Pagans and paganism. The whole pagan world was a sink of iniquity. But what Arnold was interested in was the real difference in spirit and sentiment between paganism and Christianity. He takes up one of the best of Theocritus's idylls and translates it. This makes up the second part of the essay. Gorgo and Praxinoe, two Syracusan women, go together to the palace of King Ptolemy Philopater to see the image of Adonis decorated magnificently by Queen Arsinoë. Full of animation and naturalness, the two women are in dialogue. Then a celebrated performer begins her hymn in praise of the image. The story of Adonis has many elements of religious emotion. Adonis is an emblem of the power of life and the bloom of beauty. But the idyll has nothing serious in it, it is all levity. Thus Arnold, "The ideal, cheerful, sensuous, pagan life is not sick or sorry". It is all "a religion of pleasure".

In the third part Arnold sets in contrast "the religion of sorrow" preached by St. Francis in the beginning of the thirteenth century. St. Francis took voluntary poverty and suffering to his soul. He has his hymn for the sun, for Adonis, but it is all different. Theocritus's hymn takes the world by its outward, sensible side; St. Francis' hymn takes it by its inward, symbolic and sacral side. Theocritus's hymn treats the world according to the demand of the senses, St. Francis's hymn according to the demand of the heart and imagination. The religion of sorrow has its advantage over the religion of pleasure, in its power to be "a stay for the mass of mankind, whose lives are full of hardship". It draws "from the spiritual world a source of joy so abundant
that it ran over upon the material world and transfigured it."
Once again Arnold re-affirms that "Human nature is neither all
senses and understanding, nor all heart and imagination". In the
last section he quotes Heine who, in the prime of life, had pro-
claimed, "the body and soul... shall have made their peace". Some
day or other, and again, stricken with incurable disease, he saw
the manifest failure of the religion of pleasure and revealed
one of the grotesque sights of the suffering Middle Ages. So
Arnold sums up: "the main element of the modern spirit's life
is neither the senses and understanding, nor the heart and ima-
gination; it is the imaginative reason". 28 It is a reconcilia-
tion of the two traditions — rationalism and faith; to which
Trilling gives a metaphoric turn: "He steers a course both by
compass and by stars". "The imaginative reason" Arnold finds in
the poetry of Simonides, Pindar, Aeschylus, Sophocles. It was not
all perfect; yet Arnold believes, "... no other poets so well
show to the poetry of the present the way it must take; no other
poets have lived so much by the imaginative reason". 29 The
models and the expectation are, however, not likely to be fulfill-
ed in 'modern element in literature'.

But the phrase "imaginative reason" should not be taken
merely as one of the 'catch-words' coined by Arnold, another of
"his minting of verbal coinage". It goes deep within him and

28. EC I, p. 133
29. ibid., p. 134
reveals large areas of his buried self. The phrase cannot be bisociated into imagination and reason in the manner of romanticism and classicism, Hellenism and Hebraism, paganism and medievalism, sweetness and light, literature and science, etc.

On one side of it are senses and understanding and on the obverse heart and imagination. But Arnold does not mean the fusion of the two, or one transmuting into another as in Wordsworth's "sensations sweet/Felt in the blood, felt along the heart". Again it is no mere closing "the gap between head and heart, between feelings and intellect" as Trilling seems to suggest. One may approach the true meaning of the phrase from Arnold's own illustration from Sophocles at the close of the essay. Speaking of the ancient Greek poets, he says, "no other poets have lived so much by the imaginative reason". In the passage quoted by Arnold the poet prays that his lot may lead him in "the path which august laws ordain", and "Heaven is the father alone" of these laws "and the race of mortal men did not beget them". "The power of God is mighty in them, and groweth not old". The "august laws" are certainly the voice of reason and such reason is imaginative as the laws come from "Heaven". Mortal men cannot bring them forth, and these have the power of God. The poetry of the present is then imagination and reason rolled into one, indistinguishable in the eternal choir. If so, poetry becomes a Mantra, a realm beyond Arnold's grasp. But this cannot be modernist poetry, a point strangely

31. Matthew Arnold, p. 194
overlooked by Arnold. Arnold has pointed at the direction along which poetry is to proceed, i.e. the future poetry, or the forever modern poetry.

It is ... by the union of great vital energy and a considerable possibility of the spiritual vision that there may be most naturally a strong utterance of that which most has to be expressed, the seen and realised unity of life and the spirit. 32

It is doubtful if Arnold would have agreed with this view or realised the full significance of what he said when he spoke of "imaginative reason". Arnold was, of course, familiar with the Bhagavad Gita but he forgot or rather failed to recognise that the poet of the Gita has the "imaginative reason" in the real sense, with its source in the beyond.

The essay is a piece of creative criticism. In fact, Arnold has enjoyed the happiness of creative activity in his attempt to find the real difference in spirit and sentiment between paganism and Christianity. He has used up half the space with quotations from Theocritus, St. Francis and Heine, which are in themselves works of art par excellence. The bits of criticism that come up here and there are quite in keeping with the sentiment 33 with which the entire essay is soaked. Arnold has mastered "The great

32. Sri Aurobindo, The Future Poetry (Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry; 1953), p. 404

33. The sentiment is that "serenity of existence is perpetually troubled". EC 1, (1968/e), P. 131
art of criticism" here which "is to get oneself out of the way and to let humanity decide". What he says about one of the books in the Abbe Migne's collection applies well also to his essay:

Do not seek in it impartiality, the critical spirit; in reading it you must do the criticism for yourself; it loves criticism as little as the world loves it.

