercised the mind of Eliot for nearly twenty-five years. The award of the Nobel prize to T.S.Eliot coincided with the publication of the Book. Eliot is aware of the problems that afflict our historical period even in his poetry. His point of view is always that of a Christian. He believes with Lord Action whom he quotes to this effect: 'I think our studies ought to be all but purposeless. They want to be pursued with chastity like mathematics.'

Eliot introduces his book by defining Definition. He cites Oxford English Dictionary:

Definition : 1. The setting of bounds;
limitation(rare) - 1483.
The second meaning is present in the author's mind along with the first. The book is given an excessively tentative title. Eliot does not claim finality or completeness for it. Eliot's dilemma, as reflected in his book, is the apparent choice between freedom and planning. A difficulty is felt in assessing his attitude throughout because Eliot goes on qualifying his value-judgements throughout. Implications and rejections of a stand occur even within a paragraph itself.

The use of the term culture has implications carrying with it the whole nexus of bodily experience. Wensleydale cheese and boiled cabbage cut into sections are also not to be ignored. He says in the introduction to the book: 'My aim is to help to define a word, the word "culture".'

Three senses of the world 'Culture' are distinguished, at first, by Eliot: '......' according to whether we have in mind the development of an "individual", of a "group" or "class", or of a "whole society". According to Eliot, the first two senses of the Word, especially the first, are usually discussed without relation to the third. He seems to be thinking of Matthew Arnold in this regard. Two important deductions may be made from this distinction. 'A good deal of confusion could be avoided, if we refrained from setting before the group, what can be the aim only of the individual; and before society, as a whole, what can be the aim only of

a group'. He adds further: 'Amongst men of letters and moralists, it has been usual to discuss culture in the first two senses, and especially the first, without relation to the third.' But he takes care to clarify. 'It does not follow from this that there is no meaning in speaking of the culture of an individual, or of a group or class. We only mean that the culture of the individual cannot be isolated from that of the group, and that the culture of the group cannot be abstracted from that of the whole society; and that our notion of "perfection" must take all three senses of "culture" into account at once.'

Self-cultivation and development are involved in the culture of the individual and to a lesser extent, that of the group. This is clear from his remark: 'As something to be achieved by deliberate effort, "culture" is relatively intelligible when we are concerned with the self-cultivation of the individual, whose culture is seen against the background of the culture of the group and of the society.' But the culture of the society is its whole way of life. He remarks: 'According to the account which I have given, a "culture" is conceived as the creation of the society as a whole: being, from another aspect, that which makes it a society.' He goes on to say: 'I have raised this question, however, solely in support of my contention that culture is not merely the sum of several activities, but a "way of life".'

54. Ibid., P.22.
55. Ibid., P.24.
56. Ibid., P.21.
57. Ibid., P.37.
58. Ibid., P.41.
he emphasizes the distinction inherent in the three senses of the term 'culture'. Thus, according to Eliot, the inherited and unconscious assumptions that govern a society also constitute its culture. In Eliot's ideal scheme of things, these three aspects affect each other to the general good: 'and we shall look for culture, not in any individual or in any one group of individuals, but more and more widely; and we are driven in the end to find it in the pattern of the society as a whole.'

He emphasizes the same point again: 'nor does it follow that in a society, of whatever grade of culture, the groups concerned with each activity of culture will be distinct and exclusive; on the contrary, it is only by an overlapping and sharing of interests, by participation and mutual appreciation, that the cohesion necessary for future can obtain.'

Eliot speaks also of a vertically extended model of a whole culture which consists of several 'levels' harmoniously interacting. Thus we come to 'levels' of culture, resulting in 'high' or 'minority' culture being customarily produced and consumed. The top levels are most complicated and functionally differentiated. In this context, Eliot remarks: 'At a higher stage still, we find that some functions are more honoured than others, and this division promotes the development of "classes", in which higher honour and higher privilege are accorded, not...

60. Ibid., P.24.
merely to the person as functionary but as member of the class. And the class itself possesses a function, that of maintaining that part of the total culture of the society which pertains to that class. We have to try to keep in mind, that in a healthy society this maintenance of a particular level of culture is to the benefit, not merely of the class which maintains it, but of the society as a whole.\(^61\) This leads to less conscious levels of traditional and popular cultures lower down the social order. He observes in this context: 'As a society develops towards functional complexity and differentiation, we may expect the emergence of several cultural levels: in short, the culture of the class or group will present itself.'\(^62\) Further: 'This higher level of culture must be thought of both as valuable in itself, and as enriching of the lower levels: thus the movement of culture would proceed in a kind of cycle, each class nourishing the others.'\(^63\) Thus popular culture is affected by whole culture to its advantage. It is a cyclic and harmonious process. Nevertheless, one can distinguish between higher and lower levels. One can refer, in this context, to Eliot's mention of an audience witnessing an Elizabethan play, each section of the audience admiring the play according to its own cultural level. In this context, 'The Idea of a Christian Society' has an analogy where Eliot describes a community of believers whose belief, for the most part, would be traditional and instinctive. This type of belief is exhibited in behaviour.


\(^{62}\) Ibid., P.25.

\(^{63}\) Ibid., P.37.
A small clerisy of conscious believers, who would be responsible for the spiritual and intellectual direction of the society, would also exist beside the major group of traditional believers.

But Eliot is emphatic that culture as a whole can only be lived at the unconscious level through established form and habit. He observes: 'culture cannot altogether be brought to consciousness; and the culture of which we are wholly conscious is never the whole of culture: the effective culture is that which is directing the activities of those who are manipulating that which they call culture.'

Hence culture is something that can never be consciously planned. He remarks in this context: 'for thus we slip into the assumption that culture can be planned. Culture can never be wholly conscious - there is always more to it than we are conscious of; it cannot be planned because it is also the unconscious background of all our planning.' So he lays emphasis on the unconscious aspect of culture. The aspects of consciousness and unconsciousness are qualities of different social groups within the culture. The minority fosters the conscious values and transmits them through rhythm and texture to the majority.

Eliot emphasizes that a large part of a way of life is necessarily unconscious when he defines culture as

64. T.S. Eliot, Notes towards the Definition of Culture, (London: Faber and Faber, 1963), P. 107.
65. Ibid., P. 94.
a 'whole way of life'. Common behaviour exhibits beliefs and this is the unconscious part of culture. The conscious part is composed of religion, moral code, systems of law and works of art. The discussion of 'levels' of culture is centred around this distinction between conscious and unconscious aspects of culture.

The idea of equal diffusion may perhaps be confined to only one aspect of culture, namely the arts. But this is something that should not be deliberately planned. Our educational system based on equality of opportunity has these ideas of diffusion of culture largely built into it. The culture with specialised developments or the so-called specialised culture can be extended only after a change. But, for Eliot, change implies adulteration and cheapening. A change that leads to enrichment is totally rejected by him as an impossibility. But the doubt persists whether the values of one way of life can be transferred to another. A conscious selection of the good to be adopted may also not be a realistic proposition. Hence his position is full of confused thoughts.

In culture, what is embedded in the mind at the unconscious level must have been once examined consciously. Hence Eliot is negating all the efforts of the educators from 'The Republic' to 'Scrutiny' when he claims that culture cannot be planned. He ought not to dissociate himself from
planning if he wants to build up a healthy society. His aloofness is also reflected in a statement like this: 'The Culture of an artist or a philosopher is distinct from that of a mine worker or field labourer; the culture of a poet will be somewhat different from that of a politician; but in a healthy society these are all parts of the same culture; and the artist, the poet, the philosopher, the politician and the labourer will have a culture in common, which they do not share with other people of the same occupations in other countries.' He seems to expect a similar aloofness in the people who will be cultured in the future. These clearcut distinctions are undesirable in a healthy society as the professions can be interchangeable. A poet could also be a politician and vice versa.

Eliot says that consciousness ultimately leads to chaos as it is corrupt. But he is silent about the constraints necessary to invalidate consciousness, thus ensuring the survival of society. But any attempt to restrain consciousness is bound to fail as it is combined with power, a product of political influence inevitable in a society.

He makes a finer distinction of 'good manners' of people of various levels. 'But as we distinguish between the meanings of 'culture' at the several levels, so we distinguish also between the meanings of more and

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66. T.S. Eliot, Notes towards the Definition of Culture, (London: Faber and Faber, 1963), P.120.
less conscious "good manners". Thus he emphasizes, in every aspect, this differentiation of levels of culture. At the same time, he takes care to remind that this does not mean that the members of the upper levels of society do not possess more culture than the members of the lower levels: "Yet group culture, as observable in the past, has never been co-extensive with class, whether an aristocracy or an upper middle class." But they will only represent a more 'conscious' culture: "It is important to remember that we should not consider the upper levels as possessing more culture than the lower, but as representing a more conscious culture and a greater specialisation of culture." The distinction between conscious and unconscious life is thus being presented in terms of the two meanings of 'culture': culture, as the whole body of artistic and intellectual work, is the preserve of the conscious 'elite' and culture, defined anthropologically, as a particular way of life, a network of unconscious habits, as belonging to the members of the lower strata of society.

