

## PAPER VI

### UNIT I

#### **Non-fictional Prose—General Introduction, Joseph Addison's *The Spectator Papers: The Uses of the Spectator, The Spectator's Account of Himself, Of the Spectator***

##### **1.1. Introduction: Eighteenth Century English Prose**

The eighteenth century was a great period for English prose, though not for English poetry. Matthew Arnold called it an "age of prose and reason," implying thereby that no good poetry was written in this century, and that, prose dominated the literary realm. Much of the poetry of the age is prosaic, if not altogether prose-rhymed prose. Verse was used by many poets of the age for purposes which could be realized, or realized better, through prose. Our view is that the eighteenth century was not altogether barren of real poetry.

Even then, it is better known for the galaxy of brilliant prose writers that it threw up. In this century there was a remarkable proliferation of practical interests which could best be expressed in a new kind of prose-pliant and of a work a day kind capable of rising to every occasion. This prose was simple and modern, having nothing of the baroque or Ciceronian colour of the prose of the seventeenth-century writers like Milton and Sir Thomas Browne. Practicality and reason ruled supreme in prose and determined its style. It is really strange that in this period the language of prose was becoming simpler and more easily comprehensible, but, on the other hand, the language of poetry was being conventionalized into that artificial "poetic diction" which at the end of the century was so severely condemned by Wordsworth as "gaudy and inane phraseology."

## **1.2. The Contribution of the Age to Prose**

Much of eighteenth-century prose is taken up by topical journalistic issues-as indeed is the prose of any other age. However, in the eighteenth century we come across, for the first-time in the history of English literature, a really huge mass of pamphlets, journals, booklets, and magazines. The whole activity of life of the eighteenth century is embodied in the works of literary critics, economists, "letter-writers," essayists, politicians, public speakers, divines, philosophers, historians, scientists, biographers, and public projectors. Moreover, a thing of particular importance is the introduction of two new prose genres in this century. The novel and the periodical paper are the two gifts of the century to English literature, and some of the best prose of the age is to be found in its novels and periodical essays. Summing up the importance of the century are these words of a critic: "The eighteenth century by itself had created the novel and practically created the literary history; it had put the essay into general circulation; it had hit off various forms and abundant supply of lighter verse; it had added largely to philosophy and literature. Above all, it had shaped the form of English prose-of-all-work, the one thing that remained to be done at its opening. When an age has done so much, it seems somewhat illiberal to reproach it with not doing more." Even Matthew Arnold had to call the eighteenth century "our excellent and indispensable eighteenth century."

The essay, satire, and dialogue (in philosophy and religion) thrived in the age, and the English novel was truly begun as a serious art form. Literacy in the early 18th century passed into the working classes, as well as the middle and upper classes. Furthermore, literacy was not confined to men, though rates of female literacy are very difficult to establish. For those who were literate, circulating libraries in England began in the Augustan period. Libraries were open to all, but they were mainly associated with female patronage and novel reading.

### 1.3. The Eighteenth Century Periodical Essay:

In the eighteenth century British periodical literature underwent significant developments in terms of form, content, and audience. Several factors contributed to these changes. Prior to 1700 the English popular press was in its infancy. The first British newspaper, *The Oxford Gazette*, was introduced in 1645. Two years later the Licensing Act of 1647 established government control of the press by granting the *Gazette* a strictly enforced monopoly on printed news. As a result, other late seventeenth-century periodicals, including *The Observer* (1681) and *The Athenian Gazette* (1691), either supplemented the news with varied content, such as political commentary, reviews, and literary works, or provided specialized material targeting a specific readership. During this time, printing press technology was improving. Newer presses were so simple to use that individuals could produce printed material themselves. British society was in transition as well. The burgeoning commercial class created an audience with the means, education, and leisure time to engage in reading. When the Licensing Act expired in 1694, publications sprang up, not just in London, but all across England and its colonies.

Joseph Addison and Richard Steele are generally regarded as the most significant figures in the development of the eighteenth-century periodical. Together they produced three publications: *The Tatler* (1709-11), *The Spectator* (1711-12), and *The Guardian* (1713). In addition, Addison published *The Free-Holder* (1715-16), and Steele, who had been the editor of *The London Gazette* (the former *Oxford Gazette*) from 1707 to 1710, produced a number of other periodicals, including *The Englishman* (1713-14), *Town-Talk* (1715-16), and *The Plebeian* (1719). The three periodicals Addison and Steele produced together were great successes; none ceased publication because of poor sales or other financial reasons, but by the choice of their editors. Beginning in the eighteenth century and continuing to the present day, there has been debate among critics and scholars over the contributions of Addison and Steele to their joint enterprises. Addison has been

generally seen as the more eloquent writer, while Steele has been regarded as the better editor and organizer.

Periodicals in the eighteenth century included social and moral commentary, and literary and dramatic criticism, as well as short literary works. They also saw the advent of serialized stories, which Charles Dickens, among others, would later perfect. One of the most important outgrowths of the eighteenth-century periodical, however, was the topical, or periodical, essay. Although novelist Daniel Defoe made some contributions to its evolution with his *Review of the Affairs of France* (1704-13), Addison and Steele are credited with bringing the periodical essay to maturity. Appealing to an educated audience, the periodical essay as developed by Addison and Steele was not scholarly, but casual in tone, concise, and adaptable to a number of subjects, including daily life, ethics, religion, science, economics, and social and political issues.

Another innovation brought about by the periodical was the publication of letters to the editor, which permitted an unprecedented degree of interaction between author and audience. Initially, correspondence to periodicals was presented in a limited, question-and-answer form of exchange. As used by Steele, letters to the editor brought new points of view into the periodical and created a sense of intimacy with the reader. The feature evolved into a forum for readers to express themselves, engage in a discussion on an important event or question, conduct a political debate, or ask advice on a personal situation. Steele even introduced an advice to the lovelorn column to *The Tatler* and *The Spectator*.

Addison and Steele and other editors of the eighteenth century saw their publications as performing an important social function and viewed themselves as moral

instructors and arbiters of taste. In part these moralizing and didactic purposes were accomplished through the creation of an editorial voice or persona, such as Isaac Bickerstaff in *The Tatler*, Nestor Ironside in *The Guardian*, and, most importantly, Mr. Spectator in *The Spectator*. Through witty, sometimes satirical observations of the contemporary scene, these fictional stand-ins for the editors attempted to castigate vice and promote virtue. They taught lessons to encourage certain behaviors in their readers, especially self-discipline. Morals were a primary concern, especially for men in business. Women, too, formed a part of the readership of periodicals, and they were instructed in what was expected of them, what kind of ideals they should aspire to, and what limits should be on their concerns and interests.

The impact of periodicals was both immediate and ongoing. Throughout the eighteenth century and beyond there were many imitators of Addison and Steele's publications. These successors, which arose not just in England, but in countries throughout Europe and in the United States as well, modeled their style, content, and editorial policies on those of *The Tatler*, *The Spectator*, and *The Guardian*. Some imitators, such as *The Female Spectator* (1744), were targeted specifically at women. Addison and Steele's periodicals achieved a broader influence when they were translated and reprinted in collected editions for use throughout the century. The epistolary exchanges, short fiction, and serialized stories included in the periodicals had an important influence on the development of the novel. In addition, celebrated figures from Benjamin Franklin and Jean-Jacques Rousseau to Mark Twain have acknowledged the impact of the eighteenth-century periodical, particularly *The Spectator*, on their development as writers and thinkers.

### 1.3.1. The Beginnings of the Periodical Essay

The periodical essay was a new literary form that emerged during the early part of the eighteenth century. Periodical essays typically appeared in affordable publications that came out regularly, usually two or three times a week, and were only one or two pages in length. Unlike other publications of the time that consisted of a medley of information and news, essay periodicals were comprised of a single essay on a specific topic or theme, usually having to do with the conduct or manners. They were often narrated by a persona or a group of personas, commonly referred to as a “club.” (DeMaria 529)

For the most part, readers of the periodical essay were the educated middle class individuals who held learning in high esteem but were not scholars or intellectuals. Women were a growing part of this audience and periodical editors often tried to appeal to them in their publications. (Shevelov 27-29)

*The Tatler* (1709-1711) and *The Spectator* (1711-1712) were the most successful and influential single-essay periodicals of the eighteenth century but there are other periodicals that helped shape this literary genre.

While the periodical essay emerged during the eighteenth century and reached its peak in publications like *The Tatler* and *The Spectator*, its roots can be traced back to the late seventeenth century. An important forerunner to the *Spectator* is John Dunton’s *Athenian Mercury*, which played a key role in the development of the periodical essay. (DeMaria 529-530)

The *Athenian Mercury* began publication in 1691 with the purpose of ‘resolving weekly all the most nice and curious questions propos’d by the ingenious.’ It did not publish essays. Instead it followed a question and answer or “advice column” format and is one of the first periodicals to solicit questions from its audience. Readers submitted questions anonymously and their candid inquiries were answered by a collection of “experts” known as the Athenian Society or simply the “Athenians.” (Graham 19) Dunton hinted that the Athenian Society was made up of a group of learned individuals, but in reality the society only consisted of three people who were not necessarily “authorities.” Their identities remained a secret, however, and this is one of the first instances of a periodical using a fictional social group or club to answer questions or narrate. (Hunter 13-15)

Each issue of the *Athenian Mercury* would answer anywhere from eight to fifteen questions on topics ranging from love, marriage and relationships to medicine, superstitions and the paranormal. Dunton received so many questions from female readers that he decided to devote the first Tuesday of every month to questions from women. (Berry 18-19) Examples of the questions submitted to the Athenians include:

Why the Sea is salt? (Athenian Gazette vol. 1 no.2), Whence proceeds weeping and laughing from the same cause? (Athenian Gazette vol.1 no.3) Whether most Persons do not Marry too young? (Athenian Gazette vol. 1, no. 13) and Whether it be proper for Women to be Learned? (Athenian Gazette vol. 1, no. 18)

As these sample questions demonstrate, the *Athenian Mercury* was focused on the social and cultural concerns of individuals. These subjects tapped into the reading public’s desire for knowledge, instructive information, and for something new and as a

result, the *Athenian Mercury* was a huge success. (Hunter 14-15) Several features of the *Athenian Mercury*, such as its epistolary format and its creation of a fictional club, would be continued by another influential periodical published during the eighteenth century, Daniel Defoe's *The Review*. (DeMaria 529-531)

Originally known as *A Weekly Review of the Affairs of France; Purg'd from the Errors and Partiality of Newswriters and Petty Statesmen of All sides*, the *Review* began publication in 1704 as an eight page weekly. The title, length and frequency of the periodical changed in subsequent issues until it eventually became a triweekly periodical entitled *The Review*. (Defoe, Second xvii-xviii)

Most issues of *The Review* consisted of a single essay, usually covering a political topic, which was followed by questions-and-answers section called the *Mercure Scandal*: or *Advice from the Scandal Club*, translated out of French. Defoe eventually replaced the translated out of French with *A Weekly History of Nonsense, Impertinency, Vice and Debauchery*. (DeMaria 531) In this section, a fictional group known as the "Scandal Club" answered readers' questions on a variety of subjects including drinking, gambling, love and the treatment of women. The advice column component of *The Review* was so popular among readers that Defoe began publishing a twenty-eight page monthly supplement devoted entirely to readers' questions. By May 1705 Defoe dropped the *Advice from the Scandal Club* from *The Review* and began publishing the questions-and-answers separately in a publication entitled *The Little Review*. (Graham 48-49)

With their advice column elements, the *Advice from the Scandal Club* and *The Little Review* were obvious imitators of the *Athenian Mercury*. However, the questions and answers in Defoe's periodicals were longer and mostly written as letters and this type



of prose writing would eventually evolve into the single essay format of *The Tatler* and *The Spectator*. (Graham 50) Like other periodicals of the time, the *Advice from the Scandal Club* and *The Little Review* addressed questions of behavior and conduct but Defoe's tone was more satirical and he would often mock the stuffiness of the *Athenian Mercury* in his essays. Defoe's periodicals were also less mannerly and he often placed ads for products like remedies for venereal disease within their pages. (DeMaria 532)

The single-essay made its first appearance in *The Tatler*, which began publication in 1709. Created by Richard Steele, the purpose of *The Tatler* was to "offer something, whereby such worth members of the public may be instructed, after their reading, what to think.." and to "have something of which may be of entertainment to the fair sex.." (Tatler, April 12, 1709) Steele was the creator but other significant writers of the time, including Joseph Addison and Jonathan Swift, were also contributors.

*The Tatler* was a single-sheet paper that came out three times a week and in the beginning, consisted of short paragraphs on topics related to domestic, foreign and financial events, literature, theater and gossip. Each topic fell under the heading of a specific place, such as a coffee house, where that discussion was most likely to take place. (Mackie 15) Isaac Bickerstaff, the sixty-something fictional editor, narrated *The Tatler* and his thoughts on miscellaneous subjects were included under the heading "From my own Apartment." As *The Tatler* progressed, these popular entries began taking up more and more space until the first issue consisting of a single, "From my own Apartment" essay appeared on July 30, 1709. (DeMaria 534) In an attempt to appeal to his female audience, Steele introduced the character Jenny Distaff, Isaac Bickerstaff's half sister, and she narrated some of the essays later in the periodical's run. (Italia 37)

The last issue of *The Tatler* appeared in January 1711 and by the following March, Steele launched a new periodical, *The Spectator*, with Joseph Addison. *The Spectator* was published daily and consisted of a single essay on a topic usually having to do with conduct or public behavior and contained no political news. *The Spectator* was narrated by the fictional persona, Mr. Spectator, with some help from the six members Spectator Club.

While *The Tatler* introduced the form of the periodical essay, “*The Spectator* perfected it” and firmly established it as a literary genre. *The Spectator* remained influential even after it ceased publication in 1712. Other eighteenth century periodicals, including Samuel Johnson’s *The Idler* and *The Rambler*, copied the periodical essay format. Issues of *The Tatler* and *The Spectator* were published in book form and continued to sell for the rest of the century. The popularity of the periodical essay eventually started to wane, however, and essays began appearing more often in periodicals that included other material. By the mid-eighteenth century, periodicals comprised of a single essay eventually disappeared altogether from the market. (Graham 68-69)

### **1.3.2. The Form and Content of the Periodical Essay**

The periodical essay of the eighteenth century invited men of the Age of Reason to pour into it their talent and thought; it was a form in which they could make their points briefly and effectively; it was flexible, and was eventually familiar enough to be well-received. The form itself reflected the common-sense practicality, restraint and moderation that the periodical writers were advocating. In one balanced, comparatively

short piece of writing, a thought was developed-- in an easy, quiet and painless manner-- that could be driven home in later essays over a long period of time. If a writer had a pet idea or philosophy, he was given a medium for fixing it firmly in his reader's mind by repeating his thought at irregular intervals. The moral issues with which periodical writers dealt had a "cumulative" impact in being stressed in a number of papers; the periodical essay differed from a newspaper in that the newspaper was concerned with matters of the moment brought as soon as possible before the public, and the essay could proceed on a more leisurely course. Both media used the same format and had essentially the same audience--the middle and upper middle classes. The periodical essay dealt with matters that were contemporary but not immediate-with manners and morals, with tendencies of the time rather than actual events.

The periodical essay took the long view, it dealt with the needs of men to improve themselves gradually; it may have seemed to center on trivial matters in comparison with the great import of current events, but its end, and therefore its method, was entirely different from that of the newspaper. The aim of the literary periodical of the eighteenth century was admittedly the analysis and criticism of the contemporary life--for a reformatory purpose; men needed to have an instruction and an example in order to know how to act, and that example was provided by the periodicals. In his first *Tatler*, Steele states blandly that his paper will serve those who are public-spirited enough to "neglect their own affairs and look into the actions of state," men who are "persons of strong zeal and weak intellect," and will instruct those politic persons "what to think." Addison, in his statement of purpose in *The Spectator*, No. 10, is even more explicit: "to the end that their virtue and discretion may not be short, transient intermittent starts of thought, I have resolved to refresh their memories from day to day, till I have recovered them out of that desperate state of vice and folly into which the age is fallen."

Addison was echoing the thoughts of a number of thinkers of his age; the beginnings of the eighteenth century saw a desire for reform in many areas of living, "for

a purer and simpler morality, for gentler manners, for...dignified self-respect," a new civilization, in effect. The periodical writers were following a powerful tendency of the eighteenth century, "the reaction against the moral license of Restoration society which came with the rise of the middle class to prominence and affluence." The tendency toward moralization and satire may have been influenced too by disgust with its opposite force, the immense self-satisfaction of men of the time.

Englishmen in the early years of the century had ample reasons for being satisfied with their lot; England had emerged in these years as a victorious power, commerce was expanding, the middle class was wealthy and growing--the mainstay of an apparently stable society. When men of the Age of Reason looked back on the conflicts and controversies of the seventeenth century, their reliance on "good sense" and moderation seemed to be justified. Lord Shaftesbury, in his *Characteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, published in 1711, expressed the prevailing concept of "order" as the basis and end of human action:

The sum of philosophy is to learn, what is just  
in society and beautiful in nature and the order  
of the world.... The taste of beauty and the  
relish of what is decent, just, and amiable, perfects the character of the  
gentleman and the philosopher.

This glib and rather vague ideal-- self-perfection by the improvement of taste—was rooted in the belief that the world was not becoming a better place for intelligent human beings; men had only to raise themselves by conscious efforts toward self-improvement. The periodical writers echoed, to some extent, the complacency of the times, the sense of security and calm, but also tried to correct the faults that were products of this complacency. Of their readers, they demanded sane, level-headed actions backed by the dictates of reason and common sense.

Eighteenth- century writers, and particularly the periodical essayists, showed the same concern for order, reason, and good sense in their writing. Reacting against the passion and complexity of the seventeenth- century metaphysical school, they strove for clearness, for correctness, and for a balanced style that would underline their rational persuasions. Their principal aim was to be understood-, and the lucidity and symmetry which their prose attained is a result of the conscious effort to fix a standard of clarity.

One chief contribution that the periodical writers made to English literature were the colloquial manner they adopted in order to appeal to a wider public; they required that a piece of prose or poetry be “interesting, agreeable, and above all comprehensible.” The periodical essay was designed to reach the always expanding and powerful middle classes, and to interest them in the forming of manners and morals, that would fit them for the new age.

The belief in the perfectibility of man and the clear, reasoned prose in which this belief was proclaimed were inspired by the effect of scientific discovery and research on the period. Newtonian science had induced men to accept the fact that the natural order was explainable, that man and nature operated under fixed laws, and that all human endeavor was equally ordered and subject to rules that, if they were not understood at the present time, would be grasped eventually. Thus, the best writing was that which strove for mathematical clearness and precision. Of course, writers could not succumb completely to such an idea, but the ‘scientific spirit’ did influence a literary genre that in its best examples is justifiably famous for its clear, balanced, familiar, and very reasonable prose.

### **1.3.3. The Periodical Essay and the Eighteenth Century Social life**

Life in and around eighteenth century London provided much material for criticism and satirization; one great value of the literary periodicals is the full picture of the times that they give. The essayists concentrated on social conditions and customs in the city, which had a population at the time of about 600,000, and on the (usually) petty vices and idiosyncrasies of urban individuals.

In the eighteenth century, there was still considerable difficulty in travel and communication for those who lived in the country, so the periodicals had for most of their “material” and audience the ladies and gentlemen of the metropolis. The daily life of these people was “sedentary and artificial to a degree hardly credible to modern readers.” They seemed to have little to do besides dressing themselves and attending various amusements of the city; their interest in fashion and fashionable manners was excessive. The fascination of the upper classes with ornament—in speech, manners, and dress—was subject to increasing ridicule by the advocates of sense and moderation, and with good reason. Both men and women used a great amount of cosmetics, and were perfumed and powdered to the hilt. Dress of both sexes was characterized by frills and bright colors. The elaborate headpieces and enormous hats of the women paralleled the excesses in men’s dress. This extravagance in style carried through all the dress of both sexes; the cost of clothing and accessories was high, and many of the gallants owed their tailors more than they could pay.

Other favorite objects for satire and ridicule were the amusements, often in doubtful taste that Londoners were fond of, such as animal-baiting, cock-fights—“the eighteenth century loved such shows and cared very little for the cruelty involved”—boxing and wrestling matches and various ‘rough sports’ at fairs. Gambling, on cards, horses, lotteries, cock fights, etc., was a vice to which all classes were partial. Card playing in particular was universally popular and was indulged in by many ladies and gentlemen almost to the exclusion of other interests (like work).

The more serious vices—duelling, sexual immorality, and drinking—were not ignored by the periodical writers; the aim of the essayists was to correct these vices and to raise moral standards.

#### **1.3.4. The Coffee House Culture**

The chief outlets for the periodicals and the soil in which the ideas introduced in the essays took root were the coffee houses, the intellectual and social centers of the eighteenth century. Coffee had been brought into England about the middle of the preceding century and by the early 1700's had become an institution. Coffee houses were the chief gathering places for men of letters and were the natural centers for the dissemination of ideas and information. Each coffee house had its own clientele, and discussion was on topics of interest and import to the particular trade or social group that “belonged” there.

In the coffee houses circles were formed to mull over the matters of the day; the opinions of the coffee houses became the criteria for pronouncing judgment on ideas and events of the times. The give and take of conversation was an important feature of London life and influenced it in many ways. Men's ideas were moulded and refined through contact with others' thoughts, and conversation became clearer and more polished.

The coffee houses had a direct effect on the literary style of the periodicals; because the papers were circulated and discussed in these centers, the writing needed to be as clear and colloquial as conversation. The coffee houses were an admirable part of eighteenth century life, but other facets of the times were less pleasant. The unpleasant aspects of the century—the prevalence of violence and crime in the poorly lighted London streets, the cruel punishments of criminals, the quackery of “medical” men, the

extreme poverty of the lower classes—were not reflected to as great a degree as upper class morals and manners, but it was in this atmosphere that the periodical essay developed and did more, perhaps, than any other institution toward improving social conditions.

As the age cried out to be educated, to be instructed in sane living, the periodicals answered with their sage and reasoned advice. The best, most readable of these “advisors of the age” were Richard Steele’s *The Tatler*, Joseph Addison’s *The Spectator*, Samuel Johnson’s *The Rambler*, and Oliver Goldsmith’s collection of essays, *The Citizen of the World*.

#### **1.4. Joseph Addison**

Addison was born in Milston, Wiltshire, but soon after his birth his father, Lancelot Addison, was appointed Dean of Lichfield and the Addison family moved into the cathedral close. He was educated at Charterhouse School, where he first met Richard Steele, and at The Queen's College, Oxford. He excelled in classics, being specially noted for his Latin verse, and became a Fellow of Magdalen College. In 1693, he addressed a poem to John Dryden, and his first major work, a book of the lives of English poets, was published in 1694. His translation of Virgil's *Georgics* was published the same year. Dryden, Lord Somers and Charles Montagu, 1st Earl of Halifax, took an interest in Addison's work and obtained for him a pension of £300 to enable him to travel to Europe with a view to diplomatic employment, all the time writing and studying politics. While in Switzerland in 1702, he heard of the death of William III, an event which lost him his pension, as his influential contacts, Halifax and Somers, had lost their employment with the Crown.



He returned to England at the end of 1703. For more than a year he remained without employment, but the Battle of Blenheim in 1704 gave him a fresh opportunity of distinguishing himself. The government, more specifically Lord Treasurer Godolphin, commissioned Addison to write a commemorative poem, and he produced *The Campaign*, which gave such satisfaction that he was forthwith appointed a Commissioner of Appeals in Halifax's government. His next literary venture was an account of his travels in Italy, which was followed by an opera libretto titled *Rosamund*. In 1705, with the Whigs in political power, Addison was made Under-Secretary of State and accompanied Halifax on a mission to Hanover. Addison's biographer states: "In the field of his foreign responsibilities Addison's views were those of a good Whig. He had always believed that England's power depended upon her wealth, her wealth upon her commerce, and her commerce upon the freedom of the seas and the checking of the power of France and Spain."

From 1708 to 1709 he was MP for the rotten borough of Lostwithiel. Addison was shortly afterwards appointed secretary to the new Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, Lord Wharton, and Keeper of the Records of that country. Under the influence of Wharton, he was Member of Parliament in the Irish House of Commons for Cavan Borough from 1709 until 1713. From 1710, he represented Malmesbury, in his home county of Wiltshire, holding the seat until his death.

He encountered Jonathan Swift in Ireland and remained there for a year. Subsequently, he helped found the Kitcat Club and renewed his association with Richard Steele. In 1709 Steele began to bring out *The Tatler*, to which Addison became almost immediately a contributor: thereafter he (with Steele) started *The Spectator*, the first number of which appeared on 1 March 1711. This paper, which at first appeared daily,

was kept up (with a break of about a year and a half when *The Guardian* took its place) until 20 December 1714. His last undertaking was *The Freeholder*, a political paper, 1715–16.

Steele's ceasing work on *The Tatler* may have been influenced in part by his recognition that another writer was bringing to perfection the form which he (Steele) had brought to popularity. Joseph Addison, although he did not originate the form and method of his medium, explored to the fullest the possibilities which Steele had suggested.

When Addison contributed to *The Tatler*, the two friends found that their veins of humor ran parallel. A month after the paper ceased publication, "Addison and Steele met at a club and laid the keel for a fresh paper: non-political, that it might live, daily, that it might pay." The paper was to concentrate on reforming the morals and manners of society, "to enliven morality with wit," to keep, if possible from becoming embroiled in government controversies. The new paper must "look on, but must be neutral and discreet, merely a spectator—and so it was called."