Of course Arnold has made casually some critical observations, weighty in substance and forceful in seriousness. His remark on Catholicism may seem to be casual but it is by no means less critical: "Catholicism suggests, — what shall I say? — all the pell-mell of the men and women of Shakespeare's plays". This is criticism opening up the abundance of the art-world. Another such sentence is "To be a representative poem, it must be one for popular use, one that the multitude listens to". The hymn in Theocritus's idyll and that of St. Francis are representative works in this sense. The critical view is expressed again in Arnold's remark about the Renascence and the Reformation:

The Renascence is, in part, a return towards the pagan spirit ... a return towards the life of the senses and the understanding. ... the real Reformation ... was a reaction of the moral and spiritual sense against the carnal and pagan sense. 34

The truth about such remarks may be questioned but the clarity in Arnold's criticism is always its chief feature. He says clearly

34. EC I, p. 130
what he has to say. He leaves nothing vague or indistinct in his argument; and that is why he is often aphoristic. One may reflect well at ease on such pithy sayings as "What a sink of iniquity was the whole pagan world", or "The ideal, cheerful, sensuous pagan life is not sick or sorry", or "He brought religion to the people" about St. Francis, or "Human nature is neither all senses and understanding, nor all heart and imagination". But the true critic's "disinterested mode of seeing" a thing is not absent for a moment in him. Arnold does not spare even St. Francis whom he calls "a figure of the most magical power and charm". He shows how the medieval Christianity is touched in its extreme when St. Francis suffers from the doubt "whether he who had destroyed himself by the severity of his penances could find mercy in eternity". Arnold is bold enough to throw away all pretensions to classicism when he says, "... nor will I set up the Greek poets, from Pindar to Sophocles, as objects of blind worship", and "The present has to make its own poetry, and not even Sophocles and his comppears, any more than Dante and Shakespeare, are enough for it". 35 But with such severity of attitude Arnold appears also as a critic of life in general speaking at times in the voice of a mystic. The apostle of equality points to the bleaker truth about the outer society of man through the ages:

What, under the first emperors, was the condition of the Roman poor upon the Aventine compared with that of our poor in Spitalfields and Bethnal Green?

35. FC I, p. 134
In the same way he probes deep into the inner needs of man:

And when one thinks what human life is for the vast majority of mankind, how little of a feast for their senses it can possibly be, one understands the charm for them of a refuge offered in the heart and imagination. 36

Arnold could not continue long in the strain of sustained criticism; he takes refuge in art, ("Art still has truth, take refuge there", 'Memorial Verses'). His description of St. Francis is a piece of art created after his heart. He makes one listen in hushed silence to the incantative lines of his about St. Francis:

He transformed monachism by uprooting the stationary monk, delivering him from the bondage of property, and sending him, as a mendicant friar, to be a stranger and sojourner, not in the wilderness, but in the most crowded haunts of men, to console them and to do them good.

This is the work of an artist; the critic in Arnold is often a dissembler.

36. The passage has a bearing on what Amiel says about art:
"By the instinctive collaboration of everybody concerned, wit and taste hold festival, and the associations of reality are exchanged for the associations of imagination". EC II, p. 192
The immediate impetus behind 'Marcus Aurelius', apart from the physical one of Mr Long's book, is Mr Mill's accusation that "Christian morality is in great part merely a protest against paganism; its ideal is negative rather than positive, passive rather than active". One notices here a bias against Christian morality, as though it merely opposes paganism and offers nothing positive in its place. Arnold rejects this accusation and puts forward such arguments as a preface to his remarks on Marcus Aurelius. The moral writings of Emperor Marcus Aurelius owe their charm to the very sentiment from which Christian morality draws its power. This is Arnold's conclusive remark: "What an affinity for Christianity had this persecutor of the Christians!". But these premises bring out some of the best elements in Arnold as a poet-critic. Critical ability is sound in his determination of the function of moral systems in human life and in the relation between morality and religion. The systems of morality keep one "in the right course through outward troubles and inward perplexity". Not only in times of troubles and perplexity, Arnold adds, "human life has always a clue to follow" in the moral precepts. But moral rules are not enough for the mass of mankind. They need "a joyful and bounding emotion". Religion supplies the necessary emotion and inspiration: "The paramount virtue of religion is, that it has lighted up morality". The point is borne out with the aid of quotations from Epictetus and Jesus. Epictetus dictates moral laws and leaves his hearer cold whereas Jesus 'fires' him to the practice of morality. Arnold is right
in his opinion; and it serves him as a valid method of approach to Marcus Aurelius. For Marcus Aurelius is not only a great master of morals, he suffuses and softens the moral teachings with emotion. But Arnold did not see the other side of "joyful and bounding emotion" which could lead one to fanaticism.

Surely, discipline of emotions is a necessity in religion; and Eliot improves on Arnold in this respect when he says, "... the specifically religious emotions must be a kind of extension and sanctification of the domestic and social emotions". Religious emotion is not isolated from social emotion, but it follows from the social conduct which obviates a kind of disciplined code. Of course, Arnold knew the implication of it all when he said that conduct was three-fourths of life. Marcus Aurelius also recognized, as Arnold quotes, "the prime principle in man's constitution is the social".

