CHAPTER TWO: FORSTER'S WORLD VIEW

Optimist in Life

It was during his interlude in Germany as a tutor to the children of ‘Elizabeth’ (Countess von Arnim, later Countess Russell) that Forster first took his stand on optimism as against the fin-de-siecle attitude to life. The spring had arrived in Nassenheide and the place was bathed in beauty. The grass was tulip-spotted and pancy-strewn, the meadows coloured by kingcups, cowslips and yellow anemones. Blown uphill in his mood by this natural luxuriance, Forster wrote: “You cannot imagine the radiance that descended upon that flat iron-coloured land in May”, and in that radiant idleness an extraordinary current of optimism was running through him which made him note in his diary on 27th February, 1905: “A taste for cheap tragic effects in life seems to be the penalty paid by those who have no taste for tragedy in Art, … Those who like tragedy in art are somewhat brutalized to it in life.” Disliking the stench of death and of wounded flesh which Pater’s Marius the Epicurean (which he then was reading) was reeking with, Forster turned to the letters of Keats who “shows a perfect attitude towards his art: absolutely serious but genial.” Certifying Keats as “the best person in the world”, Forster enthusiastically notes: “He has seized upon the supreme fact of human nature, the very small amount of good in it, and the supreme importance of that little. He is contented with his stuffy set, as he would

have been contented with anyone whom he knew long enough.” Feeling a sense of parity with Keats so far as his aim in life was concerned, Forster’s mind was troubled by the question:

He who loses his own soul for men’s sake shall he find it? To be enthusiastic & sentimental over the picturesque poor is no difficulty. One doesn’t face the question till it comes to the vulgar and genteel. To know and help them are we to lose our souls – or how much of them?2

Forster’s life was one long articulate attempt to address himself to this central question. In other words, the question was whether he had faith in human life in general. At this point in his life, in 1905, in Nassenheide, Germany, Forster felt he had this faith: “The conditions are appalling: poverty, matrimony, much of family life all work against love and clear vision: and to these are added the rules of the game – death and decay. Yet people contrive to get in touch – I believe because they are radically good.”3 It is here that the study of Forster as the seer and critic of the world should begin.

Thirty five years later, in 1940, after the two World Wars, Forster then an aged celebrity of a broadcaster, expressed his reflections on Nazis and Nazism in his ‘Three Anti-Nazi Broadcasts’,

My belief is that if the Nazis won, culture would be destroyed in England and the Empire... In Hitler’s war Germany is not a hostile

2. Ibid. P. 133.
3. Ibid. Shortly after this resolution Forster left Nassenheide in good spirits.
country, she is a hostile principle. She stands for a new and a bad way of life and, if she won, would be bound to destroy our ways.

Nazi Germany was dangerous as an absolutist principle, not the expanse of natural beauty and optimism as he looked on it years ago in Nassenheide. Germany systematized culture into a ‘governmental’ idea whereas culture in England is “national: it springs naturally out of our way of looking at things ... It has developed slowly, easily, lazily; the English love of freedom, the English countryside, English prudishness and hypocrisy, English freakishness, our mild idealism and good-humoured reasonableness have all combined to make something ... unusual.” It is in this contrastive cultural context that Forster examines the role of freedom. Whereas the Nazis condemn freedom Forster as a writer not only asserts the necessity of freedom for culture to flourish but cites three reasons for his firm belief in freedom. The fundamental feeling of freedom which is necessary for the writer to exist as a writer should be accompanied by a functional freedom for the writer to tell others what he feels. These two are imperative for any cultural existence, and the third concerns the public; it must be free to read, to listen and to look. In the absence of the third, the public remains immature and Forster says, “... immaturity is a great characteristic of the public in Nazi Germany.” Freedom, according to Forster, is a formative factor of growing up and is necessary for any culture to assert itself meaningfully. Thus freedom, and the spirit of it, enables a national culture to grow and expand and become a super-national culture which fosters the general good of humanity. Being beyond

the political and geographical boundaries, this super-national culture "gives and
takes. It wants to give and take. It has generosity and modesty.... It expands
wherever human beings are to be found." The golden milieu which this attitude
would have created was ruined by Nazi Germany which, with its "governmental
culture", instead "ordered an age of bloodshed." It could thus never contribute to
the good of humanity, never become super-national. "Germany is to be German
for ever ...." and, "To be German is – to be German"; thus fed by empty exalted
slogans Germany pressed herself on to "the goal of a fool", that is, "Germany for
ever"; which really means "Gangsterdom for ever", and it is "an uneducated
official's dream." This dream led the Nazi to demolish culture, and destroy
"variety, spontaneity, anything different from themselves". While Forster
considers the Nazi revolution "a revolution of the soul", revealing "the power of
the soul and sentiment", he wonders why the soul always requires a machine
gun?" "Why does the instinct instinctively persecute? Why does the sentiment
mean insensitiveness?" Nazism is the symbol of intolerance and cruelty and it
considers it a crime to think. Forster fears a political domination of Germany
over England because the Nazis "would twist our minds through our own national
literature if they got into our country" because "destruction of national culture is
part of their programme of conquest." They would also "alter our civilization until
it is in line with their own." They would institute a culture which would be like "a
pyramid of appetites on a foundation of stupidity", which would kill the impulse to
create. His pacifistic tendencies are obvious when he prophetically asserts: "...

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violence has so far never worked. Even when it seems to conquer, it fails in the long run." His faith in the general goodness of man and his enthusiasm for optimism in life are reasserted even in a catastrophic prospect of doom: "Man ... refuses to live by bread alone, and is the only animal who has attempted to understand his surroundings."

At the same Forster does not believe in freedom for freedom's sake. In the socio-political and cultural context of the modern times freedom should not be looked upon as a bourgeois luxury. It must not be an attractive decoration, but a decent, delicate and sound investment for human happiness. In a review of a volume of Marxist criticism Forster asks:

"Freedom? But freedom to do what? How pat the dreary question fails! .... Freedom to injure others? Freedom to starve? Freedom to feed while others starve? ... Freedom, like God, melts when we ask her to give an account of herself. But she has the power of re-forming behind our back or when we look away, so that suddenly, in the midst of our ratiocinations, we exclaim 'She exists! I know she exists! I must win her! All men must win her too!'"

Forster pleaded for the recognition of Freedom as a primal human impulse before its utilization in socio-political context. This impulse, given the right guidance, gives rise to socialistic co-operation which in its turn is responsible for

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7. "What Has Germany Done to the Germans", TCD, p. 46.
8. "What would Germany do to Us?", TCD, pp. 49 – 53.
material freedom and facilitates the existence of creative individuality and spiritual liberation. Firm in his liberal convictions, Forster places freedom along with love as a constitutively human instinct. As a fundamental aspect of the human spirit, freedom enables man to create aesthetic, socio-political and religious orders which bring out the true freedom within, that is, 'pure liberty'. This liberty leads men to "the land beyond logic, to the Beloved Republic which feeds upon freedom and lives, to the Good Place which is every poet's dream." This was the dream of Ronald Kidd in whom Forster recognizes "the Ancient Roman, the Tribune of the People, who contends that the Res Publica should be the possession of all." Kidd's life was a "service of the elusive principle which we call liberty, ... in which we all believe", and he "did, literally, die that we might be free." Eulogizing Kidd as a prophet of freedom Forster goes on to say:

I know the political and philosophical difficulties in this idea of freedom: freedom for what: freedom to do what: freedom at whose expense, and so on. As a conception it is negative: but as a faith it is positive, and Ronald Kidd upheld it till his dying day."11

Forster considers freedom 'as a faith', as an aspect of the unseen, an integral component of the human spirit. He admired Milton's Aeropagitca as a protest against the suppression of British freedom of thought and expression and also as "a disturbance of our self-complacency" though Milton "exalts our national character in splendid words" and was "intensely patriotic". According to Forster

10. Ibid. p. 39
Aeropagitica highlights "not tyranny abroad but the need, even in wartime, of liberty at home."  

The Nineteenth century Western outlook on the human condition was strongly influenced by Christianity, and had a dualistic nature. The society was fundamentally split. Moral communication broke down and man was tragically separated from his traditional roots and values because of the self-division of the age. In England, which J.S. Mill saw as "two nations", great artists lived "double lives, torn between their public and private roles". There was a fundamental rupture "between faith and knowledge, between religious or poetic truth and scientific or rational truth" which reflected the modernist infection of "split consciousness" (Carl Gustav Jung), "Dissociation of Sensibility" (T.S. Eliot), and devotion to "things as opposed to values" (Alfred North Whitehead). Stone baptizes this fundamental conflict, attributed by Mill to Bentham and Coleridge, as the profound and complex contrast "between a mechanical and an organic view of life, between analysis and creative synthesis. ... between rationalism and romanticism, Utilitarianism and anti-Utilitarianism. ... between the practical and the ideal." This characterised the split personality of the age which witnessed "the revolt of the human mind against the philosophy of the eighteenth century". It was the protest of the 'ontological' against the 'experimental', 'conservative' against the 'innovative', the 'religious' against the 'infidel', the 'concrete and

historical' against the 'abstract and metaphysical', and the 'poetical' against the 'matter-of-fact and prosaic'.\textsuperscript{15} The essential dialectic of Forster's life, thought and art, his liberal-humanist quest for joining poetry and prose,\textsuperscript{16} is directly derived from this central Millite socio-political dialectic of the Benthamite-Coleridgean cultures. Forster's liberalistic-optimistic-realistic view of life is inspired by the Platonistic-ColerIDGEAN-Arnoldian-Spiritualistic-Idealistic axis which stands for culture, inner life, individual, human relationship as against the Aristotelian-Benthamite-Utilitarian-Materialistic Axis which over-emphasizes the role of a political economy in ordering society and human affairs.