The character of the Spectator, as outlined in the first number, was designed to attract the readers of the now defunct *Tatler*; he was faintly reminiscent of the sage Mr. Bickerstaff, but was even more mysterious, a man who never spoke, but who poked his head into all the talkative parts of the town.

Although Steele wrote only slightly fewer papers for the new periodical than his friend (240 to Addison's 274), the "spirit of the spectator" is Addison's; it is Addison's character that the Spectator assumes—that of a scholar, well-versed in classical literature,

a curious though timid student of human nature, a sensitive observer of all that goes on around him. He describes himself and the Spectator:

*I had not been long at the university, before I distinguished myself by a most profound silence; for during the space of eight years...I scarce uttered the quantity of an hundred words; and indeed do not remember that I ever spoke three sentences together in my whole life...Thus I live in the world rather as a Spectator of mankind than as one of the species; by which means I have made myself a speculative statesman, soldier, merchant, and artisan, without ever meddling with any practical part in life.*

Steele must assume this character when he writes, and it is harder to distinguish between their works in *The Spectator* than in *The Tatler*, except for the careful phrasing of Addison which marks all of his essays.

Steele and Addison provide a natural contrast to one another, both in their personalities and in their work. Both men were interested in reforming the manners and morals of the eighteenth century, but Steele wrote more from “outer” experience of the faults, foibles, and weaknesses he was satirizing in human beings, while Addison wrote from “inner” experience, drawing on his habit of thought and introspection. His tone is calmer than Steele’s, though he is less warm and sympathetic. His prose is more balanced and symmetrical, easier to follow, though perhaps less “natural”. His essays attempt a conscious perfection of style that Steele may not have had time for.

## **1.5. The Political Background of 1710-11**

In politics, the year 1710 had been a notable one, and eventful both for Addison and Steele. The position maybe briefly surveyed. When the year opened the Whigs were in power, and the war with France was proceeding, and within measurable distance of complete success. In that year King Louis, anticipating Marlborough's presence with his army in Paris itself made fresh overtures for peace. But Britain, on her part also, was slackening and indisposed for the final firmness needful for the reaping of her triumph. Many causes were at work. In September, 1709, Malplaquet had been fought, a triumph for Marlborough and the allies, yet at so great cost in blood that Britain was sickened with war, and the Tory opposition began to pronounce for peace.

Had only the fruits of the Revolution of 1688 been secure, and the country free from fears of a Stuart invasion and Jacobite rising, peace might have been Britain's proper policy. But Scotland had not yet settled down to accept the very unpopular Union of the Parliaments, and in 1710, a landing of the Pretender had actually been planned in France, to take place in the month of August at Stonehaven. Within Queen Anne's household, likewise, the influence of the Whigs and Marlborough and the War part was on the wane, and changes were in prospect.

Marlborough's duchess, Keeper of the Privy Purse, and chief possessor of Queen Anne's ear, had overdone the hectoring of her mistress, and was being ousted from favour by Mrs. Masham, the friend of Harley, leader of the Tories. Most potent political factor, however, and chief influence against the Whigs, probably was the political blunder of the impeachment of Dr. Sacheverel, a London clergyman, for the high Tory sermon he had preached on Nov. 5, 1709, against the Revolution and the War, Low

Churchmen, Dissenters, and Toleration, glancing also at the chief minister, Godolphin, under his nickname of Volpone.

The trial before the House of Lords had been concluded, and sentence upon Sacheverel pronounced at Westminster Hall only on March 20, 1710. Queen Anne favored Sacheverel's high-church and anti-toleration views, although his condemnation of the Revolution was virtual condemnation of her own possession of the throne, and she regarded the prosecuting Whig ministry with corresponding disfavor. So in September, 1710, her palace clique, with Harley behind them, had persuaded her, in the midst of the anti-Whig feeling, to dissolve Parliament and hold a General Election.

This was fatal to the party of Addison and Steele, although Addison's great personal popularity easily secured his return as member for Malmesbury. The Whig ministry fell; with their fall, Addison of course lost his Irish Secretaryship, and Steele as unnecessarily forfeited his post of Gazetteer, because in his political ardour he could not keep clear of party politics in *The Tatler*. By this time, however, Addison, though beaten and stripped as a party politician, was in circumstances far removed from the poor author in the fourth storey lodging whom Godolphin had employed in 1704 to write *The Campaign*. He could now afford to take his ease, and let his talk flow from his pen. In the very year of his political fall, he purchased the estate of Bilton in Warwickshire for no less a sum than ten thousand pounds.

It was in these circumstances, on 1<sup>st</sup> March, 1711, that the enterprise of Steele brought forth *The Spectator* to fill the place left vacant by the premature decease of *The Tatler*—the politics being now however tabooed. No connection between *The Tatler* and *The Spectator* was declared, but the public were not long in doubt. As Nahum Tate, the poet Laureate, wittily put it, people soon perceived that the sun had only set to rise again.

The attempt to keep abreast of all the interests of the town in each issue was abandoned; one topic only was selected for the day's lucubration, or speculation, as *The Spectators* now chose to call it. To that form indeed the later *Tatlers* had been rapidly gravitating. Neither was the new paper in any sense a record of news, as *The Tatler* had professed to be: it was concerned with comment and criticism alone. *The Spectator*, in fact, was a paper made up of a clever leading article or entertaining essay, followed by a few advertisements.

## **1.6. The Spectator in General**

A fresh literary fiction was put forth that the new paper would be the pronouncement of a club of representative men, corresponding roughly to the special clubs from which the *Tatler* was supposed to draw his information and ideas. But still less than in the case of *The Tatler* was this scheme carried out, even in name. The scheme supplied themes for two opening papers, and then *The Spectator's* editorial committee was practically forgotten. In actual reality, Steele and Addison were responsible for the supply of the daily essay, and no others provided any of the first fifty numbers.

*The Spectator*, laid upon the London breakfast tables at a penny, was single folio sheet, double-columned on either side, four columns in all, not unlike in size to a single sheet of any one of the existing weeklies like *The Athenaeum* or *Nature*. As indicating the public which the original *Spectators* had in view, we may note that the Latin motto at the head of each number is left untranslated. Advertisements of eight books fill up the first number, the advertisements in later issues becoming more varied and embracing the theaters and other entertainments and sales of things in general. The famous publisher

and bookseller, Jacob Tonson, advertises the ninth edition of *Paradise Lost* five times in the first fifty issues, “to be sold at Shakespeare’s Head.”

In the public eye the new enterprise was another of Steele’s, and even Swift, who was likely to be more than ordinarily well informed, assigned to Addison only a subordinate part. We know that Steele’s confession with regard to *The Tatler* was even more applicable to its successor. “Addison is ‘The Spectator,’” says Macaulay. The number of papers contributed by each editor was not very different, viz., 274 by Addison as against 240 by Steele. Yet general consent goes with Macaulay’s pronouncement. The outstanding papers are, as a rule, Addison’s, the attractive literary grace is Addison’s, Addison’s special humor is regarded as distinctive of *The Spectator*, the whole change in form from *The Tatler* is a recognition of Addison’s special strength.

The success of *The Spectator* was great, as many as fourteen thousand being the estimate of the sale of one number without any suggestion that the sale of that number was abnormal. Considering how few were readers at the beginning of the eighteenth century, Macaulay is of opinion that *The Spectator* had as great a popularity as “the most successful works of Walter Scott and Dickens in our own time.” So great was its hold that in August, 1712, when Government imposed a halfpenny stamp on journals, and many “came down,” *The Spectator* raised its price to twopence, and continued to flourish.

### **1.7. The Spectator’s Account of Himself: (Spectator. No. 1, March 1, 1711)**

Non fumum ex fulgore, sed ex fumo dare lucem  
Cogitat, ut speciosa dehinc miracula promat.. — HORACE

He does not lavish at a blaze his fire,  
Sudden to glare, and in a smoke expire;  
But rises from a cloud of smoke to light,  
And pours his specious miracles to sight —FRANCIS.

I HAVE observed, that a reader seldom peruses a book with pleasure, till he knows whether the writer of it be a black [dark] or a fair man, of a mild or choleric disposition, married or a bachelor, with other particulars of the like nature, that conduce very much to the right understanding of an author. To gratify this curiosity, which is so natural to a reader, I design this paper and my next as prefatory discourses to my following writings, and shall give some account in them of the several persons that are engaged in this work. As the chief trouble of compiling, digesting, and correcting will fall to my share, I must do myself the justice to open the work with my own history.

I was born to a small hereditary estate, which, according to the tradition of the village where it lies, was bounded by the same hedges and ditches in William the Conqueror's time that it is at present, and has been delivered down from father to son whole and entire, without the loss or acquisition of a single field or meadow, during the space of six hundred years. There runs a story in the family, that when my mother was gone with child of me about three months she dreamt that she was brought to bed of a judge whether this might proceed from a law-suit which was then depending in the family, or my father's being a justice of the peace, I cannot determine; for I am not so vain as to think it presaged any dignity that I should arrive at in my future life, though that was the interpretation which the neighbourhood put upon it.

The gravity of my behaviour at my very first appearance in the world, and all the time that I sucked, seemed to favour my mother's dream: for, as she has often told me, I



threw away my rattle before I was two months old, and would not make use of my coral till they had taken away the bells from it.

As for the rest of my infancy, there being nothing in it remarkable, I shall pass it over in silence. I find, that during my non-age, I had the reputation of a very sullen youth, but was always a favourite of my school-master, who used to say, that my parts were solid, and would wear well. I had not been long at the university, before I distinguished myself by a most profound silence; for during the space of eight years, excepting in the public exercises of the college, I scarce uttered the quantity of an hundred words; and indeed do not remember that I ever spoke three sentences together in my whole life. Whilst I was in this learned body, I applied myself with so much diligence to my studies, that there are very few celebrated books, either in the learned or modern tongues, which I am not acquainted with.

Upon the death of my father, I was resolved to travel into foreign countries, and therefore left the university with the character of an odd, unaccountable fellow, that had a great deal of learning, if I would but show it. An insatiable thirst after knowledge carried me into all the countries of Europe in which there was anything new or strange to be seen: nay, to such a degree was my curiosity raised, that having read the controversies of some great men concerning the antiquities of Egypt, I made a voyage to Grand Cairo, on purpose to take the measure of a pyramid; and as soon as I had set myself right in that particular, returned to my native country with great satisfaction.

I have passed my latter years in this city, where I am frequently seen in most public places, though there are not above half a dozen of my select friends that know me; of whom my next paper shall give a more particular account. There is no place of general

resort, wherein I do not often make my appearance; sometimes I am seen thrusting my head into a round of politicians at Will's, and listening with great attention to the narratives that are made in those little circular audiences. Sometimes I smoke a pipe at Child's, and whilst I seem attentive to nothing but the Postman [a newspaper], overhear the conversation of every table in the room. I appear on Sunday nights at St. James's Coffee-house, and sometimes join the little committee of politics in the inner room, as one who comes there to hear and improve. My face is likewise very well known at the Grecian, the Cocoa-Tree, and in the theatres both of Drury Lane and the haymarket. I have been taken for a merchant upon the Exchange for above these ten years, and sometimes pass for a Jew in the assembly of stock-jobbers at Jonathan's: in short, wherever I see a cluster of people, I always mix with them, though I never open my lips but in my own club.

Thus I live in the world rather as a Spectator of mankind than as one of the species; by which means I have made myself a speculative statesman, soldier, merchant, and artisan, without ever meddling with any practical part in life. I am very well versed in the theory of a husband or a father, and can discern the errors in the economy, business, and diversion of others, better than those who are engaged in them; as standers-by discover plots, which are apt to escape those who are in the game. I never espoused any part with violence, and am resolved to observe an exact neutrality between the Whigs and Tories, unless I shall be forced to declare myself by the hostilities of either side. In short I have acted in all the parts of my life as a looker-on, which is the character I intend to preserve in this paper.

I have given the reader just so much of my history and character, as to let him see I am not altogether unqualified for the business I have undertaken. As for other particulars in my life and adventures, I shall insert them in following papers, as I shall see

occasion. In the mean time, when I consider how much I have seen, read, and heard, I begin to blame my own taciturnity; and since I have neither time nor inclination to communicate the fullness of my heart in speech, I am resolved to do it in writing, and to print myself out, if possible, before I die. I have been often told by my friends, that it is pity so many useful discoveries which I have made should be in the possession of a silent man. For this reason, therefore, I shall publish a sheet-full of thoughts every morning, for the benefit of my contemporaries; and if I can any way contribute to the diversion or improvement of the country in which I live, I shall leave it, when I am summoned out of it, with the secret satisfaction of thinking that I have not lived in vain.

There are three very material points which I have not spoken to in this paper; and which, for several important reasons, I must keep to myself, at least for some time: I mean an account of my name, my age, and my lodgings. I must confess, I would gratify my reader in anything that is reasonable; but as for these three particulars, though I am sensible they might tend very much to the embellishment of my paper, I cannot yet come to a resolution of communicating them to the public. They would indeed draw me out of that obscurity which I have enjoyed for many years, and expose me in public places to several salutes and civilities, which have been always very disagreeable to me; for the greatest pain I can suffer is the being talked to, and being stared at. It is for this reason likewise, that I keep my complexion and dress as very great secrets; though it is not impossible, but I may make discoveries of both in the progress of the work I have undertaken. After having been thus particular upon myself, I shall in to-morrow's paper give an account of those gentlemen who are concerned with me in this work ; for, as I have before intimated, a plan of it is laid and concerted (as all other natters of importance are) in a club. However, as my friends have engaged me to stand in the front, those who have a mind to correspond with me, may direct their letters to the SPECTATOR, at Mr. Buckley's, in Little Britain. For I must further acquaint the reader, that though our club meets only on Tuesdays and Thursdays, we have appointed a Committee to sit every

night, for the inspection of all such papers as may contribute to the advancement of the public weal.

### **1.7.1. Summary of the Paper:**

In the above paper Addison gives a brief character sketch of Mr. Spectator (the name assumed by himself and his fellow writers like Steele, Budgell and Tickell who also contributed to The Spectator. The following are the traits of Mr. Spectator's personality on which he throws light:

- a. He was born to a small family estate which dates back to the very ancient times.
- b. He is a very widely traveled gentleman.
- c. True to his name, he is a 'spectator' of humanity and is curious to study the manners and conditions of all its sections. This curiosity impels him to visit public resorts like coffee-houses, exchanges, even foreign countries.
- d. He is very reticent and reserved. Even while he was a child, he was tremendously sober and sedate. He hates "being talked to, and being stared at."
- e. His persistent observation of humanity has paid him rich dividends in so far as it has made him an adept at all trades. But he is just an arm-chair philosopher, not a man of action.
- f. He is the chief organizer of the "Spectator club" which meets twice a week. He will bring out a "sheet-full of thoughts" every morning for the pleasure and profit of his countrymen.

Addison begins the first paper of *The Spectator* with a subtle ironical remark. He says that a reader is justly curious about the character of the writer whose work he is studying. It is essential to satisfy this curiosity of the reader about particulars such as the marital status, the temperament and the complexion of the writer, because such knowledge is of great value for the right understanding of an author. Keeping this point in view, Mr. Spectator will throw some light on his own character.

Mr. Spectator was born to a small estate which among his ancestors had changed hands from father to son without the least change in its area. Six months before his birth his mother dreamt that her child would become a judge. After his birth, as an infant, Mr. Spectator behaved in such a dignified and sober manner that his mother became certain of the truth of her dream. Unlike other children he hated noise-producing toys such as rattles and corals.

Then Mr. Spectator comes to his educational career at the school and the university. As a student he was a hard and intelligent worker and his school teacher had a high opinion of his talents. However, he remained reticent and reserved. Then he talks about his travels. After his father's death he left the university and embarked on a long spell of travelling. He visited all the countries of Europe and went as far as Egypt. There he took the exact measurement of a pyramid, which had been a very controversial issue.

After recapitulating his past biography, Mr. Spectator comes to the present and tells us something about his personal activities and aptitudes. We are told that he is very fond of mixing with all sorts of people so as to increase his knowledge about humanity. He is particularly happy to be at public places like markets, exchanges and coffee-houses

because they provide him with ample opportunity to *see* and meet people belonging to all walks of life. His passion is to see, but not to *talk* to people.

Through his minute and painstaking observation of all kinds of people Mr. Spectator has become qualified in all the theoretical aspects of most professions and pursuits of life. However, he is not a man of action. Further, Mr. Spectator assures us of his political impartiality.

Thus Mr. Spectator builds up an impression of his being a well-read, well-travelled, widely aware and keenly observant man of speculation well-equipped for the job he has taken in hand. He has much to communicate, but he dislikes talking. Therefore, everyday from this day onwards Mr. Spectator would be publishing a sheet-full containing his thoughts which he is averse to communicating in speech. He will aim at the entertainment and edification of his countrymen, and the achievement of this aim will give him much satisfaction that he has done his duty.

Though Mr. Spectator has revealed much of himself in this paper hither to, yet he does not want to reveal three important points concerning himself. They are:

- a. His name,
- b. Age, and
- c. Lodgings.

The disclosure of these particulars would have made for much embarrassment to him; because people would have greeted him everywhere and liked to have talked with him. Mr. Spectator wishes to remain obscure to avoid being talked to or stared at.

In the end, Mr. Spectator points out that he will give an account of the members of the “Spectator Club in the next paper. He invites the readers to write him letters if they like. The Club will examine all such papers as may tend to public welfare.

### **1.8. The Uses of The Spectator: Text (Spectator. No. 10, March 12, 1711)**

Non aliter quam qui adverso vix flumine lembum  
Remigiis subigit: si brachia forte remisit,  
Atque ilium in praeceps prono rapit alveus amni.—VIRGIL.

So the boat's brawny crew the current stem,  
And, slow advancing, struggle with the stream:  
But if they slack their hands or cease to strive,  
Then down the flood with headlong haste they drive— DRYDEN.

IT is with much satisfaction that I hear this great city inquiring day by day after these my papers, and receiving my morning lectures with a becoming seriousness and attention. My publisher tells me, that there are already three thousand of them distributed every day: so that if I allow twenty readers to every paper, which I look upon as a modest computation, I may reckon about threescore thousand disciples in London and Westminster, who I hope will take care to distinguish themselves from the thoughtless herd of their ignorant and unattentive brethren. Since I have raised to myself so great an audience, I shall spare no pains to make their instruction agreeable, and their diversion useful. For which reasons I shall endeavour to enliven morality with wit, and to temper wit with morality, that my readers may, if possible, both ways find their account in the speculation of the day. And to the end that their virtue and discretion may not be short,

transient, intermitting starts of thought, I have resolved to refresh their memories from day to day, till I have recovered them out of that desperate state of vice and folly into which the age is fallen. The mind that lies fallow but a single day, sprouts up in follies that are only to be killed by a constant and assiduous culture. It was said of Socrates that he brought Philosophy down from heaven, to inhabit among men; and I shall be ambitious to have it said of me, that I have brought Philosophy out of closets and libraries, schools and colleges, to dwell in clubs and assemblies, at tea-tables and in coffee-houses.

I would therefore in a very particular manner recommend these my speculations to all well-regulated families that set apart an hour in every morning for tea and bread and butter; and would earnestly advise them for their good to order this paper to be punctually served up, and to be looked upon as a part of the tea equipage.

Sir Francis Bacon observes, that a well-written book, compared with its rivals and antagonists, is like Moses's serpent, that immediately swallowed up and devoured those of the Egyptians. I shall not be so vain as to think that, where the SPECTATOR appears, the other public prints will vanish ; but shall leave it to my readers' consideration, whether it is not much better to be let into the knowledge of one's self, than to hear what passes in Muscovy or Poland; and to amuse ourselves with such writings as tend to the wearing out of ignorance, passion, and prejudice, than such as naturally conduce to inflame hatreds, and make enmities irreconcilable.

In the next place, I would recommend this paper to the daily perusal of those gentlemen whom I cannot but consider as my good brothers and allies, I mean the fraternity of Spectators, who live in the world without having anything to do in it; and



either by the affluence of their fortunes, or laziness of their dispositions, have no other business with the rest of mankind, but to look upon them. Under this class of men are comprehended all contemplative tradesmen, titular physicians, fellows of the Royal Society, Templars that are not given to be contentious, and statesmen that are out of business; in short, every one that considers the world as a theatre, and desires to form a right judgment of those who are the actors on it.

There is another set of men that I must likewise lay a claim to, whom I have lately called the blanks of society, as being altogether unfurnished with ideas, till the business and conversation of the day has supplied them. I have often considered these poor souls with an eye of great commiseration, when I have heard them asking the first man they have met with, whether there was any news stirring? and by that means gathering together materials for thinking. These needy persons do not know what to talk of, till about twelve a clock in the morning ; for by that time they are pretty good judges of the weather, know which way the wind sits, and whether the Dutch mail be come in. As they lie at the mercy of the first man they meet, and are grave or impertinent all the day long, according to the notions which they have imbibed in the morning, I would earnestly entreat them not to stir out of their chambers till they have read this paper, and do promise them that I will daily instil into them such sound and wholesome sentiments, as shall have a good effect on their conversation for the ensuing twelve hours.

But there are none to whom this paper will be more useful than to the female world. I have often thought there has not been sufficient pains taken in finding out proper employments and diversions for the fair ones.

Their amusements seemed contrived for them, rather as they are women, than as they are reasonable creatures; and are more adapted to the sex than to the species. The toilet is their great scene of business, and the right adjusting of their hair the principal employment of their lives. The sorting of a suit of ribbons is reckoned a very good morning's work; and if they make an excursion to a mercer's or a toy-shop, so great a fatigue makes them unfit for anything else all the day after. Their more serious occupations are sewing and embroidery, and their greatest drudgery, the preparation of jellies and sweet-meats. This, I say, is the state of ordinary women; though I know there are multitudes of those of a more elevated life and conversation, that move in an exalted sphere of knowledge and virtue, that join all the beauties of the mind to the ornaments of dress, and inspire a kind of awe and respect, as well as love, into their male beholders. I hope to increase the number of these by publishing this daily paper, which I shall always endeavour to make an innocent if not an improving entertainment, and by that means at least divert the minds of my female readers from greater trifles. At the same time, as I would fain give some finishing touches to those which are already the most beautiful pieces in human nature, I shall endeavour to point out all those imperfections that are the blemishes, as well as those virtues which are the embellishments, of the sex. In the meanwhile I hope these my gentle readers, who have so much time on their hands, will not grudge throwing away a quarter of an hour in a day on this paper, since they may do it without any hinderance to business.

I know several of my friends and well-wishers are in great pain for me lest I should not be able to keep up the spirit of a paper which I oblige myself to furnish every day: but to make them easy in this particular, I will promise them faithfully to give it over as soon as I grow dull. This I know will be matter of great raillery to the small wits ; who will frequently put me in mind of my promise, desire me to keep my word, assure me that it is high time to give over, with many other pleasantries of the like nature, which men of a little smart genius cannot forbear throwing out against their best friends, when they

have such a handle given them of being witty. But let them remember that I do hereby enter my caveat against this piece of raillery.

### **1.9. Of The Spectator: (March 2, 1711)**

--- Ast Alli sex

Et plures uno conclamant ore.-- Juv.

THE first of our Society is a Gentleman of Worcestershire, of antient Descent, a Baronet, his Name Sir ROGER DE COVERLY. His great Grandfather was Inventor of that famous Country-Dance which is call d after him. All who know that Shire are very well acquainted with the Parts and Merits of Sir ROGER. He is a Gentleman that is very singular in his Behaviour but his Singularities proceed from his good Sense, and are Contradictions to the Manners of the World, only as he thinks the World is in the wrong. However, this Humour creates him no Enemies, for he does nothing with Sourness or Obstinacy; and his being unconfined to Modes and Forms, makes him but the readier and more capable to please and oblige all who know him. When he is in town he lives in Soho Square. It is said, he keeps himself a Batchelour by reason he was crossed in Love by a perverse beautiful Widow of the next County to him. Before this Disappointment, Sir ROGER was what you call a fine Gentleman, had often supped with my Lord Rochester and Sir George Etherege fought a duel upon his first coming to Town, and kick'd Bully Dawson in a publick Coffee-house for calling him Youngster. But being ill used by the above-mentioned Widow, he was very serious for a year and a half; and tho his Temper being naturally jovial, he at last got over it, he grew careless of himself and never dressed afterwards; he continues to wear a Coat and Doublet of the same Cut that were in Fashion at the Time of his Repulse, which, in his merry Humours, he tells us, has

been in and out twelve times since he first wore it. Tis said Sir ROGER grew humble in his Desires after he had forgot this cruel Beauty, insomuch that it is reported he has frequently offended in Point of Chastity with Beggars and Gypsies: but this is look'd upon by his Friends rather as Matter of Raillery than Truth. He is now in his Fifty-sixth Year, cheerful, gay, and hearty, keeps a good House in both Town and Country ; a great Lover of Mankind ; but there is such a mirthful Cast in his Behaviour, that he is rather beloved than esteemed. His Tenants grow rich, his Servants look satisfied, all the young Women profess Love to him, and the young Men are glad of his Company: When he comes into a House he calls the Servants by their Names, and talks all the way Up Stairs to a Visit. I must not omit that Sir ROGER is a Justice of the Quorum; that he fills the chair at a Quarter-Session with great Abilities, and three Months ago, gained universal Applause by explaining a Passage in the Game-Act.