Marcus Aurelius, says Arnold, was the ruler of the grandest of empires; and he was one of the best of men. So it is natural to refer both to his outward life and to his inward life. It is


A.N. Whitehead has a more neat and concise exposition: "A civilized religion should aim at the training of such emotions as naturally arise from a civilized rational criticism of metaphysical intuitions powerfully influential in great epochs of human history".

as a ruler of the Roman empire that his outward life was concerned. The inner life is all that makes him one of the best of men. In the discussion of the outward life Arnold's critical sense comes out in true proportion whereas the artistic sense overpowers the critical one in the presentation of the inward life. Nothing appears to be striking in the outward life of Marcus Aurelius. Arnold refers only to two facts of his life which "demand a word of comment". For these seem not to be in conformity with his character. He persecuted the Christians at Lyons and he had for his son the vicious and brutal Commodus. Arnold defends him against the charges from a truly critical stand-point. He admits that Marcus Aurelius did Christianity an immense injustice, and yet he was blameless. For he should be seen in the context of his time. He could not see then Christianity as it really was; rather it appeared to him as "something philosophically contemptible, politically subversive, and morally abominable". So he could not have done otherwise. J.S. Mill has defended the persecution of the Christians by Marcus Aurelius in a much shorter space and more critically than Arnold has done here. But it is quite expected that Arnold should be elaborate as he has perhaps in mind what Mill 38 said about Marcus Aurelius. This historical analysis has sufficient truth in it but Arnold's comment on Marcus Aurelius in this respect is touching: "... in his character, beautiful as it is, there is something melancholy, circumscribed, and ineffectual". And for having such a son as Commodus,

he is not to be blamed; he is unfortunate. Arnold gives psychological explanation. Disposition and temperament are inexplicable. Besides these two seemingly derogatory facts, there is the interesting record of his education. Arnold has critically analysed history and probed psychological secrets, and here he considers an important aspect of the society of man. The account of Marcus Aurelius' education is a refreshing and consoling picture which, says Arnold, constitutes "that substratum of right thinking and well-doing which in all ages must surely have somewhere existed, for without it the continued life of humanity would have been impossible". That substratum is built not by the majority but by "the remnant", as Arnold says in 'Discourses in America'. Marcus Aurelius and his mother from whom he learnt so much belong to that small group, 'the remnant'.

In presenting the inner ('inward') life of Marcus Aurelius from his Meditations Arnold fulfils the function of the 'critic' as he propagates "the best that is said and thought in the world". Marcus Aurelius expresses his thoughts on the ground-motives of human action; and Arnold says that "he becomes the unique, the incomparable Marcus Aurelius". He quotes at large from Meditations and shows "the incomparable Marcus Aurelius". The quotations reveal also the incomparable Matthew Arnold as he appears there at the height of his critical power with the full force of an artist. The passages are chosen with the taste of an artist and commented upon with the calibre of a critic. He has followed an order in the arrangement of the passages. A busy Marcus Aurelius prescribes a memorandum to follow in his life: Let nothing be
done or thought without a purpose. Then comes the passage on the
ground-motives of human actions. Man should act without any
motives of reward and punishment as the vine produces grapes.
Arnold gives next a passage which reveals the Wordsworthian
observation of nature in Marcus Aurelius whose remark 39 calls
in mind "Nature never did betray / The heart that loved her".
The charm lies in the strain of the moral subjects. And Arnold
has chosen such moral sayings as gave out a modern note. In his
dark sonnets Hopkins could have found solace in Marcus Aurelius:

But consider the goodness with which he ( God ) has
privileged man; for he has put it in his power, when he has
been separated, to return and to be united and to resume his
place.

What is more modern than his idea about "retreat and solitude"
when he says,

... it is in thy power whenever thou shalt choose to retire
into thyself. For nowhere either with more quiet or more
freedom from trouble does a man retire than into his own
soul, particularly when he has within him such thoughts
that by looking into them he is immediately in perfect
tranquillity ?

39. "... if a man should have a feeling and a deeper insight
with respect to the things which are produced in the universe,
there is hardly anything which comes in the course of nature
which will not seem to him to be in a manner "disposed so
as to give pleasure".

EC I, p. 217-18
Temperamentally Arnold is closer to this sense of seclusion. One may consider only the choice of his models—Newman, Lacordaire, Aurelius, George Sand, Maurice de Guerin. Newman retired to his seclusion at Littlemore, a dreary village by the London road and Lacordaire to Soreze, a village in the department of the Tarn. Arnold quotes Lacordaire: "A man is formed from within, and not from without", and so "the one great thing is to have a life of one's own". The grand maxim is "one can do nothing without solitude". Pagan morality is then at the highest point in Marcus Aurelius; yet his 'morality' reminds one of Christian morality "by its accent of emotion".

The accent of emotion is the quality of art, and Marcus Aurelius is not only a philosopher on the throne which Plato would have desired to see, he is also an artist. "The emotion of Marcus Aurelius", says Arnold, "does not quite light up his morality, but it suffuses it". Morality suffused with emotion is synonymous with art. Marcus Aurelius is "imaginative, fresh, and striking" even on the topic of the hollowness of human life. Arnold shows artistic sensibility much more than critical power in the observation:

It is impossible to rise from reading Epictetus or Marcus Aurelius without a sense of constraint and melancholy, without feeling that the burden laid upon man is well-nigh greater than he can bear. 40.