Liberalism promotes a benevolent optimism in spite of the liberal mind's perception of the hard realities of material life. Forster's world-view is characteristically complex and typically dialectical. This makes his brand of liberalism very intractable. Lionel Trilling describes Forster as "at war with the liberal imagination."\textsuperscript{17} Early nineteenth century thought of a liberal "as a revolutionary thinker, more usually known as a 'radical' because he attacked social institutions at their roots".\textsuperscript{18} The mid-Victorian period saw liberalism springing out of its radical exclusiveness and becoming a guiding political philosophy of the industrial and commercial middle classes. Adopted by the Whigs as their moving principle, this liberalism became social, political, parliamentary, reform-seeking and progress-loving. It was the main reason

\textsuperscript{15} J.S.Mill – quoted by Stone, p. 5.
\textsuperscript{16} Stone quotes from a 'modern poet' who defines poetry as "language married to music, reason embraced by imagination, intellect in the clasp of emotion, the outer world and the inner life united in metaphor." Pp 5 – 6.
\textsuperscript{17} Lionel Trilling, \textit{Liberal Imagination}
behind the mid-Victorian complacency and optimism. Enmeshed with politics, liberalism lost its original idealism. Chartered by economic organisation, boisterously supported by politicians, and institutionalised by lazy minds, liberalism lost its human touch and became increasingly impersonal and indifferent to the enterprising individual. Diluted and laced by currents and cross-currents of Reformism, Fabianism, Socialism, Marxism, Conservatism, Evangelical Ethics and so on, Liberalism degenerated into a trite slogan. Moving around in this circle Forster felt both the 'wingedness' and the 'groundedness', the Utopian idyllic achievement and the hard scientific truth, which Liberalism held forth at that time. Untinged by political bias Forster’s first formulations of Liberalism began to express themselves hesitantly through the Independent Review which he described as “decency touched with poetry”, “a light rather than a fire, but a light that penetrated the emotions”.19 He always concentrated on what the politicians ignored.

Neo-Platonic-Coleridgean Idealist

It is interesting to examine the direct and indirect influences of what Carlyle calls the “Sign of the Times” on Forster’s receptive mind. “To be sensitive to what is going on”, is Forster’s credo for a critic, and so he could not have been cognitively or intuitively blind to what was going on in the intellectual traditions of the past. Forster’s liberal mind did not fight shy of being influenced. He was a

very grateful legatee of his intellectual heritage evidently derived from the central Platonic-Coleridgean-Arnoldian tradition.

At the heart of Plato's philosophy is his theory of Forms, or Ideas. Ultimately, his view of knowledge, ethics, psychology, the state, and art must be understood in terms of this theory. Influenced by Socrates, Plato was convinced that knowledge is attainable and it has two essential characteristics. First, knowledge must be certain and infallible. Second, knowledge must have as its object that which is genuinely real as contrasted with that which is an appearance only. Because that which is fully real must, for Plato, be fixed, permanent, and unchanging. He identified the real with the ideal realm of being as opposed to the physical world of becoming. So Plato rejected empiricism which claimed that knowledge is derived from sense experience. He thought that propositions derived from sense experience have, at most, a degree of probability. They are not certain. Furthermore, the objects of sense experience are changeable phenomena of the physical world. Hence, objects of sense experience are not proper objects of knowledge. In the Republic, Plato distinguishes between two levels of awareness: opinion and knowledge. Claims or assertions about the physical or visible world, including both commonsense observations and the propositions of science, are opinions only. Some of these opinions are well founded; some are not; but none of them counts as genuine knowledge. The higher level of awareness is knowledge, because there reason, rather than sense experience, is involved. Reason, properly used, results in
intellectual insights that are certain, and the objects of these rational insights are the abiding universals, the eternal Forms or substances that constitute the real world. Plato describes individuals as chained deep within the recesses of a Cave. Unable to see one another, they can only see the wall of the cave upon which appear shadows cast by models or statues of animals and objects that are passed before a brightly burning fire. One of the individuals escapes from the cave into the light of day, and he sees for the first time the real world and returns to the cave with the message that the only things they have seen heretofore are shadows and appearances and that the real world awaits them if they are willing to break their bonds. The shadowy environment of the cave symbolizes for Plato the physical world of appearances. Escape into the sun-filled setting outside the cave symbolizes the transition to the real world, the world of full and perfect being, the world of Forms, which is the proper object of knowledge.

Plato’s theory of Forms may best be understood in terms of mathematical entities. A circle, for instance, is defined as a plane figure composed of a series of points, all of which are equi-distant from a given point. No one has ever actually seen such a figure, however. What people have actually seen are drawn figures that are more or less close approximations of the ideal circle. Mathematicians define a circle in terms of logical points, not spatial points. Although the Form of a circle has never been seen - indeed, could never be seen - mathematicians and others do in fact know what a circle is. They can
define a circle and they know what it is. For Plato, therefore, the Form "circularity" exists, not in the physical world of space and time, but as a changeless object in the world of Forms or Ideas, which can be known only by reason. Forms have greater reality than objects in the physical world both because of their perfection and stability and because they are models of ordinary physical objects. Circularity, squareness, and triangularity are excellent examples, then, of what Plato meant by Forms. An object existing in the physical world may be called a circle or a square or a triangle only to the extent that it resembles ("participates in" is Plato's phrase) the Form "circularity" or "squareness" or "triangularity."

Plato extended this theory beyond the realm of mathematics to the field of social ethics and explained how the same universal term can refer to so many particular things or events. The word justice, for example, can be applied to hundreds of particular acts because these acts have something in common, namely, their resemblance to, or participation in, the Form "justice." An individual is human to the extent that he or she resembles or participates in the Form "humanness." If "humanness" is defined in terms of being a rational animal, then an individual is human to the extent that he or she is rational. A particular act is courageous or cowardly to the extent that it participates in its Form. An object is beautiful to the extent that it participates in the Idea, or Form, of beauty. Everything in the world of space and time is what it is by virtue of its resemblance to, or participation in, its universal Form. In Plato's hierarchy
of Forms, the supreme Form is the Form of the Good, which, like the sun in the
myth of the cave, illuminates all the other Ideas and represents his movement
in the direction of an ultimate principle of explanation. Ultimately, the theory of
Forms is intended to explain how one comes to know (theory of knowledge)
and also how things have come to be as they are (theory of being). Plato's
ethical theory argues that virtue is knowledge and can be taught, and
knowledge of the Form of the Good is the source of guidance in moral decision-
making. Plato also argued that to know the good is to do the good, and
immorality is due to ignorance. Plato's conviction that the moral person is the
truly happy person, and his belief that individuals always desire their own
happiness, they always desire to do that which is moral, makes his
philosophical formulations optimistic.

Plato had an essentially antagonistic view of art and the artist, although he
approved of certain religious and moralistic kinds of art. Again, his approach is
related to his theory of Forms. A beautiful flower, for example, is a copy or
imitation of the universal Forms "flowerness" and "beauty." The physical flower
is one step removed from reality, that is, the Forms. A picture of the flower is,
therefore, two steps removed from reality. The artist, therefore, is two steps
removed from knowledge, and, indeed, Plato's frequent criticism of the artists is
that they lack genuine knowledge of what they are doing. Artistic creation, Plato
observed, seems to be rooted in a kind of inspired madness.20

20. Adapted from "Infopedia 2.0", "Philospy & Religion – Plato."
This stream of Great Greek Philosophy, crystalline in its open and untrammeled thought, flowed through five centuries, via Plotinus, its “second founder”, to the romantic age and with its extravagance of constructive ideas and free spirit made its impact on the sensitive mind of Coleridge. Coleridge set out to purify and reconstruct these Hellenic Dogmas with “a liberty of speculation which no Christian can tolerate”.\(^{21}\) The main issue of the Coleridgean Metaphysics was to formulate a stance that founds itself on the idea of the Absolute as Will, the primal basis of his “voluntaristic form of idealistic philosophy.”\(^{22}\) Disillusioned by Schelling’s Nature Philosophy which he termed as “spiritless Pantheism”, Coleridge stands for a more comprehensive attitude to Nature as a living and creative principle, - \textit{natura naturans}, as against \textit{natura naturata}, - nature as a finished and dead product. His platonism makes him an ardent supporter of the Dynamic Philosophy of Nature which pleased his dream of finding the expression of an idea both in the material and the spiritual world. This Organic Nature tends to Individuality which commences in Man. Nature for Coleridge was a progressive system of dynamic and individualizing activities connected with the idea of Life as “the principle of Individuation.” He distinguished between mechanism and life and says : "... whatever is organized from without is a product of mechanism; whatever is mechanized from within is a production of organization."\(^{23}\) In this organization Coleridge finds the essence of romance which is a kind of faith in man and
some sense of the inherent greatness of his soul. Coleridgean emphasis is visibly on the value of human life;

"I did but see her passing by, / And yet I love her till I die".

The romantic spirit values the sense of the Infinite which is implicit in human life and which is the source of the deepest human experiences, sometimes expressed in the "still sad music of humanity". This Presence manifests itself in finite life both through wit which is "the sense of the littleness of that seem great" and humour which is "the sense of the greatness of things that seem little". Coleridge tried to humanize the hard philosophical idealism of Plato by appealing to what Wordsworth calls "a few strong instincts and a few plain rules" in the formidable face of "the pride of intellect and thought" which Platonism stood for. His nature is deeply religious. This is evident in his quest for a personal relation with a Mind and Will as the source of all reality and a living presence in the soul. Coleridge's voluntaristic idealism, or his and the other romantics' firm belief in the native goodness and goodwill of man, can be said to have inspired Forster via Mathew Arnold's socio-cultural criticism.

Mathew Arnold who like Forster abandoned creative art and devoted his later life to literary, social and religious criticism was painfully aware of the

24. Ibid. p. 28.
25. Ibid. p. 29.
drought of the age and of the "strange disease of modern life", - "the
ratioication, the morbid seriousness, the intense and unremitting self-
analysis", which while paralyzing the moral dynamism of his age also paralyzed
his "poetic nerve." He transformed the central Benthamite-Coleridgean
contention into a cultural struggle. Highly critical of the English Machinery-
Culture which extended its influence from the factories to the souls of men and
their personal relation, Mathew Arnold lambasted the English for their slavery to
what they considered as precious ends in themselves - "Freedom, population,
coal, wealth, religious organization". He proposed Culture as the "final and all-
embracing absolute". He makes culture a synonym for perfection, "of
harmonious perfection ... which consists in becoming something, in an inward
condition of the mind and spirit", and defines the idea of perfection "as a
general expansion of the human family" as against "strong individualism",
undue emphasis on "the individual's personality", the popular maxim of "every
man for himself", "want of flexibility", the tendency to see only "one side of a
thing" and the obsession with particularity and specificity of pursuit. He posits
Culture as the "ultimate Coleridgean synthesis" and advances its claim of
"doing humanistic service in lieu of Christianity." Diagnosing the malady of the
modern age as "so deprived" and perceiving himself as "self-divided", Mathew
Arnold is the legitimate cultural ancestor of "Forster's dialectic of experience",29

27. Ibid. p. 10.
28. Mathew Arnold, Culture and Anarchy, P.
29. Wilfred Stone, p. 11.
as Plato's dialectic of reality was the ancestor of his own cultural, idealistic humanism. Forster's own words are evidence for this Arnoldian heritage:

Mathew Arnold is of all the Victorians most to my taste: a great poet, a civilized citizen, and a prophet who has managed to project himself into our present trouble (1944), so that when we read him now he seems to be in the room.  