The Gentleman next in Esteem and Authority among us, is another Batchelour, who is a Member of the Inner Temple: a Man of great Probity, Wit, and Understanding; but he has chosen his Place of Residence rather to obey the Direction of an old humoursome Father, than in pursuit of his own Inclinations. He was placed there to study the Laws of the Land, and is the most learned of any of the House in those of the Stage. Aristotle and Longinus are much better understood by him than Littleton or Cooke. The Father sends up every Post Questions relating to Marriage-Articles, Leases, and Tenures, in the Neighbourhood ; all which Questions he agrees with an Attorney to answer and take care of in the Lump. He is studying the Passions themselves, when he should be inquiring into the Debates among Men which arise from them. He knows the Argument of each of the Orations of Demosthenes and Tully, but not one Case in the Reports of our own Courts. No one ever took him for a Fool, but none, except his intimate Friends, know he has a great deal of Wit. This Turn makes him at once both disinterested and agreeable : As few of his Thoughts are drawn from Business, they are most of them fit for Conversation. His Taste of Books is a little too just for the Age he lives in ; he has read

all, but approves of very few. His Familiarity with the Customs, Manners, Actions, and Writings of the Ancients, makes him a very delicate Observer of what occurs to him in the present World. He is an excellent Critick, and the Time of the Play is his Hour of Business exactly at five he passes through New Inn., crosses through Russel Court; and takes a turn at Will's till the play begins ; he has his shoes rubb'd and his Perriwig power'd at the Barber's as you go into the Rose. It is for the Good of the Audience when he is at a Play, for the Actors have an Ambition to please him.

The Person of next Consideration is Sir ANDREW FREEPORT, a Merchant of great Eminence in the City of London: A Person of indefatigable industry, strong Reason, and great Experience. his Notions of Trade are noble and generous, and (as every rich Man has usually some sly Way of Jestings, which would make no great Figure were he not a rich Man) he calls the Sea the British Common. He is acquainted with Commerce in all its Parts, and will tell you that it is a stupid and barbarous Way to extend Dominion by Arms; for true Power is to be got by Arts and industry. He will often argue, that if this Part of our Trade were well cultivated, we should gain from one Nation ; and if another, from another. I have heard him prove that Diligence makes more lasting Acquisition than Valour, and that Sloth has ruin'd more Nations than the Sword. He abounds in several frugal Maxims, amongst which the greatest Favourite is, A Penny saved is a Penny got. A General Trader of good Sense is pleasanter Company than a general Scholar ; and Sir ANDREW having a natural unaffected Eloquence, the Perspicuity of his Discourse gives the same Pleasure that Wit would in another Man. He has made his Fortunes himself; and says that England may be richer than other Kingdoms, by as plain Methods as he himself is richer than other Men; tho at the same Time I can say this of him, that there is not a Point in the Compass, but blows home a Ship in which he is an Owner.

Next to Sir ANDREW in the Club-room sits Captain SENTRY, a Gentleman of great Courage, good Understanding, but Invincible Modesty. He is one of those that deserve very well, but are very awkward at putting their Talents within the Observation of such as should take notice of them. He was some Years a Captain, and behaved

himself with great Gallantry in several Engagements, and at several Sieges; but having a small Estate of his own, and being next Heir to Sir ROGER, he has quitted a Way of Life in which no Man can rise suitably to his Merit, who is not something of a Courtier, as well as a Soldier. I have heard him often lament, that in a Profession where Merit is placed in so conspicuous a View, Impudence should get the better of Modesty. When he has talked to this Purpose, I never heard him make a sour Expression, but frankly confess that he left the World, because he was not fit for it. A strict Honesty and an even regular Behaviour, are in themselves Obstacles to him that must press through Crowds who endeavour at the same End with himself; the Favour of a Cornmandcr. He will, however, in this Way of Talk, excuse Generals, for not disposing according to Men s Desert, or enquiring into it : For, says he, that great Man who has a Mind to help me, has as many to break through to come at me, as I have to come at him : Therefore he will conclude, that the Man who would make a Figure, especially in a military Way, must get over all false Modesty, and assist his Patron against the Importunity of other Pretenders, by a proper Assurance in his own Vindication. He says it is a civil Cowardice to be backward in asserting what you ought to expect, as it is a military Fear to be slow in attacking when it is your Duty. With this Candour does the Gentleman speak of himself and others. The same Frankness runs through all his Conversation. The military Part of his Life has furnished him with many Adventures, in the Relation of which he is very agreeable to the Company; for he is never over-bearing, though accustomed to command Men in the utmost Degree below him ; nor ever too obsequious, from an Habit of obeying Men highly above him.

But that our Society may not appear a Set of Humourists unacquainted with the Gallantries and Pleasures of the Age, we have among us the gallant Will.. HONEYCOMB, a Gentleman who, according to his Years, should be in the Decline of his Life, but having ever been very careful of his Person, and always had a very easy Fortune, Time has made but very little Impression, either by Wrinkles on his Forehead, or

Traces in his Brain. His Person is well turned, and of a good Height. He is very ready at that sort of Discourse with which Men usually entertain Women. He has all his Life dressed very well, and remembers Habits as others do Men. He can smile when one speaks to him, and laughs easily. He knows the History of every Mode, and can inform you from which of the French King s Wenches our Wives and Daughters had this Manner of curling their hair, that Way of placing their Hoods ; whose Frailty was covered by such a Sort of Petticoat, and whose Vanity to show her Foot made that Part of the Dress so short in such a Year. In a Word, all his Conversation and Knowledge has been in the female World: As other Men of his Age will take Notice to you what such a Minister said upon such and such an Occasion, he will tell you when the Duke of Monmouth danced at Court such a Woman was then smitten, another was taken with him at the Head of his Troop in the Park. In all these important Relations, he has ever about the same Time received a kind Glance, or a Blow of a Fan, from some celebrated Beauty, Mother of the present Lord such-a-one. If you speak of a young Commoner that said a lively thing in the House, he starts up, He has good Blood in his Veins, Tom Mirabell begot him, the Rogue cheated me in that Affair; that young Fellow's Mother used me more like a Dog than any Woman I ever made Advances to. This Way of Talking of his, very much enlivens the Conversation among us of a more sedate Turn ; and I find there is not one of the Company but myself, who rarely speak at all, but speaks of him as of that Sort of Man, who is usually called a well-bred fine Gentleman. To conclude his Character, where Women are not concerned, lie is an honest worthy Man.

I cannot tell whether I am to account him whom I am next to Speak of, as one of our Company; for lie visits us but seldom, but when he does, it adds to every Man else a new Enjoyment of himself. He is a Clergyman, a very philosophick Man, of general Learning, great Sanctity of Life, and the most exact good Breeding. He has the Misfortune to be of a very weak Constitution, and consequently cannot accept of such Cares and Business as Preferements in his Function would Oblige him to: He is therefore

among Divines what a Chamber-Counsellor is among Lawyers. The Probity of his Mind, and the Integrity of his Life, create him Followers, as being eloquent or loud advances others. He seldom introduces the Subject he speaks upon; but we are so far gone in Years, that he observes when he is among us, an Earnestness to have him fall on some divine Topick, which he always treats with much Authority, as one who has no Interests in this World, as one who is hastening to the Object of all his Wishes, and conceives Hope from his Decays and Infirmities. These are my ordinary Companions,

### **1.9.1. Summary of the Paper:**

In this paper Steele gives an account of the six gentlemen who, along with Mr. Spectator, are members of the Spectator Club. These gentlemen are:

- i. Sir Roger de Coverley: He is a good natured, jolly country baronet who was once very particular about elegant dress and sophisticated manners. However, after his unsuccessful love-affair with a widow, he has given up attending to his dress and polite pursuits.
- ii. A member of the Inner Temple: His name is not mentioned. Though his profession is law, he does not much attend to legal studies. Rather, he gives full attention to theatre and literature.
- iii. Sir Andrew Freeport: He is a prosperous merchant and is a champion of free trade and commerce.
- iv. Captain Sentry: He is an ex-serviceman. He is modest and self-critical.
- v. Will Honeycomb: He is an old man-about-town and a lady-killer. He is also a recognized authority on fashions and fads of the town.
- vi. An unnamed clergyman: He enjoys but poor health. He is a great authority on divinity.



The Spectator (Steele) in this paper gives thumbnail sketches of the six members of the Club. The first of them is a well-known country baronet. He has some oddities and does not follow the rest of the world in some particulars. He is fifty six but still a bachelor. It is said that as a young man he fell in love with an obstinate widow who broke his heart. From then onwards he gave up his fashionable pursuits and elegant manner of dressing up and is sticking ever since to very old fashioned clothes. He is loved by everyone and is very free with his servants. Sometimes he acts as a justice of the quorum. He is naturally jovial and a lover of all mankind.

The next member of the Club is also a bachelor. He is a member of the Inner Temple. His profession is law, but his interests lie elsewhere. He is fond of literature and drama. He is honest, intelligent and industrious. His father wants to see him as a lawyer. In literature he is a very discriminating critic and allows merit to only a few writers. He is perfectly conversant with ancient life and manners and assesses modern life and manners by comparing them with old. He is a regular play-goer, so much so that it seems as if seeing plays were his real “business”. All the actors do their best to please him and cannot give slipshod performance when he is around because they know that no flaw will go unnoticed by him.

The third is Sir Andrew Freeport—an eminent merchant of London. He is very well-experienced, industrious and has strong common sense about him. He goes on repeating incessantly what he calls a “joke”. According to him England can dominate other countries by trade, not by war. He is all support for expansion of trade and industry. He is very prosperous and the trade-ships owned by him (singly or in partnership with others) ply in all directions of the world.

The fourth is Captain Sentry who is very courageous but very modest. Indeed it is on account of his modesty that he was obliged to renounce his career in the army. In the army a man cannot make headway unless he tries to catch the attention of his superiors by exhibition of his merits. But being very modest, Captain Sentry could not do so and he saw less deserving men being promoted in preference to him. Hence he resigned captainship. However, he is not bitter at his misfortune and gives all the blame to himself for his modesty. Financially, he is not ill disposed. He has a small estate of his own and is the next heir to Sir Roger.

The fifth is an old swashbuckler, an authority on women and sartorial fashions. In spite of his age he looks young and healthy. He remembers the history and genesis of every new and old fashion. He has many love affairs to his credit. His jolly and unreserved conversation enlivens the atmosphere of the Club. Towards the end Will Honeycomb, in a Spectator Paper, is shown as a married to a country belle and thereafter leading a subdued and reformed life.

Lastly, there is an unnamed clergyman who is but a casual visitor to the Club. He is very religious, learned and philosophic. But because his health is very poor, he does not act in professional capacity. However, he does advise other clergymen regarding matters connected with their work. Whenever he observes that the other members of the Club are in a mood to listen to him talk about divine matters, he obliges them duly.

Steele in his brief portrayal of the six characters in this paper may also have been indebted to the seventeenth century character writers—notably Hall, Stephen, Earle and Overbury. These writers chose some real characters from life and word-painted them briefly. Mostly they concentrated on representative rather than individual traits of their

“modes”. On the whole, their performance falls below excellence. Their characters are generally wooden and lack flexibility and liveliness. It is so probably because they modeled their performance rather too slavishly on the precedent set by Theophrastus, the first Greek character-writer. On the other hand, on account of his disregard of slavish imitation and his observation, experience, insight, humanity and uncanny mastery of detail, Steele’s characters are very life-like. They are not gowns or walking sticks, but men, alive and kicking. Thus, in spite of his indebtedness to some predecessors, Steele’s achievement is in a good measure his own.

### **1.10. Conclusion:**

*The Glorious Revolution* of 1688 witnessed a victory of the town over the court, and the town having rejected the court’s standards in manners and morals, was now struggling to find its own standards, to root itself in a social and ethical code. The town had defeated the court, and now the town had to be educated up to its new position. It was mainly to recover English society from “that desperate state of vice and folly” into which the age had fallen, which Addison and Steele to pool their talents in a task to refine the taste of their contemporaries and to widen their outlook, and to create a common ground for the meeting of the Puritan and the man of the world, mainly “to enliven morality with wit, and to temper wit with morality.” Thus, aimed at the “advancement of the public weal”, *The Spectator* stormed into popular favor on March 1, 1711.

Although *The Spectator* performed the role of a moral educator, however for a modern reader its interest and function remains manifold. It is at once the monument of a noble friendship between Steele and Addison; certain *Spectator* papers, namely the *Coverley Essays* are considered to be the precursor of the great eighteenth century novel. It gave way to a new kind of prose writing which was both serious and entertaining, but

above all, it presented a faithful mirror of the Augustan Age in England viewed with an aloof and dispassionate observation. These periodicals had a dual aim to amuse and to improve. It was a through a deft management of the second of these, while not neglecting the first, that Steele and Addison achieved their great success.

In its aim “to enliven morality with wit, and to temper wit with morality”, The Spectator adopted a fictional method of presentation through a ‘Spectator Club, whose imaginary members represented the author’s own ideas about society. These members included representatives of commerce, the army, the town (respectively, Sir Andrew Freeport, Captain Sentry, and Will Honeycomb), and of the country gentry (Sir Roger de Coverley). They represented considerable classes or sections of the community and were men of strongly marked opinions, prejudices, and foibles, all of which provided enough matter of comment to the spectator himself, who delivers the judgement of reason and commonsense.

The main object of *The Spectator* papers was to mirror the Augustan Age in England and to present that life in such a graceful, humorous and elegant style, that the people may themselves know their own defects and remedy them in the light of suggestion dropped from the author of the paper. It was thus an organ of social criticism, literary discussion, and moral edification. Addison’s ambition was to be known as a moral philosopher who, “brought philosophy out of closets and libraries, schools and colleges to dwell in clubs and assemblies, at tea-tables and coffee-houses.” His belief was that it was better “to amuse ourselves with such writings as tend to the wearing out of ignorance, passion and prejudice than such as naturally conducts to inflame hatred and make enmities irreconcilable.”

In short, through *The Spectator* Addison not only gave expression to his sense of morality and wisdom but also reflected the age, bringing before us the true picture of the eighteenth century life, with its gay fopperies, ball dances, club-sittings, cock hunting, intense party-spirit, and its literary discussions. In the words of Macaulay, “In *The Spectator* and *The Tatler*, we once again see the inevitable eighteenth century with the Churches thronging with the daily worshippers, the beaux gathering in the coffee-houses, the gentry going to the drawing room, the ladies thronging to the toy-shops, the chairman jostling in the streets...”

Although from the time of the Restoration, London had been more and more the center of English cultural life, England was still essentially an agricultural country, and while the peasantry played little part in the literary life of the time, the squirearchy was continuously present in the imagination of those who wrote and thought about England. And in *The Coverley Papers* the concern to bridge the gap between the town and the country is very much evident. Here one finds the full length portrayal of a character, Sir Roger de Coverley, who has endeared himself to successive generations of readers, in addition to a number of other more sketchy but still convincing delineations of English types.

Sir Roger de Coverley, first introduced by Steele in the second issue of *The Spectator*, is an old fashioned country gentleman, but as his character was developed by Addison in subsequent numbers, he becomes an eccentric and lovable Squire, whose foibles are held up for the sympathetic amusement of a Whig audience. He eventually becomes a symbol of an ideal feudal paternalism. Sir Roger is seen at home, ruling his household and the village with a genial if somewhat autocratic sway; then in London he is seen taking the cicerone who pilots him round Westminster Abbey for a monument of wit and learning, and so on and so forth.

Amiable and urbane, laughing at his fellowmen but laughing without scorn, rather as one who understands and sympathizes—the spectator points out their foibles and cajoles as much as argues them out of their propensities. In *The Spectator*, popular superstitions, popular whims, caprices, idiosyncracies, social manners, pursuits, fashions in their turn find themselves within the hold of the spectator to be examined, dandled, caressed, rebuked, sentenced, but all with a mild hand and genial humor.

In fact many of Addison's papers were directed against the coarser vices of the time, against gambling, drinking, swearing, indecency of conversation, cruelty, practical joking, dueling etc, while some of *The Spectator* papers attack the triviality of life, special follies, and foibles of dress, manners, or of thought; others, the lack of order and comfort in life of the community.

Addison, in his own way, unveils the cultural and social picture of his age. We can arrive at a fairly convincing picture of the society of his age by piecing together the numerous hints and bits afforded by his periodical papers. And this picture is not only a great deal authentic; it is also vivid and pulsating with life. The *Spectator* papers have long been recognized as valuable human documents for the student of the social and cultural history of the Age of Queen Anne. They are good documentary records of the day—records supplemented by frequent comments. Both the country and town scenes are handled with equal authenticity and mastery. A.R. Humphrey says in this connection:

*“Even more than The Tatler is The Spectator famous for the variety and vividness of its social panorama. The scope of London's life, and something of the country's, is mirrored—coffee house life with its debates, news-sheets, clubs of common interests (even the common interests of oddities) and indeed its whole routine... We observe street*

*scenes, commercial houses (No. 69 creates a splendid pattern of Royal-exchange activity and the romance behind the process of trade), monied and trading interests (Nos. 21 and 108 recommend business), theatres with accounts of performers and performances and fun at the extravagances of the reigning Italian opera, current gossip, street-cries, Churches great and small, the ships and traffic of the Thames, fashions and fashionable affectations, and beyond the town, the country with its sports, superstitions, and the comedy of its old-fashioned social life.”*

Thus, *The Spectator* covered everything necessary to a proper social education, from what kind of hats ladies should wear to how to appreciate Milton, indeed it presented a faithful and well composed portrait of the age. The vivid reflections of London and the country life not only serve as a feast of delight for the readers, but it also offers an unpretentious image of the eighteenth century English society.

To sum up, Addison’s picture of the society of Queen Anne’s period is fairly authentic and fairly comprehensive. He was one of the pioneers who set the tone of realism. Summing up the achievement of Addison we can justly say with Compton-Rickett:

*“Small wonder that, at a time when Richardson was quietly performing his work as a compositor, and Fielding indulging in schoolboy exploits; when Smollet and Goldsmith and Sterne were yet unborn, a public should be found for his picture of contemporary life and manners.”*

### **Sources/Suggested Reading:**

1. **History of English Literature by Legouis and Cazamian**
2. **The Spectator Essays: Introduction and Notes by John Morrison**  
<https://archive.org/stream/spectatoressaysi00addiuoft#page/n7/mode/2up>
3. <http://www.ourcivilisation.com/smartboard/shop/fowlerjh/indexe.htm>
4. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph\\_Addison](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Addison)
5. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Spectator\\_\(1711\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Spectator_(1711))
6. **Coverley Papers from The Spectator by T. Singh**



## PAPER VI

### UNIT II

#### CHARLES LAMB'S 'MY RELATIONS'

##### 1.0. Life and Works of Charles Lamb

Charles Lamb was an important English poet and literary critic of Welsh origin. He was born in London on February 10th 1775. As an expert of the Shakespearean period as well as an author of talent, Lamb would come to be considered one of the most significant literary critic of his time. Moreover, Lamb would be celebrated for his simple, yet not simplistic, personal reflections on daily life, which would always be supplemented with a distinctive sense of both humor and tragedy. Lamb's two most famous works were to be *Essays of Elia*, and, *Tales from Shakespeare*, in fact a children's book. He would actually write the latter in collaboration with his sister, Mary Lamb (1764 - 1847). Charles Lamb also had an older brother, John, named after their father, as well as four other brothers and sisters who would not survive their infancy. Lamb would come to be described by his main biographer, E.V. Lucas, as the most touching character in English literature.

Lamb's parents were Elizabeth Field and John Lamb. Charles would be their last child after Mary, who was born 11 years earlier while John, the brother, would be born even earlier than his sister. The father was a clerk for a lawyer. Years later Charles would write a kind of biographical portrait of him in a piece

entitled “Elia on the Old Benchers” and would refer to him by the name of “Lovel”.

Charles Lamb would become a close friend of the famous British philosopher, literary critic and poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772 - 1834). In fact Lamb’s first published work would be four sonnets which would be included in the 1796 *Poems on Various Subjects* by Coleridge. And yet because Lamb had a stutter he would not only be disqualified at boarding school for a clerical career, but while Coleridge and others would be able to go on to university, Lamb stopped his schooling at the age of 14. Notwithstanding this would not prevent Lamb to become an important member, and indeed to play an important part in a circle of famous authors. This included important literary figures such as poet William Wordsworth (1770 - 1850), essayist and poet Leigh Hunt (1784 - 1859), writer and literary critic William Hazlitt (1778 - 1830) as well as poet Robert Southey (1774 - 1843).

In 1819 at the age of 44, Lamb who had never married mostly because of his commitment to his troubled family would fall in love with Fanny Kelly, an actress from Covent Garden. He would eventually propose to her but she would refuse and he would in the end die single. Unmarried, Lamb would live with his sister, Mary Lamb, who too would stay single as she almost perpetually would suffer from serious mental disorders. In fact, in 1796, in a fit of insanity, she would stab their mother, Elizabeth, killing her with a kitchen knife. After that, in spite of the difficult turn of events Charles did all he could to stay close to his sister and would even in fact end up becoming Mary’s official guardian, thus making it possible for her to be released from the mental hospital. It is noteworthy

to keep in kind that when she felt at home and well enough, Mary could be one of the most creative, lively woman.

Case in point, together with his sister Charles would write the famous *Tales from Shakespeare*, a collection of 20 tales inspired by the eminent playwright. Published in 1807 this book remains to this day a classic of British literature for youth. The first publisher of the work was the British journalist, political philosopher and novelist William Godwin (1756 - 1836), husband of the English philosopher and one of the first advocate of women's right Mary Wollstonecraft (1759 - 1797), and also father of British writer Mary Shelley (1797 - 1851). The book was to be constantly reprinted to this day and was even finally illustrated for the first time in 1899 by Arthur Rackham (1867 - 1939). The work would also be translated into several languages and thus made available across the globe.

In the *Essays of Elia*, Lamb's intimate and informal tone of voice would captivate many readers, old and young. The name of "Elia" had actually been the alias he had used whenever he would contribute to the renowned *London Magazine*. The essays describe the strange world of the author's fictional alter ego that is embodied in the melancholic character Elia. It is as a true painter of modern life that Lamb reinvents here the tradition of essay writing. He does so, for instance, by mixing subjective bias, sensuality and critical thinking. In those essays Lamb makes good use of irony, nostalgia, and shares with us his vivid fascination for the details of things, including the very minutes of everyday life. In sum, *Essays of Elia* constitute a singular text in which the author is clearly fascinated by the diversity of things, the unreality of the past, the absolute uniqueness of experience as well as a keen awareness of the limitation of writing.

Lamb's writings also include poetry with *Blank Verse* (1798), and with *Pride's Cure* (1802). Novels, such as *The Adventures of Ulysses* (1808) which was written with children in mind as the audience, it is thus reminiscent of *The Tales from Shakespeare*. But also *Specimens of English Dramatic poets who lived about the time of Shakespeare* (1808), which is essentially a kind of anthology of sections from Elizabethan dramas together with commentaries. This work has been said to have had a significant impact on the way nineteenth century English verses would come to be written. In *On the Tragedies of Shakespeare* (1811) Charles Lamb examines and is critical of Hamlet's "To be or not to be". He would controversially state in the piece that:

*I confess myself utterly unable to appreciate that celebrated soliloquy in Hamlet, beginning 'To be or not to be', or to tell whether it be good, bad, or indifferent; it has been so handled and pawed about by declamatory boys and men, and torn so inhumanly from its living place and principle of continuity in the play, till it is become to me a perfect dead member.*

We also have pieces such as *Witches and Other Night Fears* (1821) and *The Last Essays of Elia* (1833), which is the second volume of the famous *Essays of Elia* (1823). This last volume would in fact be published shortly before Lamb's death. It includes essay titles such as A Bachelor's Complaint of the Behaviour of Married People; The Two Races of Men; My First Play; Confessions of a Drunkard; Mrs. Battle's Opinions on Whist as well as others. In a very real sense, while in his lifetime Lamb was encouraged by many for his hard work in literature, he actually enjoyed very little appreciation for his unique talent while he was alive. Not surprisingly perhaps, he would thus go through difficult moments of doubt with regards to his work and seriously seems to have wondered about his

ability to write anything worth mentioning. In fact, in similar ways to his sister, Mary, he too would suffer episodes of psychological illness. Be that as it may, Charles Lamb left us with a very rich legacy of work ranging from short stories, essays, poetry, even plays, as well as letters filled with his exceptional intimate style and humor.

Lamb would succumb to an infection he would unfortunately contract from a minor cut on his face after having fallen in the street, in fact only several months after Coleridge. Charles Lamb would die at Edmonton, a suburb of London on December 27th 1834 at the age of 59. He is buried at All Saint's Churchyard, also in Edmonton. Mary, his sister would survive him by more than a decade and would be buried next to him. It is interesting to note that in 1849, 15 years after Lamb's death, the French author Eugène Forcade (1820 - 1869) would describe Lamb as having been of an eminently friendly nature, an original writer, a kind of hero constantly caring for his poor sister.

### **1.1. Family Tragedy:**

Both Charles and his sister Mary suffered a period of mental illness. As he himself confessed in a letter, Charles spent six weeks in a mental facility during 1795, at the time while he was already making his name as a poet:

Coleridge, I know not what suffering scenes you have gone through at Bristol. My life has been somewhat diversified of late. The six weeks that finished last year and began this your very humble servant spent very agreeably in a mad house at Hoxton—I am got somewhat rational now, and don't bite any one. But mad I was—and many a vagary my imagination played with me, enough to make

a volume if all told. My Sonnets I have extended to the number of nine since I saw you, and will some day communicate to you.