40. FC I, p. 205
Were philosophy cannot generate such feeling, nor any religion either. It needs an aesthetic attitude toward the destiny of man to generate and to appreciate the feeling. Marcus Aurelius and Matthew Arnold share this attitude, and they are both artists above anything else. The artist Arnold could well imagine Marcus Aurelius "stretching out his arms for something beyond".

Joubert practised in life what Marcus Aurelius prescribed: "... it is in ... a man's power to bring himself very near to the fashion of a private person" and "it is in thy power whenever thou shalt choose to retire into thyself". Arnold says that Joubert "went back to the retirement which he loved" and quotes Chateaubriand on Joubert: "He has chosen to hide his life". It is all for the fulfilment of his ambition. He "cared far more about perfecting himself than about making himself a reputation".

Marcus Aurelius lent to morality an accent of emotion, and so did Joubert. "The charm of Joubert is, that he has and keeps both" "penetration" and "soul". His ideas "shine when he utters them in perfect freedom". He has characteristic thoughts on matters of religion, but Arnold is more concerned with his maxims on purely literary subjects. Joubert's comments are quoted copiously in the essay, and these are on poetry and fiction, on Plato, Ficole, Bossuet, Racine, Boileau, Voltaire and Rousseau. But Arnold himself appears as a critic in his presentation of Joubert's ideas. It is remarkable that his celebrated statement about literature (poetry) being, at bottom, "a criticism of life" occurs first in this essay. He states: "The end and aim of all literature,
if one considers it attentively, is, in truth, nothing but that. Arnold divides the famous men of literature into two classes— the famous men of genius and the famous men of ability. "... the criticism which the men of genius pass upon human life is permanently acceptable to mankind; the criticism which the men of ability pass upon human life is transitorily acceptable." He goes on to say that the criticism of life given by the Homers and the Shakespeares is "a source of illumination and joy to the whole human race for ever". Arnold's statement about poetry has been interpreted in various ways by poets and critics, including a note of protest from Eliot. Trilling defends Arnold on the ground that the statement is not a definition of poetry but it is about the function of poetry. "Criticism is not what poetry is; it is what poetry does".

In this essay again Arnold quotes a passage from Joubert, which, he says, "excellently defines the true salutary function of literature":

To accustom mankind to pleasures which depend neither upon the bodily appetites nor upon money, by giving them a taste for the things of the mind, seems to me, in fact,

41. EC I, p. 180
42. The Sacred Wood (Methuen & Co. Ltd.; London; 1967), p. ix
43. Matthew Arnold, p. 196
the one proper fruit which nature has meant our literary productions to have. 44

In a letter to Clough he wrote much earlier that poetry should add to one's store of thoughts and feelings, and compose and elevate the mind. Thus this is quite in conformity with Arnold's own ideas about poetry and literature in general. Another quotation from Chateaubriand reveals his critical acumen. It is a criticism on the true pathetic:

It is a dangerous mistake ... to suppose that the best works of imagination are those which draw most tears. One could name this or that melodrama, which no one would like to own having written, and which yet harrows the feelings far more than the Aeneid. The true tears are those which are called forth by the beauty of poetry; there must be as much admiration in them as sorrow.

The passage reveals, like many other passages, Arnold's perception of the nature of art. Arnold often makes use of the "quotational method" of literary criticism. To drive home his point, he quotes Joubert on Boileau: "Boileau is a powerful poet, but only in the world of half poetry" and Arnold adds immediately "How true is that of Pope also". It is a sound criticism of Pope as a poet, and nothing could be more expressive.

44. EC I, p. 175
45. Letters, March 1849, p. 100
than this. Pointing out the peculiar beauty of Joubert towards the close of the essay, Arnold comes close to his famous phrase, "imaginative reason" first used in 'Pagan and Medieval Religious Sentiment' and says, "... it is in the union of soul with intellect, and in the delightful and satisfying result which this union produces".

Arnold's comment on the French language is a series of sure judgments from a master-critic. Thus Arnold, on the epigrammatic sayings of Joubert, "the French language is in itself so favourable a vehicle for such sayings, that the making (of) them in it has less merit; at least half the merit ought to go, not to the maker of the saying, but to the French language". Arnold here hits the nail on the head in a no-nonsense manner. On the aphorisms of Amiel he repeats the observation: "But epigrammatic sentences of this sort are perhaps not so very difficult to produce in French at any rate". All this shows how Arnold the critic gives rein to his critical faculty, bringing Joubert and Amiel under the same scrutiny.

The piece on Joubert is a characteristic study revealing much of Arnold the artist. His approach to the study is worth quoting: "It is salutary from time to time to come across a genius of this kind and to extract his honey". In the brevity of that sketch lies the soul of a true poet-critic. Take an instance, "... and at his bedroom-door, on his bad days, Madame

46. Essays in Criticism II, 1958/e, p. 189
Joubert stood sentry, trying, not always with success, to keep back the thirsty comers from the fountain which was forbidden to flow. Arnold goes on to moralize on human life, at various points in the essay. There is a mystic under-tone in "But most of us, alas: are what we must be, not what we ought to be, not even what we know we ought to be". More intuitive than logical, yet vibrating with the voice of an artist is "Truth illuminates and gives joy, and it is by the bond of joy, not of pleasure, that men's spirits are indissolubly held."