In the whole scheme of Forster's creative and the critical thinking one can see the working of Hegelian dialectical method. Hegel's aim was to set forth a philosophical system so comprehensive that it would encompass the ideas of his predecessors and create a conceptual framework in terms of which both the past and future could be philosophically understood. Such an aim would require nothing short of a full account of reality itself. Thus, Hegel conceived the subject matter of philosophy to be reality as a whole. He referred to this reality, or the total developmental process of everything that is, as the Absolute, or Absolute Spirit. According to Hegel, the task of philosophy is to chart the development of Absolute Spirit. This involves (1) making clear the internal rational structure of the Absolute; (2) demonstrating the manner in which the Absolute manifests itself in nature and human history; and (3) explicating the teleological nature of the Absolute, that is, showing the end or purpose toward which the Absolute is directed. Concerning the rational structure of the Absolute, Hegel, following the ancient Greek philosopher Parmenides, argued

30. EMF, "Mathew Arnold"
that "what is rational is real and what is real is rational." This must be understood in terms of Hegel's further claim that the Absolute must ultimately be regarded as pure Thought, or Spirit, or Mind, in the process of self-development. The logic that governs this developmental process is dialectic. The dialectical method involves the notion that movement, or process, or progress, is the result of the conflict of opposites. Traditionally, this dimension of Hegel's thought has been analyzed in terms of the categories of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. Although Hegel tended to avoid these terms, they are helpful in understanding his concept of the dialectic. The thesis, then, might be an idea or a historical movement. Such an idea or movement contains within itself incompleteness that gives rise to opposition, or an antithesis, a conflicting idea or movement. As a result of the conflict a third point of view arises, a synthesis, which overcomes the conflict by reconciling at a higher level the truth contained in both the thesis and antithesis. This synthesis becomes a new thesis that generates another antithesis, giving rise to a new synthesis, and in such a fashion the process of intellectual or historical development is continually generated. Hegel thought that Absolute Spirit itself (which is to say, the sum total of reality) develops in this dialectical fashion toward an ultimate end or goal. For Hegel, therefore, reality is understood as the Absolute unfolding dialectically in a process of self-development. As the Absolute undergoes this development, it manifests itself both in nature and in human history. Nature is Absolute Thought or Being objectifying itself in material form. Finite minds and human history are the process of the Absolute manifesting
itself in that which is most kin to itself, namely, spirit or consciousness. In *The Phenomenology of Mind* Hegel traced the stages of this manifestation from the simplest level of consciousness, through self-consciousness, to the advent of reason.  

Forster, though not very fond of the Hegelian Absolute, simulates Hegel’s method of dialectic to make sense of this world. In his own admission he is incapable of “abstract thought.” His characteristically liberal temperament makes him mildly sceptical about all theory, all systems, all Faiths and Causes. It also prompts him to steer a middle-course away from both the anarchic subjectivity celebrated by the Romantics and the inflexible objectivity with which truth was conceived by orthodox Belief. Not wishing to propound or adopt any systematic Philosophy, Forster stands for a complex attitude to Life, Nature and Man drawing his inspiration from many philosophies. Forster browsed through many books of his contemporaries on Science, on the Nature of the world and the cosmos. These light musings on the world made him “concentrate upon what’s small and immediate” which compelled him to adopt, not an Absolute theory or system, but values”, small, finite and useful. He was not enamoured by the scientism of some of his contemporaries. But his interest in scientific ideas was genuine. He was equally indifferent to the tall claims of the mystic

32. Furbank, p. 77.
thinkers of the time, opposed to all that was fashionable and popular in his time, Faith, Scientism, Racial loyalty, Forster’s new attitude was one of mild decent scepticism towards cosmic social order juxtaposed by a predilection for the inner life of the individual. It was a delicate mixture of open-minded empiricism, which reflects his attitude to science and history, and a reliance on individual human imagination to provide personal values. This eclectic attitude distanced Forster from the more pronounced liberal-humanist tradition of hostility to Science.\textsuperscript{34} Thus Forster’s method resembles Hegel’s in its attempt to adopt and cherish an all-comprehensive, all-inclusive vision of the Universe.

Forster’s idealism, born of Cambridge-high-brow-elitism, after being enmeshed in the complexities of the war years, became a pragmatic-imaginative one. It was baptized in the fire of the world-crisis of the mid-thirties, the Economic Depression, the rise of Fascism, Communism, Grunyism, bureaucratic encroachment, censorship, conscription and the increased marginalisation and enervation of the human individual and human values. These socio-political interventions cannot redeem the situation as they are hell bent on persecuting the “God’s elect, the electorate.” Chained by the tyrants who themselves are in chains, the twentieth century man has suffered many disillusionments, the most recent being the disillusion over democracy which followed the earlier disillusion over peace in 1914. This tyranny and the tyrants have become the norm. In the midst

\textsuperscript{34} This tradition roughly includes Mathew Arnold, I.A.Richards and F.R.Leavis who vehemently opposed the ‘scientific outlook’ popularized by some of their contemporaries.
of all these, Forster feels that freedom must be “discovered, not recovered.” He disagrees with Gerald Heard who is of the view that tyrants could be “got at” by the “neo-Brahmins”, people with integrity and spiritual authority, the “psychological supermen who will eradicate conflict by disseminating inner harmony.” Even a Hitler could “be made to catch the boat”, claims Gerald Heard. But Forster disagrees with Heard and says: “Tyrants have seldom listened to sages for more than a minute or two, and they have seldom done more than listen.” His 1941 essay on ‘Tolerance’, though enthusiastic about the practical compulsions of “reconstruction” after the war – “a hard scientific truth”, lays emphasis on the “sound attitude of mind, a right psychology”. He discards the claims of Love as impractical in public life. “The idea that nations should love one another, ... is absurd, unreal, dangerous. It leads us into perilous and vague sentimentalism.” He suggests, “something much less dramatic and emotional” for the practical need of rebuilding civilization, namely, Tolerance, “the quality which will be most needed after the war, ... the sound state of mind ... the only force which will enable different races and classes and interests to settle down together to the work of reconstruction.” Affirming his faith in democracy, and asserting that the way of tolerance is the way of democracies, Forster promotes tolerance as the most harmonious way and spirit by and in which “a civilized world may be built.” He calls it a “desirable spiritual exercise” wanted in all aspects of modern civic life. Distinguishing tolerance from weakness, Forster

36. R. Advani., p. 33.
37. “Gerald Heard”, TCD., P. 38.

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suggests that it is only when practical tolerance has completed building the house that "love will enter it, and the greatest force in our private lives will also rule in public life." 38

This plea for intelligent-imaginative tolerance in public life is in tune with Forster's temperamental individualistic inclinations. He strongly believes in the supreme importance of personal relationships and private life. "I have no mystic faith in the people", Forster says. "I have in the individual. He seems to me a divine achievement and I mistrust any view which belittles him .... You are important because everyone else is an individual too". 39 As a schoolboy at Tonbridge Forster had undergone untold miseries from the horror of the gangs, and even then whenever he was bullied "... he recovered his balance best by mentally resolving the gang back into individuals." 40 This over-emphasis of the role of the individual is symptomatic of the apprehension that human freedom is menaced "because a million years ago Man was born in chains." He hopes that after the present tournament of tyranny, violence and aeroplanes is over, "a new creature may appear on this globe, a creature who, we pretend, is here already : the individual." 41 Forster's stand for the support and empowerment of the individual in the modern world which is strongly organized against the individuals makes him bravely ask: "When there is a collision of principles would you favour the individual at the expense of the community as I would? Or would you prefer

40. P.N.Furbank, pp. 42 – 43.
economic justice for all at the expense of personal freedom?" Not answering this semi-rhetorical question Forster tries to hint at how a world of individuals and personal freedom would go on. He pins his hopes on a "something" which will be born from the union between man's desire to be free and his wish to love. This something, the fruit of the marriage between the desire to devote oneself to another person (Love) and the desire for personal liberty, according to Forster, might remove the fundamental menace to freedom which the modern age holds forth, thus enabling "Love to come back to it is proper level and ... steady civilization". This sentimental belief in love may be inspired by the Bloomsbury creed of intimate friendship which Forster also enjoyed at Cambridge as an Apostle. He posits love as an antidote to fear which deprives man of his freedom and is firmly convinced that salvation is possible only by a better use of man's innate capacity for love, and his better realization of his latent moral resourcefulness. This may also be inspired by his much beloved friend Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson who considered love as "something which gives us ... an idea ... of what we might mean by a perfect Good." These inspirations made Forster realize that his faith is in the effective combination of inner love and freedom and not in the new faiths of Marxism, Scientific Socialism and Mysticism. He ardently believed that in the conflict between Liberty and Equality the only possible resolution lies in the moral faculty of the individual. A good government consists in the best compromise between the competing ideal of Liberty and

42. TCD, p. 67.
44. "Some Books", King's College Manuscripts, quoted by R. Advani, p. 34.
45. Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson: The Meaning of Good (1901), p. 188.
Equality. A true Liberal becomes "the man in the middle". Forster prefers to be in the middle and stands for a harmonious compromise between these more extreme positions. In one of his reviews he declares: "I myself am a sentimentalist who believes in the importance of love" because the desire to love and the desire to be loved are the twin anchor ropes which keep the human race human.