—Lamb to Coleridge; May 27, 1796.

However, Mary Lamb's illness was particularly strongest, as it led her to become aggressive in a fatal occasion. On 22 September 1796, while preparing dinner, Mary became angry with her apprentice, roughly shoving the little girl out of her way and pushing her into another room. Her mother, Elizabeth, began yelling at her for this, and Mary suffered a mental break-down as her mother continued yelling at her. A terrible event occurred: she took the kitchen knife she had been holding, unsheathed it, and approached her mother, who was sitting down. Mary, *"worn down to a state of extreme nervous misery by attention to needlework by day and to her mother at night"*, was seized with acute mania and stabbed her mother to the heart with a table knife. Charles ran into the house soon after the murder and took the knife out of Mary's hand.

Later in the evening, Charles found a local place for Mary in a private mental facility called Fisher House, which had been found with the help of a doctor friend of his. While reports were published by the media, Charles wrote a letter to Samuel Taylor Coleridge in connection to the matricide:

MY dearest friend — White or some of my friends or the public papers by this time may have informed you of the terrible calamities that have fallen on our family. I will only give you the outlines. My poor dear dearest sister in a fit of insanity has been the death of her own mother. I was at hand only time enough to snatch the knife out of her grasp. She is at present in a mad house, from whence I fear she must be moved to an hospital. God has preserved to me my senses, — I eat and drink and sleep, and have my judgment I believe very sound. My poor father was slightly wounded, and I am left to take care of him and my aunt. Mr.

Norris of the Bluecoat school has been very very kind to us, and we have no other friend, but thank God I am very calm and composed, and able to do the best that remains to do. Write, —as religious a letter as possible— but no mention of what is gone and done with. —With me “*the former things are passed away*,” and I have something more to do than to feel. God almighty have us all in his keeping.

—Lamb to Coleridge. September 27, 1796

Charles took over responsibility for Mary after refusing his brother John's suggestion that they have her committed to a public facility. Lamb used a large part of his relatively meagre income to keep his beloved sister in the private "madhouse" in Islington. With the help of friends, Lamb would succeed in obtaining his sister's release from what would otherwise have been lifelong imprisonment. Although there was no legal status of "insanity" at the time, the jury returned the verdict of "lunacy" which was how she was freed from guilt of willful murder, on the condition that Charles take personal responsibility for her safekeeping.

The 1799 death of John Lamb was something of a relief to Charles because his father had been mentally incapacitated for a number of years since suffering a stroke. The death of his father also meant that Mary could come to live again with him in Pentonville, and in 1800 they set up a shared home at Mitre Court Buildings in the Temple, where they would live until 1809.

In 1800, Mary's illness came back and Charles had to take her back again to the mental facility. In those days, Charles sent a letter to Coleridge, in which he admitted he felt melancholic and lonely, "almost wishing that Mary were dead."

Later she would come back, and both he and his sister would enjoy an active and rich social life. Their London quarters became a kind of weekly salon for many of the most outstanding theatrical and literary figures of the day. Charles Lamb, having been to school with Samuel Coleridge, counted Coleridge as perhaps his closest, and certainly his oldest, friend. On his deathbed, Coleridge had a mourning ring sent to Lamb and his sister. Fortuitously, Lamb's first publication was in 1796, when four sonnets by "Mr. Charles Lamb of the India House" appeared in Coleridge's *Poems on Various Subjects*. In 1797 he contributed additional blank verse to the second edition, and met the Wordsworths, William and Dorothy, on his short summer holiday with Coleridge at Nether Stowey, thereby also striking up a lifelong friendship with William. In London, Lamb became familiar with a group of young writers who favoured political reform, including Percy Bysshe Shelley, William Hazlitt, and Leigh Hunt.

Lamb continued to clerk for the East India Company and doubled as a writer in various genres, his tragedy, *John Woodvil*, being published in 1802. His farce, *Mr H*, was performed at Drury Lane in 1807, where it was roundly booed. In the same year, *Tales from Shakespeare* (Charles handled the tragedies; his sister Mary, the comedies) was published, and became a best seller for William Godwin's "Children's Library".

In 1819, at age 44, Lamb, who, because of family commitments, had never married, fell in love with an actress, Fanny Kelly, of Covent Garden, and proposed marriage. She refused him, and he died a bachelor.

His collected essays, under the title *Essays of Elia*, were published in 1823 ("Elia" being the pen name Lamb used as a contributor to the *London Magazine*).



*The Essays of Elia* would be criticized in the *Quarterly Review* (January, 1823) by Robert Southey, who thought its author to be irreligious. When Charles read the review, entitled, "*The Progress of Infidelity*," he was filled with indignation, and wrote a letter to his friend Bernard Barton, where Lamb declared he hated the review, and emphasized that his words "*meant no harm to religion*." First, Lamb did not want to retort, since he actually admired Southey; but later he felt the need to write a letter Elia to Southey, in which he complained and expressed that the fact that he was a dissenter of the Church, did not make him an irreligious man. The letter would be published in the *London Magazine*, on October, 1823:

Rightly taken, Sir, that Paper was not against Graces, but Want of Grace; not against the ceremony, but the carelessness and slovenliness so often observed in the performance of it. . . You have never ridiculed, I believe, what you thought to be religion, but you are always girding at what some pious, but perhaps mistaken folks, think to be so.

—Charles Lamb, "Letter of Elia to Robert Southey, Esquire"

A further collection called *The Last Essays of Elia* was published in 1833, shortly before Lamb's death. Also, in 1834, Samuel Coleridge died. The funeral was confined only to the family of the writer, so Lamb was prevented from attending and only wrote a letter to Rev. James Gilman, a very close expressing his condolences.

He died of a streptococcal infection, erysipelas, contracted from a minor graze on his face sustained after slipping in the street, on 27 December 1834. He was 59. From 1833 till their deaths, Charles and Mary lived at Bay Cottage, Church Street, Edmonton north of London (now part of the London Borough of

Enfield. Lamb is buried in All Saints' Churchyard, Edmonton. His sister, who was ten years his senior, survived him for more than a dozen years. She is buried beside him.

## **1.2. Leading Characteristics of Lamb's Personality:**

Lamb was really one of the most sweet-tempered persons, who could pass on his sweetness of temper even to his readers through his writings. It is surprising how a person, who was so poor and who had so many worries and calamities in his life, could retain such a sweet temper. How much of tremendous patience Lamb possessed and how much of courage he had in fighting with adversity can be seen in his contentment and also in his cheerful spirit and sweet temper. His sister, being deranged in brain and when particularly his sister killed her mother in fits of insanity, Lamb decided to remain a bachelor all his life. It is not true that his poverty prevented him from getting married; but it is his anxiety and care about his sister that deprived him forever of the blessings of married life. We do not know if he could retain the same temper, the same brotherly love, the same sense of responsibility if he had married Anna Simons with whom he had fallen in love, but unfortunately, whom he could not marry. Lamb's hankering for marriage is reflected in his love of children, which he unconsciously depicts in his essay on Dream Children. Some of Lamb's biographers believe that Lamb took to drinking only to forget the pinches of poverty, the disappointment in love, and also the insanity of his sister, but then Lamb never got addicted to drinking.

Lamb was extremely fond of London life because he was born and educated in London and also he worked all his life in London. All his writings are full of the atmosphere of the city of London, particularly the intellectual atmosphere of it. Lamb has reflected in his *Essays* as well as in other writings the

concentrated life of London, the bookish culture, and other such intellectual facilities, which are available in London only. Both Ollier and Hazlitt have pointed out how Lamb was enamored of London, how he had depicted London life, and how he had breathed into that congested city a picture of dreams and fancies that generally come to the poets like Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, Keats, Byron, and other Romantic poets of the nineteenth century. Lamb's love for antiquity was inspired by his close association with the old buildings of the Inner Temple and Christ's Hospital but Lamb was never an antiquarian. In this connection, H.C. Hill says, "Lamb loved old books but disliked new readings, he loved old writers, but when a friend brought him leaves from the tree that grew by the tomb of Virgil, he threw them carelessly into the street. It would almost seem that the dead were in a sense alive to him, and that he resented anything that interfered with this fancy.

To one chief feature of city life, Lamb was indifferent. He took no interest in politics. Not only in his Essays, begun only five years after the close of the great Napoleonic wars, but even in his Letters there are hardly any references to politics. Politics were excluded from the subjects at his Wednesday evening assemblies. Procter supposes that his abstention from subjects connected with the great world was due to modesty, but it was so complete that one can hardly ascribe it to anything but indifference. It was, however, this avoidance of the ephemeral that has given him his continued popularity, for there are but few readers who take much interest in even the best political writers of a by-gone age. Still it is interesting to note that he owes his existence, as it were, to an ephemeral form of literature, the periodical magazine, which owes its origin so largely to politics. Hazlitt points out that Lamb, "from the peculiarity of his exterior and address as an author, would probably have never made his way by detached and independent efforts," but that, once brought before the public, beauty of his writing and the nature of his subjects attracted and compelled admiration.

It is curious that at the very moment when Wordsworth was originating a new nature-worship, one of his earliest and warmest admirers should be, so decidedly as Lamb was, a worshipper of the town. Wordsworth called him “a scorner of the fields,” and his words do much to justify the accusation. In a letter to Wordsworth (January 30<sup>th</sup>, 1801), he writes: “Separate from the pleasure of your company, I don’t much care if I never see a mountain in my life. I have passed all my days in London, until I have formed as many and intense local attachments as any of your mountaineers can have done with dead nature”; and, again (January 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1830), “O, let no native Londoner imagine that health and rest and innocent occupation, interchange of sweet and recreative study, make the country anything better than odious and detestable! A garden was the primitive prison till man, with Promethean felicity and boldness, luckily sinned himself out of it. Thence followed Babylon, Nineveh, Venice, London, haberdashers, goldsmiths, taverns, play-houses, satires, epigrams, puns—these all came into town part of the thither side of innocence.” While such passages as these contain much and evident exaggeration, they mark very decidedly the direction in which Lamb’s preferences lay. On the other hand this preference did not prevent his showing a keen and loving appreciation of the beauties of the country. He could enjoy a holiday there, and could truly and sympathetically describe the scenery around him as we see in *Mackery End*, *Blackesmoor*, and *Dream Children*, for, as regards the places mentioned in these *Essays*, they had for him the local attachment which is necessary to stimulate genius into expression.

Lamb was a great observer and also a great thinker; otherwise he could not have given such realistic details of many things nor could he have scattered such pearls of wisdom throughout his writing. Wordsworth rightly says that “Lamb poured out truth in words by thoughtful love, inspired words potent over smiles and tears.” Lamb felt deeply for the lower animals and the poor people probably

because he was himself poor and found his own helplessness reflected in the lives of the lower animals, who could not fight against the laws of nature as he could not fight against the laws of mankind.

This all embracing love of Lamb's was due to no sense of duty, but was in his nature, and showed itself in a gentleness and sweetness of look and manner, which, as Le Grice has told us, caused him even as a child to be distinguished by his Christian name. "So Christians should call one another," Lamb writes in *Mackery End*. In later life it drew from Wordsworth the title of "gentle-hearted," which, in spite of Lamb's objection to the epithet, has clung, and must ever cling to his name. It is unfortunate that we have, in English, no word that will express gentleness without weakness. Lamb was right in objecting, for his was no weak character. He could not refuse money to a begging impostor. "Reader, be not frightened," he writes in *The Decay of Beggars*, "at the harsh words imposition, imposture—give and ask no questions. Cast thy bread upon the waters"—he could not refuse that fatal "last glass" with a friend, he could not hate any man whom he knew, and Jeremy Taylor tells us that to be good we must hate bad men; but he could devote his whole life to a sister who killed her mother, and might at any time kill him. This he did for the sake of love; but surely it was the love of a strong man. It was a burden of forty years' endurance—an undertaking as truly heroic as any of the great deeds of the Elizabethan age.

Even in the underlying melancholy of his character Lamb resembles many of the Elizabethans, for melancholy is a common accompaniment of habits of deep thought, but in Lamb's case his melancholy was due to a hereditary taint. His father's dotage and his sister's madness has been recorded to his brother John, we find Lamb writing on one occasion that he has fears of his mind. Lamb suffered

only once from an attack of madness sufficiently serious to necessitate his confinement, but the gloominess noticeable in *New Year's Eve*, in *Witches and Other Night Fears*, and in the *Confessions of a Drunkard*, as well as in many scattered passages, is strong proof of the disease latent in his nature. He can seldom write gaily for any length of time, the darker side of his life forces itself upon his attention.

He tells us somewhere that he had read large quantities of "dry divinity" to prevent his mind from dwelling on his misfortunes, but fortunately he found in the old strong writers who most interested him not merely a relief from sad thoughts, but the occasion of healthy thought also. He was no scholar in the modern sense of the word, his classical allusions, his references to the Bible, his quotations are hardly ever correct; but he had a full intelligent, and loving acquaintance with all the great writers from the time of Spenser to his own; he knew Wordsworth as well as any of his modern worshippers; and, as shown by his quotations, he read nearly all that was of any interest in the light literature and drama of his day. This appreciation of all kinds of books seems to be due partly to the accident of his having had in his childhood free access to the large library of Samuel Salt, partly, possibly, to the accident of town life, which tends to excite in the mind a vivid interest in all classes of our fellow-creatures, and in what we can learn of them.

Besides books Lamb loved pictures and prints. He constantly refers to them in his *Essays*. It is evident that he was a good judge of them, and that the taste for them was a family one is shown by his reference in his *My Relations* to his brother John's collection.

Besides his prose Lamb wrote many poems and a few dramatic works, but neither in Poetry nor in the Drama did he rise above the ordinary level. On the other hand the practice of versification gave him a wonderful command of prose, and the undeveloped dramatic instinct accounts for the vividness of characterization which distinguishes the personages whose acts and sayings form the ground-work of most of the Essays.

Lamb's essays and other writings are full of wisdom, truth, penetrating insight, sympathy, gentleness, and love for all things and persons, which he happens to observe and comment upon. He possesses an extraordinary commonsense, and that is why, whatever he says is not very far from truth or reality or fairness. We can find his wisdom and wit scattered in many of his essays, such as *Old China*, *Recollections of Christ's Hospital*, *Modern Gallantry*, *The Tombs in the Abbey*, and in many other essays. One thing, however, is very striking that in spite of Lamb's shrewd criticism of men and things, Lamb never became unpopular. Wordsworth, Coleridge, Hazlitt and others all have certified that it is due to Lamb's kindness that people loved him.

It has been pointed out that spirituality played an important role in Lamb's personal life, and that, although he was not a churchman, and disliked organized religion, he yet "sought consolation in religion," as shown by letters to Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Bernard Barton, in which he described the New Testament as his "best guide" for life, and where he talked about how he used to read the Psalms for one or two hours without getting tired. Other papers have also dealt with his Christian beliefs. As his friend Samuel Coleridge, Lamb was sympathetic to Priestleyan Unitarianism[18] and was a dissenter, yet, he was described by Coleridge himself as one whose "faith in Jesus had been preserved" even after the

family tragedy. Wordsworth also described him as a firm Christian in the poem *Written After the Death of Charles Lamb*. Alfred Ainger, in his work *Charles Lamb*, writes that Lamb's religion had become "an habit".

The poems "*On The Lord's Prayer*", "*A Vision Of Repentance*", "*The Young Catechist*", "*Composed at Midnight*", "*Suffer Little Children, And Forbid Them Not, To Come Unto Me*", "*Written a twelvemonth after the Events*", "*Charity*", "*Sonnet To A Friend*" and "*David*" reflect much about Lamb's faith, whereas the poem "*Living Without God In The World*" has been called a "poetic attack" to unbelief, in which Lamb expresses his disgust for atheism attributing its nature to pride.

## **2.0. The Essay: Its Definition and Characteristics:**

### **2.1.1. The Essay:**

"The History of Essay-writing", says Henry Morley, "in modern literature begins with Montaigne and then passes to Bacon. Each used the word Essay in its true sense, as an assay or analysis of some subject of thought. Bacon's essay was of life, generally in many forms, with full attention to its outward circumstances. Montaigne's essay was of the inner life of man as it was to be found in the one man's life that he knew." The Essay Proper, or Literary Essay, is not merely a short analysis of a subject, not a mere epitome, but rather a picture of the writer's mind as affected for the moment by the subject with which he is dealing. Its most distinctive feature is the egotistical element.



### 2.1.2. Egotistical Element of the Essay:

Montaigne tell us he chose himself for his subject because he was the only person whom he knew thoroughly, and therefore the only person he could truly describe to the world. This is an egotism devoid of self-assertion, except in so far as it claims that the character of the writer is worth knowing, a claim quite consistent with modesty. Bacon's egotism shows itself at times, as in his treatment of *Friendship*, in a curious incapacity to take any view not based on his own experience. In Sir Thomas Brown egotism becomes as it were impersonal, he is to himself the type of the human race. It is egotism of this kind which we find in Lamb, though mixed with sweetness all his own. As Cowper thinks every trifling incident in his life will be interesting to his friend Unwin because of Unwin's love for him, so Lamb assumes the friendship of his reader, takes him into his confidence on all his private affairs, jokes with him, and mystifies him, exactly in the same way as he treated his actual friends.

Lamb's essays can therefore, be read as a kind of autobiography; in one he describes his childhood in the Temple, in another his school-days at Christ's Hospital, in others Blakesware in Hertfordshire where he spent his boyish holidays, in others his early poverty, his first literary beginnings, his Bohemian life in connection with the Press, his holiday trips to the sea-side with his sister Mary, his recovery from a serious illness, the drudgery of his office work, and his relief when he finally retires from his official duties; and everywhere we come across numberless details about his friends. They all appear in his *Essays*, and he jokes and takes liberties with

them there as he did in real life; but even when laughing at them, as in the case of Dyer, he has a curious art which makes us doubt the realities of the stories he tells us, and when he says anything that might appear to be unkind, he immediately adds some pleasant trait of character to prevent our forming a wrong opinion.

Of his relations he gives us full and living pictures –his brother John is the James Elia of *My Relations*; his sister Mary, never absent from his mind in life, is present throughout the Essays as Bridget Elia, and is most lovingly described in *Mackery End*; his father is the Lovel of the *Old Benchers*; his aunt is referred to in *My Relations*; his grandmother in *Dream Children*. Then coming to matters more personal he describes in various places his want of skill in figuring his dread of novelty, his dislike of death, his imperfection of speech, his incapacity for music, his want of personal beauty, his short stature and unmilitary appearance, his ignorance of things generally known, his love of good cheer, his weakness for wine and tobacco. There is only one subject he is silent upon, and that is insanity. In *New Year's Eve* he has occasion to refer to melancholy madness, and to do so inserts a long question from Burton.

### **2.1.3. Subject of the Essay:**

Montaigne had very little but himself to write about, few books and hardly any society. Bacon was occupied with serious matters: he lived in a time when life was serious as well as vigorous. Steele and Addison in a purely literary age wrote for polite society: their satire was conventional, their subjects generally trifling. Lamb, Hazlitt,

and Hunt had a wider range of subjects—the one essential being that the subject must be one of public interest—and they wrote for a large, educated, and thoughtful reading public. In Lamb's writings, as in Montaigne's, the subject is the writer himself—not, however, the mere individual Lamb, but Lamb as he was connected with his numerous friends, and as his sympathy identified him with his inhabitants of the great city in which he lived.

#### **2.1.4. Method of the Essay:**

When we study the Essay, that is the Literary Essay, we notice a number of peculiarities which differentiate it from other branches of literature:

- a) The Essay is a short composition, one which can be easily read though in any interval of leisure, and retained easily in the mind as a whole.
- b) It should be rather an assemblage of details carefully grouped than a system or theory worked out; it should suggest rather than prove, for in so short a work there must necessarily be much left undealt with. It is a picture, not a narrative or a thesis.
- c) It must be an artistic whole that is the development of a single idea, and not an aimless or casual wandering of the mind from one subject to another. Here some think that Lamb is defective. For instance, in the Essay on *Oxford in the Vacation* the greater part is concerned with Lamb's friend

Dyer, and in *Old China* with a description of the early poverty of Lamb and his sister. In the former it would appear that the title of the Essay misleads us, the real subject being the influence of University life upon the characters of men studiously inclined, which he illustrates by a description of its effect upon himself in his short visits, and upon his friend Dyer, who has had the advantages which he himself had missed. In *Old China*, on the other hand, the fantastic reasoning with which, Mary maintains the advantages of comparative poverty shows the same absence of perspective as the pictures of the Chinese artist. In all cases it is the human interest that appeals to Lamb; he describes not so much things as their effect upon, or illustration in, human character. The artistic completeness of his treatment is perhaps best seen in *The Old and New Schoolmaster*, where every detail bears upon the subject suggested by the title.

- d) The subject must be lightly handled; not frivolously, but without any appearance of wishing to force the writer's opinion upon the reader. It must appeal like a poem, to the emotions and the heart rather than to the intellect. There need be no-lack of wisdom in it, but this must be imparted by persuasion and not by argument; and here the egotism of the Essay justifies itself, for the writer's personal experience is always a ready example and illustration. Bacon effects this by his constant use of poetic imagery and simile; for the simile is not a statement of fact, but a picture of the impression made by a fact upon the mind of the writer. Still the simile is not so effective for this purpose as the direct "I" of Lamb. This is

well seen in the opening paragraphs of *Witches and Other Night Fears*, where Lamb defends the wisdom of his ancestors, presenting his arguments as his personal feelings on the subject: “I have sometimes thought that I could not have existed in the days of received witchcraft; that I could not have slept in a village where one of those reputed hags dwelt. Our ancestors were bolder or more obtuse.”

- e) Lastly, the Essays must appear to be written, not without thought, but freely and openly without any after-consideration. This is what Montaigne means when he says, “I speak unto paper as unto the first man I meet.” The same quality gives their charm to Addison’s Essays; and Lamb, talking in the Essays of Elia, says: “Crude they are, I grant you—a sort of unlicked, incondite things.” It is not every man who can enjoy good company if he be poor, or sensible company if he be rich; and the attractiveness of the Essay is largely due to the fact that it provides company both good and sensible for the reader in his moments of leisure, at times when he thinks rather of relaxing his mind than on its improvement. When we remember how often many of Lamb’s Essays were re-written, or, if not re-written, at least altered in many parts, we are surprised to observe the constant freshness which they retain. This is greatly due to his truthfulness. He might rewrite or modify a passage for reasons of taste, but the opinions he expressed were always really his, at any rate at the time of writing, and hence there is less alteration than one would expect to find. Again, the nature of his subjects—his constant reference to things never

known by or forgotten by his readers, and yet connected with the town they lived in, or the nation they belonged to—produces the same effect as novelty. Then again he tells an old story, but with some slight modifications that quite change its effect. At other times an old idea running in his mind serves as the groundwork of a joke or pun; and lastly, in literary point, allusions, quotations, references, there is an amount of inaccuracy which we can hardly imagine to be possible in a carefully revised piece of writing.

## **2.2. Lamb as an Essayist:**

We have now to consider certain peculiarities which characterize Lamb's writing, as illustrated in the Essays. These may be dealt with under the following headings: (1) *Style*, (2) *Dramatic characterization*, (3) *Extensive use of quotation*, (4) *Humour*, (5) *Pathos*.

### **2.2.1. Style:**

There are many points in which Lamb imitates the Elizabethan writers: e.g., in his love for word-coining, his fondness for alliteration, his use of compound words, his formation of adjectives from proper names, his frequent use of Latinisms. Then again he introduces many words now obsolete, and only to be found in Elizabethan writers, the result being a language which, like that of Spenser, could never have been spoken at any time; but, besides this, he is so well acquainted with the Elizabethan writers that when he

follows their veins of thought he seems insensibly to adopt their style and the very cadence of their writing.

When reflective, as in *New Year's Eve* and the *Popular Fallacies*, his style resembles that of Sir Thomas Browne; when fantastic, as in the *Chapter on Ears*, that of Burton; when witty, as in *Poor Relations*, that of Fuller. The result of this is a kind of mannerism, which is not so much an affectation, though he calls it “a self-pleasing quaintness,” as the natural effect of his preference for the ancient authors.

His mind was so saturated with what he read that he could not avoid the use of their phraseology any more than a child brought up amongst his elders can avoid using what we call old-fashioned expressions. On rare occasions he used this antique style where the subject was not capable of that deep thought and fine observation with which we are accustomed to associate it. On these occasions even his powerful fancy is unable to make it pleasing. But, generally speaking, he shows great skill in adapting his style to his subject.

In dealing with matters purely modern, as in *Newspapers Thirty-five Years Ago*, his style is purely modern also; in his rural descriptions his tone is almost Wordsworthian. But whatever his style may be, his thoughts are his own, fresh and original, and his honest admiration of what was great in the past has done much, at least in literary circles, to check that conceit of the present, which is so common in a rapidly-advancing civilization.

### **2.2.2. Dramatic Characterization:**

Proctor writes: “Some of his phantasms—the people of the Old South-Sea House, Mrs. Battle, the Benchers of the Middle Temple,...might be grouped into Comedies. His sketches are always (to quote his own eulogy of Marvell) ‘full of a witty delicacy,’ and if properly brought out and marshaled would do honour to the stage.” This remark is true of almost all the characters in the Essays; and it is somewhat surprising that, with this power of characterization, his two direct attempts at the drama, *John Woodvil* and *Mr. H—*, should have been such failures. It seems that he could harmonize a scene, but not arrange or work out a plot. But besides this power of characterization, a certain dramatic effect is produced by the flexibility of his descriptive style, as may be seen in its rapid changes as he describes the different clerks in the South-Sea House.