Arnold has given the difference of degree between pleasure and joy in his essay on Amiel, "Creation gives ... pleasure, and, when successful and sustained, more than pleasure, joy". But 'joy' itself has its gradation

And yet men have such need of joy
But joy whose grounds are true;
And joy that should all hearts employ
As when the past was new.

(11. 237-40 'Obermann Once More')

Yet joy is not all; there is something more pervasive and potential, and that is peace,

That general life, which does not cease,
Whose secret is not joy, but peace.

(11. 131-2 'Resignation')

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47. Essays in Criticism II, 1958/e, p. 183
Whatever the difference between pleasure and joy or between joy and peace, Arnold felt the "need of joy" in life; and this is as much the concern of a critic as that of an artist.

In 'Heine's Grave' Arnold implores the "spirit of the world" for a life "other and milder" than the strange and bitter life of Heine. He prays,

May'st thou the rapture of peace  
Deep have embreathed at its core;  
Made it a ray of thy thought,  
Made it a beat of thy joy.  

(11. 229-32)

But Heine had not the joy "whose grounds are true". He had not the "moral balance", the "nobleness of soul and character". Arnold says in his inaugural Oxford lecture, "An intellectual deliverance is the peculiar demand of those ages which are called modern". "Paladin of the modern spirit", Heine has this intellectual deliverance. Yet "He is not an adequate interpreter of the modern world". For Heine had not the "eternally needful moral deliverance". But Arnold has a profound admiration for him: "he is a great modern poet", "he has a talisman by which he can feel ... the power of modern ideas"; "Heine had all the culture of Germany; in his head fermented all the ideas of modern Europe". 49 With this "intense modernism", Heine, "was a

49. EC I, p. 117
born man of letters" and "he shows himself the born poet he is". But the major thrust of Arnold's appreciation falls on "a life and death battle with Philistinism" in which Heine was engaged. Heine was "a soldier in the war of liberation of humanity". Yet, inspite of so much power in him Heine gets a "half-result"; and this reminds Arnold of the English poet Byron, "the greatest natural force, the greatest elementary power" in English literature since Shakespeare. Byron, like Heine, had not the moral deliverance but he had not even "the intellectual equipment" which Heine had. Arnold's admiration for both Heine and Byron is a well known part of his critique. This may seem somewhat strange to his nature. He has, in spirit, an affinity with Lacordaire, Joubert and Newman, and yet has reverence for Heine and Byron. But this is part of his personality: the apostle of sweetness and light is also an advocate of "force and fire". The elegiac Arnold longed for a heroic strain in him; though he could not reconcile the two. Wavering between them, he found a resting place in 'sweetness and light', in "self-poised" life.

Arnold has given a clear judgment in ascertaining Heine's place in modern European literature. The "great characteristic" in Heine's poetry is the blending of "the impression of French modernism and clearness with that of German sentiment and fulness". What makes him remarkable is his power of blending the wit and ardent modern spirit of France with the culture, the sentiment and the thought of Germany. There is another kind of fusion in him, the fusion of the Hellenic spirit with the Hebrew spirit. Yet Heine falls short of the essential element in the
making of a poet, that is, the "charm" which "is the glory which makes/ Song of the poet divine". 50 In his poem 'Heine's Grave' and in this essay too, Arnold refers to Goethe's remark that Heine "Had every other gift, but wanted love", "that he was deficient in love". It is, of course, noted that Goethe did not say this of Heine but of Platen. 51 But Arnold's estimate that Heine is deficient in "self-respect", in "true dignity of character" has sufficient truth in it.

Arnold himself shrinks in fear of Heine's fate but he has wonderous admiration for this heroic figure. In 'Pagan and Medieval Religious Sentiment' he compares Heine's sentiment in his prime of life with that felt twenty years later and shows the terrible change. Earlier Heine had held "God to be a kind being who has intended man to be happy" but later, stricken with incurable disease, saw in sombre vision "the poor leprosy-stricken clerk of the Limburg chronicle". But he could "keep himself erect in suffering by a colossal irony of this sort by covering himself and the universe with the red fire of this sinister mockery." 52 Heine's is a strange personality, sordid, yet sardonic; he suffers like Prometheus

to the earth
Pinn'd by the thunder, to rear
His bolt-scathed front to the stars (11.30-32)

50. 'Heine's Grave' (11. 103-4)
51. Trilling, Matthew Arnold, p. 208
52. GC I, p. 132
Beholding the absurdity of men-
Their vaunts, their fears - let a sardonic smile
For one short moment, wander o'er his lips

(11. 207-209)

Heine says himself:

Alas! the mockery of God is heavy upon me! The great author of the universe, the Aristophanes of Heaven, has determined to make the petty earthly author, the so-called Aristophanes of Germany, feel to his heart's core what pitiful needle-pricks his cleverest sarcasms have been, compared with the thunderbolts which his divine humour can launch against feeble mortals!..53

Let one consider, in the context, Eliot's remark: "The vision of the horror and the glory was denied to Arnold but he knew something of the boredom".54 This tells only half the truth. Arnold knew much more than mere 'boredom'. For he could see, with Heine, the poor clerk of Limburg "moping in the dismal deserts of his misery". Elsewhere Arnold visualises "the workhouse, the dismal Mapperly Hills, ... the gloom, the smoke, the cold, the strangled illegitimate child". The pagan life did not suggest "the thought of horror and misery"; yet Arnold sees "What a sink of iniquity was the whole pagan world; how one

53. FC I, p. 131
54. The Use of Poetry, (Faber and Faber; London; 1959), p.106
Roman fed his oysters on his slaves, how another put a slave to death that a curious friend might see what dying was like . . ."