Declaring that he belonged "to the fag-end of Victorian Liberalism" which practised "benevolence and philanthropy, was humane and intellectually curious, upheld free speech, had little colour prejudices, believed that individuals are and should be different, and entertained a sincere faith in the progress of society", Forster found fault with his education which made him 'soft', and his economic situation which was the result of "exploiting the poor of our own country and the backward classes abroad". The dialectical mysticism of his views can be inferred from his plea for mixing "the new economy with the old morality" and in his realization of the "split in one's loyalties". Forster recognizes the need to maintain the sense of tradition of many generations represented by the old farmsteads. He is also aware of the need to provide houses for the growing population by building satellite townships and commandeering large areas of county land. Hence the necessity of the Ministry of Town and Country Planning is felt by the liberalist Forster. But he is honest to admit his difficulty in equating the problem.

and “cannot free myself from the conviction that something irreplaceable has been destroyed, and that a little piece of England has died as surely as if a bomb had hit it.” He feels that no compensation is equal to the loss, - “the life of tradition.” He is also not sure whether the modern era of planned life and planned change will further a “sphere both for human relationships and for the despised activity known as art.” If the artist is allowed his “ivory tower” and to plan for our minds, the scientist, subsidized by the terrified governments, who is temperamentally unfit to enter into people's feelings, should come out of his “ivory laboratory” and “plan for our bodies” in order to realistically face the “challenge of our times.” Forster claims that “personal relationships” provide “something comparatively solid in a world full of violence and cruelty.” This solid factor is in conflict with “something incalculable in us, which ... rise to the surface and destroy our balance.” Forster's position is that for the sake of living we have to “assume that the personality is solid and the ‘self' is an entity”. Thus one can start getting a little order into the contemporary chaos. We, therefore, must be fond of people and trust them, and must be as reliable as possible. It is an affair of the heart and must be supported by a semi-mystic warmth which will, under favourable conditions, be transformed into faith. In this modern world of causes it is possible that “love and loyalty to an individual can run counter to the claims of the state”. Forster then would take a tough stand in support of the individual: “... if I had to choose between betraying my country and betraying my friend, I hope I

49. Ibid. p. 69.
should have the guts to betray my country." 51 This is possible only in Forster's "Beloved Republic", the humanist's mystical Atlantis, "the City of God" to be reached through a liberalist’s dream. 52 The kind of humanism which Forster stands for primarily recognizes the complexity and variety of human life; it has progressive tendencies in tandem with modernity. It stresses man's uniquely 'human' self which must not be destroyed in the interest of a just socio-economic and political order.

As a Liberal humanist Forster is also supportive of other virtues which he believes contribute in constituting the human spirit. While praising his ancestor Henry Thornton who was "only a successful banker, an extensive philanthropist, a devout Christian, and affectionate husband and a judicious father, a loyal friend, an upright citizen, an incorruptible M.P", and who reminded him of "an age when to get rich and to be good were harmonious", he says that the great defect of his great-grandfather’s sect was its indifference to "a touch of mysticism, a sense of the unseen, and a capacity for martyrdom." Lacking these soul-purging impulses which lift one "into a region outside money", and indifferent to "poetry, mystery, passion, ecstasy, music", his ancestors could not make a bigger name in history. 53 While basking in this hallowed region or the spiritual dimension, Forster does not deny the claims of the body. While admiring ascetic qualities if they do not deny the human spirit, he is thoroughly convinced that "a denial of

51. Ibid. p. 76.
52. The Menace to Freedom", TCD., P. 23.
the body is a denial of human life". He is suspicious of the tall claims of asceticism which advances the spirit over the body because, as he puts it in 'What I Believe', "bodies are the instruments through which we register and enjoy the world". He, therefore rejects 'renunciation' as a means to fulfilment and social equality and says that it would evolve "a curtailed, denuded, castrated individual who would have aroused the contempt of the Ancient Greeks". Again elsewhere he observes: "Christians and Pantheists may insist that the soul is separate from the body, but this is not true. There is a live body, that is all."

This empirical-materialism which makes Forster believe that his treasures are in this world though it is not exactly his 'home', is counter-balanced by a semi-mystic, casual otherworldliness. He criticizes the acquisitive instinct which utilizes power and force and which inhibits the human spirit, destroys relationships and prevents spiritual fulfillment. Attributing caution, stolidity and lack of imagination to property owners, Forster says that the acquisitive instinct prevents toleration of other individual owners and the right to freedom of others. The human spirit is caught in the vicious grip of "a sinister trinity" formed by "Creation, property, enjoyment". And property takes over the places of creation and enjoyment, thereby enervating and emptying the life of the spirit. He exposes the evil attributes of money, which Tolstoy describes as "evil and immoral" and its

54. R. Advani, p. 43
56. Ibid. — quoted from Commonplace Book, p. 240.
possession as "one of the chief causes of evil"\textsuperscript{58}, and its vicious grip on the human mind:

One of the evils of money is that it tempts us to look at it rather than at the things that it buys. \ldots That is the fundamental deceitfulness of riches which kept worrying Christ. That is the treachery of the purse, the wallet and the bank-balance \ldots . They were invented as a convenience to the flesh, they have become a chain for the spirit.\textsuperscript{59}

This treacherous trinity along with the "Devil", the Benthamite creature, "blinded by arithmetic, deaf to the warnings of poetry".\textsuperscript{60} has dominated the twentieth century urban life thereby making it an arid desert.

**Aristocracy in the midst of Democracy: Forster & Politics.**

It is natural that such a temperament as Forster's would turn to Democracy to help in the reconstruction of the human society. But democracy is not an end for Forster, nor is it the most ideal situation for human life. The ideal is the semi-utopian Republic of Love in which Love will reign supreme both in the private and public lives of human beings. Democracy is only the preparatory step, nay, the only preparatory step, towards that Forsterian \textit{Sumum Bonum}.

Democracy is not a Beloved Republic really, and never will be. But it is lessm hateful than other contemporary forms of government, and to that extent it

\textsuperscript{58} What, Then, Must We do, - quoted by R. Advani, p. 44.
\textsuperscript{59} "The Last Parade", TCD., p. 18.
\textsuperscript{60} EMF. Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson, p. 241.
deserves our support. It does start from the assumption that the individual is important, and that all types are needed to make a civilization.

Unlike the efficiency regimes democracy does not divide people into the "bossers and the bossed." According to Forster, sensitive people have their best chance in a democracy as it "allows them most liberty" to express themselves and to be creative. Democracy allows criticism, and thus makes possible the active existence of the Press and Parliament. Forster believes in the Parliament "because it is a talking shop", "because it criticizes and talks", and also in the "Private Member who makes himself a nuisance" because "he does expose abuses which would otherwise never have been mentioned." So Forster proposes "Two cheers for Democracy: one because it admits variety and two because it permits criticism."61

From this intermediate belief in twice-cheered democracy, Forster the semi­mystic liberal moves higher. For him this tolerant democracy is not an ideal, but an intermediate expression of love and freedom. That is why he allows only two cheers for this democracy and reserves the third cheer for his idealist Republic in which freedom feeds love and love lives on freedom. Discarding force on which all society rests, while cherishing the intervals from force as creative moments which he calls "civilization", citing the 'Valkyries' as symbols of courage, intelligence and the human spirit, and Brunhilde's hymn as signaling the "recurrence of love", Forster eagerly proclaims "the love which is eternally
triumphant and feeds upon freedom and lives.” He calls the absence of force ‘civilization.’ Rejecting all universalist claims, Forster believes that nothing, -millennium, movements, religions, conversions or convulsions, - will be able to “bring peace to the world or integrity to the individual”. This pessimistic realization is tempered by the small consolations of life, “creativeness”, “friendship and loyalty”. He refuses to take refuge in hero-worship and greatly dislikes that gross aberration of nature called the “Great Man” who is “an integral part of the authoritarian stock-in-trade”. Hero demands worship and this is a favourite arrangement for the timid and the bored who, after “bowing down, feel exalted and strengthened.” Great Men strive for and achieve success which, by being an absolute and a fixity, is a negation of the dynamic force of creation. This leads Forster to believe in aristocracy, an aristocracy of the “sensitive, the considerate and the plucky.” This aristocracy which represents the true human tradition has a secret understanding among its members. These people cannot be organized and labelled. They are slippery and largely intractable. Their temple is “the Holiness of the Heart’s Affection” and their kingdom is “the wide open world.” It is from this aristocracy that the Saviour of the future will spring up who, without preaching a new Gospel but with “a new technique”, will make effective the existing “goodwill and the good temper”, and thus order the world. This will be a

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62. Ibid. p. 80.
63. Ibid. pp.
64. Ibid. pp. 81 – 82.
quiet solitary labour like some rare bird "pecking away at the stony ground and finding all kinds of private succulent things where others find only grit." 65

Forster's preference of this enlightened aristocracy who will, if given a chance, rule and order the universe in the true liberal-humanist and democratic spirit, can be attributed to the influence of Plato via Plotinus and Coleridge. Plato's Republic, is concerned with questions of justice, just state" and "just individual". The ideal state, according to Plato, is composed of three classes: the merchant class, the military class, and the philosopher-kings according to the education of the different individuals, and their interest and ability. Those who complete the entire educational process become philosopher-kings who are able to grasp the Forms and, therefore, to make the wisest decisions. Indeed, Plato's ideal educational system is primarily structured so as to produce philosopher-kings. Plato associates the traditional Greek virtues of wisdom, courage and temperance with the ruling, the military and the artisan classes respectively, and the virtue of justice characterizes society as a whole. The just state is one in which each class performs its own function well without infringing on the activities of the other classes. Similarly Plato divides the human soul into three parts: the rational part, the will, and the appetites. The just person is the one in whom the rational element, supported by the will, controls the appetites. In the same way

enlightened philosopher-kings, supported by the soldiers, govern the rest of society.