### **2.2.3. Use of Quotation:**

As a rule, Landor rightly remarks, the use of quotation only marks the weakness of the writer, and in fact it is only justifiable when the quotation adapts itself to the context, and does not strike the reader with any sense of incongruity. There is no reason why a writer should avoid using an idea, or the form in which a previous writer expressed that idea, if he can make its setting correspond to it. This is the justification of Milton in his adaptation of passages from the Greek and Latin writers, and it is the justification of Lamb, who makes perhaps a more free use of quotation than does any other the modern prose writers. Further, a careful perusal of his works will show that the quotations which he uses occur so repeatedly that they must have been constantly in his mind, and not raked up for the



occasion. Amongst others the student should note the following kinds of quotations: pretended quotations, quotations from his own works, random quotations, or half recollections, transformed quotations, condensed quotations, combined quotations, adapted quotations, parodies, and single-word quotations.

#### **2.2.4. Humour:**

The terms Wit, Humour, and Fun are often confused, but they are really different in meaning. The first is based on intellect, the second on insight and sympathy, the third on vigour and freshness of mind and body. Lamb's writings show all the three qualities, but what most distinguishes him is Humour, for his sympathy is ever strong and active. In *Poor Relations* the opening is sheer Wit, but we are more inclined to cry than to laugh when we read the story of Favel's flight from the University. "I do not know how," says Lamb, "upon a subject which I began with treating half seriously, I should have fallen upon a recital so eminently painful"; but this is Lamb's way, he cannot even laugh at people without presently putting himself in their place and taking their view of the matter.

Humour might be defined as extreme sensitiveness to the true proportion of things. We are so accustomed to exaggerate one or other side of a fact that the true proportion, when seen, strikes us with a sense of incongruity, and so excites laughter; but the laughter is really at our own previous misconceptions, and therefore borders on the painful. Wit, on the other hand, is an intellectual triumph, bringing things into connection that before appeared totally different. The laughter it causes is that of self-satisfaction, and may even be

accompanied by cruel feelings towards others. Fun is, as Ollier says, “the creation of animal spirits and health”; it depends on the possession of sufficient vigor to forget ourselves for the moment and to look upon everything around us as formed for our amusement. We see this Fun in *All Fool’s Day*, which is largely composed of mere pleasant nonsense like the idle talk when the wine is going round after dinner; and in *Roast Pig*, which is full of sheer absurdities.

- a) **Punning:** this same love of Fun is seen in Lamb’s fondness for punning, which he indulged more freely in his conversation than in his writing. It may be remembered that punning was a characteristic of the Elizabethan writers.
- b) **Absurd Details:** So, also, he frequently inserts absurd details. He has been long striving to learn “God save the King,” but without much success, “Yet hath the loyalty of Elia never been impeached.” He has borrowed from everyone he knows, “It has been calculated that he laid a tythe part of the inhabitants (of England) under contribution.”
- c) **Inventions:** sometimes his details are mere inventions, as the discussion at St. Omer’s, when he was a student there, of the lawfulness of beating pigs to death, and the story of the little chimney-sweep found sleeping on the state bed in Arundel Castle. So also, the thoroughly paced liar in *The Old Margate Hoy* can hardly have been any one but Lamb himself.
- d) **Improving upon Facts:** then, again, he takes the liberty of improving upon fact. In *Amicus Redivus* he tells us that he drew his friend Dyer from the New River, whereas he was away from home at

the time and arrived only after Dyer had been rescued and put to bed.

- e) **Perverse Interpretations:** sometimes he indulges in perverse interpretations. When his friend hears some one playing upon the piano and knows it cannot be the maid (because, of course, she would not dare to take such a liberty), he pretends it was because of some subtle superiority in his own strumming, due to the fact that he is an educated man.
- f) **Mystification:** another form taken by his Fun is the constant mystification to which he treats his readers. After speaking of real persons in the *South- Sea House* he pretends they have no existence, “I have fooled the reader to the top of his bent.” In *Christ’s Hospital* he begins in the character of Coleridge, but towards the end he speaks as himself. His *Memoir of Liston*, as has been mentioned before, was an absolute fiction, and he prides himself on the success of his imposition.
- g) **Startling Metaphors:** there is a mixture of Fun and Wit in his metaphors and comparisons. The clerks of the South-Sea House remind him of the animals in Noah’s Ark; the sage who invented a less expensive way of roasting pigs than that which necessitated the burning down of a house he compares to “our Locke”. The cook in *The Old Margate Hoy* reminds him of Ariel.

- h) **Irony:** his Fun passes into Humor when there is an ad-mixture of reflection. He is fond of a kind of reversed irony. He makes a statement or uses a phrase which at first is unpleasing, but becomes pleasing when we consider it more carefully. For instance, he writes of “the rational antipathies of the great English and French nations.” He says of himself and his sister, “We are generally in harmony, with occasional bickering, as it should be among near relations,” and describes the coast-guard men as carrying on “a legitimated civil war in the deplorable absence of a foreign one.”
- i) **Little Hits:** the Essays are full of little hits at himself and others. He tells us that when at Oxford he is often mistaken for one of the Dons, but the mistake is made only by the dim-eyed vergers. Coleridge claims that the title o property in a book is in “exact ratio to the claimant’s power of understanding and appreciating the same. Should he go on acting upon this theory, which of our shelves is safe?” he tells us he must touch gently upon the foibles of his sister, “Bridget does not like to be told of her faults.” He wishes his friend’s wife, a Frenchwoman, had carried away from his library not the works of Margaret of Newcastle but “*Zimmerman on Solitude!*”
- j) **Humorous Touches:** everywhere in the Essays we find scattered little humorous touches. Mrs. Battle loses her rubber because she cannot bring herself to utter the common phrase, “Two for his heels.” When Bobo is discovered eating the roast pigs by his father, and finds time to attend to his remonstrances and blows, he seizes a fresh pig and tears it into two parts, but it is the “lesser half” which he thrusts into the “fists” of his father.

- k) **Paradox and Oxymoron:** all most all the reflective writers have been fond of paradox and Lamb not less than others, so we observe many passages, such as, “Awoke into sleep and found the vision true,” “Whom single blessedness had soured to the world,” “The sophisticating medium of moral uses.” Now and then we notice instances of oxymoron, “Fortunate piece of ill-fortune.”

### 2.2.5. Pathos:

Humor is very nearly allied to Pathos. Our smiles and our tears are alike limited by our powers of insight and sympathy. Lamb’s humor was largely the effect of a sane and healthy protest against the over-whelming melancholy induced by the morbid taint in his mind. He laughed to save himself from weeping, but as has been mentioned above, he could not prevent his mind from passing at times to the sadder aspects of life. In *Rosamond Gray*, the description of his dead brother in *Dream Children*, the flight of Favel from the University in *Poor Relations*, the story of the sick boy who “had no friends,” in *The Old Margate Hoy*, and in many other instances we have examples of true pathos. In *New Year’s Eve*, in *Witches and Other Night Fears*, and the *Confessions of a Drunkard*, the feeling is so intense as to inspire rather terror than pity.

### 3.0. My Relations: Text

I AM arrived at that point of life, at which a man may account it a blessing, as it is a singularity, if he have either of his parents surviving. I have not that felicity and sometimes think feelingly of a passage in Browne's Christian Morals, where he speaks of a man that hath lived sixty or seventy years in the world. "In such a compass of time," he says, " a man may have a close apprehension what it is to be forgotten, when he hath lived to find none who could remember his father, or scarcely the friends of his youth, and may sensibly see with what a face in no long time OBLIVION will look upon himself."

I had an aunt, a dear and good one. She was one whom single blessedness had soured to the world. She often used to say, that I was the only thing in it which she loved ; and, when she thought I was quitting it, she grieved over me with mother's tears. A partiality quite so exclusive my reason cannot altogether approve. She was from morning till night poring over good books, and devotional exercises. Her favourite volumes were Thomas a Kempis, in Stan- hope's Translation; and a Roman Catholic Prayer Book, with the matins and complines regularly set down, terms which I was at that time too young to understand. She persisted in reading them, although admonished daily concerning their Papistical tendency ; and went to church every Sabbath, as a good Protestant should do. These were the only books she studied ; though, I think, at one period of her life, she told me, she had read with great satisfaction the Adventures of an Unfortunate Young Nobleman. Finding the door of the chapel in Essex-street open one day it was in the infancy of that heresy she went in, liked the sermon, and the manner of worship, and frequented it at intervals for some time after. She came not for doctrinal points, and never missed them. With some little asperities in her constitution, which I have above hinted at, she was a steadfast, friendly being, and a fine old Christian. She was a woman of strong sense, and a shrewd mind extraordinary at a repartee ; one of the few occasions of her breaking silence else she

did not much value wit. The only secular employment I remember to have seen her engaged in, was, the splitting of French beans, and dropping them into a China basin of fair water. The odour of those tender vegetables to this day comes back upon my sense, redolent of soothing recollections. Certainly it is the most delicate of culinary operations.

Male aunts, as somebody calls them, I had none to remember. By the uncle's side I may be said to have been born an orphan. Brother, or sister, I never had any to know them. A sister, I think, that should have been Elizabeth, died in both our infancies. What a comfort, or what a care, may I not have missed in her ! But I have cousins, sprinkled about in Hertfordshire besides two, with whom I have been all my life in habits of the closest intimacy, and whom I may term cousins par excellence. These are James and Bridget Elia. They are older than myself by twelve, and ten, years ; and neither of them seems disposed, in matters of advice and guidance, to waive any of the prerogatives which primogeniture confers. May they continue still in the same mind ; and when they shall be seventy-five, and seventy-three, years old (I cannot spare them sooner), persist in treating me in my grand climacteric precisely as a stripling, or younger brother !

James is an inexplicable cousin. Nature hath her unities, which not every critic can penetrate ; or, if we feel, we cannot explain them. The pen of Yorick, and of none since his, could have drawn J. E. entire those fine Shandian lights and shades, which make up his story. I must limp after in my poor antithetical manner, as the fates have given me grace and talent. J. E. then to the eye of a common observer at least seemeth made up of contradictory principies. The genuine child of impulse, the frigid philosopher of prudence the phlegm of my cousin's doctrine

is invariably at war with his temperament, which is high sanguine. With always some fire-new project in his brain, J. E. is the systematic opponent of innovation, and crier down of every thing that has not stood the test of age and experiment. With a hundred fine notions chasing one another hourly in his fancy, he is startled at the least approach to the romantic in others ; and, determined by his own sense in every thing, commends you to the guidance of common sense on all occasions. With a touch of the eccentric in all which he does, or says, he is only anxious that you should not commit yourself by doing any thing absurd or singular. On my once letting slip at table, that I was not fond of a certain popular dish, he begged me at any rate not to say so for the world would think me mad. He disguises a passionate fondness for works of high art (whereof he hath amassed a choice collection), under the pretext of buying only to sell again that his enthusiasm may give no encouragement to yours. Yet, if it were so, why does that piece of tender, pastoral Domin- ichino hang still by his wall ? is the ball of his sight much more dear to him ? or what picture-dealer can talk like him?

Whereas mankind in general are observed to warp their speculative conclusions to the bent of their individual humours, his theories are sure to be in diametrical opposition to his constitution. He is courageous as Charles of Sweden, upon instinct ; chary of his person, upon principle, as a travelling Quaker. He has been preaching up to me, all my life, the doctrine of bowing to the great the necessity of forms, and manner, to a man's getting on in the world. He himself never aims at either, that I can discover, and has a spirit, that would stand upright in the presence of the Cham of Tartary. It is pleasant to hear him discourse of patience extolling it as the truest wisdom and to see him during the last seven minutes that his dinner is getting ready. Nature never ran up in her haste a more restless piece of workman-ship than when she moulded this impetuous cousin and Art never turned out a more elaborate orator than he can display himself to be,



upon his favourite topic of the advantages of quiet, and contentedness in the state, whatever it be, that we are placed in. He is triumphant on this theme, when he has you safe in one of those short stages that ply for the western road, in a very obstructing manner, at the foot of John Murray's street where you get in when it is empty, and are expected to wait till the vehicle hath completed her just freight a trying three quarters of an hour to some people. He wonders at your fidgetiness, "where could we be better than we are, thus sitting, thus consulting?" "prefers, for his part, a state of rest to locomotion," with an eye all the while upon the coachman till at length, waxing out of all patience, at your want of it, he breaks out into a pathetic remonstrance at the fellow for detaining us so long over the time which he had professed, and declares peremptorily, that "the gentleman in the coach is determined to get out, if he does not drive on that instant."

Very quick at inventing an argument, or detecting a sophistry, he is incapable of attending you in any chain of arguing. Indeed he makes wild work with logic ; and seems to jump at most admirable conclusions by some process, not at all akin to it. Consonantly enough to this, he hath been heard to deny, upon certain occasions, that there exists such a faculty at all in man as reason ; and wondereth how man came first to have a conceit of it enforcing his negation with all the might of reasoning he is master of. He has some speculative notions against laughter, and will maintain that laughing is not natural to him when peradventure the next moment his lungs shall crow like Chanticleer. He says some of the best things in the world and declare th that wit is his aversion. It was he who said, upon seeing the Eton boys at play in their grounds What a pity to think, that these fine ingenious lads in a few years will all be changed into frivolous 'Members of Parliament !

His youth was fiery, glowing, tempestuous and in age he discovereth no symptom of cooling. This is that which I admire in him. I hate people who meet Time half-way. I am for no compromise with that inevitable spoiler. While he lives, J. E. will take his swing. It does me good, as I walk towards the street of my daily avocation, on some fine May morning, to meet him marching in a quite opposite direction, with a jolly handsome presence, and shining sanguine face, that indicates some purchase in his eye a Claude or a Hobbima for much of his enviable leisure is consumed at Christie's, and Phillips's or where not, to pick up pictures, and such gauds. On these occasions he mostly stoppeth me, to read a short lecture on the advantage a person like me possesses above himself, in having his time occupied with business which he must do assureth me that he often feels it hang heavy on his hands wishes he had fewer holidays and goes off West-ward Ho ! chanting a tune, to Pall Mall perfectly convinced that he has convinced me while I proceed in my opposite direction tuneless.

It is pleasant again to see this Professor of Indifference doing the honours of his new purchase, when he has fairly housed it. You must view it in every light, till he has found the best placing it at this distance, and at that, but always suiting the focus of your sight to his own. You must spy at it through your fingers, to catch the aerial perspective though you assure him that to you the landscape shows much more agreeable without that artifice. Wo be to the luckless wight, who does not only not respond to his rapture, but who should drop an unseasonable intimation of preferring one of his anterior bargains to the present ! The last is always his best hit his " Cynthia of the minute." Alas ! how many a mild Madonna have I known to come in a Raphael ! keep its ascendancy for a few brief moons then, after certain intermedial degradations, from the front drawing-room to the back gallery, thence to the dark parlour, adopted in turn by each of the Carracci, under successive lowering ascriptions of filiation, mildly breaking its fall

consigned to the oblivious lumber-room, go out at last a Lucca Giordano, or plain Carlo Maratti ! which things when I beheld musing upon the chances and mutabilities of fate below, hath made me to reflect upon the altered condition of great personages, or that woeful Queen of Richard the Second set forth in pomp,

She came adorned hither like sweet May.

Sent back like Hollowmass or shortest day.

With great love for you, J. E. hath but a limited sympathy with what you feel or do. He lives in a world of his own, and makes slender guesses at what passes in your mind. He never pierces the marrow of your habits. He will tell an old established play-goer, that Mr. Such-a-one, of So-and-so (naming one of the theatres) , is a very lively comedian as a piece of news ! He advertised me but the other day of some pleasant green lanes which he had found out for me, knowing me to be a great walker, in my own immediate vicinity who have haunted the identical spot any time these twenty years! He has not much respect for that class of feelings which goes by the name of sentimental. He applies the definition of real evil to bodily sufferings exclusively and rejecteth all others as imaginary. He is affected by the sight, or the bare supposition, of a creature in pain, to a degree which I have never witnessed out of womankind. A constitutional acuteness to this class of sufferings may in part account for this. The animal tribe in particular he taketh under his especial protection. A broken-winded or spur-galled horse is sure to find an advocate in him. An over-loaded ass is his client for ever. He is the apostle to the brute kind the never-failing friend of those who have none to care for them. The contemplation of a lobster boiled, or eels skinned alive, will wring him so, that " all for pity he could die." It will take the savour from his palate, and the rest from his pillow, for days and nights. With the intense feeling of Thomas

Clarkson, he wanted only the steadiness of pursuit, and unity of purpose, of that "true yoke-fellow with Time," to have effected as much for the Animal, as he hath done for the Negro Creation. But my uncontrollable cousin is but imperfectly formed for purposes which demand co-operation. He cannot wait. His amelioration-plans must be ripened in a day. For this reason he has cut but an equivocal figure in benevolent societies, and combinations for the alleviation of human sufferings. His zeal constantly makes him to outrun, and put out, his coadjutors. He thinks of relieving, while they think of debating. He was black-balled out of a society for the Relief of \*\*\*\*\* \* > because the fervor of his humanity toiled beyond the formal apprehension, and creeping processes, of his associates. I shall always consider this distinction as a patent of nobility in the Elia family !

Do I mention these seeming inconsistencies to smile at, or upbraid, my unique cousin? Marry, heaven, and all good manners, and the understanding that should be between kinsfolk, forbid ! With all the strangenesses of this strangest of the Elia I would not have him in one jot or tittle other than he is ; neither would I barter or exchange my wild kinsman for the most exact, regular, and every-way consistent kinsman breathing.

In my next, reader, I may perhaps give you some account of my cousin Bridget if you are not already surfeited with cousins and take you by the hand, if you are willing to go with us, on an excursion which we made a summer or two since, in search of more cousins through the green plains of pleasant Hertfordshire.

#### 4.0. Works of Charles Lamb:

Lamb's first publication was the inclusion of four sonnets in Coleridge's *Poems on Various Subjects*, published in 1796 by Joseph Cottle. The sonnets were significantly influenced by the poems of Burns and the sonnets of William Bowles, a largely forgotten poet of the late 18th century. Lamb's poems garnered little attention and are seldom read today. As he himself came to realize, he was a much more talented prose stylist than poet. Indeed, one of the most celebrated poets of the day—William Wordsworth—wrote to John Scott as early as 1815 that Lamb "writes prose exquisitely"—and this was five years before Lamb began *The Essays of Elia* for which he is now most famous.

Notwithstanding, Lamb's contributions to Coleridge's second edition of *The Poems on Various Subjects* showed significant growth as a poet. These poems included *The Tomb of Douglas* and *A Vision of Repentance*. Because of a temporary fallout with Coleridge, Lamb's poems were to be excluded in the third edition of the Poems though as it turned out a third edition never emerged. Instead, Coleridge's next publication was the monumentally influential *Lyrical Ballads* co-published with Wordsworth. Lamb, on the other hand, published a book entitled *Blank Verse* with Charles Lloyd, the mentally unstable son of the founder of Lloyds Bank. Lamb's most famous poem was written at this time and entitled *The Old Familiar Faces*. Like most of Lamb's poems, it is unabashedly sentimental, and perhaps for this reason it is still remembered and widely read today, being often included in anthologies of British and Romantic period poetry. Of particular interest to Lambarians is the opening verse of the original version of *The Old Familiar Faces*, which is concerned with Lamb's mother, whom Mary Lamb killed. It was a verse that Lamb chose to remove from the edition of his *Collected Work* published in 1818:

*I had a mother, but she died, and left me,*

*Died prematurely in a day of horrors -*

*All, all are gone, the old familiar faces.*

In the final years of the 18th century, Lamb began to work on prose, first in a novella entitled *Rosamund Gray*, which tells the story of a young girl whose character is thought to be based on Ann Simmons, an early love interest. Although the story is not particularly successful as a narrative because of Lamb's poor sense of plot, it was well thought of by Lamb's contemporaries and led Shelley to observe, "what a lovely thing is Rosamund Gray! How much knowledge of the sweetest part of our nature in it!" (Quoted in Barnett, page 50)

In the first years of the 19th century, Lamb began a fruitful literary cooperation with his sister Mary. Together they wrote at least three books for William Godwin's Juvenile Library. The most successful of these was *Tales From Shakespeare*, which ran through two editions for Godwin and has been published dozens of times in countless editions ever since. The book contains artful prose summaries of some of Shakespeare's most well-loved works. According to Lamb, he worked primarily on Shakespeare's tragedies, while Mary focused mainly on the comedies.

Lamb's essay "On the Tragedies of Shakespeare Considered with Reference to their Fitness for Stage Representation", which was originally published in the *Reflector* in 1811 with the title "On Garrick, and Acting; and the Plays of Shakspeare, considered with reference to their fitness for Stage Representation", has often been taken as the ultimate Romantic dismissal of the theatre. In the

essay, Lamb argues that Shakespeare should be read, rather than performed, in order to protect Shakespeare from butchering by mass commercial performances. While the essay certainly criticizes contemporary stage practice, it also develops a more complex reflection on the possibility of representing Shakespearean dramas:

Shakespeare's dramas are for Lamb the object of a complex cognitive process that does not require sensible data, but only imaginative elements that are suggestively elicited by words. In the altered state of consciousness that the dreamlike experience of reading stands for, Lamb can see Shakespeare's own conceptions mentally materialized.

Besides contributing to Shakespeare's reception with his book *Tales From Shakespeare*, Lamb also contributed to the recovery of Shakespeare's contemporaries with his book *Specimens of the English Dramatic Poets Who Lived About the Time of Shakespeare*.

Although he did not write his first Elia essay until 1820, Lamb's gradual perfection of the essay form for which he eventually became famous began as early as 1802 in a series of open letters to Leigh Hunt's *Reflector*. The most famous of these early essays is *The Londoner*, in which Lamb famously derides the contemporary fascination with nature and the countryside. He would continue to fine-tune his craft, experimenting with different essayistic voices and personae, for the better part of the next quarter century.

## **5.0. Elia:**

Lamb took the name of Elia, which should, he said, be pronounced Ellia, from an old clerk, an Italian, at the South-Sea House in Lamb's time: that is, in

1791–1792. Writing to John Taylor in July, 1821, just after he had taken over the magazine (see below), Lamb says, referring to the South–Sea House essay, “having a brother now there, and doubting how he might relish certain descriptions in it, I clapt down the name of Elia to it, which passed off pretty well, for Elia himself added the function of an author to that of a scrivener, like myself. I went the other day (not having seen him [Elia] for a year) to laugh over with him at my usurpation of his name, and found him, alas! no more than a name, for he died of consumption eleven months ago, and I knew not of it. So the name has fairly devolved to me, I think; and ’tis all he has left me.”

In the library at Welbeck is a copy of a pamphlet, in French, entitled *Considérations sur l’état actuel de la France au mois de Juin 1815, par un Anglais*, which was presented to the Duke of Portland by the author, F.A. Elia. This was probably Lamb’s Elia. The pamphlet is reprinted, together with other interesting matter remotely connected with Lamb, in *Letters from the Originals at Welbeck Abbey*, privately printed, 1909.

Elia. Essays which have appeared under that signature in the *London Magazine*, was published early in 1823. Lamb’s original intention was to furnish the book with a whimsical preface, as we learn from the following letter to John Taylor, dated December 7, 1822:—

Elia did not reach a second edition in Lamb’s lifetime — that is to say, during a period of twelve years — although the editions into which it has passed between his death and the present day are legion. Why, considering the popularity of the essays as they appeared in the *London Magazine*, the book should have found so few purchasers is a problem difficult of solution. Lamb himself seems to have attributed some of the cause to Southey’s objection, in the *Quarterly Review*, that Elia “wanted a sounder religious feeling;” but more probably the book was too dear: it was published at 9s. 6d.



Ordinary reviewers do not seem to have perceived at all that a rare humorist, humanist and master of prose had arisen, although among the finer intellects who had any inclination to search for excellence for excellence's sake Lamb made his way. William Hazlitt, for example, drew attention to the rich quality of Elia; as also did Leigh Hunt; and William Hone, who cannot, however, as a critic be mentioned with these, was tireless in advocating the book. Among strangers to Lamb who from the first extolled his genius was Miss Mitford. But Elia did not sell.

Ten years passed before Lamb collected his essays again, and then in 1833 was published *The Last Essays of Elia*, with Edward Moxon's imprint. The mass of minor essays in the *London Magazine* and elsewhere, which Lamb disregarded when he compiled his two collections, will be found in Vol. I. of the present edition. *The Last Essays of Elia* had little, if any, better reception than the first; and Lamb had the mortification of being asked by the Norris family to suppress the exquisite and kindly little memoir of Randal Norris, entitled "A Death-Bed" (see page 279), which was held to be too personal. When, in 1835, after Lamb's death, a new edition of *Elia* and *The Last Essays of Elia* was issued, the "Confessions of a Drunkard" took its place (see Vol. I.).

The *London Magazine*, with John Scott (1783–1821) as its editor was founded in 1820 by Baldwin, Cradock & Joy. Its first number was dated January, 1820, and Lamb's first contribution was in the number for August, 1820. Lamb had known Scott as editor of *The Champion* in 1814, but, according to Talfourd, it was Hazlitt who introduced Lamb to the *London Magazine*.