Like his 19th century predecessor, Matthew Arnold, Eliot was deeply concerned with the steep fall in the standards of art and culture. This is the result of the organisation of mass society solely for the purposes of earning profit. Arnold's notion of perfection has to be modified.

67. T.S. Eliot, Notes towards the Definition of Culture, (London: Faber and Faber, 1963), P.42.
68. Ibid., P.42.
69. Ibid., P.48.
by taking into account the three senses of culture put forward by Eliot.

Eliot's emphasis of culture as a whole way of life is significant. But his seriousness is not very convincing when he categorises: 'Taking now the point of view of identification, the reader must remind himself as the author has constantly to do, of how much is here embraced by the term "culture". It includes all the characteristic activities and interests of a people: Derby Day, Henley Regatta, Cowes, the twelfth of August, a cup final, the dog races, the pin table, the dart board, Wensleydale cheese, boiled cabbage cut in to sections, beetroot in vinegar, nineteenth century Gothic churches and the music of Elgar. The reader can make his own list. And then we have to face the strange idea that what is part of our culture is also a part of our "lived" religion.' This pleasant miscellany includes sport, food and a little art. Eliot's categories are a characteristic observation of English leisure. He translates the older specialised sense of culture like arts, philosophy into popular culture like sport, food and Gothic churches.

Regarding the transmission of culture, Eliot observes: 'The primary channel of transmission of culture is the family: no man wholly escapes from the kind, or wholly surpasses the degree, of culture which he acquired from his early environment. It would not do to suggest that this

can be the "only" channel of transmission: in a society of any complexity it is supplemented and continued by other conduits of transmission....71 A form of life based on a structure of values which goes beyond culture is thus visualised by Eliot. The value of an existing social class as a symbol of the future society is indicated in the following remark: 'And it is certain - and especially obvious when we turn our attention to the arts - that as new values appear, and as thought, sensibility and expression become more elaborate, some earlier values vanish.'72 As the unconscious majority of people do not take part in active remaking of culture, it can be presumed that the essentials of culture exist already. Thus Eliot suggests a relation, which is reciprocal, between the more and less conscious levels within the society visualised by him. A distillation of the known values of a Christian upper class to different cultural levels is going to be the practical result of this process. But a direct offering of the values of a conscious culture to lower levels is emphatically rejected by him when he remarks: 'to aim to make everyone share in the appreciation of the fruits of the more conscious part of culture is to adulterate and cheapen what you give.'73 Thus, Eliot rejects political democracy in any form. He remarks in this context: 'for it may be argued that complete equality means universal irresponsibility; and in such a society as I envisage, each

71. T.S.Eliot, Notes towards the Definition of Culture, (London: Faber and Faber,1963), P.43.
72. Ibid., P.25.
individual would inherit greater or less responsibility towards the commonwealth, according to the position in society which he inherited - each class would have some what different responsibilities. A democracy in which everybody had an equal responsibility in everything would be oppressive for the conscientious and licentious for the rest. 74

Thus he relies too much on the family as the primary channel for transmission of culture. This may appear to be over-simplification. The problems inherent in the structure of the family system, from the sociological point of view, seem to be ignored by him. He remarks at one point: 'Instead of congratulating ourselves on our progress, whenever the school assumes another responsibility hitherto left to parents, we might do better to admit that we have arrived at a stage of civilisation at which the family is irresponsible, or incompetent, or helpless; at which parents cannot be expected to train their children properly, and would not know how, even if they had the means; and that Education must step in and make the best of a bad job.' 75 But he had praised the role of the family in the passage quoted earlier. 'The primary channel of transmission of culture is the family; no man wholly escapes from the kind, or wholly surpasses the degree, of culture which he acquired from his early

74. T.S.Eliot, Notes towards the Definition of Culture, (London; Faber and Faber,1963), P.48.
75. Ibid., P.104.
environment...... But by far the most important channel of transmission of culture remains the family: and when family life fails to play its part, we must expect our culture to deteriorate...... But when I speak of the family, I have in mind a bond which embraces a longer period of time than this: a piety towards the dead, however obscure, and a solicitude for the unborn, however remote - unless this reverence for past and future is cultivated in the home, it can never be more than a verbal convention in the community. 76 But the process by which the family can pass from what it is to what it should be is not provided by Eliot. A brief mention is made: 'I hope, however, that the reader of these lines had read, or will immediately read, "The Peckham Experiment", as an illustration of what can be done, under modern conditions, to help the family to help itself.' 77 But this is not an adequate suggestion.

A third sense of culture, apart from the socio­logical and anthropological ones, becomes apparent from an examination of the translation of the three broadcasts on the unity of European culture addressed to Germany after the war. He remarks: 'By "culture", then, I mean first of all what the anthropologists mean: the way of life of a particular people living together in one place. That culture is made visible in their arts, in their social systems, in their habits and customs, in their religion. But these

76. T.S.Eliot, Notes towards the Definition of Culture, (London: Faber and Faber,1963), Pp.43-44.
77. Ibid., P.104.
things added together do not constitute the culture, though we often speak for convenience as if they did. These things are simply the parts into which a culture can be anatomised, as a human body can. But just as a man is something more than an assemblage of the various constituent parts of his body, so a culture is more than the assemblage of its arts, customs, and religious beliefs. These things all act upon each other and fully to understand one you have to understand all. The term 'culture' is being used here in an organicist sense. Culture is thus more than the sum of its visible aspects, even though it pertains to the whole life of a community. In religious and metaphysical terms, the soul is the animating principle behind an assemblage of parts of a human body. Religion is the animating principle in Eliot's model of a society. Thus we come back to the link between culture and religion. Religion thus makes culture more than a mere collection of various elements. The relationship between religion and culture cannot be specifically and completely expressed by the usage of terms like identity and relationship. He says in this context: 'In order to apprehend the theory of religion and culture which I have endeavoured to set forth in this chapter, we have to try to avoid the two alternative errors: that of regarding religion and culture as two separate things between which there is a "relation", and that of "identifying" religion and culture. I spoke at one point

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78. T.S. Eliot, *Notes towards the Definition of Culture*, (London: Faber and Faber, 1963), P. 120.
of the culture of a people as an "incarnation" of its religion; and while I am aware of the temerity of employing such an exalted term, I cannot think of any other which would convey so well the intention to avoid "relation" on the one hand and "identification" on the other. Thus he sets forth his difficulty. The problem gets further complicated when he remarks: 'The identity of religion and culture remains on the unconscious level, upon which we have superimposed a conscious structure wherein religion and culture are contrasted and can be opposed.' The complication deepens with the remark: 'And both "religion" and "culture", besides meaning different things from each other, should mean for the individual and for the group something towards which they strive, not merely something which they possess....... From one point of view we may identify: from another, we must separate.' Thus 'religion' and 'culture' appear to be two different aspects of one and the same thing. This third aspect of culture has to be taken in to account. Eliot's description of tradition in 'After Strange Gods' and the largely unconscious religious practice of mass of people in 'The Idea of a Christian Society' anticipate this idea of religion-culture.

A clear conception of what Eliot means by faith, theology and religion is not adequately dealt with even in the section 'Unity and Diversity'. A factual account

80. Ibid., P.68.
81. Ibid., P.31.
of the development of the Church of England is given. He remarks: 'An individual European may not believe that the Christian Faith is true, and yet what he says, and makes, and does, will all spring out of his heritage of Christian culture and depend upon that culture for its meaning.'

It is surprising to note that he makes on the same page the remark that 'If Christianity goes, the whole of our culture goes'. It is strange that a culture which produced greatest pieces of art before the birth of Christianity should depend on the same Christianity for its survival. Eliot emphasised the importance of Christianity thus: 'To our Christian heritage we owe many things beside religious faith. Through it we trace the evolution of our arts, through it we have our conception of Roman Law which has done so much to shape the Western World, through it we have our conceptions of private and public morality. And through it we have our common standards of literature, in the literatures of Greece and Rome. The Western world has its unity in this heritage, in Christianity and in the ancient civilisations of Greece, Rome and Israel, from which, owing to two thousand years of Christianity, we trace our descent.'

He seems to have conveniently ignored the historical fact that only from the 6th century onwards that Christianity has been an effective cultural medium. He has simply equated Christianity with all that is good in the Western world. He makes Christianity such a frail thing that if it goes, everything else also goes. He asserts the

82. T.S.Eliot, Notes towards the Definition of Culture, (London: Faber and Faber,1963), P.122.
83. Ibid., Pp.122-123.
unambiguous divine origin and divine power of Christianity. But, at the same time, he asserts emphatically: 'A higher religion is one which is much more difficult to believe.' As a definition of higher religion, it is clearly not true in the case of Christianity. Millions of people have found it easier to have belief in Christianity than in paganism. It is not easy for a lay man to distinguish between refinement and crudity in theology and philosophy. There is a gross reduction of complex issues to simple terms.