Coleridge humanised the idea of Oligarchic-Monarchy. He admired Godwinian Communism, went through many adventures like emigration to America, an unhappy marriage, had visions of himself as "a servant of mankind". He mocked both orthodoxy and unorthodoxy, subscribed to Burke-inspired undergraduate brand of Political romanticism, inclined towards mysticism against the gross and unimaginative mechanisation of the universe, and finally arrived at an "alloy of Radicalism with faith". Seeing the path of possible perfection strewn with infinite complexities and confusions, Colelridge resigned himself "to that Being Who shaketh the earth out of her place, and the pillars thereof, tremble". "Talk not politics. Preach the Gospel", was his advice to any "friend of universal equality".66 He was convinced that the reforms of machinery were irrelevant without a change of heart and wrote in 1798, "Governments are more the effect than the cause of that which we are." And in a letter to his brother, expressing his disagreement with the eighteenth-century belief in man’s natural goodness he wrote: "I wish to be a good man and a Christian, but I am no Whig, no Reformist, no Republican." Realizing the complexities of the circumstances Coleridge favoured dealing with the immediate problems empirically, while respecting the spiritual aspects of a secular society. Influence of the German Idealists became the true foundation of his political speculations and contributed to his towards
conservatism. Fired by Platonism he maintained that an institution was an
embodiment of an idea and if its idea be good, an institution is worth
maintaining. Platonism helped Coleridge to realize that the romantic
temperament such as his should find an outlet for its expansive emotions in the
idea of humanity and then in a sense of community, that is, England. This was
because of the new situation in which the rights of man changed into the rights of
nations, Pantisocracy changed into patriotism, and brotherhood of man turned
into geographic nationalism. This, for him, is the "sublime of man / ... to know
ourselves / Parts and proportions of some wondrous whole! / This fraternises
man." This sense of the "whole" is made into "one Self" which keeps on
"spreading still" "far diffused as fancy's wing can travel!" With this poetic
conviction he went on to demand of all political systems, whether Radicalism or
Toryism, a government according to ethical principles and the conduct of secular
affairs sub specie aeternitatis. Caught between the dialectic of the idea of
permanence represented by the landowners, and the idea of progress
represented by the mercantile capitalists, Coleridge proposed a harmonious
balance between the two. He repudiated both democracy and absolutism as
ideal systems for the governance of mankind and conceived of society as a
"corporation of major interests" consisting of family, community and the nation.
Rejecting the empirical atomism of Hobbes and Locke, he supported an organic
view of the society thus allowing multiplicity and variety in its make-up. Believing

66. Harold Beeley, "The Political Thought of Coleridge", in Coleridge: Studies by several hands
on the Hundredth Anniversary of his Death, edited by Edmund Blunden & Earl Leslie Griggs
in the duality of an individual, - the *idem*, the self, and the *alter*, the otherness, -

Coleridge's position is one of "synthesis of *alter et idem*, myself and my neighbour." He also a posits two counterweights to prevent the excesses of both the modern commercial spirit with its mad race for gain and the conservative agricultural tradition with its poise and security and claims of permanence. They are a powerful aristocracy whose attachment to their estates is stronger than mere lust of money, and who, therefore, are inclined to be more committed and saner in their view of national well-being than the merchants and the traders who only seek profit in all their endeavours. This aristocracy will, according to Coleridge, counteract "the superstitions of wealth" by the "more delicate superstitions of ancestry" and thus provide a "social conscience" to the nation.

Believing in the supreme importance of education and of the educated in the affairs of an ideal state, Coleridge enthusiastically proposes the establishment and maintenance of a pastor and a schoolmaster in every parish, and both groups together forming the "clerisy" which would include "the learned of all denominations." This "permanent, nationalised, learned order, a national clerisy or Church is an essential element of a rightly constituted nation", and Coleridge considers the clergyman as "a neighbour and a family man, whose education and rank admit him to the mansion of the rich landholder, while his duties make him the frequent visitor of the farmhouse and the cottage." This idea of a learned order, permanently endowed and dispersed throughout the country, and

68. Coleridge, Religious Musings
69. Coleridge, *Essays on his Own Times*, 1, p. 185.
70. *Church and State*, p. 78. - quoted by Harold Beeley, p. 170.
spreading the "germ of civilization", is Coleridge's major contribution to political theory. One need not try hard at all to see the striking similarities of views of Coleridge and Forster in respect of an ideal political system.

This Coleridgean "germ of civilization" must be socially manifested in an ideal socio-political order. Forster argues for its increased role in ordering human affairs. He connects the basic human impulses to their corresponding social behaviour, - fear is connected to materialism, tyranny and orthodoxy, and love and freedom are linked to personal relations, creativity in private life and critical responsibility in public life. Forster is severely critical of any dogmatic and totalitarian ideology that unilaterally claims to order the society. Blind adherence to such faith or ideology, for him, is like an addict's abject dependence on drug. It will stifle the creative freedom and the ebullient freshness of what imagination can do for the flowering of the human personality. So a social order cannot be a prescriptive straitjacketed ideology-machine, but a loosely knit, flexible framework which allow breathing and breeding space for personality and imagination to flourish. Criticising the unimaginative and mechanistic attempt to herd humans together with bullying regulations in the interest of a social order, Forster argues his way through asserting the uniqueness and the irrevocable singularity of human individuals and the possibility of love and loyalty among them, to a larger possibility of creating a meaningful order among them which will be based, not on the drug of faith or belief, but on their primarily human and fundamentally personal inclination to creativity. This order will have a quiet birth and slow popularity, but it will be the only lasting order which will survive all
human failures and triumphs, all human excesses and exaggerations, and which will establish an integrated social order on this disordered planet. This will be an organic and dynamic spiritual order because it is "... evolved from within, not imposed from without ... an internal stability, a vital harmony". It is this spontaneous formation which will be the corner stone of Forster's "Love, the Beloved Republic which feeds upon Freedom and lives." Realizing the historical impossibility of such an order which has been posited by liberals like J.S.Mill who emphasised the supremacy of ahistorical and transcendent personal values over social order, and L.T.Hobhouse who viewed the outer order as merely facilitating the growth of personality which grows from within, Forster gives importance to social order only as an instrument which invigorates individuality and the inner order of the mind. This order operates naturally and evolves gradually with sure momentum and under no external compulsions, thus vindicating the claim that "Individuality is an element of well-being." Forster’s idea of order is misunderstood by some liberal critics as similar to a purely poetic sense of order which is "all-inclusive" and which "cannot be stated in political terms." But Forster does not seem to subscribe to such ultra-poetic, utopian idea of order. As a realist he accepts a larger and more relevant idea of a social order which has implications beyond individuality and personal life. That the personal order must be made compatible with social order is implicit in the Forsterian scheme, and he believes in a valuable and inevitable combination of idealism and realism. In this

liberalist chemistry lies the salvation of humanity from the modern malady of chronic and tragic fragmentation. Forster admires Edward Carpenter's idea of democracy as an extension of love into the practical and public affairs of men. Carpenter blamed Christianity and Commercialism for the failure of love and the failure of society, and in his *Towards Democracy* makes democracy transform itself from a mere "political term" into "a synonym of love." But Forster the realist is aware of the limitations of such political idealism. The New Jerusalem which Edward Carpenter saw was seen as nice from far, but ".... When the armies of the downtrodden enter its gate ... the New Jerusalem becomes a more ordinary city, where the party leaders book the best rooms." The dialectic of Christianity and Commercialism, between God and Mamon, can be resolved by a harmonious synthesis of idealism and realism. Forster always tries to reconcile the claims of private creativity with "a larger non-autocratic social order." That love should dwell in each, in all individuals is good enough for Forster when he says:

"Love is a great force in private life; it is indeed the greatest of all things: but love in public affairs simply does not work. It has been tried again and again: by the Christian civilizations ... and also by the French Revolution ... which reasserted the Brotherhood of Man .... it has always failed .... The fact is we can only love what we know personally. And we cannot know much. In public affairs, in the rebuilding of civilization, something much less dramatic and emotional is needed, namely tolerance."  

75. R. Advani quotes from Hynes' *The Edwardian turn of Mind*, (p. 150 – 1), p. 57.  
77. "Tolerance", *TCD.*, p. 54.
Though it is a "dull virtue" and means passive putting up with people and being able to stand things, it is the quality which is most suited to help "different races and classes and interests to settle down together to the work of reconstruction." Tolerance is the Forsterian synthesis in the dialectic between private life and public role of an individual, between love and social indifference or irresponsibility. He states: "If you don’t like people, put up with them as well as you can. Don’t try to love them: you can’t, you’ll only strain yourself. But try to tolerate them. On the basis of that tolerance a civilized future may be built." This emphasis on tolerance as the most useful, perhaps the only viable, peace-time virtue posits the liberal standpoint that violence and force do not always pay, and if one wants any semblance of civilization, nay, a meaningful and imaginative civilization, tolerance is indispensable. He enlists the Buddhist Emperor Asoka, the Dutch scholar Erasmus, the Frenchman Montaigne, John Locke, Sydney Smith, Lowes Dickinson and Goethe to testify the claim of tolerance as the means of "salvation of this crowded jostling modern world." Tolerance is the modern measure by which a community’s civilized human nature is to be ascertained. The opposite of tolerance,—fear, force, belief and totalitarianism,—makes a community anti-human and primitive. He also cites the evils of powerful governments which even within democracy crush individuality with the help of "an omniscient bureaucracy". This "Fabio-Fascism" which had alarmed all liberal thinkers of the time and is a cultural cousin of Benthamism, stands for a despotic power placing the government above the Parliament and law courts. This

78 Ibid. p. 55.
79 Ibid.
dangerous phenomenon of Fabio-Fascist bureaucracy regulates personal life, destroys spontaneity and creativity, perverts the spirit of democracy by marginalising the individual, and finally, turns modern civilization into a prison, all in the name of social order. This soul-less galvanising apparatus, the inexorable rule-machine, levels human society like a powerful bull-dozer and destroys all chances of the spiritual development of the individual and of society. Administration, legality, regulations, economic development, industrial progress, Grants commission, Planning commission – an impressive list of social amelioration cliches – they hinder spirit of individualism, creativity and liberty, and establish a “chartered”, standardized civilization. This Commissar Culture with its veritable red-tape is the modern devil, the evil legatee of the Benthamite Culture bent upon destroying the spirit of laissez-faire, which, according to Forster, “is the only one that seems to work in the world of spirit” because “if you plan and control men’s minds you stunt them”. 81 This is the danger into which democracy can, with the help of a bureaucracy, degenerate. This danger will destroy human tradition. Hence Forster’s ardent faith in Aristocracy in the midst of Democracy, an intelligent Minority influencing the rule by Majority, “a secular intelligentsia” 82 promoting the emotional, intellectual and spiritual development in the society. This enlightend tribe of what Mill calls “the leading intellects of the age”, 83 “the

80. Ibid. p. 57.
82. R. Advani, p. 61.
salt of the earth\textsuperscript{84} will be indispensable for organising human life and for protecting humanity from the bestial Benthamite, de-humanizing forces.