Arnold may not have the full sense of evil existing and working in human life, but he feels the "ground tone/ of human agony". The tragedy of human life has been hinted at in many of his poems and prose-writings, though the accompanying horrors are not so glaringly portrayed as in the dramatic pieces of other writers. What moved him more were social horrors rather than physical or psychological. Yet he has one passage, at least, in Meropen which reminds one of Webster. It is in a piece of conversation between the Chorus and Meropen:

What then?
Seems it lighter, my loss,
If, perhaps, unpierced by the sword,
My child lies in his jagg'd
Sunless prison of rock,
On the black wave born to and fro?

(11. 114-119)

Arnold feels a kind of horror in the sense of alienation from the Time Spirit. Arnold's protagonists "suffer in all innocence for their superiority to the Time Spirit". But sometimes it is an alienation not from the society alone but from the self too, and that is most horrible. He speaks of "the mass of men" in 'The Buried Life':

I knew they lived and moved
Trick'd in disguises, alien to the rest
Of men, and alien to themselves - (11. 20-22)
Arnold has also the vision of glory, though he cannot realise it in life; perhaps it is not for man to realise: Arnold asks,

What bard,

At the height of his vision, can deem
Of God, of the world, of the soul,
With a plainness as near,
As flashing as Moses felt
When he lay in the night by flock
On the starlit Arabian waste?

("The Future" ll. 41-47)

The apostrophe to his father at the close of 'Rugby Chapel' points at the way to the glorious vision:

Ye, like angels, appear,
Radiant with ardour divine (ll. 190-31)

...... continue our march,
On, to the bound of the waste,
On, to the City of God. (ll. 206-8)

Arnold's letter 55 to Clough (Sept. 23, 1849) recounts the "boredom" in detail from which he suffers and also seeks the way to escape. But, in the wide range of his thought and experience, Arnold acquired a sense of deeper malady than 'boredom' and pointed a way out, to "the mighty life" ('Self-Dependence'). Arnold had not "a beautiful world with which to deal", rather he

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55. Letters, p. 111
had the 'curiosity' of a critic "to see beneath both beauty and ugliness" and the ability of a poet, partly at least, "to see the boredom, the horror, and the glory".

It is true that Arnold has not the "width of emotional range" "between depravity's despair and the beatific vision". But at rare moments he touched the two extremes:

The complaining millions of men
Darken in labour and pain;
But he was a priest to us all
Of the wonder and bloom of the world.

('The Youth of Nature', ll. 51-54)

If millions of men suffer from desperation in life, Wordsworth could bring them back the "freshness of the early world". The point to be noticed is that Arnold recognised, like Marcus Aurelius, that "the prime principle in man's constitution is the social". He admitted that "conduct ... is three-fourths of human life". George Sand lent him the guiding thought that "the sentiment of the ideal life, which is none other than man's normal life as we shall one day know it". Heine could hardly live up to this standard; and with all his awed admiration Arnold regrets the prodigality of Nature in Heine.

The essay, 'Heinrich Heine', has its importance in the critical canon of Arnold's social writing. It defines the 'modern spirit' and 'Philistinism' which engage much of his attention. But as he proceeds, some offshoots of literary criticism crop up with obvious meaning. He passes on to say that "the most
indispensable quality" of a critic is "justness of spirit", and "one of the critic's highest functions" is "to ascertain the master-current in the literature of an epoch, and to distinguish this from all minor currents". Arnold has anticipated the moderns in fixing the function of criticism, that is, "comparison and analysis". The exhaustive critic, says Eliot, "will be able to gauze nicely the position and proportion of the objects surrounding us". But the implication of Goethe's remark quoted by Arnold runs counter to Eliot's theory of tradition and individuality:

The artist must work from within outwards, seeing that, make what contortions he will, he can only bring to light his own individuality ... and only in this way is it possible to be original.

Stating thus the function of a critic and an artist, Arnold offers a simple exposition of what poetry is: "poetry is simply the most beautiful, impressive, and widely effective mode of saying things". In another context he has indicated "the true goal of all poetry and all art", and this is, the spirit of Greece and the spirit of Judaea reaching "the infinite"—"the Greek spirit by beauty, the Hebrew spirit by sublimity". It is then not to be wondered at that "direct political action is not the true function of literature". This piece of warning is to