Some thing more precise than a bald statement that religion is the 'spirit of culture' is required. According to Eliot, a society's manners, learning, philosophy and artistic productions are the 'incarnation' of its religion. But first we have to understand the beliefs held in a society about divine things and practices associated with these beliefs. These beliefs somehow diffuse themselves into the manners, learning, philosophy and art of that society. But Eliot uses the term 'incarnation' in a way that suggests more than mere influence. Perhaps it is only a verbal transformation that is implied. For it to be anything else, evidence has to be produced that without religious beliefs and practices, there can be no cultural artefacts. But a religious term like 'incarnation' must have been used by Eliot with a deeper meaning than this. Perhaps he means that culture is not to be understood at all in natural terms.

but must be regarded as of a divine origin. As culture is of divine origin, it must perish among a people who lose belief in a supernatural world. 'Learning' and 'philosophy', as understood by Eliot, are permeated with theology. Perhaps, in a scientific and industrial society, theology would become, as Eliot feared in 'The Idea of a Christian Society', 'a special study, like numismatics or heraldry.'

But Eliot is not referring to the importance to be attached to devout persons in a nation only. Culture is shaped by all worship, directly or indirectly, and in complex ways. According to Eliot, the quality of a given culture will, ultimately, depend on the character of its religion: 'It is against a background of Christianity that all our thought has significance... Only a Christian culture could have produced a Voltaire or a Nietzsche.'

He had emphasized previously: 'It is only when we imagine our culture as it ought to be, if our society were a really Christian society, that we can dare to speak of Christian culture as the highest culture; it is only by referring to all the phases of this culture, which has been the culture of Europe, that we can affirm, that it is the highest culture that the world has ever known.'

The varieties and contradictions of art and life are kept in mind along with the conviction that religion is primary. This makes

86. Ibid., P.33.
his social criticism pragmatic. It is positive in significance as it sets the limits of the plannable. Valid culture centred in religions other than Christianity must be respected as we respect life. He observes: 'we can also learn to respect every other culture as a whole, however inferior to our own it may appear or however justly we may disapprove of some features of it: the deliberate destruction of another culture as a whole is an irreparable wrong, almost as evil as to treat human beings like animals.' Speaking from a sociological point of view, Eliot recognises the value for culture of a variety of religious sects. He observes: 'I attempt, as far as possible, to contemplate my problems from the point of view of the sociologist, and not from that of the Christian apologist.' He remarks further in this context: 'From the sociological point of view, the truth or falsity is irrelevant: we are concerned only with the comparative effects of different religious structures upon culture.' He concludes: 'From this it should follow that as a religion divides into sects, and as these sects develop from generation to generation, a variety of cultures will be propagated.'

Dr. Karl Mannheim, in his 'Man and Society' substitutes elites for classes and this substitution poses an obstacle in the path of acceptance of Eliot's theory of culture. The nineteenth century attempt to re-identify

88. Ibid., P.68.
89. Ibid., P.69.
90. Ibid., P.73.
class with function is continued by Dr. Mannheim. This is a continuation of the tradition of Carlyle, Ruskin, Coleridge and Arnold.

Coleridge's 'Clerisy' is a revival of obsolete classes. Ruskin and Carlyle wanted the existing classes to resume their socially assigned roles. Matthew Arnold propounded the theory of the civilizing minority, 'the remnant' leading to the formation of a new class. Dr. Mannheim realised the failure of all these attempts and rejected the idea of class based on birth or money. He proposed the theory of elites whose basis is achievement, as he accepted the fact of necessary specialisation and complexity of modern society. But, in reality, we have a mixed economy where the old class and the new elite mix together. The theory of elites is strengthened by equality of opportunity for education. Specialisation with quality has thus become a practical necessity.

Eliot's objection to Dr. Mannheim's theory of elites is contained in the statement that 'It posits an "atomic" view of society.' Eliot's instinct is for an organic view of society which is the opposite of the atomic one. The social laissez-faire implied in the atomic view of society is rejected by Eliot. The atomic view of society is a comprehensive one embracing with in its fold

economic individualism, equality of opportunity in the field of education and fierce competition with the consequent worship of success. Transmission of culture through a system of formal education is objected to by Eliot as it limits a whole way of life to certain specialisations, leading to disintegration. The resultant establishment of a new kind of stratified society based on merit and which is functionally authoritarian is not acceptable to Eliot.

Eliot insists on culture as a whole way of life and hence rejects this theory of elites on the basis of the meagre quality of its common culture. Another objection to this theory is that it requires a change of persons in each generation without any guarantee of continuity other than the elite's own skills. An elite thus denies a wider social continuity guaranteed by a class. Eliot's stress is on the whole content of a culture with the inclusion of special skills in it. Eliot objects to the theory of elites on the ground that the whole common way of life is affected by the co-existence of fine acquisitions with mediocrity. According to Eliot, general continuity is ensured only by the retention of a governing social class with which the elite overlap and constantly interact. Eliot is actually recommending what exactly is already existing socially when once the abstractions are removed. According to Eliot, national life is distorted by a classless society and national education. Hence he condemns these two factors totally without any reservations.
Eliot merely extends the discussions carried from the 'Moot' into his criticism of the theory of elites as propounded by Dr. Mannheim. Eliot's view is that the continuance of social classes is necessary for transmission of culture and that there can be no continuation of a high culture without an upper class. The injustice of the class system with its privileges is justified by him because of the benefit to the whole society on account of their continuance. But in an elitist society, the criterion for selection and training would be the suitability for the jobs. Hence culture is threatened by elitism as it is a threat to the hereditary guardians of traditions. Eliot decries the modern fad of equalitarianism. Culture may flourish in a future society in which elitism is permitted to mix with class distinctions based on the continuity of family interests. A faint hope of such a society coming into existence in the future is offered by Eliot: 'If we agree that the primary vehicle for the transmission of culture is the family, and if we agree that in a more highly civilised society there must be different levels of culture, then it follows that to ensure the transmission of the culture of these different levels there must be groups of families persisting, from generation to generation, each in the same way of life.'

Eliot attacks the elitist theory of culture as propounded by Dr. Mannheim observing: 'I must remark that

Dr. Mannheim's description of culture is different from that given in the previous chapter of this essay. He says ("Man and Society", P.21): "A sociological investigation of culture in liberal society must begin with the life of those who create culture, i.e., the intelligentsia and their position within society as a whole." Eliot accepts that the above theory is acceptable only to the extent that culture finds ready articulation among the intellectuals of a particular society. The narrow confines of the professional interests of elites will have to be widened for this appreciation to take place.

The Marxist theory of a people's culture is also objected to by Eliot as being equally oppressive. He remarks: 'But we have very little evidence about the perpetuation of government by elite, and such as we have is unsatisfactory. A considerable time must elapse before we can draw any illustration from Russia.' The institution of family is held by him as culturally vital and enduring. It is responsible for the economic and cultural stratification in society. He remarks in this context: 'what is important is a structure of society in which there will be, from "top" to "bottom", a continuous gradation of cultural levels.... I incline to believe that no true democracy can maintain itself unless it contains these different levels of culture. The levels of

94. Ibid., P.45.
culture may also be seen as levels of power, to the extent that a smaller group at a higher level will have equal power with a larger group at a lower level.... If we agree that the primary vehicle for the transmission of culture is the family, and if we agree that in a more highly civilised society there must be different levels of culture, then it follows that to ensure the transmission of the culture of these different levels there must be groups of families persisting, from generation to generation, each in the same way of life. 95

Eliot strongly believes that the elite would establish itself as a class with the sole aim of dominating the society. Greater danger lies in the elite as it conceives of itself as the sole center and transmitter of the whole culture of that society. The individuals forming the elite will share the whole culture of the society with all other individuals composing the society at large. Eliot is firm in the conviction that any finite group, like the elite, should not have the discretion to decide about the preservation or destruction of any aspect of culture.

An elite should not be allowed to consider himself as the sole arbiter of culture. The effort of the elites to homogenize differences under cover of democracy is also rejected by Eliot. He declares: 'and to aim to make everyone share in the appreciation of the fruits of the more conscious part of culture is to adulterate and cheapen

what you give.' The general decline in cultural standards is also confirmed by such an attempt. Its appreciation may be limited or total on account of its diversified manifestation. But the exercise of acuteness of good taste is essential for its appreciation. Eliot regrets that the present time is ill-prepared for the cultivation of good taste in every aspect of its varied activity.