Forster's aristocracy can look back and find its immediate ancestor in Mathew Arnold's "cultured Minority", his substitute for the clergy. The Arnoldian notion of culture places human perfection as an internal condition, as a natural growth of our humanity asserting predominance over our animality. This idea of perfection and humanity is not a democratic one. All men do not carry "the kingdom of God" within them; only a cultured few have this privilege or burden. Arnold explains:

Natures with this bent emerge in all classes, .... And this bent always tend to take them out of their class, and to make their distinguishing characteristic not their Barbarianism or their philistinism, but their humanity. They have in general a rough time of it in their lives; but they are sown more abundantly than one might think, they appear where and when least expects it, they set up a fire which enfilades, so to speak, the class with which they are ranked ... \textsuperscript{85}

This notion of Liberal Socialism of a semi-esoteric kind in which a synthesis is attempted between liberty and equality by bringing an enlightened aristocracy reflecting the co-existence of both liberty and control, of liberal humanism and rational altruistic self-control, is also reflected in the works of L.T.Hobhouse who criticizes the social order which "cramps the personal life and the spiritual order", and in T.H.Green who visualised a liberal social philosophy which harmoniously

balances the traditional liberal value of "creative individualism" and the topically important expedient of a "just and better planned economic order." This liberalist positing of an ideal stressing spiritual freedom and diversity (the liberal thesis) contrasted with the economically deterministic and materialistic imperative of equality and social welfare (the socialist antithesis) is reconciled by the notion of 'Liberal Socialism' (the humanist synthesis). Unconvinced by the socialist claim that a desirable moral and spiritual atmosphere will emerge out of a planned economy and a regulated social life, Forster is unrelenting in his continual stress upon "moral values and the legislation of the spirit." in his quest for a desirable state of life. One cannot ignore the tinge of the Cambridge-Apostolic "state of mind". His view of social order as of any value only if it provides opportunities for human self-development and of the artists and the creative individuals as important and indispensable contributors to the real well-being of the society smacks of an elegant mixture of poetic mysticism and socio-human realism which is central to Forster's attitude and his works. His attachment to democracy for its predominantly human characteristics, his ardent faith in his aristocracy which stands for "the true human tradition" of soul-enriching spiritual values, and his hope that the human scene can be ordered by human efforts and human evil can be counterbalanced by innate human goodness, places him in the role of a modern prophet of optimism. His aristocracy symbolises "the one permanent victory of our queer race over cruelty and chaos" and is counted among "a few (who) are great names." While distancing himself equally from populist

excesses and vulgarities which are the evils of an intolerant democracy, and from
the snobbish 'touch-me-not-ism' or 'holier than thou', 'Ivory Tower' attitude of the
upper classes, Forster concerns himself with "the problem of value, the problem
of maintaining and extending aristocracy in the midst of democracy."\(^{88}\)
(emphasis mine) It is around this aristocracy that Forster's essential criticism of
society and politics hinges. His fundamental concern as a critic is to advance the
claim of this aristocracy in social reconstruction, and its crucial role in protecting
the human values of personal freedom, human relation, creative individualism,
and imaginative moralism. This "invincible army, yet not a victorious one, the
aristocrat, the elect, the chosen, the Best People\(^{89}\) is to fight the social evils of
ignorance, poverty, militarism and imperialism in a specific movement of liberal
thought with the weapons of creativity, imagination and example, and by
appealing to the supreme value of the civilized individual. The only meaningful,
effective and enduring social direction is towards the pluralization of this Civilised
Individual. Uniform codes, social regulations, moral laws, economic planning,
ideologies, reform movements, spiritual renewals, and, even, religious worship
will not found the kingdom if they do not primarily recognize the supreme
importance of the Individual and promote his survival and welfare. Concern for
the barest human needs of the Individual should be the first step to be taken
towards any civilization,\(^{90}\) and the socio-moral and spiritual welfare of this

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90. One of the reasons why Forster "scrapped" the all important mystery of the Incarnation of
Christ was that "the main aim of the Incarnation was not to stop war or pain or poverty, but to
free us from sin ..." quoted by Furbank from Forster's "Presidential address to the
individual is the crowning glory of human civilization. Thus benevolently positioned in the society and basking under the glorious reign of human ideals, the Individual will express his creative urges, and in his creations lies the real achievement of any civilization worth the name. From this view of society, at once individualistic and pluralistic, homocentric and socially coloured, admitting atomism and creative variety, Forster takes the one forward step towards an eclectic, enlightened and vibrant aristocracy. Rukan Advani gives an impressive list of Forster’s assorted aristocracy: “artists (from Shakespeare to Roger Fry), historians (Voltaire, Gibbon), scientists (James Simpson), theologians (Clement and Origen), thinkers (Plotinus, Lowes Dickinson), and even a god (Krishna).” These exemplify “diverse ways of fulfillment”. They are intensely human, intricately complex, “mixtures of good and evil in whom the good predominates”. They are not paragons of virtues or “symbols of perfection”. Forster is “deliberately irreverent” towards them, aware of their “fallibility as human beings”. These heroes are “human rather than mythical or heroic”. These Forsterian heroes are found across the “whole stretch of human history”, and according to him, “salvation lies only in remembering, assimilating, cherishing and personally expanding the values of (this) aristocracy”. The “saviour of the future will utilize this aristocracy” if and when he comes, in his mission of actuating “the goodwill and good temper which are already existing.” This is the semi-prophetic, semi-apocryphal hope of an agnostic humanist in real earnest to do something for the contemporary chaos prevailing in the modern age. His optimism that the Elect

91. R. Advani, P. 68.
92. “What I believe”, TCD, p. 82.
(Aristocracy) and the Electorate (Democracy) together will found the Kingdom, nay, "Love the Beloved Republic" in which the "Unquenchable lights of my aristocracy" and the "Signals of the invincible army" will forever hold out an invitation: "Come along – anyway, let's have a good time while we can."\(^93\)

There is no fixity about who belongs to Forster's aristocracy of the sensitive, the considerate and the plucky. Forster is quite haphazard in including and excluding people in this loose formation. Sometimes he includes the landed aristocrat in this group by virtue of his "connection with the land". The Duke of Portland was included because he "inherited and enhanced a great name", "does not like the present day", but is "too good a sportsman to grumble", and firmly believes that "the new world ... holds just as many possibilities of happiness, good fellowship, and enjoyment of life ...." Forster admires such attitude and certifies that people with similar views make him feel that "the landed aristocrat seems the only democrat, and our hearts go out to him." Forgiving arrogance in the Duke as unconscious, Forster says that the aristocrat in the Duke "does practise ... the art of switching off when a person or a situation incommodes him."\(^94\)

Forster's sensitive mind also took stock of the class stratification which gathered round his notion of aristocracy. He distinguishes the three social classes in terms of three drawers, the top drawer, - the aristocracy, the middle...

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93. Ibid.
drawer, - the merchant and the government officials, and the bottom drawer, - the working class. Speaking of "Mrs. Miniver, the gifted heroine of Miss Jan Struther's sketches", he says that she belonged, not to the top drawer as she is "certainly not an aristocrat" because of something that she had not got – "some grace or grandeur, some fierce eccentricity, some sense of ancient lineage or broad acres lost through dissipation" –, because "distinction does not course in her blood", but to the middle drawer, that is, to the class "which strangled the aristocracy in the nineteenth century, and has been haunted ever since by the ghost of its victim .... and has come into power consequent on the Industrial Revolution and Reform Bills and the Death Duties." This class "has never been able to build itself an appropriate home". It still thinks that the Englishman's home is his 'castle' and "still hanker(s) after the feudal stronghold which (is) condemned as uninhabitable", and thus it is twice removed from reality and nobility. The working classes, which hoot this middle class occasionally in order "to clear their chests and to get rid of their feeling of incompetence", have "spontaneity, natural gaiety, recklessness" which the aristocrat once had and the middle class never had. Forster sees a strange spiritual affinity between the noble aristocrats and the naturally sincere working classes.

There is a natural sympathy between the top drawer and the bottom. The 'castle' and the 'hovel' have understood one another, and have even approximated in type. Those who had everything have felt easy in the presence of those who had nothing.95

Forster hopes to find a spiritual harmony in "the fabric of England" in this spiritual entente cordiale between the top and the bottom drawers of the social strata. This reinforces Forster's political preference of aristocracy in the midst of democracy. In Forster's scheme of things educated idealism will lead the natural vibrant recklessness of popularism to establish a political order in which vox populi, when inspired and led by the snobility, will become vox dei. This will be an improved version of democracy which Aristotle derisively described as "a drunken clown followed by a yelling mob."

Agnostic Humanist in Religion.

Forster is convinced that man has miserably failed to organize and distribute his own native goodness in this messy world of force and violence. Man's "divine creativeness appears as a trivial by-product" too feeble to face the drum-beat of force, violence and war. During the crisis of the thirties when religious belief was becoming increasingly popular, Forster criticized the irrational obsession with "blind belief in belief". While the sign of the times was for faith and for more faith, Forster was convinced that "what our tormented planet most needs at the present moment is not more but less faith. People believe much too ardently, and consequently desire to kill those who differ from them." Faith, strong because it was blind, was only contributing to the modern mess. It was becoming more and more intolerant and, thereby, inhuman. Its exclusiveness was something soul-

96. Forster angrily retorted to Arnold Toynbee's talk on "Post-war Paganism versus Christianity" which was published in the Listener(20 Jan. 1937). - R. Advani, p. 77.
97. Ibid. Advani quotes from 'Church, Community and State' Listener, 27 Jan. 1937.
denying. In Alexandria, he speaks about the jews of Jerusalem who migrated to Alexandria and who when they got into touch with Alexandrian Hellenism, became "more and more conscious of the churlishness and inaccessibility of {their} national God."\footnote{Alexandria, P. 55.} He also admires the Alexandrian Jews for making Jehovah more human and accessible and for thinking of 'Sophia', wisdom, as the link between man and God. This, according to Forster, is a significant departure from dogmatic conservatism in favour of a tolerant and eclectic humanism. He also admires the Jewish belief in "man's capacity to realize God within this world", wisdom being the "messenger who bridges the gulf and makes us friends of God."\footnote{R. Advani, pp. 78 – 79.} Forster sees no help from Christianity which largely depends for its impact on money, and not any more on its spiritual appeal. The "Gold and silver have I none" days of Christianity are over and it cannot, Forster feels, make humanity "get up and walk".\footnote{"Acts", 3: 6–7. The Jerusalem Bible (Popular Edition, Darton, Longman & Todd, London, 1974) P. 159. St. Peter's words to the crippled beggar at the entrance to the Temple at Jerusalem.} He rejects Christianity's claim to be the "spiritual force" which it once was, and says that the "indwelling spirit will have to be restated ... in a non-Christian form." Admitting that his faith is "a very small one", Forster "an individualist and a liberal", not ashamed to see liberalism crumbling beneath him, desperately holds on to the view that human salvation should be engineered by human individuals.\footnote{TCD, pp. 83 – 84.} His imaginative agnosticism is evident in the prophetic beginning of his illuminating essay, "What I Believe": "I do not believe in Belief. But this is an Age of Faith." This pronouncement also reflects the
dialectical nature of Forster’s thinking. He describes faith as “a stiffening process, a sort of mental starch, which ought to be applied as sparingly as possible.”