John Scott, who was the author of two interesting books of travel, *A Visit to Paris* in 1814 and *Paris Re-visited* in 1815, was an admirable editor, and all was going exceedingly well until he plunged into a feud with *Blackwood's Magazine* in general, and John Gibson Lockhart in particular, the story of which in full may

be read in Mr. Lang's Life and Letters of Lockhart, 1896. In the duel which resulted Scott was shot above the hip. The wound was at first thought lightly of, but Scott died on February 27, 1821 — an able man much regretted.

The magazine did not at first show signs of Scott's loss; it continued to bear the imprint of its original publishers and its quality remained very high. With Lamb and Hazlitt writing regularly this could hardly be otherwise. But four months after the death of Scott and eighteen months after its establishment the London Magazine passed into the hands of the publishers Taylor & Hessey, the first number with their imprint being dated August, 1821. Although for a while no diminution of merit was perceptible and rather an access of gaiety — for Taylor brought Hood with him and John Hamilton Reynolds — yet the high editorial standards of Scott ceased to be applied. Thenceforward the decline of the magazine was steady.

John Taylor (1781–1864), senior partner in the firm of Taylor & Hessey, was known as the identifier of Sir Philip Francis with the author of "Junius," on which subject he had issued three books. Although unfitted for the post, he acted as editor of the London Magazine until it was again sold in 1825.

With the beginning of 1825 Taylor made a change in the magazine. He started a new series, and increased the size and the price. But the experiment did not answer; the spirit had evaporated; and in the autumn he sold it to Henry Southern (1799–1853), who had founded the Retrospective Review in 1820. The last number of the London Magazine to bear Taylor & Hessey's name, and (in my opinion) to contain anything by Lamb, was August, 1825. We have no definite information on the matter, but there is every indication in Lamb's Letters that Taylor was penurious and not clever in his relations with contributors. Scott Lamb seems to have admired and liked; but even in Scott's day payment does not seem to have been prompt. Lamb was paid, according to Barry Cornwall, two or three

times the amount of other writers, who received for prose a pound a page. But Lamb himself says that the rate for him was twenty guineas a sheet, a sheet being sixteen pages; and he told Moore that he had received £170 for two years' Elia. In a letter to Barton in January, 1823, Lamb remarks: "B—— [Baldwin] who first engaged me as 'Elia' has not paid me up yet (nor any of us without repeated mortifying appeals)."

The following references to the London in Lamb's letters to Barton tell the story of its decadence quite clearly enough. In May, 1823:—"I cannot but think the London drags heavily. I miss Janus [Wainwright]. And O how it misses Hazlitt — Procter, too, is affronted (as Janus has been) with their abominable curtailment of his things."

## **6.0. Sources/Suggested Reading:**

1. Lamb, Charles. *Essays of Elia*. Chennai: Macmillan. 2004
2. A Critical Guide to Charles Lamb and His Essays by T. K. Dutt and R. R. Agrawal.
3. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles\\_Lamb](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Lamb)
4. Charles Lamb; A Memoir by Barry Cornwall

## PAPER VI

### UNIT III

#### MATTHEW ARNOLD'S 'PREFACE' to *POEMS* (1853)

##### 1.0. Matthew Arnold: A Brief Biography

Although remembered now for his elegantly argued critical essays, Matthew Arnold (1822-1888) began his career as a poet, winning early recognition as a student at the Rugby School where his father, Thomas Arnold, had earned national acclaim as a strict and innovative headmaster. Arnold also studied at Balliol College, Oxford University. In 1844, after completing his undergraduate degree at Oxford, he returned to Rugby as a teacher of classics. After marrying in 1851, Arnold began work as a government school inspector, a grueling position which nonetheless afforded him the opportunity to travel throughout England and the Continent. Throughout his thirty-five years in this position Arnold developed an interest in education, an interest which fed into both his critical works and his poetry. *Empedocles on Etna* (1852) and *Poems* (1853) established Arnold's reputation as a poet and in 1857 he was offered a position, which he accepted and held until 1867, as Professor of Poetry at Oxford. Arnold became the first professor to lecture in English rather than Latin. During this time Arnold wrote the bulk of his most famous critical works, *Essays in Criticism* (1865) and *Culture and Anarchy* (1869), in which he sets forth ideas that greatly reflect the predominant values of the Victorian era.

Meditative and rhetorical, Arnold's poetry often wrestles with problems of psychological isolation. In "To Marguerite—Continued," for example, Arnold revises Donne's assertion that "No man is an island," suggesting that we "mortals" are indeed "in the sea of life enisled." Other well-known poems, such as "Dover Beach," link the problem of isolation with what Arnold saw as the dwindling faith of his time. Despite his own religious doubts, a source of great anxiety for him, in several essays Arnold sought to establish the essential truth of Christianity. His most influential essays, however, were those on literary topics. In "The Function of Criticism" (1865) and "The Study of Poetry" (1880) Arnold called for a new epic poetry: a poetry that would address the moral needs of his readers, "to animate and ennoble them." Arnold's arguments, for a renewed religious faith and an adoption of classical aesthetics and morals, are particularly representative of mainstream Victorian intellectual concerns. His approach—his gentlemanly and subtle style—to these issues, however, established criticism as an art form, and has influenced almost every major English critic since, including T. S. Eliot, Lionel Trilling, and Harold Bloom. Though perhaps less obvious, the tremendous influence of his poetry, which addresses the poet's most innermost feelings with complete transparency, can easily be seen in writers as different from each other as W. B. Yeats, James Wright, Sylvia Plath, and Sharon Olds. Late in life, in 1883 and 1886, Arnold made two lecturing tours of the United States. Matthew Arnold died in Liverpool in 1888.

## **1.1. Arnold as a Literary Critic:**

### **1.1.1. Introduction:**

Matthew Arnold (1822-1888), the Victorian poet and critic, was 'the first modern critic', and could be called 'the critic's critic', being a champion not only of great poetry, but of literary criticism itself. The purpose of literary criticism, in his view, was 'to know the best that is known and thought in the world, and by in its turn making this known, to create a current of true and fresh ideas', and he has influenced a whole school of critics including new critics such as T. S. Eliot, F. R. Leavis, and Allen Tate. He was the founder of the sociological school of criticism, and through his touchstone method introduced scientific objectivity to critical evaluation by providing comparison and analysis as the two primary tools of criticism.

Arnold's evaluations of the Romantic poets such as Wordsworth, Byron, Shelley, and Keats are landmarks in descriptive criticism, and as a poet-critic he occupies an eminent position in the rich galaxy of poet-critics of English literature.

T. S. Eliot praised Arnold's objective approach to critical evaluation, particularly his tools of comparison and analysis, and Allen Tate in his essay *Tension in Poetry* imitates Arnold's touchstone method to discover 'tension', or the proper balance between connotation and denotation, in poetry. These new critics have come a long way from

the Romantic approach to poetry, and this change in attitude could be attributed to Arnold, who comes midway between the two schools.

### **1.1.2. The Social Role of Poetry and Criticism:**

To Arnold a critic is a social benefactor. In his view the creative artist, no matter how much of a genius, would cut a sorry figure without the critic to come to his aid. Before Arnold a literary critic cared only for the beauties and defects of works of art, but Arnold the critic chose to be the educator and guardian of public opinion and propagator of the best ideas.

Cultural and critical values seem to be synonymous for Arnold. Scott James, comparing him to Aristotle, says that where Aristotle analyses the work of art, Arnold analyses the role of the critic. The one gives us the principles which govern the making of a poem, the other the principles by which the best poems should be selected and made known. Aristotle's critic owes allegiance to the artist, but Arnold's critic has a duty to society.

To Arnold poetry itself was the criticism of life: 'The criticism of life under the conditions fixed for such criticism by the laws of poetic truth and poetic beauty', and in his seminal essay 'The Study of Poetry' (1888) he says that poetry alone can be our sustenance and stay in an era where religious beliefs are fast losing their hold. He claims that poetry is superior to philosophy, science, and religion. Religion attaches its emotion to supposed facts, and the supposed facts are failing it, but poetry attaches its emotion to ideas and ideas

are infallible. And science, in his view is incomplete without poetry. He endorses Wordsworth's view that 'poetry is the impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all Science', adding 'What is a countenance without its expression?' and calls poetry 'the breath and finer spirit of knowledge'.

### **1.1.3. A Moralist:**

As a critic Arnold is essentially a moralist, and has very definite ideas about what poetry should and should not be. A poetry of revolt against moral ideas, he says, is a poetry of revolt against life, and a poetry of indifference to moral ideas is a poetry of indifference to life.

Arnold even censored his own collection on moral grounds. He omitted the poem *Empedocles on Etna* from his volume of 1853, whereas he had included it in his collection of 1852. The reason he advances, in the Preface to his *Poems* of 1853 is not that the poem is too subjective, with its Hamlet-like introspection, or that it was a deviation from his classical ideals, but that the poem is too depressing in its subject matter, and would leave the reader hopeless and crushed. There is nothing in it in the way of hope or optimism, and such a poem could prove to be neither instructive nor of any delight to the reader.

Aristotle says that poetry is superior to History since it bears the stamp of high seriousness and truth. If truth and seriousness are wanting in the subject matter of a poem, so will the true poetic stamp



of diction and movement be found wanting in its style and manner. Hence the two, the nobility of subject matter, and the superiority of style and manner, are proportional and cannot occur independently.

Arnold took up Aristotle's view, asserting that true greatness in poetry is given by the truth and seriousness of its subject matter, and by the high diction and movement in its style and manner, and although indebted to Joshua Reynolds for the expression 'grand style', Arnold gave it a new meaning when he used it in his lecture *On Translating Homer* (1861):

*I think it will be found that that the grand style arises in poetry when a noble nature, poetically gifted, treats with simplicity or with a severity a serious subject.*

According to Arnold, Homer is the best model of a simple grand style, while Milton is the best model of severe grand style. Dante, however, is an example of both.

Even Chaucer, in Arnold's view, in spite of his virtues such as benignity, largeness, and spontaneity, lacks seriousness. Burns too lacks sufficient seriousness, because he was hypocritical in that while he adopted a moral stance in some of his poems, in his private life he flouted morality.

#### **1.1.4. Return to Classical Values:**

Arnold believed that a modern writer should be aware that contemporary literature is built on the foundations of the past, and should contribute to the future by continuing a firm tradition. Quoting Goethe and Niebuhr in support of his view, he asserts that his age suffers from spiritual weakness because it thrives on self-interest and scientific materialism, and therefore cannot provide noble characters such as those found in Classical literature.

He urged modern poets to look to the ancients and their great characters and themes for guidance and inspiration. Classical literature, in his view, possess pathos, moral profundity and noble simplicity, while modern themes, arising from an age of spiritual weakness, are suitable for only comic and lighter kinds of poetry, and don't possess the loftiness to support epic or heroic poetry.

Arnold turns his back on the prevailing Romantic view of poetry and seeks to revive the Classical values of objectivity, urbanity, and architectonics. He denounces the Romantics for ignoring the Classical writers for the sake of novelty, and for their allusive (Arnold uses the word 'suggestive') writing which defies easy comprehension.

#### **1.1.5. Preface to *Poems* of 1853:**

In the Preface to his *Poems* (1853) Arnold asserts the importance of architectonics; ('that power of execution, which creates, forms, and constitutes') in poetry - the necessity of achieving unity by subordinating the parts to the whole, and the expression of ideas to

the depiction of human action, and condemns poems which exist for the sake of single lines or passages, stray metaphors, images, and fancy expressions. Scattered images and happy turns of phrase, in his view, can only provide partial effects, and not contribute to unity. He also, continuing his anti-Romantic theme, urges, modern poets to shun allusiveness and not fall into the temptation of subjectivity.

He says that even the imitation of Shakespeare is risky for a young writer, who should imitate only his excellences, and avoid his attractive accessories, tricks of style, such as quibble, conceit, circumlocution and allusiveness, which will lead him astray.

Arnold commends Shakespeare's use of great plots from the past. He had what Goethe called the architectonic quality that is his expression was matched to the action (or the subject). But at the same time Arnold quotes Hallam to show that Shakespeare's style was complex even where the press of action demanded simplicity and directness, and hence his style could not be taken as a model by young writers. Elsewhere he says that Shakespeare's 'expression tends to become a little sensuous and simple, too much intellectualised'.

Shakespeare's excellences are:

- 1) The architectonic quality of his style; the harmony between action and expression.
- 2) His reliance on the ancients for his themes.
- 3) Accurate construction of action.
- 4) His strong conception of action and accurate portrayal of his subject matter.

5) His intense feeling for the subjects he dramatizes.

His attractive accessories (or tricks of style) which a young writer should handle carefully are:

- 1) His fondness for quibble, fancy, conceit.
- 2) His excessive use of imagery.
- 3) Circumlocution, even where the press of action demands directness.
- 4) His lack of simplicity (according to Hallam and Guizot).
- 5) His allusiveness.

As an example of the danger of imitating Shakespeare he gives Keats's imitation of Shakespeare in his *Isabella or the Pot of Basil*. Keats uses felicitous phrases and single happy turns of phrase, yet the action is handled vaguely and so the poem does not have unity. By way of contrast, he says the Italian writer Boccaccio handled the same theme successfully in his *Decameron*, because he rightly subordinated expression to action. Hence Boccaccio's poem is a poetic success where Keats's is a failure.

Arnold also wants the modern writer to take models from the past because they depict human actions which touch on 'the great primary human affections: to those elementary feelings which subsist permanently in the race, and which are independent of time'. Characters such as Agamemnon, Dido, Aeneas, Orestes, Merope, Alcmeon, and Clytemnestra, leave a permanent impression on our minds. Compare *The Iliad* or *The Aeneid* with *The Childe Harold* or *The Excursion* and you see the difference.

A modern writer might complain that ancient subjects pose problems with regard to ancient culture, customs, manners, dress and so on which are not familiar to contemporary readers. But Arnold is of the view that a writer should not concern himself with the externals, but with the 'inward man'. The inward man is the same irrespective of clime or time.

#### **1.1.6. The Function of Criticism:**

It is in his *The Function of Criticism at the Present Time* (1864) that Arnold says that criticism should be a 'dissemination of ideas, a disinterested endeavour to learn and propagate the best that is known and thought in the world'. He says that when evaluating a work the aim is 'to see the object as in itself it really is'. Psychological, historical and sociological background are irrelevant, and to dwell on such aspects is mere dilettantism. This stance was very influential with later critics.

Arnold also believed that in his quest for the best a critic should not confine himself to the literature of his own country, but should draw substantially on foreign literature and ideas, because the propagation of ideas should be an objective endeavour.

#### **1.1.7. The Study of Poetry:**

In *The Study of Poetry*, (1888) which opens his *Essays in Criticism: Second series*, in support of his plea for nobility in poetry, Arnold recalls Sainte-Beuve's reply to Napoleon, when latter said that charlatanism is found in everything. Sainte-Beuve replied that charlatanism might be found everywhere else, but not in the field of poetry, because in poetry the distinction between sound and unsound, or only half-sound, truth and untruth, or only half-truth, between the excellent and the inferior, is of paramount importance.

For Arnold there is no place for charlatanism in poetry. To him poetry is the criticism of life, governed by the laws of poetic truth and poetic beauty. It is in the criticism of life that the spirit of our race will find its stay and consolation. The extent to which the spirit of mankind finds its stay and consolation is proportional to the power of a poem's criticism of life, and the power of the criticism of life is in direct proportion to the extent to which the poem is genuine and free from charlatanism.

In *The Study of Poetry* he also cautions the critic that in forming a genuine and disinterested estimate of the poet under consideration he should not be influenced by historical or personal judgements, historical judgements being fallacious because we regard ancient poets with excessive veneration, and personal judgements being fallacious when we are biased towards a contemporary poet. If a poet is a 'dubious classic, let us sift him; if he is a false classic, let us explode him. But if he is a real classic, if his work belongs to the class of the very best . . . enjoy his work'.

As examples of erroneous judgements he says that the 17th century court tragedies of the French were spoken of with exaggerated praise, until Pellisson reproached them for want of the true poetic stamp, and another critic, Charles d' Hricault, said that 17th century French poetry had received undue and undeserving veneration. Arnold says the critics seem to substitute 'a halo for physiognomy and a statue in the place where there was once a man. They give us a human personage no larger than God seated amidst his perfect work, like Jupiter on Olympus.'

He also condemns the French critic Vitet, who had eloquent words of praise for the epic poem *Chanson de Roland* by Turoldus, (which was sung by a jester, Taillefer, in William the Conqueror's army), saying that it was superior to Homer's *Iliad*. Arnold's view is that this poem can never be compared to Homer's work, and that we only have to compare the description of dying Roland to Helen's words about her wounded brothers Pollux and Castor and its inferiority will be clearly revealed.

#### **1.1.8. The Study of Poetry: A Shift in Position- the Touchstone Method:**

Arnold's criticism of Vitet above illustrates his 'touchstone method'; his theory that in order to judge a poet's work properly, a critic should compare it to passages taken from works of great masters of poetry, and that these passages should be applied as touchstones to other poetry. Even a single line or selected quotation will serve the purpose.

From this we see that he has shifted his position from that expressed in the preface to his *Poems* of 1853. In *The Study of Poetry* he no longer uses the acid test of action and architectonics. He became an advocate of 'touchstones'. 'Short passages even single lines,' he said, 'will serve our turn quite sufficiently'.

Some of Arnold's touchstone passages are: Helen's words about her wounded brother, Zeus addressing the horses of Peleus, suppliant Achilles' words to Priam, and from Dante; Ugolino's brave words, and Beatrice's loving words to Virgil.

From non-Classical writers he selects from *Henry IV Part II* (III, i), Henry's expostulation with sleep - 'Wilt thou upon the high and giddy mast . . . '. From *Hamlet* (V, ii) 'Absent thee from felicity awhile . . . '. From Milton's *Paradise Lost* Book 1, 'Care sat on his faded cheek . . . ', and 'What is else not to be overcome . . . '

#### **1.1.9. The Study of Poetry: On Chaucer**

The French Romance poetry of the 13th century langue d'oc and langue d'oïl was extremely popular in Europe and Italy, but soon lost its popularity and now it is important only in terms of historical study. But Chaucer, who was nourished by the romance poetry of the French, and influenced by the Italian Royal rhyme stanza, still holds enduring fascination. There is an excellence of style and subject in his poetry, which is the quality the French poetry lacks. Dryden says of Chaucer's *Prologue* 'Here is God's plenty!' and that 'he is a



perpetual fountain of good sense'. There is largeness, benignity, freedom and spontaneity in Chaucer's writings. 'He is the well of English undefiled'. He has divine fluidity of movement, divine liquidness of diction. He has created an epoch and founded a tradition.

Some say that the fluidity of Chaucer's verse is due to licence in the use of the language, a liberty which Burns enjoyed much later. But Arnold says that the excellence of Chaucer's poetry is due to his sheer poetic talent. This liberty in the use of language was enjoyed by many poets, but we do not find the same kind of fluidity in others. Only in Shakespeare and Keats do we find the same kind of fluidity, though they wrote without the same liberty in the use of language.

Arnold praises Chaucer's excellent style and manner, but says that Chaucer cannot be called a classic since, unlike Homer, Virgil and Shakespeare, his poetry does not have the high poetic seriousness which Aristotle regards as a mark of its superiority over the other arts.

#### **1.1.10. The Study of Poetry: on the Age of Dryden and Pope**

The age of Dryden is regarded as superior to that of the others for 'sweetness of poetry'. Arnold asks whether Dryden and Pope, poets of great merit, are truly the poetical classics of the 18th century. He says Dryden's post-script to the readers in his translation of *The*

*Aeneid* reveals the fact that in prose writing he is even better than Milton and Chapman.

Just as the laxity in religious matters during the Restoration period was a direct outcome of the strict discipline of the Puritans, in the same way in order to control the dangerous sway of imagination found in the poetry of the Metaphysicals, to counteract 'the dangerous prevalence of imagination', the poets of the 18th century introduced certain regulations. The restrictions that were imposed on the poets were uniformity, regularity, precision, and balance. These restrictions curbed the growth of poetry, and encouraged the growth of prose.

Hence we can regard Dryden as the glorious founder, and Pope as the splendid high priest, of the age of prose and reason, our indispensable 18th century. Their poetry was that of the builders of an age of prose and reason. Arnold says that Pope and Dryden are not poet classics, but the 'prose classics' of the 18th century.

As for poetry, he considers Gray to be the only classic of the 18th century. Gray constantly studied and enjoyed Greek poetry and thus inherited their poetic point of view and their application of poetry to life. But he is the 'scantiest, frailest classic' since his output was small.

#### **1.1.11. The Study of Poetry: on Burns**

Although Burns lived close to the 19th century his poetry breathes the spirit of 18th Century life. Burns is most at home in his native language. His poems deal with Scottish dress, Scottish manner, and

Scottish religion. This Scottish world is not a beautiful one, and it is an advantage if a poet deals with a beautiful world. But Burns shines whenever he triumphs over his sordid, repulsive and dull world with his poetry.

Perhaps we find the true Burns only in his bacchanalian poetry, though occasionally his bacchanalian attitude was affected. For example in his *Holy Fair*, the lines 'Leeze me on drink! it gies us mair/ Than either school or college', may represent the bacchanalian attitude, but they are not truly bacchanalian in spirit. There is something insincere about it, smacking of bravado.

When Burns moralizes in some of his poems it also sounds insincere, coming from a man who disregarded morality in actual life. And sometimes his pathos is intolerable, as in *Auld Lang Syne*.

We see the real Burns (wherein he is unsurpassable) in lines such as, 'To make a happy fire-side clime/ to weans and wife/ That's the true pathos and sublime/ Of human life' (*Ae Fond Kiss*). Here we see the genius of Burns.

But, like Chaucer, Burns lacks high poetic seriousness, though his poems have poetic truth in diction and movement. Sometimes his poems are profound and heart-rending, such as in the lines, 'Had we never loved sae kindly/ had we never loved sae blindly/ never met or never parted/ we had ne'er been broken-hearted'.

Also like Chaucer, Burns possesses largeness, benignity, freedom and spontaneity. But instead of Chaucer's fluidity, we find in Burns a

springing bounding energy. Chaucer's benignity deepens in Burns into a sense of sympathy for both human as well as non-human things, but Chaucer's world is richer and fairer than that of Burns.

Sometimes Burns's poetic genius is unmatched by anyone. He is even better than Goethe at times and he is unrivalled by anyone except Shakespeare. He has written excellent poems such as *Tam O'Shanter*, *Whistle and I'll come to you my Lad*, and *Auld Lang Syne*.

When we compare Shelley's 'Pinnacled dim in the of intense inane' (*Prometheus Unbound* III, iv) with Burns's, 'They flatter, she says, to deceive me' (*Tam Glen*), the latter is salutary.

#### **1.1.12. Arnold on Shakespeare:**

Praising Shakespeare, Arnold says 'In England there needs a miracle of genius like Shakespeare's to produce a balance of mind'. This is not bardolatry, but praise tempered by a critical sense. In a letter he writes. 'I keep saying Shakespeare, you are as obscure as life is'.

In his sonnet *On Shakespeare* he says; 'Others abide our question. Thou art free./ We ask and ask - Thou smilest and art still,/ Out-topping knowledge'.

## **1.2. Arnold's Limitations:**

For all his championing of disinterestedness, Arnold was unable to practise disinterestedness in all his essays. In his essay on Shelley particularly he displayed a lamentable lack of disinterestedness. Shelley's moral views were too much for the Victorian Arnold. In his essay on Keats too Arnold failed to be disinterested. The sentimental letters of Keats to Fanny Brawne were too much for him.

Arnold sometimes became a satirist, and as a satirical critic saw things too quickly, too summarily. In spite of their charm, the essays are characterised by egotism and, as Tilotson says, 'the attention is directed, not on his object but on himself and his objects together'.

Arnold makes clear his disapproval of the vagaries of some of the Romantic poets. Perhaps he would have agreed with Goethe, who saw Romanticism as disease and Classicism as health. But Arnold occasionally looked at things with jaundiced eyes, and he overlooked the positive features of Romanticism which posterity will not willingly let die, such as its humanitarianism, love of nature, love of childhood, a sense of mysticism, faith in man with all his imperfections, and faith in man's unconquerable mind.

Arnold's inordinate love of classicism made him blind to the beauty of lyricism. He ignored the importance of lyrical poems, which are subjective and which express the sentiments and the personality of the poet. Judged by Arnold's standards, a large number of poets both ancient and modern are dismissed because they sang with 'Profuse strains of unpremeditated art'.

It was also unfair of Arnold to compare the classical works in which figure the classical quartet, namely Achilles, Prometheus, Clytemnestra and Dido with Heamann and Dorothea, Childe Harold, Jocelyn, and 'The Excursion'. Even the strongest advocates of Arnold would agree that it is not always profitable for poets to draw upon the past. Literature expresses the zeitgeist, the spirit of the contemporary age. Writers must choose subjects from the world of their own experience. What is ancient Greece to many of us? Historians and archaeologists are familiar with it, but the common readers delight justifiably in modern themes. To be in the company of Achilles, Prometheus, Clytemnestra and Dido is not always a pleasant experience. What a reader wants is variety, which classical mythology with all its tradition and richness cannot provide. An excessive fondness for Greek and Latin classics produces a literary diet without variety, while modern poetry and drama have branched out in innumerable directions.

As we have seen, as a classicist Arnold upheld the supreme importance of the architectonic faculty, then later shifted his ground. In the lectures *On Translating Homer*, *On the Study of Celtic Literature*, and *The Study of Poetry*, he himself tested the greatness of poetry by single lines. Arnold the classicist presumably realised towards the end of his life that classicism was not the last word in literature.