According to Eliot, culture is not the sum of several activities but the way of life of a society. This is the main basis of his objection to the theory of elites. This point is made clear in his remark: 'The function of what Dr. Mannheim would call the culture-creating groups, according to my account, would be rather to bring about a further development of the culture in organic complexity: culture at a more conscious level but still the same culture.' This would also result in an absence of contacts and mutual influences which are essential for development of culture in proper manner: 'I have suggested elsewhere that a growing weakness of our culture has been the increasing isolation of elites from each other, so that the political, that philosophical, the artistic, the scientific, are separated to the great loss of each of them, not merely through the arrest of any general circulation of ideas, but through the lack of those contacts and mutual influences at a less conscious level, which are perhaps even more important than

97. Ibid., P.37.
ideas. Eliot does not agree with Dr. Mannheim's view that culture could be understood through rational investigation. Living culture is the only way to understand it. Thus Eliot's devotion to his theory of the unconscious absorption of society by self and self by society assumes great significance. Culture and religion thus get interlinked.

Eliot is here thinking only of his conception of a Christian society, ignoring all practical considerations of power and the structure of society. The factual Industrial society is ignored. He scrupulously avoids all questions about means. He holds up before us a positive society devoid of all tensions and contradictions which are characteristic of modern industrial society. A comparison with alternatives is also rejected. The nearest approach to reality lies in his remark: 'Britain will presumably continue to be governed by some mercantile and financial class which, with a continual change of personnel, has been increasingly important since the 15th century. I mean by a "lower middle class society" one in which the standard man legislated for and catered for, the man whose passions must be gratified, will be the lower middle class man. He is the most numerous, the one most necessary to flatter.' Eliot implies here that restraint must be placed on the lower middle class man. Culture is neatly divided between 'the producers and consumers of culture -

98. T.S. Eliot, Notes towards the Definition of Culture, (London: Faber and Faber, 1963), P. 38.
the existence of men who can create new thought and new art (with middlemen who can teach the consumers to like it) and the existence of a cultivated society to enjoy and patronize it. The lower middle class constitute the class of consumers who will be taught to like it. Eliot's proposal can be described as a dogmatic but nevertheless mild and tolerant authoritarianism, imposing no more than a Christian frame of reference upon the state. But the state is hardly Christian in all its parts and the imposition of a Christian authority on such a State is almost an impossibility. It is almost a challenge to the existing order. There is an apocalyptic note in contrast to his characteristic weariness: 'I would not have it thought that I condemn a society because of its material ruin, for that would be to make its material success a sufficient test of its excellence; I mean only that a wrong attitude towards nature implies somewhere, a wrong attitude towards God and that the consequence is an inevitable doom.'

The events of 1938 proved true all his suspicions and fears about the validity of the contemporary civilization. That is the reason for the composition of 'The Idea of a Christian Society'. There is a charge levelled against Eliot that he places the elites in the vanguard of culture. Eliot's definition of elite applies to those who are capable of appreciating poetry. They are independent and somewhat in

101. Ibid., P.49.
advance of their time. His remarks in this context are pertinent: 'But while it is generally supposed that class, in any sense which maintains associations of the past, will disappear, it is now the opinion of some of the most advanced minds that some qualitative differences between individuals must be recognised, and that the superior individuals must be formed into suitable groups, endowed with appropriate powers, and perhaps with varied emoluments and honours. Those groups, formed of individuals apt for powers of government and administration, will direct the public life of the nation; the individuals composing them will be spoken of as "leaders". There will be groups concerned with art, and groups concerned with science, and groups concerned with philosophy, as well as groups consisting of men of action; and these groups are what we call elites.'

The meetings of the Moot group discussed Eliot's ideas on culture along with proposals of Karl Mannheim and other members. Roger Kojecky in his book "T.S.Eliot's Social Criticism" points out a paradox of divided loyalties between romantic expressionism and classical control. This paradox appears in his writings on society. Eliot's elitist notions of culture and class, his plea for the retention of regional culture, his denunciation of totalitarianism of all shades and his call for an authoritarian social order with the community of Christians at the helm of affairs reveal this paradox. Many of his contradictions can be seen as rationalization of his own creative activity. His social

criticism is actuated by his need to 'redeem the time' in a world 'Worm-eaten with liberalism' and the 'strange Gods'. He speaks as a committed ideologue with a mission to save the world. In his notes for the lecture on French literature, Eliot foresees a connection between his literary and social criticism. Eliot's transition from a literary critic to a critic of society with a distinct Christian orientation is to be seen as a search for stable basis for a meaningful social life. He automatically ignores the contribution of non-Christian religions to the making of culture. The non-Christian world had a flourishing culture long before the advent of Christianity and it is a short-sighted misjudgment to regard this culture as marginal to Christianity.

The question of elites reveals Eliot's thinking about restoration of a past order corresponding to a past stage of religious evolution. In the opinion of Eliot, something more spiritual than self-interest bound together members of a family. Hence levels of culture become inevitable as much as the desirability of specialisation of culture. In a highly civilised society, equality of opportunity is denied by these levels of culture. Hence he assumes that culture can be transmitted from generation to generation only by maintaining class privileges. The dangers of ossification are also at the same time recognised by him.
Eliot has in mind a truly organic unity, in which the parts are constituent and not component. Eliot tells us a flourishing national culture should hence be 'a constellation of cultures, the constituents of which, benefiting each other, benefit the whole.' Similar opinion is expressed in respect of world culture: 'just as we recognise that the parts of Britain must have in one sense a common culture, though this common culture is only actual in diverse local manifestations, so we must aspire to a common world culture, which will not yet diminish the particularity of the constituent parts.'

Avenues of achievement and ability can be kept open only when the spirit of enquiry, scepticism and innovation are preserved. Situations in society which change continually can be successfully dealt with only when liberty of thought and behaviour are encouraged and developed. Eliot is of the opinion that apart from all these things, religious faith is also required to control and avoid disorder. This alone can ensure a strict control over the intellectual life of the community. But care must be taken to see that this control does not pass into the hands of an ecclesiastical elite which would only be...

one variety of totalitarianism. The only alternative is
a world-wide common faith, secular and not supernatural
in character. But Eliot is not very clear in his discus-
sion of integration and unification.

Class system prevalent in society is dealt with
by Eliot as it is closely connected with the discussion
of elites. A specific sociological embodiment is given
in terms of class levels. A discussion of class system
leads Eliot to discuss social mobility also. A measure
of social mobility is favoured by him as it prevents the
formation of caste fixities. At the same time, too much
of mobility is not acceptable to him as it would lead to
disintegration. He observes in this context: 'It is a
recurrent theme of this essay, that a people should be
neither too united nor too divided, if its culture is to
flourish. Excess of unity may be due to barbarism and may
lead to tyranny; excess of division may be due to decadence
and may also lead to tyranny: either excess will prevent
further development in culture. The proper degree of unity
and diversity cannot be determined for all peoples at all
times.... Neither a classless society, nor a society of
strict and impenetrable social barriers is good; each class
should have constant additions and defections; the classes,
while remaining distinct, should be able to mix freely; and
they should all have a community of culture with each other
which will give them something in common, more fundamental
than the community which each class has with its counterpart in another society.* Earlier, he had remarked: 'I have suggested elsewhere that a society is in danger of disintegration when there is a lack of contact between people of different areas of activity - between the political, the scientific, the artistic, the philosophical and the religious minds.' He remarks on the danger inherent: 'I should say then that in a vigorous society there will be present both class and elite, with some overlapping and constant interaction between them. An elite, if it is a governing elite, and so far as the natural impulse to pass on to one's offspring both power and prestige is not artificially checked, will tend to establish itself as a class.' Hence the necessity of keeping in check the elites by an inherited class system. In the opinion of Eliot, social mobility derived from equality of educational opportunities also provides frequent instances of cultural shock.

Eliot supports his whole theory of class in this way: 'And the class itself possesses a function, that of maintaining that part of the total culture of the society which pertains to that class.' The smooth movement from the differentiation of function in primitive society to what he calls as class implies a lack of deep conviction on the part of Eliot. His conception of society is too stable and

106. Ibid., P.44.
107. T.S.Eliot, Notes towards the Definition of Culture, (London: Faber and Faber, 1963), P.44.
more simple than any existing one to which his discussion may be relevant. The emergence of such functional groups as merchants, industrial capitalists and financiers is not taken into account in Eliot's structure of society. He ignores also the fact that function can be divorced from property. It becomes thus inappropriate to equate class with function, ignoring the emergence of new economic functions deeply embedded in the structure of society. This complication of affairs is ignored by Eliot.