57. Ibid., p. 17
be kept in mind while interpreting the phrase "criticism of life". The movements of ideas of the French Revolution, says Arnold, "produced no such intellectual fruit as the movement of the ideas of the Renascence", as "the Revolution took a political, practical character" and its movements of ideas "rushed into the political sphere". Arnold professed not "to be a politician", but he had a high regard for Burke who brought thought to bear upon politics. Burke mixed politics with thought. Thus Arnold, "the return of Burke upon himself has always seemed to me one of the greatest things in English literature". Burke has traced "the reason of things in politics". And, in a way, he felt the sense of want of correspondence between the forms of modern Europe and its spirit. "The awakening of this sense is the awakening of the modern spirit", and the "persons of good sense" should endeavour "to remove this want of correspondence" as Goethe did and Heine followed. In England Byron and Shelley attempted to apply freely "the modern spirit" to life, and Matthew Arnold is bold enough to place them above Wordsworth, Scott, Coleridge and Keats in this respect. Where else could one find such a spirit of independence, "a free play of the mind", in a critic, as in Arnold? Byron "taught us little", and Shelley is an "ineffectual angel", yet they "will long be remembered ... for their passionate, their Titanic effort to flow in the main stream of modern literature". The representatives of the modern spirit are regarded as "children of the light" and their adversaries as "Philistines". Arnold characterizes the Philistines as "humdrum people, slaves to routine, enemies to light; stupid and oppressive, but at the same time
very strong". He has much to say about them in his later writings but he explains the term 'Philistine' exhaustibly in this essay.

Matthew Arnold is so much critical in 'Heinrich Heine' that he finds little scope to be artistic. Yet the artist in him works in silent collaboration with the critic. The choice of the passages quoted from Heine reveals the artistic temperament more than the critical. Heine writes,

I know not if I deserve that a laurel-wreath should one day be laid on my coffin ... But lay on my coffin a sword; for I was a brave soldier in the Liberation War of humanity.

The 'brave soldier' bears the passion of an artist, and Arnold, himself an artist, knows well that Heine deserves both the laurel and the sword. It is Arnold's usual practice to insert passages of poetic beauty in critical essays and create the spell of a "charm" which is "the poet's alone". Arnold translates one of Heine's poems in ballad-form addressed to a child and lifts his essay in criticism to an artistic level. The closing stanza reveals the incomparable charm:

Well, on me, my child, look! kiss me, and look boldly upon me! one of those knights of the Holy Ghost am I.

Arnold says that Heine "is a great modern poet, he is not conquered by the Middle Ages". But "one of those knights of the Holy Ghost" speaking in ballad-form is certainly medieval in spirit and form, and that is one of the ways to become an artist. Arnold the critic, in choosing this poem, is conquered
by Arnold the artist. Sustained criticism is too much, and if serious, it is too tense. So Arnold offers artistic relief. Art is concealed in criticism and criticism often culminates in art. Arnold says of Byron and Heine:

What a spendthrift, one is tempted to cry, is Nature! with what prodigality, in the march of generations, she employs human power, content to gather almost always little result from it, sometimes none! 58

This is like Arnold. He moves in a wide range and not on a narrow track. "A plain citizen of the republic of letters", as he declares himself, he is not content to remain so but is eager to cross the boundary, "for an ampler sphere" ("Resignation"), "stretching out his arms for something beyond" ("Marcus Aurelius").

Essays in Criticism, First Series, (1865) occupies a unique position in Arnold's prose-writings. The uniqueness is in the essays forming no exhaustive set or category as one finds in the lectures on Translating Homer or the Study of Celtic Literature, or in Essays in Criticism, Second Series. These essays are on diverse topics and varied personalities. 'The Function of Criticism at the Present Time' is serious and tense with argument while 'The Literary Influence of Academies' is somewhat loose and flat in most parts. Marcus Aurelius was the illustrious Roman emperor whereas Joubert, the "French Coleridge",

58. EC I, pp. 116-17
'remained in the shade'. The Guérins, brother and sister, are obscure figures. Heine, the German Jew, is as great as Spinoza the Dutch philosopher, but the difference between them is great. 'Pagan and Medieval Religious Sentiment' seems to have no bearing on any of these essays in the collection. It is beyond anyone's prudence to put these essays in a single category. Trilling, however has divided them in two groups; the four essays, 'The Function of Criticism at the Present Time', 'The Literary Influence of Academies', 'Maurice de Guérin' and 'Heinrich Heine' deal with literary life, poetry and criticism, and the remaining essays deal with religion. But the task of division is not so simple as that. These principal essays were written between 1863 and 1865, and before this period Arnold gave his professorial lectures on Translating Homer with the inaugural address on the Modern Element in Literature, and wrote the educational reports, 'A French Eton'. Therefore, it was, in a sense, a period of seething ideas seeking a form. So however diverse, these essays have one common aim. Thus they are central to Arnold's humanistic teaching. Their chief concern is the application of 'moral' ideas to life, and as such the essays are held together by this single thread which may be tiny but is tenuous.59