Arnold's lack of historic sense was another major failing. While he spoke authoritatively on his own century, he was sometimes groping in the dark in his assessment of earlier centuries. He used to speak at times as if ex cathedra, and this pontifical solemnity vitiated his criticism.

As we have seen, later critics praise Arnold, but it is only a qualified praise. Oliver Elton calls him a 'bad great critic'. T. S. Eliot said that Arnold is a 'Propagandist and not a creator of ideas'. According to Walter Raleigh, Arnold's method is like that of a man who took a brick to the market to give the buyers an impression of the building.

### **1.3. Arnold's Legacy:**

In spite of his faults, Arnold's position as an eminent critic is secure. Douglas Bush says that the breadth and depth of Arnold's influence cannot be measured or even guessed at because, from his own time onward, so much of his thought and outlook became part of the general educated consciousness. He was one of those critics who, as Eliot said, arrive from time to time to set the literary house in order. Eliot named Dryden, Johnson and Arnold as some of the greatest critics of the English language.

Arnold united active independent insight with the authority of the humanistic tradition. He carried on, in his more sophisticated way, the Renaissance humanistic faith in good letters as the teachers of wisdom, and in the virtue of great literature, and above all, great poetry. He saw poetry as a supremely illuminating, animating, and fortifying aid in the difficult endeavour to become or remain fully human.

Arnold's method of criticism is comparative. Steeped in classical poetry, and thoroughly acquainted with continental literature, he compares English

literature to French and German literature, adopting the disinterested approach he had learned from Sainte-Beuve.

Arnold's objective approach to criticism and his view that historical and biographical study are unnecessary was very influential on the new criticism. His emphasis on the importance of tradition also influenced F. R. Leavis, and T. S. Eliot.

Eliot is also indebted to Arnold for his classicism, and for his objective approach which paved the way for Eliot to say that poetry is not an expression of personality but an escape from personality, because it is not an expression of emotions but an escape from emotions.

Although Arnold disapproved of the Romantics' approach to poetry, their propensity for allusiveness and symbolism, he also shows his appreciation the Romantics in his *Essays in Criticism*. He praises Wordsworth thus: 'Nature herself took the pen out of his hand and wrote with a bare, sheer penetrating power'. Arnold also valued poetry for its strong ideas, which he found to be the chief merit of Wordsworth's poetry. About Shelley he says that Shelley is 'A beautiful but ineffectual angel beating in a void his luminous wings in vain'.

In an age when cheap literature caters to the taste of the common man, one might fear that the classics will fade into insignificance. But Arnold is sure



that the currency and the supremacy of the classics will be preserved in the modern age, not because of conscious effort on the part of the readers, but because of the human instinct of self-preservation.

In the present day with the literary tradition over-burdened with imagery, myth, symbol and abstract jargon, it is refreshing to come back to Arnold and his like to encounter central questions about literature and life as they are perceived by a mature and civilized mind.

#### **1.4. Preface to *Poems* (1853): The Text**

IN two small volumes of *Poems*, published anonymously, one in 1849, the other in 1852, many of the *Poems* which compose the present volume have already appeared. The rest are now published for the first time.

I have, in the present collection, omitted the Poem from which the volume published in 1852 took its title. I have done so, not because the subject of it was a Sicilian Greek born between two and three thousand years ago, although many persons would think this a sufficient reason. Neither have I done so because I had, in my own opinion, failed in the delineation which I intended to effect. I intended to delineate the feelings of one of the last of the Greek religious philosophers, one of the family of Orpheus and Musaeus, having survived his fellows, living on into a time when the habits of Greek thought and feeling had begun fast to change, character to dwindle, the influence of the Sophists to prevail. Into the feelings of a man so situated there entered much that we are accustomed to consider as exclusively modern; how much, the fragments of Empedocles himself which remain to us are sufficient at least to indicate. What those who are familiar

only with the great monuments of early Greek genius suppose to be its exclusive characteristics, have disappeared; the calm, the cheerfulness, the disinterested objectivity have disappeared: the dialogue of the mind with itself has commenced; modern problems have presented themselves; we hear already the doubts, we witness the discouragement, of Hamlet and of Faust.

The representation of such a man's feelings must be interesting, if consistently drawn. We all naturally take pleasure, says Aristotle, in any imitation or representation whatever: this is the basis of our love of Poetry: and we take pleasure in them, he adds, because all knowledge is naturally agreeable to us; not to the philosopher only, but to mankind at large. Every representation therefore which is consistently drawn may be supposed to be interesting, inasmuch as it gratifies this natural interest in knowledge of all kinds. What is not interesting, is that which does not add to our knowledge of any kind; that which is vaguely conceived and loosely drawn; a representation which is general, indeterminate, and faint, instead of being particular, precise, and firm.

Any accurate representation may therefore be expected to be interesting; but, if the representation be a poetical one, more than this is demanded. It is demanded, not only that it shall interest, but also that it shall inspire and rejoice the reader: that it shall convey a charm, and infuse delight. For the Muses, as Hesiod says, were born that they might be 'a forgetfulness of evils, and a truce from cares': and it is not enough that the Poet should add to the knowledge of men, it is required of him also that he should add to their happiness. 'All Art,' says Schiller, 'is dedicated to Joy, and there is no higher and no more serious problem, than how to make men happy. The right Art is that alone, which creates the highest enjoyment.'

A poetical work, therefore, is not yet justified when it has been shown to be an accurate, and therefore interesting representation; it has to be shown also that it is a representation from which men can derive enjoyment. In presence of the most tragic circumstances, represented in a work of Art, the feeling of enjoyment, as is well known,

may still subsist: the representation of the most utter calamity, of the liveliest anguish, is not sufficient to destroy it: the more tragic the situation, the deeper becomes the enjoyment; and the situation is more tragic in proportion as it becomes more terrible.

What then are the situations, from the representation of which, though accurate, no poetical enjoyment can be derived? They are those in which the suffering finds no vent in action; in which a continuous state of mental distress is prolonged, unrelieved by incident, hope, or resistance; in which there is everything to be endured, nothing to be done. In such situations there is inevitably something morbid, in the description of them something monotonous. When they occur in actual life, they are painful, not tragic; the representation of them in poetry is painful also.

To this class of situations, poetically faulty as it appears to me, that of Empedocles, as I have endeavoured to represent him, belongs; and I have therefore excluded the Poem from the present collection.

And why, it may be asked, have I entered into this explanation respecting a matter so unimportant as the admission or exclusion of the Poem in question? I have done so, because I was anxious to avow that the sole reason for its exclusion was that which has been stated above; and that it has not been excluded in deference to the opinion which many critics of the present day appear to entertain against subjects chosen from distant times and countries: against the choice, in short, of any subjects but modern ones.

‘The Poet,’ it is said, and by an intelligent critic, ‘the Poet who would really fix the public attention must leave the exhausted past, and draw his subjects from matters of present import, and therefore both of interest and novelty.’

Now this view I believe to be completely false. It is worth examining, inasmuch as it is a fair sample of a class of critical dicta everywhere current at the present day, having a philosophical form and air, but no real basis in fact; and which are calculated to

vitate the judgement of readers of poetry, while they exert, so far as they are adopted, a misleading influence on the practice of those who write it.

What are the eternal objects of Poetry, among all nations and at all times? They are actions; human actions; possessing an inherent interest in themselves, and which are to be communicated in an interesting manner by the art of the Poet. Vainly will the latter imagine that he has everything in his own power; that he can make an intrinsically inferior action equally delightful with a more excellent one by his treatment of it; he may indeed compel us to admire his skill, but his work will possess, within itself, an incurable defect.

The Poet, then, has in the first place to select an excellent action; and what actions are the most excellent? Those, certainly, which most powerfully appeal to the great primary human affections: to those elementary feelings which subsist permanently in the race, and which are independent of time. These feelings are permanent and the same; that which interests them is permanent and the same also. The modernness or antiquity of an action, therefore, has nothing to do with its fitness for poetical representation; this depends upon its inherent qualities. To the elementary part of our nature, to our passions, that which is great and passionate is eternally interesting; and interesting solely in proportion to its greatness and to its passion. A great human action of a thousand years ago is more interesting to it than a smaller human action of to-day, even though upon the representation of this last the most consummate skill may have been expended, and though it has the advantage of appealing by its modern language, familiar manners, and contemporary allusions, to all our transient feelings and interests. These, however, have no right to demand of a poetical work that it shall satisfy them; their claims are to be directed elsewhere. Poetical works belong to the domain of our permanent passions: let them interest these, and the voice of all subordinate claims upon them is at once silenced.

Achilles, Prometheus, Clytemnestra, Dido—what modern poem presents personages as interesting, even to us moderns, as these personages of an ‘exhausted past’? We have the domestic epic dealing with the details of modern life which pass daily under our eyes; we have poems representing modern personages in contact with the problems of modern life, moral, intellectual, and social; these works have been produced by poets the most distinguished of their nation and time; yet I fearlessly assert that Hermann and Dorothea, Childe Harold, Jocelyn, The Excursion, leave the reader cold in comparison with the effect produced upon him by the latter books of the Iliad, by the Orestea, or by the episode of Dido. And why is this? Simply because in the three latter cases the action is greater, the personages nobler, the situations more intense: and this is the true basis of the interest in a poetical work, and this alone.

It may be urged, however, that past actions may be interesting in themselves, but that they are not to be adopted by the modern Poet, because it is impossible for him to have them clearly present to his own mind, and he cannot therefore feel them deeply, nor represent them forcibly. But this is not necessarily the case. The externals of a past action, indeed, he cannot know with the precision of a contemporary; but his business is with its essentials. The outward man of Oedipus or of Macbeth, the houses in which they lived, the ceremonies of their courts, he cannot accurately figure to himself; but neither do they essentially concern him. His business is with their inward man; with their feelings and behaviour in certain tragic situations, which engage their passions as men; these have in them nothing local and casual; they are as accessible to the modern Poet as to a contemporary.

The date of an action, then, signifies nothing: the action itself, its selection and construction, this is what is all-important. This the Greeks understood far more clearly than we do. The radical difference between their poetical theory and ours consists, as it appears to me, in this: that, with them, the poetical character of the action in itself, and the conduct of it, was the first consideration; with us, attention is fixed mainly on the

value of the separate thoughts and images which occur in the treatment of an action. They regarded the whole; we regard the parts. With them, the action predominated over the expression of it; with us, the expression predominates over the action. Not that they failed in expression, or were inattentive to it; on the contrary, they are the highest models of expression, the unapproached masters of the grand style: but their expression is so excellent because it is so admirably kept in its right degree of prominence; because it is so simple and so well subordinated; because it draws its force directly from the pregnancy of the matter which it conveys. For what reason was the Greek tragic poet confined to so limited a range of subjects? Because there are so few actions which unite in themselves, in the highest degree, the conditions of excellence: and it was not thought that on any but an excellent subject could an excellent Poem be constructed. A few actions, therefore, eminently adapted for tragedy, maintained almost exclusive possession of the Greek tragic stage; their significance appeared inexhaustible; they were as permanent problems, perpetually offered to the genius of every fresh poet. This too is the reason of what appears to us moderns a certain baldness of expression in Greek tragedy; of the triviality with which we often reproach the remarks of the chorus, where it takes part in the dialogue: that the action itself, the situation of Orestes, or Merope, or Alcmaeon, was to stand the central point of interest, unforgotten, absorbing, principal; that no accessories were for a moment to distract the spectator's attention from this; that the tone of the parts was to be perpetually kept down, in order not to impair the grandiose effect of the whole. The terrible old mythic story on which the drama was founded stood, before he entered the theatre, traced in its bare outlines upon the spectator's mind; it stood in his memory, as a group of statuary, faintly seen, at the end of a long and dark vista: then came the Poet, embodying outlines, developing situations, not a word wasted, not a sentiment capriciously thrown in: stroke upon stroke, the drama proceeded: the light deepened upon the group; more and more it revealed itself to the rivetted gaze of the spectator: until at last, when the final words were spoken, it stood before him in broad sunlight, a model of immortal beauty.

This was what a Greek critic demanded; this was what a Greek poet endeavoured to effect. It signified nothing to what time an action belonged; we do not find that the *Persae* occupied a particularly high rank among the dramas of Aeschylus, because it represented a matter of contemporary interest: this was not what a cultivated Athenian required; he required that the permanent elements of his nature should be moved; and dramas of which the action, though taken from a long-distant mythic time, yet was calculated to accomplish this in a higher degree than that of the *Persae*, stood higher in his estimation accordingly. The Greeks felt, no doubt, with their exquisite sagacity of taste, that an action of present times was too near them, too much mixed up with what was accidental and passing, to form a sufficiently grand, detached, and self-subsistent object for a tragic poem: such objects belonged to the domain of the comic poet, and of the lighter kinds of poetry. For the more serious kinds, for pragmatic poetry, to use an excellent expression of Polybius, they were more difficult and severe in the range of subjects which they permitted. Their theory and practice alike, the admirable treatise of Aristotle, and the unrivalled works of their poets, exclaim with a thousand tongues—‘All depends upon the subject; choose a fitting action, penetrate yourself with the feeling of its situations; this done, everything else will follow.’

But for all kinds of poetry alike there was one point on which they were rigidly exacting; the adaptability of the subject to the kind of poetry selected, and the careful construction of the poem.

How different a way of thinking from this is ours! We can hardly at the present day understand what Menander meant, when he told a man who inquired as to the progress of his comedy that he had finished it, not having yet written a single line, because he had constructed the action of it in his mind. A modern critic would have assured him that the merit of his piece depended on the brilliant things which arose under his pen as he went along. We have poems which seem to exist merely for the sake of single lines and passages; not for the sake of producing any total-impression. We have

critics who seem to direct their attention merely to detached expressions, to the language about the action, not to the action itself. I verily think that the majority of them do not in their hearts believe that there is such a thing as a total-impression to be derived from a poem at all, or to be demanded from a poet; they think the term a common-place of metaphysical criticism. They will permit the Poet to select any action he pleases, and to suffer that action to go as it will, provided he gratifies them with occasional bursts of fine writing, and with a shower of isolated thoughts and images. That is, they permit him to leave their poetical sense ungratified, provided that he gratifies their rhetorical sense and their curiosity. Of his neglecting to gratify these, there is little danger; he needs rather to be warned against the danger of attempting to gratify these alone; he needs rather to be perpetually reminded to prefer his action to everything else; so to treat this, as to permit its inherent excellences to develop themselves, without interruption from the intrusion of his personal peculiarities: most fortunate, when he most entirely succeeds in effacing himself, and in enabling a noble action to subsist as it did in nature.

But the modern critic not only permits a false practice; he absolutely prescribes false aims.—‘A true allegory of the state of one’s own mind in a representative history,’ the Poet is told, ‘is perhaps the highest thing that one can attempt in the way of poetry.’—And accordingly he attempts it. An allegory of the state of one’s own mind, the highest problem of an art which imitates actions! No assuredly, it is not, it never can be so: no great poetical work has ever been produced with such an aim. Faust itself, in which something of the kind is attempted, wonderful passages as it contains, and in spite of the unsurpassed beauty of the scenes which relate to Margaret, Faust itself, judged as a whole, and judged strictly as a poetical work, is defective: its illustrious author, the greatest poet of modern times, the greatest critic of all times, would have been the first to acknowledge it; he only defended his work, indeed, by asserting it to be ‘something incommensurable.’



The confusion of the present times is great, the multitude of voices counselling different things bewildering, the number of existing works capable of attracting a young writer's attention and of becoming his models, immense: what we want is a hand to guide him through the confusion, a voice to prescribe to him the aim which he should keep in view, and to explain to him that the value of the literary works which offer themselves to his attention is relative to their power of helping him forward on his road towards this aim. Such a guide the English writer at the present day will nowhere find. Failing this, all that can be looked for, all indeed that can be desired, is, that his attention should be fixed on excellent models; that he may reproduce, at any rate, something of their excellence, by penetrating himself with their works and by catching their spirit, if he cannot be taught to produce what is excellent independently.

Foremost among these models for the English writer stands Shakespeare: a name the greatest perhaps of all poetical names; a name never to be mentioned without reverence. I will venture, however, to express a doubt, whether the influence of his works, excellent and fruitful for the readers of poetry, for the great majority, has been of unmixed advantage to the writers of it. Shakespeare indeed chose excellent subjects; the world could afford no better than Macbeth, or Romeo and Juliet, or Othello: he had no theory respecting the necessity of choosing subjects of present import, or the paramount interest attaching to allegories of the state of one's own mind; like all great poets, he knew well what constituted a poetical action; like them, wherever he found such an action, he took it; like them, too, he found his best in past times. But to these general characteristics of all great poets he added a special one of his own; a gift, namely, of happy, abundant, and ingenious expression, eminent and unrivalled: so eminent as irresistibly to strike the attention first in him, and even to throw into comparative shade his other excellences as a poet. Here has been the mischief. These other excellences were his fundamental excellences as a poet; what distinguishes the artist from the mere amateur, says Goethe, is Architectonicè in the highest sense; that power of execution, which creates, forms, and constitutes: not the profoundness of single thoughts, not the

richness of imagery, not the abundance of illustration. But these attractive accessories of a poetical work being more easily seized than the spirit of the whole, and these accessories being possessed by Shakespeare in an unequalled degree, a young writer having recourse to Shakespeare as his model runs great risk of being vanquished and absorbed by them, and, in consequence, of reproducing, according to the measure of his power, these, and these alone. Of this preponderating quality of Shakespeare's genius, accordingly, almost the whole of modern English poetry has, it appears to me, felt the influence. To the exclusive attention on the part of his imitators to this it is in a great degree owing, that of the majority of modern poetical works the details alone are valuable, the composition worthless. In reading them one is perpetually reminded of that terrible sentence on a modern French poet—il dit tout ce qu'il veut, mais malheureusement il n'a rien à dire.

Let me give an instance of what I mean. I will take it from the works of the very chief among those who seem to have been formed in the school of Shakespeare: of one whose exquisite genius and pathetic death render him for ever interesting. I will take the poem of *Isabella, or the Pot of Basil*, by Keats. I choose this rather than the *Endymion*, because the latter work (which a modern critic has classed with the *Fairy Queen*!), although undoubtedly there blows through it the breath of genius, is yet as a whole so utterly incoherent, as not strictly to merit the name of a poem at all. The poem of *Isabella*, then, is a perfect treasure-house of graceful and felicitous words and images: almost in every stanza there occurs one of those vivid and picturesque turns of expression, by which the object is made to flash upon the eye of the mind, and which thrill the reader with a sudden delight. This one short poem contains, perhaps, a greater number of happy single expressions which one could quote than all the extant tragedies of Sophocles. But the action, the story? The action in itself is an excellent one; but so feebly is it conceived by the Poet, so loosely constructed, that the effect produced by it, in and for itself, is absolutely null. Let the reader, after he has finished the poem of Keats, turn to the same story in the *Decameron*: he will then feel how pregnant and interesting the same action

has become in the hands of a great artist, who above all things delineates his object; who subordinates expression to that which it is designed to express.

I have said that the imitators of Shakespeare, fixing their attention on his wonderful gift of expression, have directed their imitation to this, neglecting his other excellences. These excellences, the fundamental excellences of poetical art, Shakespeare no doubt possessed them—possessed many of them in a splendid degree; but it may perhaps be doubted whether even he himself did not sometimes give scope to his faculty of expression to the prejudice of a higher poetical duty. For we must never forget that Shakespeare is the great poet he is from his skill in discerning and firmly conceiving an excellent action, from his power of intensely feeling a situation, of intimately associating himself with a character; not from his gift of expression, which rather even leads him astray, degenerating sometimes into a fondness for curiosity of expression, into an irritability of fancy, which seems to make it impossible for him to say a thing plainly, even when the press of the action demands the very directest language, or its level character the very simplest. Mr. Hallam, than whom it is impossible to find a saner and more judicious critic, has had the courage (for at the present day it needs courage) to remark, how extremely and faultily difficult Shakespeare's language often is. It is so: you may find main scenes in some of his greatest tragedies, *King Lear* for instance, where the language is so artificial, so curiously tortured, and so difficult, that every speech has to be read two or three times before its meaning can be comprehended. This over-curiousness of expression is indeed but the excessive employment of a wonderful gift—of the power of saying a thing in a happier way than any other man; nevertheless, it is carried so far that one understands what M. Guizot meant, when he said that Shakespeare appears in his language to have tried all styles except that of simplicity. He has not the severe and scrupulous self-restraint of the ancients, partly no doubt, because he had a far less cultivated and exacting audience: he has indeed a far wider range than they had, a far richer fertility of thought; in this respect he rises above them: in his strong conception of his subject, in the genuine way in which he is penetrated with it, he resembles them, and

is unlike the moderns: but in the accurate limitation of it, the conscientious rejection of superfluities, the simple and rigorous development of it from the first line of his work to the last, he falls below them, and comes nearer to the moderns. In his chief works, besides what he has of his own, he has the elementary soundness of the ancients; he has their important action and their large and broad manner: but he has not their purity of method. He is therefore a less safe model; for what he has of his own is personal, and inseparable from his own rich nature; it may be imitated and exaggerated, it cannot be learned or applied as an art; he is above all suggestive; more valuable, therefore, to young writers as men than as artists. But clearness of arrangement, rigour of development, simplicity of style—these may to a certain extent be learned: and these may, I am convinced, be learned best from the ancients, who although infinitely less suggestive than Shakespeare, are thus, to the artist, more instructive.

What, then, it will be asked, are the ancients to be our sole models? the ancients with their comparatively narrow range of experience, and their widely different circumstances? Not, certainly, that which is narrow in the ancients, nor that in which we can no longer sympathize. An action like the action of the Antigone of Sophocles, which turns upon the conflict between the heroine's duty to her brother's corpse and that to the laws of her country, is no longer one in which it is possible that we should feel a deep interest. I am speaking too, it will be remembered, not of the best sources of intellectual stimulus for the general reader, but of the best models of instruction for the individual writer. This last may certainly learn of the ancients, better than anywhere else, three things which it is vitally important for him to know:—the all-importance of the choice of a subject; the necessity of accurate construction; and the subordinate character of expression. He will learn from them how unspeakably superior is the effect of the one moral impression left by a great action treated as a whole, to the effect produced by the most striking single thought or by the happiest image. As he penetrates into the spirit of the great classical works, as he becomes gradually aware of their intense significance, their noble simplicity, and their calm pathos, he will be convinced that it is this effect,

unity and profoundness of moral impression, at which the ancient Poets aimed; that it is this which constitutes the grandeur of their works, and which makes them immortal. He will desire to direct his own efforts towards producing the same effect. Above all, he will deliver himself from the jargon of modern criticism, and escape the danger of producing poetical works conceived in the spirit of the passing time, and which partake of its transitoriness.

The present age makes great claims upon us: we owe it service, it will not be satisfied without our admiration. I know not how it is, but their commerce with the ancients appears to me to produce, in those who constantly practise it, a steadying and composing effect upon their judgement, not of literary works only, but of men and events in general. They are like persons who have had a very weighty and impressive experience: they are more truly than others under the empire of facts, and more independent of the language current among those with whom they live. They wish neither to applaud nor to revile their age: they wish to know what it is, what it can give them, and whether this is what they want. What they want, they know very well; they want to educe and cultivate what is best and noblest in themselves: they know, too, that this is no easy task—[Greek], as Pittacus said, [Greek]—and they ask themselves sincerely whether their age and its literature can assist them in the attempt. If they are endeavouring to practise any art, they remember the plain and simple proceedings of the old artists, who attained their grand results by penetrating themselves with some noble and significant action, not by inflating themselves with a belief in the pre-eminent importance and greatness of their own times. They do not talk of their mission, nor of interpreting their age, nor of the coming Poet; all this, they know, is the mere delirium of vanity; their business is not to praise their age, but to afford to the men who live in it the highest pleasure which they are capable of feeling. If asked to afford this by means of subjects drawn from the age itself, they ask what special fitness the present age has for supplying them: they are told that it is an era of progress, an age commissioned to carry out the great ideas of industrial development and social amelioration. They reply that with all this

they can do nothing; that the elements they need for the exercise of their art are great actions, calculated powerfully and delightfully to affect what is permanent in the human soul; that so far as the present age can supply such actions, they will gladly make use of them; but that an age wanting in moral grandeur can with difficulty supply such, and an age of spiritual discomfort with difficulty be powerfully and delightfully affected by them.

A host of voices will indignantly rejoin that the present age is inferior to the past neither in moral grandeur nor in spiritual health. He who possesses the discipline I speak of will content himself with remembering the judgements passed upon the present age, in this respect, by the two men, the one of strongest head, the other of widest culture, 9 whom it has produced; by Goethe and by Niebuhr. It will be sufficient for him that he knows the opinions held by these two great men respecting the present age and its literature; and that he feels assured in his own mind that their aims and demands upon life were such as he would wish, at any rate, his own to be; and their judgement as to what is impeding and disabling such as he may safely follow. He will not, however, maintain a hostile attitude towards the false pretensions of his age; he will content himself with not being overwhelmed by them. He will esteem himself fortunate if he can succeed in banishing from his mind all feelings of contradiction, and irritation, and impatience; in order to delight himself with the contemplation of some noble action of a heroic time, and to enable others, through his representation of it, to delight in it also.