Finding the old creeds as a defense mechanism against mental chaos, Forster is not averse to form a creed of his own with Erasmus and Montaigne as his “law-givers” and the “Elysian Field where even the immoral are admitted” as his temple. His motto too reflects the soul-searching agony of a sensitive agnostic:

“Lord, I disbelieve – help thou my unbelief.”\(^{102}\) He expressed this religious dilemma in a 1940 review more bluntly: “One must believe something, I am told. Why? Why should one need a belief?”\(^{103}\) For Forster religions have value if they facilitate and inspire personal fulfilment, social harmony. He distrusts the ascetic otherworldliness and the unquestioning faith which the traditional religions place above self-development and earthly pleasures. He sees all religions “as external impositions which seek to control and subdue individuality.”\(^{104}\) Opposed to religious mysticism and beliefs, Forster’s humanism makes him admire the mystic experience because it is an intense personal experience, and because it is akin to a humanist’s ecstatic pleasure derived from his experience of the beauty of the external world. But he accepts the possibility of the divine order, connects deep feeling with spiritual life and holds that the experience of the divine comes from “an intensified sense of life.”\(^{105}\) Man has to perfect his humanity before he can be said to experience the divine.

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102. Ibid. p. 75.
104. Ibid. p. 72.
105. Ibid. p. 73.
Forster's preoccupation with 'connection' as an ideal achievement towards possible human perfection has its impact on his religious criticism. The problem of religion, for him, also boils down to a problem of "how the human and the divine could be connected and brought close together." Admiring Philo's idea of 'logos' or 'word' as an intermediary between man and God, which made Hebrew Jehovah intelligible and acceptable to the Alexandrian Jews, Forster cherishes the emphasis upon "mystic vision (rather than worship) as the path to the divine." Philo Judaeus conceived of God as a being without attributes, better than virtue and knowledge, better than the beautiful and the good, a being so exalted above the world that an intermediate class of beings is required to establish a point of contact between him and the world. These beings he found in the spiritual world of ideas—not merely ideas in the Platonic sense, but real, active powers, surrounding God as a number of attendant beings. All these intermediate powers are known as the Logos, the divine image in which persons are created and through which they participate in the deity. An individual's duties consist of veneration of God and love and righteousness toward others. Humans are immortal by reason of their heavenly nature, but just as degrees in this divine nature exist, degrees of immortality also exist. Mere living after death, common to all humanity, differs from the future existence of the perfect souls, for whom paradise is oneness with God. Philo's idea of the "intermediate beings or powers known as Logos is in tune with Forster's recurrent theme of

106 Ibid. p. 79.
107 Ibid
108 Adapted from 'Infopedia 2.0' (The Ultimate Multimedia Encyclopedia and Reference Library): "Philosophers, Philo Judaeus"
He also admires Plotinus's view of religion which bridges the gulf between a religious outlook and a humanist outlook, which for him becomes a very powerful humanist argument that "the whole universe has an inclination towards good ... and man's goal is to become actually, as he is potentially, divine", thereby transforming the Christian promise that a man shall see God into the neo-Platonic or the Indian promise that "he shall be God."110 Plotinus spoke on Pythagorean and Platonic wisdom and on asceticism; such was the impression made upon his hearers that some of them gave their fortunes to the poor, set their slaves free, and devoted themselves to lives of study and ascetic piety. Plotinus's system was based chiefly on Plato's theory of Ideas, but whereas Plato assumed archetypal Ideas to be the link between the supreme deity and the world of matter, Plotinus accepted a doctrine of emanation. This doctrine supposes the constant transmission of powers from the Absolute Being, or the One, to the creation through several agencies, the first of which is nous, or pure intelligence, whence flows the soul of the world; from this, in turn, flow the souls of humans and animals, and finally matter. Human beings thus belong to two worlds, that of the senses and that of pure intelligence. Inasmuch as matter is the cause of all evil, the object of life should be to escape the material world of the senses, and hence people should abandon all earthly interests for those of intellectual meditation; by purification and by the exercise of thought people can gradually lift themselves to an intuition of the nous, and ultimately to a complete

109 Howards End. P.
110 Alexandria, p. 59.
and ecstatic union with the One-that is, God.\textsuperscript{111} As a liberal humanist Forster’s sympathies are naturally with the thinkers who do not narrow religion into a rigid order and who are more concerned with making salvation more easily accessible. According to him a more humane and enlightened spirit should inform all views of religion if religious philosophy were to have any significant human relevance.

It will be interesting to examine the influence of Coleridge’s Philosophy, both positive and negative, on Forster’s Criticism of Religion. Coleridge’s whole philosophy was a Philosophy of Religion, a Theosophy, and even a Theonosy – a knowledge of God. He looks upon all other knowledge as leading up to this knowledge of God. Religion for Coleridge is the “highest exercise of the human spirit”,\textsuperscript{112} which he proclaims as:

\begin{quote}
... the flower and crowning blossom of the plant, formed of whatever was most vital in root, stem, and leaf, by the gradual separation and deposition of whatever was earthly and crude ... it unites in its purposes the desiderata of the speculative and the practical being: its acts, including its events, are truths and objects of philosophic insight, and (its) truths are to be considered as acts and manifestations of that being which is at once the power and the truth.\textsuperscript{113}
\end{quote}

Coleridge concerns himself with a general interpretation of the meaning of religion, the nature of belief, the nature of God, the destiny of the human soul.

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111. Adapted from ‘Infopedia 2.0’: “Plotinus”.
\end{flushright}
and the role of the Christian religion. In his attempt to humanize the divine, Coleridge looked upon religion as a means to satisfy the human heart's demand for fellowship with God. A faithful friend to his friends, he sought friendship and faithfulness in God. Criticising Kant's idea of religion for its stoical abandonment of affections and for the role it assigned to God, that of a trader who exchanges virtue for happiness to his earthly customers, Coleridge viewed the essence of religion as Communion with God through 'prayer', "the very highest energy of which the human heart was capable." For him one of the striking problems concerning religion was the destiny of the individual as capable of showing God's eternity which was as important as the belief in the reality of sin and redemption. He viewed faith as the "synthesis of reason and the individual will", as a total continuous energy related to the whole moral man. He looked upon God as a personality, - as a "Personeity", what is "at once personality and more than personality ... super-personal (which) must include the best we understand by personal." In all his deliberations about God, poetical or philosophical, Coleridge talks too frequently of "Personality" and "Individual". To his primary concept of the Absolute as Will Coleridge added the idea of God as a Personal Being who is the giver of Life, therefore of Individuality. These two concepts, which are more human than speculative, and Coleridge's use of them in his philosophical musings on religion, anticipate a religious idealism of a later English philosophy which was fashionable in Forster's time. Coleridge interprets personality as "a circumference continually expanding through sympathy and understanding, rather than as an exclusive centre of self-feeling", and individuality and
uniqueness as "something to be won". The acts of expanding and winning give an organic contour to these ideals which are in thematic consonance with Forster's own views. Coleridge defines faith as the Fidelity of the personal will in each of us to the moral reason – "reason in the form of conscience, conscience in the light of reason." This faith, according to Coleridge, is independent of any belief and is identical with pure act of will which naturally gravitates to something that can be described as Will and Good and also as Supreme Reason. One cannot but see the Coleridgean meaning of faith in Forster's "Lord I disbelieve, help thou my unbelief". Coleridge looks upon faith as transcending the merely permissive faith in God which leads the faithful to petition Him for favours. For him faith is the transcendent union of the worshipper's finite will and goodness to God's infinite Will and Goodness. Prayer, therefore, is the effort to live in the spirit of the Whole and its highest achievement is the acceptance of God's will. Coleridgean idea of prayer is, therefore, more a belonging than believing. This Coleridgean Religious idealism must have filtered, via Mathew Arnold, into the psyche of Forster who seemed more inclined to the semi-radicalism of the romantics than to the vulgar Victorian faithfulness of the orthodox.

Mathew Arnold began his criticism of the society by his strong conviction that the religious organizations have miserably failed to subdue the animality in man. Stating that the English impulse for perfection has its strongest manifestation in Puritanism which itself found its most powerful expression in the religious

115. Ibid. p. 230.
organization of the Independents whose motto was: "The Dissidence of the Dissent and the Protestantism of the Protestant religion." This for Arnold seems to be the grand beginning of perfection. But men by habit do give to the language of religion a tone of mere jargon and are blind to the shortcomings of their religious organizations which the religion itself condemns. They "cheat themselves and ... explain this condemnation away." While he is tolerant towards these religious organisations and admired "the good and the happiness which they have accomplished", he is frightfully honest in admitting their much too evident defects:

... their idea of human perfection is narrow and inadequate, and that the Dissidence of the Dissent and the Protestantism of the Protestant religion will never bring humanity to its true goal. As I said with regard to wealth: Let us look at the life of those who live in and for it — so I say with regard to other religious organizations. Look at the life imaged in such a newspaper as the Non-conformist — a life of jealousy of the Establishment, disputes, tea-meetings, openings of chapels, sermons, and think of it as an ideal of a human life completing itself on all sides, and aspiring with all its organs after sweetness, light and perfection."  