The chief concern of such an essay of literary criticism

59. Sister T.M. Hoctor in the 'Introduction' to Essays in Criticism First Series has made a summary of previous discussions on the unity of and correspondence among the essays.
( University of Chicago Press; 1968 ), pp. VI-VII
as 'The Function of Criticism at Present Time' is moral. This is apparent in Arnold's definition of criticism: Criticism is "a disinterested endeavour to learn and propagate the best that is known and thought in the world". The 'best' refers obviously to the excellence in "conduct, science, beauty, manners" and in "the conditions of civilisation". Again "criticism serves the cause of perfection ..." which has also a moral meaning. The French Academy, Arnold says, owes "its existence to a national bent towards the things of the mind, towards culture, towards clearness, correctness, and propriety in thinking and speaking". It promotes this bent or inclination and sets a standard of civilised living. The quality of "urbanity" comes from "the best that is known and thought". The Greek story of Adonis is "capable of a noble and touching application, and could lead the soul to elevating and consoling thoughts". The more important part of the essay 'Pagan and Medieval Religious Sentiment' is, however, not the pagan ritual of Adonis festival but St. Francis's Canticle which offers moral guidance and spiritual solace to the people, in their "poverty and suffering". Marcus Aurelius was trained in "right thinking and well-doing" which, Arnold says elsewhere, owes to the chief influences of an Academy. But pagan morality reaches its zenith in Marcus Aurelius and it has little difference on that level with Christian morality. He "made perfection his aim". Joubert's "severity of morals" is almost proverbial, and he cared as well "about perfecting himself". While comparing Joubert with Coleridge, Arnold regrets that Coleridge "had no morals". The regret is more poignant when
Arnold finds no "moral deliverance", no "nobleness of soul and character" in Heine; for despite this, Heine was one of the "children of light", very like Joubert. He fought "a life and death battle with Philistinism", as "soldier in the Liberation war of humanity", and this line of activity rendered an immense service at that time in the awakening of modern spirit. These early essays reveal how Arnold's personality has been precipitating along a particular direction. The attitude, it may be noted, is almost the same as that expressed in the early sonnets. Of course, he has the power now to exercise "a free play of the mind" over a wide range of subjects.

Arnold has discussed the relative merit of creative efforts with illustrations from the movement of the French Revolution and the burst of creative activity in the Romantic Revival. He has also enumerated in each essay one after another the "elementary laws" for criticism which yet hold good. The critic should have a disinterested mode of seeing "the object as in itself it really is" and propagate "the best that is known and thought in the world" and "establish a current of fresh and true ideas" with which the creative power can work. Criticism, says Arnold, should get rid of 'provinciality' and achieve the note of 'urbanity' as "the soul of all good criticism" is "the fitness, the measure, the centrality". The critic must have then the justness of spirit to tell the master-current in the literature of a period from any of the minor currents. The prime merit of a critic, as found in Joubert, is soundness and completeness of judgments. Yet, inspite of all these creeds, Arnold dismisses the authority
of a critic in a liberal mood: "the great art of criticism is to get oneself out of the way and to let humanity decide". No critic who is not an artist also can speak like that. As a critic Arnold has given his ideas about poetry, prose and literature in general. "Poetry is mainly an affair of genius", it is simply the most beautiful, impressive, and widely effective mode of saying things" and these are mostly "things of the mind."

In prose "quickness of mind and flexibility of intelligence" are of first-rate importance. The range of Arnold's critical mind becomes visible in his comments on the French Revolution, the Reformation and the Renascence. He has the foresight to see that the Revolution "appeals to an order of ideas which are universal, certain, permanent". But his real power lies in pointing at the error of the French Revolution that its ideas fled the intellectual sphere and rushed into the political. But the immediate error is much compensated when one learns from Arnold that Heine called himself a "child of the French Revolution" and that "the French spirit is destined to make its influence felt" in the literature of other countries too. Of all his contemporaries Arnold had a strong European consciousness, and he could apply his mind to Joubert, Marcus Aurelius, Heine, Theocritus, St. Francis, etc. One of the remarkable results of this pan-European consciousness is his disinterested criticism of the great Romantics, though he grew up in an age when, as Leon Gottfried observes, Wordsworth, Keats, Shelley and Byron were dominant poetic forces. The Romantics had plenty of energy and plenty of creative force, but they had not "sufficient materials to work with". It was not individual defect but the want of due
intellectual climate which made the Romantic Movement deficient.
Arnold analyses the point in the context of the importance of an
order of ideas for any creative work in 'The Function of Criti-
cism at the Present Time'. Trilling mentions that Arnold found
the "burst of poetical energy, the Romantic Movement", deficient
but he ascribes it inadvertently to 'The Literary Influence of
Academies'. In 'Heinrich Heine' Arnold refers again to the
failure of this "great burst of literature". He says that the
Romantics did not apply the "modern spirit" to life and litera-
ture. Only Byron and Shelley made an attempt in this line. Heine
had the intellectual equipment and applied the modern spirit to
literature, and yet he also got "a half-result, for want of moral
balance". In 'Heinrich Heine' Arnold defines the modern spirit
as the awakening of "the sense of want of correspondence between
the forms of modern Europe and its spirit", and in 'Pagan and
Medieval Religious Sentiment' he says that the modern spirit has
chiefly to live by "the imaginative reason"; and the Greek poets,
from Pindar to Sophocles, made an effort to live by this balanced
element of the imaginative reason.

In these essays Arnold as a critic has the pet ideas
ensembled in his head by way of settling down in respective
moulds. This does not mean that his criticism is not
mature: only, his ideas follow distinct lines in education,
thology, politics, philosophy and literature. But he rarely

60. Matthew Arnold, p. 198
deviates from his point of view, the moral strenuousness, "the intense desire to correct the world and to make right prevail". Of course, the moral bias does not take from the artistic beauty of these prose-writings. Moralizings, particularly on human life and Nature, not unoften mature into musings, and then the artist in Arnold transcends the critic in him. An illustration of this process is in the conclusion of 'The Function of Criticism at the Present Time': "... to have the sense of creative activity is the great happiness and the great proof of being alive, and it is not denied to criticism to have it". Such criticism gives "a joyful sense of creative activity".

61. Trilling, Lionel, Matthew Arnold, p. 191
62. EC I, p. 30