Eliot was living at a time of change when classes were being abolished and elites succeeded them. The cultural scene appeared to Eliot as a decadent one. The society was being divided into two clear-cut classes, namely the privileged and the non-privileged, based on a distinction of wealth. Eliot considers the relation of class to culture in such a milieu; writing as a social observer and not as a Christian dogmatist, he feels that there is an amalgam of cultural activities, a harmony among diversities, within the unity which is culture. Hence arts, philosophy, scholarship and urbanity are presented by him as aspects of culture only. One can still be uncultured inspite of having specialised in any one of these aspects. He remarks: 'If we look at the several activities of culture listed in the preceding paragraph, we must conclude that no perfection in any one of them, to the exclusion of the others, can confer culture on anybody.... The person who contributes to culture, however
important his contribution may be, is not always a "cultured person". But everyone shares in all the activities of culture in a primitive society: 'It is obvious among the more primitive communities the several activities of culture are inextricably interwoven.' In more complex societies, different levels of culture are observed. Members of the upper classes have time, leisure and wealth to indulge in literary and artistic pursuits and thus represent the higher levels of culture: 'As a society develops towards functional complexity and differentiation, we may expect the emergence of several cultural levels; in short, the culture of the class or group will present itself.' But the danger in such a situation lies in the separation of the levels of culture in the whole society, leading to the disintegration of culture: 'while it appears that progress in civilisation will bring into being more specialised culture groups, we must not expect this development to be unattended by perils. Cultural disintegration may ensue upon cultural specialisation: and it is the most radical disintegration that a society can suffer. It is not the only kind, or it is not the only aspect under which disintegration can be studied; but, whatever be the cause or effect, the disintegration of culture is the most serious and the most difficult to repair.'

George Orwell supports Eliot in his doubts regarding the effects on culture of the disappearance of class

109. Ibid., P.24.
110. Ibid., P.25.
111. Ibid., P.26.
system: 'The elites will plan, organise and minister; whether they can become the guardians and the transmitters of culture, as certain social classes have been in the past, Mr. Eliot doubts, perhaps justifiably.' But Orwell points out one weakness in Eliot's thinking when he comments that class privilege, like slavery is indefensible on moral grounds. Eliot's social criticism is undermined by himself as he had, fundamentally, no faith in modern civilisation. His gloom and despair are evident in every work of his. The mind of Eliot moves between two worlds, one of supernatural eternal values, the other of the present temporal one. Eliot attacked always in his social criticism the materialistic and acquisitive nature of our present civilisation. His Anglo-Catholicism seems to him to be the best way out: 'However bigoted the announcement may sound, the Christian can be satisfied with nothing less than a Christian organisation of society - which is not the same thing consisting exclusively of devout Christians.' The hollow, superficial impressions prevalent in the contemporary world shook the aesthetic judgement of Eliot and his social criticism emanates from this shock. He was aware of the limitations of his own assumptions. He deliberately avoids therefore sociological techniques. Eliot places his faith in an absolute moral order as the only guarantee of human freedom. His faith embodies also his enthusiastic and arduous love of the good, the beautiful and sense of knowledge and human faculties.

Eliot defends class society as a stable structure essential for the transmission of culture. A totality of concrete habits and manners, which cannot be transmitted through books, can be passed on to young persons in a stable society only. The logical conclusion as to the necessary existence of a class structure in society is not argued further. All that may be needed would be stable family groups and stable social communities within a larger society and of course sufficient leisure. There is nothing in Eliot's argument to indicate that a classless society cannot coexist with a high level of culture. The past that ended with the middle of the 18th century and a very remote, perhaps unrealizable future constitute the two chief centres of Eliot's interest. He is only very rarely in touch with the present. Eliot's belief that aristocracy and Christianity can be consistently united is open to doubt. The same doubt arises with regard to his belief that Christianity and exploitation are perfectly compatible. His attack on 'the mute inglorious Milton dogma' - the idea that if education is not widely available, certain natural talents may never be brought to fruition - is also open to doubt.

Eliot believed that the relationships in a class structure are part of an organically shaped society and any disturbance of the same becomes a sensitive issue to Eliot.
traditional Anglicatholicism make society a unified structure. Because of these beliefs, he criticises the liberal attitude of Karl Mannheim and his theory of elites. He remarks: 'However moderately and unobtrusively the doctrine of elites is put, it implies a radical transformation of society.'

He is afraid that a society of elites functions on the basis of a much reduced consciousness. He rejects such a theory saying: 'On the whole, it would appear to be for the best that the great majority of human beings should go on living in the place in which they were born. Family, class and local loyalty all support each other; and if one of these decays, the others will suffer also.'

The friction a mobility would produce, he is afraid, would pose too great a threat to traditional structures. His belief that society is an organic structure makes him feel that there is danger in identifying culture with a mere collection of distinct cultural constituents. The whole is greater than the sum of its constituent parts. Hence he provides two partial definitions of culture, one essentially anthropological and the other essentially qualitative. One states that culture is the whole way of life of a people: 'and we shall look for culture, not in any individual or in any one group of individuals, but more and more widely; and we are driven in the end to find it in the pattern of the society as a whole.'

The other states: 'Culture may even be described simply as that which makes life worth living.'

115. Ibid., p.52.
116. Ibid., p.23.
117. Ibid., p.27.
A certain mysteriously elusive quality hangs around culture as a result of the oscillation between these two definitions. Eliot does not spend much time on the elements of cultural strength like the persistence of social classes, religion, the family and regional unity. He simply states: 'And once again I must repeat, the "condition of culture" which I set forth do not necessarily produce the higher civilisation; I assert only that when they are absent, the higher civilisation is unlikely to be found.' Time is the greatest enemy to culture which is subject to natural decay. He says in this context: 'Indeed, the one thing that time is ever sure to bring about is the loss; gain or compensation is almost always conceivable but never certain.' He is certain of cultural disintegration inspite of human mind and imagination striving to stave off the inevitable: 'I see no reason why the decay of culture should not proceed much further, and why we may not even anticipate a period, of some duration, of which it is possible to say that it will have "no" culture.' Enthusiasm and purposes are always transient in nature and hence of no value in stemming the decay that has set in industrial civilisation.

Culture becomes the exclusive privilege of the class that controls it. It must prevent it from spreading under peril of vulgarisation. This is a natural corollary that one can draw from Eliot's thinking. Other cultural

118. T.S.Eliot, Notes towards the Definition of Culture, (London: Faber and Faber,1963), P.49.
119. Ibid., P.25.
120. Ibid., P.19.
life may exist. But the culture of the bourgeois and the aristocracy which are nearest to the seat of political power will have a primacy denied to the other levels of culture. The quality of the culture of the minority can only be preserved if it continues to be a minority culture. According to Eliot, cultural control and political power are combined in an inseparable way: 'In a healthily "stratified" society, public affairs would be a responsibility not equally borne; a greater responsibility would be inherited by those who inherited special advantages, and in whom self-interest, and interest for the sake of their families ("a stake in the country") should cohere with public spirit.' Thus it is an aspect of the "noblesse oblige." Those who have a higher consciousness in cultural matters are precisely those who have a stake in community.

Thus we find two contrary forces alive at once in Eliot's thinking. The wholeness and the homogeneity of culture are stressed by one while the separateness of cultural elements is stressed by the other. Culture is a whole way of life but the constituent parts are not homogeneous. Thus, Eliot, in a way, is recommending an undemocratic social structure. This is perfectly in keeping with his second definition of culture: 'that which makes life worth living.' Life is made worth living only through special prerogatives and special controls. Culture and elites exert

121. T.S. Eliot, Notes towards the Definition of Culture, (London: Faber and Faber, 1963), P. 84.
reciprocal influence on each other. Consciousness is the cause of this surprising reciprocity; 'culture cannot altogether be brought to consciousness; and the culture of which we are wholly conscious is never the whole of culture; the effective culture is that which is directing the activities of those who are manipulating that which they "call" culture.'  

The central fact about his diagnosis of the present situation is that it is one leading to total social paralysis. Culture and society cannot be completely shaped even by the governing elite and those possessed of maximum consciousness. Still he defends the Western civilisation: 'It is only when we imagine our culture as it ought to be, if our society were a really Christian society, that we can dare to speak of Christian culture as the highest culture; it is only by referring to all the phases of this culture, which has been the culture of Europe, that we can affirm that it is the highest culture that the world has known.'  

But the main drawback in his defence of this structure is the total exclusion of power. He is left with the force of the written word which is linked up with consciousness. But consciousness leads only to cultural decay and disintegration. This fundamental contradiction is not solved by Eliot in his book. Hence Raymond Williams argues: 'It is clear, when the abstractions are translated, that what he recommends in substantially what now exists, socially.'  

This is his view of Eliot's fundamental conservatism. Eliot's effort to resolve the

123. Ibid., P.33.
inherent contradiction was by claiming that he was non-political. He remarks in this context: 'The writer himself is not without political convictions and prejudices; but the imposition of them is no part of his present intention.' Thus he claims to occupy a station beyond questions of power and thus nowhere incites to action.

Eliot sees an interdependence of individual, group and social cultures. At the same time, he cautions against projecting a class culture as an ideal for the whole society. Eliot is always concerned with the culture of the society as a whole because culture, according to his definition, is a whole way of life. But he does not indicate the means by which the dominant group in a society can be prevented from imposing its culture on others. This is especially important when that dominant group enjoys power also. It is surprising that the desirability of exclusiveness of group cultures in an age of mass media is not directly discussed by him. But, the breaking down of the class barriers is looked down upon by him as a cheapening or degradation of culture. An individual or a group can participate in the cultural activities of a society both horizontally as well as vertically when communications are rapid and far-reaching. The inequalities of social and institutional orthodoxies, which are successfully challenging the premises of culture itself are ignored by him.