Arnold criticises this complacent Puritan force, the ruling force of the Victorian age which is exclusive in its "care for fire and strength, strictness of conscience, Hebraism, rather than the care for sweetness and light, spontaneity of consciousness, Hellenism." This perfect Puritan, swelling with pride because of his supposed possession of the unum necessarium, the one thing needful,


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"thinks he has now knowledge and henceforth needs only to act, and, in this
dangerous state of assurance and self-satisfaction, proceeds to give full swing to
a number of the instincts of his ordinary self." This proud, vulgar religious spirit, in
other words, fanaticism, makes him a "victim of Hebraism, of the tendency to
cultivate strictness of conscience rather than spontaneity of consciousness." 117
Thus Arnold rejects the claims of religion to be the 'stay secure' for the human
race because being nothing more than a received tradition, it is sure to dissolve.
In his essay, "The Study of Poetry", this conviction of the growing irrelevance of
religion as the "ever surer and surer stay" is more powerfully argued:

Our religion has materialized itself in the fact, in the supposed fact; it has
attached its emotion to the fact, and now the fact is failing it. .... The strongest
part of our religion today is its unconscious poetry. 118

Thus Arnold proposes that religion, having failed in fact and feeling, parading
mere evidences and empty slogans fit only for the popular mind, should be
replaced by poetry which is "the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge." The
specific function of poetry is to spread Culture which is Arnold's ultimate
Coleridgean synthesis and a humanistic surrogate for Religion as was Art for
Forster. Poetry popularizing Culture, and Culture, "full of contradictions and
impossibilities as the Christian Trinity", doing the exalted and "humanistic service
in lieu of Christianity" 119, is the Arnoldian proposition for a desirable order. This is
a strong inspiration for Forster to dissociate himself from received religion and

118. The Norton Anthology, p. 2171.
plunge into agnostic, imaginative, humanism in lieu of the unimpressive, unimaginative and riddle-ridden Christianity.

Forter’s disavowal of the Christian faith happened in Cambridge under Meredith’s ministrations. The enthusiastic scepticism which was in vogue in Cambridge during Forster’s time was a precursor to this Arnold-inspired agnostic humanism. His faith was very shallow and “religion hardly figured in his life”\(^{120}\) In his 1959 Presidential address to the Cambridge Humanists, he earnestly admitted that the idea of Trinity was very odd to him, “like an unmanageable toy”, and its removal “jeopardised the stability of the Incarnation.” He was initially overwhelmed by the “idea of a god becoming a man to help men”. But “when I realised that the main aim of the Incarnation was not to stop war or pain or poverty, but to free us from sin I became less interested and ended by scrapping it too.”\(^{121}\) He found serious faults with the personality of Christ – lack of humour, passion for disciples and predilection for pain. This forbidding figure of Christ disturbed the mild tolerant temperament of Forster, and he is only too eager to admire those religious thinkers who present a milder and more gracefully human version of the Christian Religion. Significant among the early theologians whom Forster admires is Clement of Alexandria. Many scholars regard Clement as the founder of the Alexandrian school of theology, which emphasized the divine nature of Christ. It was

\(^{119}\) Wilfred Stone, Op. Cit. P. 11
\(^{120}\) Furbank, EMF: A Life, P. 62
\(^{121}\) Ibid.
Alexandrian theologians such as Saint Cyril and Saint Athanasius who took the lead in opposing Adoptionism and Nestorianism, both of which emphasized Christ's humanity at the expense of his divinity. According to Clement's system of logic, the thought and will of God exhorts, educates, and perfects the true Christian. This process is described in *A Hortatory Address to the Greeks, The Tutor, and Miscellanies*, Clement's major works. According to Clement, the life that now is, is as important as the life to come. It is a happy pilgrimage which prepares the mind and body for the divine pleasures in the next life. This enlightened tradition was continued by Origen, Clement's pupil, who is regarded as the father of the allegorical method of scriptural interpretation. He taught the principle of the threefold sense, corresponding to the threefold division of the person into body, spirit, and soul, which was then a common concept. He was a Platonist and endeavored to combine Greek philosophy and the Christian religion. He developed the idea of Christ as the Logos, or Incarnate Word, who is with the Father from eternity, but he taught also that the Son is subordinate to the Father in power and dignity. This attempt at humanising Christ appealed to Forster who considered Origen as the last of Christianity's tolerant spokesman in Alexandria. Origen's benevolent Christianity allowed scope for variety and personal creativity, and was tolerant and eclectic. For the same reasons Forster admires Arius, the fourth century theologian, who tried to elevate man towards God by presenting Christ as more

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123. "Origen," Microsoft® Encarta® 97 Encyclopedia. © 1993-1996 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved.
human than divine. He taught that "Jesus Christ was not coeternal with God but was created by God and thus was inferior to him." Arianism was popular because "by making Christ younger and lower than God it brought him nearer to us – indeed it tended to level him into a mere good man ...." Forster was of the view that religion should deal with genuinely spiritual concerns and should not dabble in doctrinal absurdities. He is quite disgusted with the Christian missions and wrote: "I should be grievously sorry if all the world became Christians." He admires the Alexandrian philosophy of religion for its serious flirtation with the idea of love. He is eager and very enthused at the prospect of a loving god, the god who loves and not the god who judges.

A highly institutionalised and rigidly organised Christianity frightened Forster and won him over to the milder, more humane, oriental versions of Christianity. He would like to recognize God as "a man of my own sort" living in the sky and that "the Kingdom of God is within us." He at times flirted with the idea of "a purely humanistic religion, personal, fraternal and sentimental." He would be thrilled if he could reconstruct the idea of Christ "as the young carpenter who would smoke a pipe with me in his off time and be more frightfully kind." Forster was drawn to the real oriental religions, namely, Islam and Hinduism. As was his wont he arrived at them through oriental friends whom he had

127. Furth, p. 162
128. Ibid, p. 163.
strongly decided to like. Forster's intuitive sympathy with, not outright admiration of, Islam is due to his friendship with Syed Ross Masood and other Muslims. Masood woke him up out of his suburban and academic life and showed him new horizons and a new civilization and released him from that negativity and defeatism with which he was infected. He got an intuitive insight into the so-called Oriental states and felt their confusion because "to them personal relations come first." He came to India because he was "drawn there by friendship and imagination." He was ready and was eager to accept "whatever the country might offer." Islam's stress on personal relationship and the brotherhood of man further endeared itself to the humanist in Forster to whom people mattered first, feelings for them next, and systems, very little. He loved India and on his very first visit he wanted to know and discover the Indians. Unlike the Anglo-Indian imperialists Forster did not think about the Indians as a problem. He was very pleased with himself among Masood's friends and "congratulated himself on landing so promptly in the midst of Indian life." Masood was a blazing Muslim patriot and Forster, when he fell in love with Masood, fell in love with Islam too. His Muslim friends were full of praise for him and one of them declared that "if more Englishmen were like him all would be well with the world." His love for Islam evolved from his love for the Muslims.

While in the midst of a Nautch appreciating and appraising the dancers, Forster felt that he "could easily 'lapse' into an oriental."129 It was a discovery for him, the discovery that emotion can arrive through the harsh voice and music, through the thundering drum-beats and through the plaintive posture of the

scarlet clad singer. The Islamic tenets of Equality and Peace and the absence in it of priestly hierarchy also appeal to Forster. The mosques do not hold out any illusion of sanctity other than "what is conferred by the presence of the devout." The central Islamic tenet that "there is no God but God and that even Mohammad is but the Prophet of God" which Forster found architecturally enshrined within the mosque moves him to a strange "sense of arrival". During his first visit he keenly experienced and enjoyed the 'gentle oriental confusion', took in the "muddle" that India presented to him, was convinced that "India attracts affinities", and "plunged deep into the East". While at Mount Abu visiting the Jain temples, observing the statues of the Tirthankaras, the founders of the Jain religion, Forster commented: "the Indian gods have an air of confabulation; they were talking just before one walked in." Forster's positive attitude towards India and the Indians made him appreciate the religions and customs of India as part of the muddle. He came to India as a friend of the Indians whom he knew and loved in England. He did not come as a collector of ideas or as a curious tourist, but as an ardent explorer who is ever ready to discover and admire. He did not have faith in any god, but his enlightened paganism and his faith in human goodness made India and the Indians, its many gods and religions, dear to him. He was a cheerful agnostic adrift in the land of religions. It was in this spirit that Forster made his observations on Hinduism. He admired Hinduism because it encourages fun

130. 'The Mosque' in Abinger Harvest, p
131. 'The Last of Abinger', TCD, p.
and playfulness. It stresses the diversity as well as the unity of individuals. It mirrors the heterogeneous as well as the composite culture of India and abundantly contributes to the 'muddle' which Forster adores. He cherishes Hinduism as a constitutive factor of his inspirational metaphor for life, India. Krishna is Forster’s symbol of Hinduism and also his favourite god. Krishna is a fun-loving god as well as a champion of truly human values, a god of man, the Narayana of the Nara. He promptly enlists Krishna in his aristocracy of "the considerate, the sensitive and the plucky." However Forster values Hinduism not as a superior way of worship but as a more attractive and human way of life. It is his seemingly wayward, playfully agnostic, but seriously humanistic temperament which draws him to Hindu culture. His is no philosophical quest for religion, but a liberal soul's quest for spirituality and in India and her many faiths he found abundant pastures that are greener than the Western Christian cultures. He discovered in Hinduism a celebration of life and its positive values whereas doctrinaire Christianity dwells on man's sinful nature, his desperate need for redemption and drowns itself in abstractions, renunciation and otherworldliness. Hinduism promotes life but Christianity seeks to correct and improve life. Forster is sceptical of the latter because "it is useless trying to touch anything you don’t want to touch: that is why all attempts to 'improve' people are in vain."[133]

133. Ibid, p. 34. Letter to Edward Carpenter, 23 April 1917.
Forster's world-view, an eclectic mixture of many influences, has contributed significantly to the stance he takes as a literary critic. This comprehensive world-view has enabled him to take a genial, tolerant and sympathetic view of literature, litterateurs and their problems as we shall see in the forthcoming chapters.