A class structure is necessary along with other patterns because culture needs forces that offset each other. He remarks: 'A nation which has gradations of class seems to me, other things being equal, likely to be more tolerant and pacific than one which is not so organised.' A nation, whose enthusiasm and antagonisms are counterpoised at home, is completely pre-occupied with settlement of internal troubles. The same principle applies to differences of religious sect and cult. Hence a world culture is richer for tolerating local culture.

Thus, in the opinion of Eliot, the existence of a variety of regional sub-cultures or satellite cultures will help the prosperity of a society as a whole. The destruction of sub-cultures leads to the destruction of the more extensive culture. He supports friction when he says: 'At this point, I introduce a new notion: that of the vital importance for a society of "friction" between its parts.... I now suggest that both class and region, by dividing the inhabitants of a country into two different kinds of groups, lead to a conflict favourable to creativeness and progress. And these are only two of an indefinite number of conflicts and jealousies which should be profitable to society. Indeed, the more than better: so that everyone should be an ally of every one else in some respects, and an opponent in several others, and no one conflict, envy or fear will dominate.' Such frictions are conducive to

126. T.S. Eliot, Notes towards the Definition of Culture, (London: Faber and Faber, 1963), P. 60.
peace within a nation, by dispersing and confusing animosities; they favour peace between nations, by giving every man enough antagonism at home to exercise all his aggressiveness.\textsuperscript{128} Hastily conceived plans for world government are looked upon with suspicion by him. Since religion and culture are aspects of the same thing, there could not be a world culture also without a world religion.

Eliot's defence of class differentiation leads us to think that each distinct human culture is a development of human potentiality and as such has intrinsic value. The following remarks support such a supposition: 'And it is what justifies other peoples and other generations in saying, when they contemplate the remains and the influence of an extinct civilisation, that it was "worth while" for that civilisation to have existed.'\textsuperscript{129} But this stand is inconsistent with Eliot's view that Christianity is the true religion and that the ultimately desirable unity in diversity is catholic Christianity sub-divided into local variations.

A constellation of cultures becomes a necessary condition for the flourishing of a national culture: 'For a national culture, if it is to flourish, should be a constellation of cultures, the constituents of which, benefiting each other, benefit the whole.'\textsuperscript{130} Culture is seen thus by

\textsuperscript{128} T.S.Eliot, \textit{Notes towards the Definition of Culture}, (London: Faber and Faber,1963), P.60.
\textsuperscript{129} Ibid., P.27.
\textsuperscript{130} Ibid., P.58.
Eliot as a complex collaboration. A 'horizontal' alternative to a 'vertical' one of levels, noted elsewhere, is offered by Eliot in this image of a constellation of cultures. Differentiation of cultural functions without necessary subordination is thus made possible. The image of number of regional cultures in creative tension with each other is extended to the image of social classes in the same tension. The socially creative role of conflict, as described in his discussion of regionalism, sharply contrasts with the static image of hierarchical levels that is projected. A functionally-based model is replaced by a conflict-based one in sociological terms but Eliot does not follow up these implications. This is the result of a confusion between simple and complex ideas of society.

The evidence from America is not yet ripe for the sociologist to support the perpetuation of government by elites: 'Nor can we rely upon any evidence from the United States of America. The real revolution in that country was not what is called the Revolution in the history books, but is a consequence of the Civil War; after which arose a plutocratic elite.' He asserts the dependence of Western culture on dogmatic Christianity.

Eliot does not provide a clear-cut distinction between 'society' and 'state'. He does not also indicate

the checks necessary to prevent the 'State' from going astray when it is given powers for the betterment of society. A slight indication is provided when he speaks of the roles of the family and the universities. The State and society shape themselves as the concrete form of the social culture of a group or an individual and all the necessary conditions for such a culture to flourish should be provided. An air of ambiguity and remoteness hangs around these issues.

The separation of politics from culture in Eliot's thinking has been pointed out as a major flaw in Eliot's concept of culture by Raymond Williams. Eliot ignores a community's beliefs and values with its political and economic structures. The quality of a society's highest values should bear some relation to the quality of its common institutional life. This is the result of the effort to go beyond the definition of culture as the arts to the idea of a whole way of life. Eliot sees the industrial democratic society as a shallow and faceless mass society and hence his efforts to separate culture from politics. He remarks in this context: 'It is commonly assumed that there is culture, but that it is the property of a small section of society; and from this assumption it is usual to proceed to one of two conclusions: either that culture can only be the concern of a small minority, and that therefore there is no place for it in the society of the future; or that in the society
of the future the culture which has been the possession of the few must be put at the disposal of everybody.132 He adds strength to his concept of culture by refusing the confine culture only to the 'elite'. Culture is lived commonly and variously by a whole people. In his conception of culture, Eliot relegates the majority of mankind to the level of unconscious and instinctive life. Eliot assents with the argument that a fully conscious culture cannot be widely shared. His pertinent remarks in this connection are: 'A "mass-culture" will always be a substitute - culture; and sooner or later the deception will became apparent to the more intelligent of those upon whom this culture has been palmed off.'133

Eliot believed that political activity should be based upon supernatural authority, generated by institutions of church and monarchy. Even before his conversion to Anglo-Catholicism, Eliot believed that human standards had always a reference to the hypothesis of the supernatural element. He preferred the Europe of Middle Ages which had unity of belief and shared values in society to the modern west of fragmented aims and values. But he was not nostalgic about the past. We can say that his views are always improvised ones as he thinks about principles and not about political realities. Hence his views are, at times, inconsistent.


133. Ibid., P.107.
Eliot has drawn a sharp distinction between political unity and cultural unity: 'The Unity of Culture, in contrast to the unity of political organisation, does not require us all to have only one loyalty: it means that there will be a variety of loyalties.' The centres of culture can preserve their freedom only when they remain independent of the politics of the government. But, speaking realistically, political events enliven genuine culture: 'The fact that culture has become, in some sense, a department of politics, should not obscure in our memory the fact that at other periods politics has been an activity pursued within a culture and between representatives of different cultures.'

The place of thought and action in the life of a man is delineated as: 'It is rather a relation between men of different types of mind and different areas of thought and action. A sharp distinction between thought and action is no more tenable for the political than for the religious life, in which the contemplative must have his own activity, and the secular priest must not be wholly unpractised in meditation. There is no plane of active life on which thought is negligible, except that of the merest automatic execution of orders; and there is no species of thinking which can be quite without effect upon action.' He deprecates systems when there is no reciprocal relationship between politics and culture: 'Modern political thought, inextricably involved with economics and with sociology,'

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134. T.S. Eliot, Notes towards the Definition of Culture, (London: Faber and Faber, 1963), P.123.
135. Ibid., P.83.
136. Ibid., P.84.
preempts to itself the position of queen of the sciences. For the exact and experimental sciences are judged according to their utility, and are valid in so far as they produce results - either for making life more comfortable and less laborious, or for making it more precarious and ending it more quickly. Culture itself is regarded as a department of life to be organised in accordance with the particular scheme we favour. I am thinking not only of the more dogmatic and totalitarian philosophies of the present day, but of assumptions which colour thinking in every country and tend to be shared by the most opposed parties. Thus, Eliot takes an ambivalent position with regard to the relation between culture and politics.

Dealing with education, Eliot believes that any artificial means to induce or transmit culture will lead only to an absurd situation. He believes that stress on education would lead only to problems which never existed before: 'Those who are conscious of their lack of education are discontented, if they cherish ambitions to excel in occupations for which they are not qualified; they are sometimes discontented, simply because they have been given to understand that more education would have made them happier.' He continues: 'And to be trained, taught or instructed above the level of one's abilities and strength may be disastrous; for education is a strain, and can impose greater burdens

137. T.S.Eliot, Notes towards the Definition of Culture, (London: Faber and Faber,1963), P.89.
138. Ibid., P.99.
upon a mind than that mind can bear. Too much education, like too little education, can produce unhappiness. Thus liberalism, to which education is a panacea for all social ills, is dismissed. Thus, any attempt to heighten consciousness through education, becomes a danger: 'To the unconscious level we constantly tend to revert, as we find consciousness an excessive burden.' Too much stress on the unconscious part would perhaps make people only more conscious. Elites are allowed an active form of consciousness. Classes can be characterised by their respective holds on consciousness. The aim of control of levels of consciousness is the total stabilization of society which is the proper aim of education. Class structure, with its inherent inequalities of opportunities for education, thus becomes essential for resistance to isolation and lack of any continuity, such as the atomic elites would suffer. Any group with heightened consciousness, as a result of the educational process, would lead to general disunity and thus needs to be controlled.

Eliot has an organic view of the culture of a society and this forms the basis for his views on education. Eliot's view is that what everyone can share in must be a cheapened and adulterated version of what the few had created and enjoyed. In Eliot's opinion, equality of opportunity for education would lead to destabilisation of society by

139. T.S. Eliot, Notes towards the Definition of Culture, (London: Faber and Faber, 1963), P.100.
140. Ibid., P.68.
substituting impermanent elites for the classes that ensure cultural stability. He argues further that the education that can be given to a selected few in a society must be at a conscious level and thus superficial. He says that 'the headlong rush to educate everybody' is, in fact, 'palming off' an inferior article. He says that by pressing for equality of opportunity in the field of education, we are 'destroying our ancient edifices to make ready the ground upon which the barbarian nomads of the future will encamp in their mechanised caravans.' The terms 'nomad' and 'caravans' suggest the impermanence of the elites.

The major difficulty in Eliot is that he leaves out a vast amount of social reality. Raymond Williams's remarks in this context are pertinent: 'In particular, the exclusion of the economic factor - of the tendency of function to turn into property - leaves the view of class narrow and misleading. Eliot seems to have always in mind, as the normal scheme of his thinking, a society which is at once a more stable and more simple one than any to which his discussion is likely to be relevant.' The placing of the minority in a hierarchical social model is also objected to as corresponding to Matthew Arnold's classification of members of a Society into Barbarians, Philistines and populace. An idealizing outsider's view of English society is extrapolated here by Eliot.

Eliot's conclusions rule out any attempt to make
the individual's search for perfection into a social ideal.
The reason lies in Eliot's belief in social tension in one
conception of society and passivity in the other conception
of society. Eliot rules out also the idea of a 'minority
culture' without reference to the progress of the culture
of the whole society of which the group is a part. This is
so because Eliot envisages a mutually beneficial role to a
group and its 'minority culture'. Thus Eliot projects
inadequate, imperfect and mutually contradictory ideas.

The whole difficulty in assessing Eliot's ideas
lies in the fact that meanings collapse and merge into each
other in Eliot's prose. This is the result of excessive
qualification indulged in by Eliot. Perhaps this may have
been a permanent legacy of the influence exercised by
his mentor, Bradley. We can refer in this context to
Prufrock's complaint: 'It is impossible to say just what
I mean.' This pursuit of meaning beyond meaning is also
evident in 'Four Quartets'.

Culture is the harmonious blend of various elements.
Religion is the underlying harmonising influence. Religion
thus becomes the vital life-blood of culture. Eliot looks
upon religion as moral teaching with moral justice. Religion
inculcates among its initiates patience, good manners and
innate politeness. Thus internal harmony and international
peace are aimed at. Unity in diversity is Eliot's prescription for the enhancement of culture. It is the hallmark of genius.

Eliot is of the opinion that culture is the one thing that cannot be aimed at deliberately. The stress is laid upon the unconscious part of culture. A person can express culture in his behaviour unconsciously only if he belongs to that culture.

The self-conscious part of moral ideals is also discouraged as it brings about a situation where action is relegated to the background and the acquisition of the moral ideal becomes more important. This results in the cultural life being dependent on 'those contacts and mutual influences at a less conscious level, which are perhaps even more important.' Eliot's scepticism comes out in the assertion: 'There is also the danger that education - which indeed comes under the influence of politics - will take upon itself the reformation and direction of culture, instead of keeping to its place as one of the activities through which a culture realises itself.' He remarks further on: 'So the instructive point is this, that the more education arrogates to itself the responsibility, the more systematically will it betray culture.'

143. T.S. Eliot, Notes towards the Definition of Culture, (London: Faber and Faber, 1963), P.38.
144. Ibid., P.107.
145. Ibid.
Eliot discusses the possibility of a further decline in culture. Perhaps this is because no life worth living can be satisfactorily lived at an unself-conscious level. He states: 'Then culture will have to grow again from the soil; and when I say it must grow again from the soil, I do not mean that it will be brought into existence by any activity of political demagogues.' Perhaps the important word here is 'growth'. The mixing of the metaphors, namely, the growth of culture and the growth of a seed from the soil, is rather awkward and inappropriate as the conditions that govern the two 'growths' are entirely dissimilar. Conscious effort enters into the pursuit of culture atleast to a certain extent which is absent in the other case. The balance between the conscious and unconscious efforts in the development of culture is a delicate one and Eliot seems to be biased in favour of the unconscious element as is evident in the use of the term 'growth'.

Eliot does not attempt to illustrate his definitions and hence their usefulness is taken away. Generalisation without any attempt to demonstrate them make the literary quality required of a serious critical work conspicuous by their absence. A brief instance can be cited: 'That is only to say that you cannot expect to have all stages of development at once; that a civilisation cannot simultaneously produce great folk poetry at one cultural level and "Paradise Lost" at another.'

147. Ibid., P.25.
Greater elaboration is expected here as it is an important point. But it is not provided. Tentative and incidental approach to an argument is coupled with a dogmatic attitude. It is charged that Eliot is only attempting to rationalise his prejudices and hence there is no attempt at patient definition and building up of a coherent and adequate theory.

Twentieth century anthropology and sociology lay stress on 'culture' as 'a whole way of life'. The literary tradition of the past has also contributed in the establishment of this theory from the days of Coleridge and Carlyle and thus has become a general intellectual method. But there is a hint that Eliot is not completely satisfied with the definition of culture as a whole way of life as he lists categories like food, sport and a little art which are a characteristic aspect of English leisure. He is here transferring the older specialised sense of 'culture' like arts and philosophy into popular culture like sport, food etc. When he says that it is possible to visualise a future which will have no culture at all, we can assume that he only means that we might have nothing recognizable as aspects of culture like arts, religion, learning, philosophy and so on. It might mean also that there might be a period in which there was no common life at any level. This sliding of definition is often present in the book.

As a conservative thinker, he opposed the limitations of an orthodox liberalism and exposed them. Eliot's
social principles contradict also the contemporary conserva-
tivism's tenet of free economy. Thus he appears sometimes
to be an unorthodox conservative. He insists on the whole-
ness of culture as a way of life. But, in practice, it is
fragmentary. Eliot's rejection of liberalism dates from
the years before 1914. Irving Babbitt's Harvard lectures
against romanticism, association with Ezra Pound and T.E.
Hulme may be traced as the source of his anti-liberal
attitude. A prewar concern for intellectual values in a
stable society led him to his concept of culture.

Eliot is trying to play too safe in his 'Notes
towards the Definition of Culture'. We find too often the
kind of statement like: 'but I must constantly remind the
reader of the limits of my subject.' His opening state-
ment is very tentative: 'My aim is to help to define a word,
the word "Culture".' Absence of reference to a concrete
case and a tentative approach are the general weaknesses of
the work. The result is a lack of conviction.

It has already been pointed out how he ignores
the effect of the economic forces on society and consequ-
etly on its culture. He ignores the mutual effect of
cultures while discussing regionalism. The development
of rapid transport facilities and easy communication with
an equal development in mass media facilities are also

148. T.S.Eliot, Notes towards the Definition of Culture,
(London: Faber and Faber,1963), P.48.
149. Ibid., P.13.
similarly ignored by him. The great changes taking place in the form of wealth which basically modify the relation of classes to each other are also not considered by him. His detachment from facts is also evident when he ignores the evils of the political system and dismisses the subject with a drastic remark: 'It is only fair to add, that when it comes to talking non-sense about culture, there is nothing to choose between politicians of one stripe or another.'

The implications are misleading. The self-assurance is rather surprising when considered against the background of shying away from precise definition. The beginning of a new monasticism, prompted by a conviction that all flesh is corrupt, is also evident. He talks very highly of the role of the universities: 'The Universities of Europe should have their common ideals, they should have their obligations towards each other. They should be independent of the governments of the countries in which they are situated. They should not be institutions for the training of an efficient bureaucracy, or for equipping scientists to get the better of foreign scientists; they should stand for the preservation of learning, for the pursuit of truth, and in so far as men are capable of it, the attainment of wisdom.' He could have been brief and at the same time more effective.

There is a glaring omission of standards, either implied or explicit. He does not even suggest a general

151. Ibid., P.123.
principle of discrimination among the various types of culture. Eliot scrupulously avoided any sympathetic reference to America. There are only two references which might be termed superficial. One is surprised by the static quality of culture as described by Eliot. All will not alike experience culture because all will not participate alike. The quite, rigid structure of levels gives rise to the unevenness and variety of any lived experience. Raymond Williams objects to his metaphor of levels as being too crude. A simple equality in the sense of identity of culture cannot be expected in a complex system of specialised developments. Hence the whole of culture will not be available to any single group or individual at a conscious level. A society, which is more simple and more stable than any to which his discussion is relevant, is in the mind of Eliot when he talks of levels of culture. Hence Eliot wants people to be stationary and not mobile. Any mobility would only lead to a crumbling down of the structures of levels erected by Eliot.

When he talks of a constellation of cultures leading to a complex collaboration, he is superimposing the structure of levels which is incompatible with it. The image of a number of regional cultures in creative tension with each other is extended to the image of social classes in the same tension. There is a break in logic here as it contradicts the reality it offers to illustrate. A break
in logic is seen very often throughout the text. Any number of examples can be cited. One such is: 'A religion requires not only a body of priests who know what they are doing, but a body of worshippers who know what is being done.' The image of an active priest and a passive worshipping group is a negative of participation and mutual appreciation.

Eliot's use of the term 'culture' is also complicated by his confusion of simple and complex ideas of society. Eliot uses both the anthropological and the sociological definitions of the term. We are left in the dark as to which particular definition he is drawing upon at a particular instance. Sometimes, he uses the term as a value-term. He visualises a future also when there will be no culture at all. All these definitions of culture, together with a list of the topics of sport, food and a little art that he gives, give us a hazy picture of what he exactly means by culture. Eliot seems to be uncertain as to whether culture is to be located primarily in the pattern of a society as a whole as he argues at one point or in the series of smaller organic groups which the idea of a constellation suggests. His description of a network of select families as the preserver of culture is also negated by his description of culture as all that goes to constitute a society. The wider sense of culture is thus narrowed down.

Eliot's organic conception of class depends on one definition of culture only. Similar is the case of the economic practice of and philosophy of the industrial middle class of Eliot's time. These questions did not arise in the mind of Eliot because Eliot seems to have had in mind always the other meaning of culture - culture as arts - while discussing the relations between classes. Another weakness is also the interchangeable use of 'class' with 'group'. The complex institution of class is seen by Eliot in essentially personal terms: a group of cultivated men and a network of related families. When Eliot speaks of the producers and consumers of culture in 'The Idea of a Christian Society, he seems to be having in mind a particular image of artistic creation and transmission as the arch type of all cultural activity. His sense of culture in its wider definition is also inadequate.

Eliot rejects also a strong, national educational organisation as a soulless ordering of organic growth. Eliot seems to be reluctant to think in terms of complex, institutional life and hence the confusion. The actual consequences of defining culture as a whole way of life in an industrial society is not faced by Eliot. He prefers the personalised institutions of the tight network of families. The confusion is seen in a statement as: 'For the schools can transmit only a part, and they can only transmit this part effectively if the outside influences,
not only of family and environment, but of work and play, of newsprint and spectacles and entertainment and sport, are in harmony with them. He is locating a quality of life in particular institutions in his own abstract way.

Evidently, there is a need to place the cultural discussion outside politics. But he affirms emphatically: 'I am quite aware that the political, the economic and the cultural problems cannot be isolated from each other.' His ambivalent attitude can be seen in another passage: 'My last appeal is to the men of letters of Europe, who have a special responsibility for the preservation and transmission of our common culture. We may hold very different political views; our common responsibility is to preserve our common culture uncontaminated by political influences.' This can be seen as a reflection of the dualism of belief and behaviour exhibited in 'The Idea of a Christian Society.' Politics is placed, sometimes, in a lower position to that occupied by culture in the external values of a small personal group. At other times, he places culture below politics in the unconscious rhythms of an instinctive way of life. The real issue is thus not tackled boldly. He sets his ideas of conscious and unconscious life at extreme points outside the normal range of human activity. He incorporates both kinds of life in interaction.

Eliot's method of argument and the moral significance of tone are revealed in the Introduction itself.

154. Ibid., p.53.
155. Ibid., p.123.
The tone is one of authoritative caution. Rescue of the term 'culture' from misuse to which it is put is the height of the author's ambition. Outlining a social or political philosophy is not the intention of the author. His attempt is to disentangle the word 'culture' from politics and education. The authoritativeness appears when he asserts that no attempt should be made ever to improve a culture directly. While, culture appears to be non-political after being rescued from other people's political structures, it is made to include his own politics. It expresses Eliot's deepest instinctive beliefs about man in society. He seems to be talking only about organic growth, personal value and traditional rhythm.

The defects noted in Eliot's cultural thinking are attributed to his American background. Raymond Williams has located the weakness of Eliot's social criticism at the point where he moves from general formulation to a detailed observation of English life. It is because Eliot observed English life as an American expatriate. This is the source of his detachment. But unfortunately it becomes also the source of his weakness.

'The Notes towards the Definition of Culture' is an important contribution to the socio-cultural criticism of England inspite of its being an uneven and self-contradicting book at certain points. Science is the one part
of culture Eliot consistently declines to deal with. This is a serious flaw as rapid changes in science and technology affect society as a whole. He concentrates rather on the artistic and philosophic parts. The question of scientific culture drawing the best brains leading to a decline in literature and philosophy is ignored by him. It may be quite possible that domination of a given culture by science and technology may result in the deterioration of art. Eliot turns nostalgically to a dead aristocratic class which was not strong enough to maintain itself in existence. To wish for a new class that will embody the values of an almost dead class goes against the historical facts and exhibits a piece of unrealistic thinking.

There seems to be a conflict between the intellectual snob and the Christian in Eliot. Eliot seems to assume that anyone who is not a believing Christian is so because of irresponsibility coupled with an indifferent attitude towards religion. Eliot seems to be having no doubt about Christianity becoming what it once was, namely a structure of belief binding together all members of society. This is the aspect which relates culture with religion in Eliot's thinking. The revival of Christian religion appears imminent to him.

All varieties of rationalism, positivism and even humanism are opposed by Eliot as they do not have the kind
of tradition which religion has behind it. To Eliot, society is more important than the individual because it happens to be the symbol of tradition and organisation. Eliot sees Europe as a unity and a community where classicism and tradition are nourished. This is because of his American background.

Eliot's mind was occupied with two strong contradictory forces. The first pre-occupation was the reason for the collapse of the social order he cherished. There was a contradictory urge in him to turn away from all such mundane pre-occupations. The first force led him astray from his literary career, making himself concerned with sociological and political problems. The second force prevented him from being completely political in his approach to sociological problems. Thus we find reflected in his writings a repetitive oscillation between these two strong contradictory forces. The ultimate result was an aversion to the familiarity of all political thought and political consciousness. Consciousness is imagined by him to be a force of politics.

According to Raymond Williams, Eliot's business is to confess an attitude wherein the formulation of programmes cannot have priority. He wants a wholly new way of life for people but does not want to use power to bring it about as power corrupts. The past cannot offer him
an answer. The present sickens him. He surveys the future in a vague and apprehensive manner. Thus he lays himself open to the charge of being not pragmatic. The impossibility of a fusion between inward consciousness and outward event posed a problem for Eliot. In his idealised structure of society, the inhabitants would maintain a direct relation to the soil, or the sea or the machine. He pursued a penitential and ecclesiastical consciousness, excluding all other types.

The problem of unity Eliot's cultural ideal would have is dealt with in the third and fourth chapters of his book. A cultural unity with variety, requiring the inclusion of diverse elements, is aimed at by Eliot. The diverse elements will include social and intellectual groups, economic interests and regional sub-culture. Homogeneity, within a single nation or among a group of nations is as much to be avoided as complete disunity. Eliot regards a uniform global culture as no culture at all.

A liberal society is opposed by Eliot as he considered it to be incompatible with the stability and variety essential for the good life as he understood it. He rejects the radical and progressive aspect of liberalism. He rejects also the free working of economic forces as it is incompatible with the form of society visualised by him. Eliot's thought is genuine even though he is a snob in his feelings. What is
of importance in his thought is that he is making out a strong case for the common human individual and not a superior or inferior individual, without reference to talent or position. There is a search for the recovery of the individual life from the collective or mass life and for a renewal of the individual life in a regimented industrialised civilisation.

Culture has to do with the relation between the spiritual and material organisation in a society as felt by individuals. For Eliot, religion alone communicates the forces that keep life going on in the individual. Eliot does not suggest any concrete proposals as there is a conflict in himself between historical fatalism and utilitarian hope. He admits the decay of the present upper class but still wishes to preserve our present culture. He identifies the elite with culture. In his view, both primitive and advanced cultures obey the same basic laws as regard their development and operation. They differ only in scale and content. His emphasis on religion as the activator of culture excludes all other perspectives.

Eliot is of the opinion that the effects of an industrial civilisation have combined to deprive the mass of humanity of its natural culture. He does not equate education with culture. He feels that culture cannot be deliberately produced by educating a class or a selected
group of the whole people. Education, as it is practised today, would not even produce a tolerable ersatz culture to replace our dying world. Eliot misses the sense of education that would make it the study and pursuit of intellectual and moral order. The manners that Eliot regards as worth saving are a flowering from morals. Eliot appears to be talking down to his readers while Matthew Arnold seems to be sharing his ideas with his readers. The imperious tone of Eliot is absent in Matthew Arnold. The latter has a persuasive and convincing tone.