I am far indeed from making any claim, for myself, that I possess this discipline; or for the following Poems, that they breathe its spirit. But I say, that in the sincere endeavour to learn and practise, amid the bewildering confusion of our times, what is sound and true in poetical art, I seemed to myself to find the only sure guidance, the only solid footing, among the ancients. They, at any rate, knew what they wanted in Art, and we do not. It is this uncertainty which is disheartening, and not hostile criticism. How often have I felt this when reading words of disparagement or of cavil: that it is the

uncertainty as to what is really to be aimed at which makes our difficulty, not the dissatisfaction of the critic, who himself suffers from the same uncertainty. Non me tua fervida terrent Dicta: Dii me terrent, et Jupiter hostis.

Two kinds of dilettanti, says Goethe, there are in poetry: he who neglects the indispensable mechanical part, and thinks he has done enough if he shows spirituality and feeling; and he who seeks to arrive at poetry merely by mechanism, in which he can acquire an artisan's readiness, and is without soul and matter. And he adds, that the first does most harm to Art, and the last to himself. If we must be dilettanti: if it is impossible for us, under the circumstances amidst which we live, to think clearly, to feel nobly, and to delineate firmly: if we cannot attain to the mastery of the great artists—let us, at least, have so much respect for our Art as to prefer it to ourselves: let us not bewilder our successors: let us transmit to them the practice of Poetry, with its boundaries and wholesome regulative laws, under which excellent works may again, perhaps, at some future time, be produced, not yet fallen into oblivion through our neglect, not yet condemned and cancelled by the influence of their eternal enemy, Caprice.

FOX HOW, AMBLESIDE,

October 1, 1853.

### **1.5. General Outline of the Preface:**

Here are some observations in outline form:

1. Withdrawal from romantic cultural project.

(A) ANTI-EXPRESSIVE: Arnold wants to be an anti-expressive poet--self-expression is not the way to make an increasingly Prufrockian Europe better. Hence the polemics against his own "Empedocles" poem and Wordsworth. Arnold's idea is the opposite of Wordsworth's--action, not feeling, should predominate in poetry.

(B) SELF: If Arnold doesn't like the romantics' engrossment in selfhood, what might be his own model of the self to be developed by poetry? Arnold looks back to the Greek ideal--as reconstructed by C19 German classics scholars--of full development of all man's powers, both intellectual and emotional. He believes that the romantics spent too much time brooding about the problem of their own alienated subjectivity. Arnold, by contrast, thinks that the standard of humanity is somewhat closer (though stripped of the neoclassicist's insistent emphasis on morality) to the realist ideal of Pope or Johnson: universal, objectified human nature. The individual, with the assistance of "healthy" poetry, is to develop himself or herself along the lines of an external, universal pattern of human nature.

(C) THERAPY = STEADYING EFFECT, ALOOFNESS: Poems that represent universal action, poems that comprise an intelligible whole, are the best form of therapy for mid-Victorian Britain. The point is not to stir up the reader and make him run out into the street with his passions or politics; the point is rather to give the reader joy and help him "see the object--universal passions like those of Dido--as in itself it really is." Remember that Arnold says such study produces "a steadying and composing effect upon [the reader's] . . . judgment, not of literary works only, but of men and events in general." Disinterestedness, aloofness, is the watchword.



(D) UNCERTAIN ABOUT "TOUCHSTONES": The study of poetry should consist in discerning "the best that is known and thought in the world," but Arnold finds it rather difficult to provide objective grounds for these best ideas--all he can do is point to them with his cultivated finger. Arnold is a Victorian who wants to be a philosophical realist with absolute certainty about some universal truth--but you can see that he isn't quite sure of himself--the Victorian age, with its Darwinists, ravaging biblical scholars, ruthless industrialists, and so forth, was not one that encouraged thoughtful people to believe in absolute certainties.

#### **1.6. Reading Questions from the Preface:**

In his "Preface to the 1853 Edition of Poems," Arnold calls for a poetry that emphasizes action, not romantic morbidity and fixation on the self. He seems to wish that Empedocles had jumped into the mountain a bit sooner before he said so much. The criticism is significant in that Arnold is accusing the romantic project--which his own poem continues--the romantic attempt to overcome various kinds of alienation, as having immolated itself and collapsed inward. Arnold says that poetry should consist of action in a rather Aristotelian sense--it should reveal something universally valid about human nature and social interactions. (We should not, however, fail to notice that the kind of "universality" that Arnold believes in does not contain the same penchant for direct moralism of the sort we find in, say, Dr. Johnson.) This qualified revelation gained from the study of the classics, Arnold hopes, will have a "steady and composing effect" on both the aesthetic and the everyday judgments of educated readers. Presumably, then, studying the classics will help to make the world somewhat more intelligible.

1. Why may every "representation . . . consistently drawn . . . be supposed to be interesting"? When is a representation not interesting?

Any such representation will be interesting along Aristotelian lines: "all knowledge," says Arnold, "is naturally agreeable to us." This remark is similar to Aristotle's statement as poetic anthropologist that "to learn gives the liveliest pleasure." The only imitation that would not interest us, according to Arnold, is one that has been "vaguely conceived and loosely drawn . . . general, indeterminate, and faint, instead of . . . particular, precise, and firm." The main point here is that we can learn nothing from such vague imitations, so we will not be interested in them. In making Aristotle's claim, Arnold is also implying that poetry is--or at least could be--a valid way of talking about the world and human nature. Unless, of course, those brooding, solipsistic romantic poets get hold of it.

To illustrate Arnold's problem with the 'uninteresting,' unhealthy romantics, we might have recourse to the field of drama. Have you ever noticed that the romantics seem to have produced remarkably few original dramas, and even fewer good ones? Well, that paucity results from the fact that romantic poets were primarily interested in expression, not in representation of actions like the ones we see on the stage. Even the most interesting romantic "plays"--Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*, say, or Byron's *Manfred*, are psychological dramas--in fact, they really aren't plays at all; they are poems conveniently divided into acts and scenes. How could one stage *Manfred* convincingly? Everything of interest that "happens" occurs in the protagonist's own mind. Obviously, this kind of inwardness does not suit Arnold's ideal for poetry. Finally, remember that it is not

enough for a poetic imitation to be "interesting"--it must possess a further power. See the next question.

2. What must be true of a "poetical work" for it to be "justified"? What does Schiller say about the purpose of art?

Poetry, Arnold implies, should be "a forgetfulness of evils, and a truce from cares." Adding to our knowledge is not enough; poetry, says Schiller, must make us happy: "All art is dedicated to joy." Unfortunately for Arnold's reputation as a poet, we shall get no joy from his portrayal of the morbidly self-conscious "romantic" Empedocles. This tragic hero spends most of Arnold's poem on the edge of Mount Etna droning lines like this:

But I--

The weary man, the banished citizen,  
Whose weariness no energy can reach,  
And for whose hurt courage is not the cure--  
What should I do with life and living more?  
No, thou art come too late, Empedocles!

(Allott, Kenneth. *The Poems of Matthew Arnold*. London: Longman. pp. 186-187. Act II.10-15)

After having read the poem, I wish Empedocles had jumped into the crater several hundred lines sooner. Arnold might well agree because for him, a poem should conduce to something very like Aristotle's favored result of tragedy: "catharsis," or, to use Professor Schell's interpretation, "clarification." Poetry should steady one's judgment about the affairs of life and provide insight into mankind's universal and timeless passions. Arnold,

then, is truly a classicist--he wants poetry to provide stability, a measure of order, in a crumbling modern world. Going back to the ancients as models might help the poet reinforce the sense that modern humanity is not as entirely severed from the past, and from past standards, as it might have thought.

3. What are the "external objects of poetry"? How does a poet recognize an "excellent action"?

The poet must choose actions "which most powerfully appeal to the great primary human affections: to those elementary feelings which subsist permanently in the race, and which are independent of time." Perhaps Arnold agrees, to some extent, with Wordsworth when the latter says that humankind's most fundamental passions are always "there" to be appealed to, even if modern society is reducing city-dwellers to savage torpor.

Superficial agreement aside, however, we cannot ignore the great differences between Wordsworth and Arnold: Arnold's idea is that action, not feeling, should predominate in poetry. Only a well-designed action makes it possible for valid expression to come through. Wordsworth, however, explicitly says that the action or situation must be made to suit the emotion to be expressed. So really the two poets are in direct opposition.

Why should they disagree so strongly? Well, Arnold's model of the self to be expressed and developed through poetic experience differs strongly from that of Wordsworth. While the latter, according to Arnold, overemphasizes the cultivation and expression of mere emotion and thereby falls into what Keats called the "egotistical sublime," Arnold's model of self-development amounts to a new classicism. Arnold, that is, like his mentors Johann

Joachim Winckelmann and Goethe, hearkens back to the cheerful Greek ideal of full, balanced development of all man's powers, both intellectual and emotional. He believes that the romantics spent too much time brooding about the problem of their own passions, their own alienated subjectivity. (One might say--inadequately enough--that the romantics overcompensated for eighteenth-century rationalism's lopsided emphasis on reason as the primary human quality.)

Arnold, by contrast, appears to think that the standard of humanity is somewhat closer to the ideal of Pope or Johnson: universal, objectified human nature. Certain intellectual qualities, certain emotions--courage, and so on--are part of the fabric of human nature. The whole person is to be cultivated; he is to develop himself along the lines of an external, universal pattern of human nature that can be discerned largely from timeless works of art which, through the proper representation of an action, can reveal and appeal to the universal passions of men. In Arnold's view, the passion of Dido upon being betrayed by an Aeneas determined to sail for Italy is more permanent than anything in Byron's *Childe Harold* or Wordsworth's *Excursion*. Above all, we do not want a Prufrockian poetry in which "there is everything to be endured, nothing to be done." The mention of Prufrockian, of course, reminds us that the artist or critic's feeling of irrelevance and helplessness did not exactly disappear in the twentieth century. Arnold is, we might say, the father of the Anglo-American Humanism within which we often place modernist authors like Woolf, Yeats, Joyce, Pound, and T.S. Eliot.

4. What, according to Arnold, is the "radical difference" between the poetical theory of the Greeks and the poetical theory of the modern age?

The Greeks, says Arnold, put the action first, while modern-day artists and critics and spectators regard not the whole action but the parts--separate thoughts, lines, and images; expression without action or intelligibility. The Greeks constructed whole works of art; modern poets produce only disjointed fragments. Again, this is because, for Arnold, the Greek model of the self and of community was an integrated one; we moderns have had this integrative model taken from us.

5. What is the false aim for poetry that the "modern critic," according to Arnold, "absolutely prescribes"?

The modern critic is wrong to prescribe "A true allegory of the state of one's own mind in a representative history." To Arnold, this is the malaise of romanticism. The poet becomes enveloped by the thick veil of his own subjectivity, isolated by the rifts in his own psyche, and cannot relate to the world outside or to others from whom he is alienated. Byron's *Manfred* would be the perfect example of this.

Moreover, we are reminded of Raymond Williams' thesis: Romanticism is an effect of what it proposes to resolve: failure of community, technological materialism, bourgeois individualism. The romantic project of cultural healing and community-building, Williams might well say, is founded upon the emotional self-realization of the individual. But the romantic wish for transsubjective, emotional ties between one human and all others can never be achieved; the message of romantic poetry cannot be received by the very culture that has in part made it necessary. Arnold is suggesting that "allegories about the state of one's own mind" offer no way out of Industrial and increasingly "democratic" Britain's problems; they are not at all representative or universal in the same way that Greek drama is. No

principle of intelligibility, no steadying effect on the judgment, according to Arnold, emerges from Wordsworth's self-revelatory *Excursion*, or from any other romantic poem.

6. A "young writer having recourse to Shakespeare as his model" runs what "great risk"? Why exactly, according to Arnold, is Shakespeare the great poet he is?

The risk is that modern authors will end up imitating only Shakespeare's expressive richness, not his facility in choosing significant subjects and constructing good actions. If this romantic reduction occurs, we face new poems like Keats' "Isabella"--chock full of happy, sensuous expressions, but loosely and vaguely drawn in terms of intelligible, whole action.

7. What effects does the study of the ancient writers have upon "those who constantly practice it"? What do such people especially want?

"I know not how it is," says Arnold, but such study produces "a steadying and composing effect upon their judgment, not of literary works only, but of men and events in general." These diligent students are "like persons who have had a very weighty and impressive experience; they are more truly than others under the empire of facts, and more independent of the language current among those with whom they live." What do these people especially want? They want "to educe and cultivate what is best and noblest in themselves." Arnold's students are no Frenchmen who run out into the streets with their new ideas; they want to understand their age, not condemn, praise, or rashly rearrange it. Arnold's phrase, "I know not how it is" may, of course, be more than just rhetorical filler. There is a kind of

quiet desperation in this Victorian's attempts to claim that poetry offers steadiness and intellectual order.

### **Sources/Suggested Reading:**

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## **PAPER VI**

### **UNIT IV**

#### **RABINDRANATH TAGORE'S 'NATIONALISM IN THE WEST'**

##### **1.0. Introduction:**

Rabindranath Tagore (7 May 1861 – 7 August 1941), sobriquet Gurudev, was a Bengali polymath who reshaped Bengali literature and music in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Author of *Gitanjali* and its "profoundly sensitive, fresh and beautiful verse", he became the first non-European to win the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1913. In translation his poetry was viewed as spiritual and mercurial; however, his "elegant prose and magical poetry" remain largely unknown outside Bengal. Tagore introduced new prose and verse forms and the use of colloquial language into Bengali literature, thereby freeing it from traditional models based on classical Sanskrit. He was highly influential in introducing the best of Indian culture to the West and vice versa, and he is generally regarded as the outstanding creative artist of the modern Indian subcontinent, being highly commemorated in India and Bangladesh, as well as in Sri Lanka, Nepal and Pakistan.

His father Maharihi Devendranath Tagore was a rich man and an aristocrat and his mother was Sarada Devi. He was the eighth son and fourteenth child of his parents. Rabindranath Tagore was not sent to any school. He was educated at home by a tutor. Rabindranath was not happy, getting educated within the four walls. He was a curious and creative child. Even as a boy he felt that nature is a mystery and he should unravel the secrets of nature, through education.

Though he was educated at home, he studied many subjects and there was a method in his studies. He would get up early. After physical education he would study Mathematics, History, Geography, Bengali and Sanskrit. In the afternoon, he learnt drawing, English and play games. On Sundays he would learn music and conduct experiments in science. Reading plays was of special interest to him. He was happy to read plays of Kalidas and Shakespeare. He had a special interest in Bengali, which was his mother-tongue.

For further studies, he was sent to a public school at London, where he became a student of Prof. Henry Morley whose lectures influenced Rabindranath to take interest in English literature. He developed interest in English culture, traditions and literature. While studying in England, he wrote a poem “Broken Heart” (Bhagna Hriday). After 18 months in England, he returned to India without taking any degree.

Rabindranath started writing poetry in Bengali. His poem “Sandhya Geet” (Song of Dusk) was appreciated by many, including Sri Bankimchandra Chatterji, who wrote the National song “vandemataram”. He later wrote in Bengali a number of devotional songs “Nivgarer”, “Prabhat Sangeet” etc.

“Gitanjali” is a well-known collection of his poems. Gitanjali contains his various noble thoughts common to the vast humanity, viz. pessimism, love, satisfaction, dignity of labour etc. for this book “Gitanjali” Rabindranath Tagore was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1913. Rabindranath Tagore was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1913. Rabindranath Tagore was the first Indian to get a Nobel Prize and the British Government conferred on him knighthood and gave the title of “Sir”.

He had great interest in village reconstruction, India culture, music and dance. He was himself a good singer and he composed a new form of music called “Rabindra Sangeet”. He had special interest in Kathak and Bali dances. He wrote a number of plays.

Some of them are (1) Valmiki Pratibha (2) Post Office (3) Naure's Revenge (4) Katha Devayaem (5) Saradotsav (6) Mukta-dara (7) Nater Puja etc., and (8) Gora. Gora deals with the theme of friendship between persons belonging to two different religions.

Rabindranath started a school at Bolpur, a village 112km. north of Kolkata. This school developed into Shantiniketan. Students come to Shantiniketan from many countries. It specializes in arts, crafts, music and dance besides rural reconstruction.

Rabindranath Tagore was also a good artist. He started to learn painting at the age of 60. He drew more than 2000 pictures, which were exhibited in many countries. He also travelled extensively throughout the world.

A Pirali Brahmin from Calcutta with ancestral gentry roots in Jessore, Tagore wrote poetry as an eight-year-old. At age sixteen, he released his first substantial poems under the pseudonym Bhānusiṃha ("Sun Lion"), which were seized upon by literary authorities as long-lost classics. He graduated to his first short stories and dramas—and the aegis of his birth name—by 1877. As a humanist, universalist internationalist, and strident nationalist he denounced the Raj and advocated independence from Britain. As an exponent of the Bengal Renaissance, he advanced a vast canon that comprised paintings, sketches and doodles, hundreds of texts, and some two thousand songs; his legacy endures also in the institution he founded, Visva-Bharati University.

Tagore modernized Bengali art by spurning rigid classical forms and resisting linguistic strictures. His novels, stories, songs, dance-dramas, and essays spoke to topics political and personal. *Gitanjali (Song Offerings)*, *Gora (Fair-Faced)* and *Ghare-Baire (The Home and the World)* are his best-known works, and his verse, short stories, and novels were acclaimed—or panned—for their lyricism, colloquialism, naturalism, and

unnatural contemplation. His compositions were chosen by two nations as national anthems: India's *Jana Gana Mana* and Bangladesh's *Amar Shonar Bangla*. The original song of Sri Lanka's National Anthem was also written and tuned by Tagore.

### **1.0.1. Tagore: Early life- 1861-1878**

The youngest of thirteen surviving children, Tagore was born in the Jorasanko mansion in Calcutta, India to parents Debendranath Tagore (1817–1905) and Sarada Devi (1830–1875). The Tagore family came into prominence during the Bengal Renaissance that started during the age of Hussein Shah (1493–1519). The original name of the Tagore family was Banerjee. Being Brahmins, their ancestors were referred to as 'Thakurmashai' or 'Holy Sir'. During the British rule, this name stuck and they began to be recognised as Thakur and eventually the family name got anglicised to Tagore. Tagore family patriarchs were the Brahmo founders of the Adi Dharm faith. The loyalist "Prince" Dwarkanath Tagore, who employed European estate managers and visited with Victoria and other royalty, was his paternal grandfather. Debendranath had formulated the Brahmoist philosophies espoused by his friend Ram Mohan Roy, and became focal in Brahmo society after Roy's death.

"Rabi" was raised mostly by servants; his mother had died in his early childhood and his father travelled widely. His home hosted the publication of literary magazines; theatre and recitals of both Bengali and Western classical music featured there regularly, as the Jorasanko Tagores were the center of a large and art-loving social group. Tagore's oldest brother Dwijendranath was a respected philosopher and poet. Another brother, Satyendranath, was the first Indian appointed to the elite and formerly all-European

Indian Civil Service. Yet another brother, Jyotirindranath, was a musician, composer, and playwright. His sister Swarnakumari became a novelist. Jyotirindranath's wife Kadambari, slightly older than Tagore, was a dear friend and powerful influence. Her abrupt suicide in 1884, soon after he married, left him for years profoundly distraught.

Tagore largely avoided classroom schooling and preferred to roam the manor or nearby Bolpur and Panihati, idylls which the family visited. His brother Hemendranath tutored and physically conditioned him—by having him swim the Ganges or trek through hills, by gymnastics, and by practising judo and wrestling. He learned drawing, anatomy, geography and history, literature, mathematics, Sanskrit, and English—his least favourite subject. Tagore loathed formal education—his scholarly travails at the local Presidency College spanned a single day.

After he underwent an *upanayan* initiation at age eleven, he and his father left Calcutta in February 1873 for a months-long tour of the Raj. They visited his father's Santiniketan estate and rested in Amritsar en route to the Himalayan Dhauladhars, their destination being the remote hill station at Dalhousie. Along the way, Tagore read biographies; his father tutored him in history, astronomy, and Sanskrit declensions. He read biographies of Benjamin Franklin among other figures; they discussed Edward Gibbon's *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*; and they examined the poetry of Kālidāsa. In mid-April they reached the station, and at 2,300 metres (7,546 ft) they settled into a house that sat atop Bakrota Hill. Tagore was taken aback by the region's deep green gorges, alpine forests, and mossy streams and waterfalls. They stayed there for several months and adopted a regime of study and privation that included daily twilight baths taken in icy water.

He returned to Jorasanko and completed a set of major works by 1877, one of them a long poem in the Maithili style of Vidyapati; they were published pseudonymously. Regional experts accepted them as the lost works of Bhānusiṃha, a newly discovered 17th-century Vaishnava poet. He debuted the short-story genre in Bengali with "Bhikharini" ("The Beggar Woman"), and his *Sandhya Sangit* (1882) includes the famous poem "Nirjharer Swapnabhanga" ("The Rousing of the Waterfall"). Servants subjected him to an almost ludicrous regimentation in a phase he dryly reviled as the "servocracy". His head was water-dunked—to quiet him. He irked his servants by refusing food; he was confined to chalk circles in parody of Sita's forest trial in the Ramayana; and he was regaled with the heroic criminal exploits of Bengal's outlaw-dacoits. Because the Jorasanko manor was in an area of north Calcutta rife with poverty and prostitution, he was forbidden to leave it for any purpose other than travelling to school. He thus became preoccupied with the world outside and with nature. Of his 1873 visit to Santiniketan, he wrote:

*What I could not see did not take me long to get over—what I did see was quite enough. There was no servant rule, and the only ring which encircled me was the blue of the horizon, drawn around these solitudes by their presiding goddess. Within this I was free to move about as I chose.*

### **1.0.2. Tagore: Shelaidaha- 1878-1901**

Because Debendranath wanted his son to become a barrister, Tagore enrolled at a public school in Brighton, East Sussex, England in 1878. He stayed for several months at a house that the Tagore family owned near Brighton and Hove, in Medina Villas; in 1877 his nephew and niece—Suren and Indira Devi, the children of Tagore's brother Satyendranath—were sent together with their mother, Tagore's sister-in-law, to live with him. He briefly read law at University College London, but again left school. He opted

instead for independent study of Shakespeare, *Religio Medici*, *Coriolanus*, and *Antony and Cleopatra*. Lively English, Irish, and Scottish folk tunes impressed Tagore, whose own tradition of Nidhubabu-authored kirtans and tappas and Brahmo hymnody was subdued. In 1880 he returned to Bengal degree-less, resolving to reconcile European novelty with Brahmo traditions, taking the best from each. In 1883 he married Mrinalini Devi, born Bhabatarini, 1873–1902; they had five children, two of whom died in childhood.

In 1890 Tagore began managing his vast ancestral estates in Shelaidaha (today a region of Bangladesh); he was joined by his wife and children in 1898. Tagore released his Manasi poems (1890), among his best-known work. As Zamindar Babu, Tagore criss-crossed the riverine holdings in command of the *Padma*, the luxurious family barge. He collected mostly token rents and blessed villagers who in turn honoured him with banquets—occasionally of dried rice and sour milk. He met Gagan Harkara, through whom he became familiar with Baul Lalon Shah, whose folk songs greatly influenced Tagore. Tagore worked to popularise Lalon's songs. The period 1891–1895, Tagore's Sadhana period, named after one of Tagore's magazines, was his most productive; in these years he wrote more than half the stories of the three-volume, 84-story Galpaguchchha. Its ironic and grave tales examined the voluptuous poverty of an idealised rural Bengal.

### **1.0.3. Tagore: Santiniketan- 1901-1932**

In 1901 Tagore moved to Santiniketan to found an ashram with a marble-floored prayer hall—The Mandir—an experimental school, groves of trees, gardens, a library. There his wife and two of his children died. His father died in 1905. He received monthly payments as part of his inheritance and income from the Maharaja of Tripura, sales of his

family's jewellery, his seaside bungalow in Puri, and a derisory 2,000 rupees in book royalties. He gained Bengali and foreign readers alike; he published *Naivedya* (1901) and *Kheya* (1906) and translated poems into free verse.

In November 1913, Tagore learned he had won that year's Nobel Prize in Literature: the Swedish Academy appreciated the idealistic—and for Westerners—accessible nature of a small body of his translated material focussed on the 1912 *Gitanjali: Song Offerings*. In 1915, the British Crown granted Tagore a knighthood. He renounced it after the 1919 Jallianwala Bagh massacre.

In 1921, Tagore and agricultural economist Leonard Elmhirst set up the "Institute for Rural Reconstruction", later renamed Shriniketan or "Abode of Welfare", in Surul, a village near the ashram. With it, Tagore sought to moderate Gandhi's Swaraj protests, which he occasionally blamed for British India's perceived mental—and thus ultimately colonial—decline. He sought aid from donors, officials, and scholars worldwide to "free village[s] from the shackles of helplessness and ignorance" by "vitalis[ing] knowledge". In the early 1930s he targeted ambient "abnormal caste consciousness" and untouchability. He lectured against these, he penned Dalit heroes for his poems and his dramas, and he campaigned—successfully—to open Guruvayoor Temple to Dalits.

#### **1.0.4. Tagore: Twilight Years- 1932-1941**

Tagore's life as a "peripatetic litterateur" affirmed his opinion that human divisions were shallow. During a May 1932 visit to a Bedouin encampment in the Iraqi desert, the tribal chief told him that "Our prophet has said that a true Muslim is he by whose words and deeds not the least of his brother-men may ever come to any harm ..." Tagore



confided in his diary: "I was startled into recognizing in his words the voice of essential humanity." To the end Tagore scrutinised orthodoxy—and in 1934, he struck. That year, an earthquake hit Bihar and killed thousands. Gandhi hailed it as seismic karma, as divine retribution avenging the oppression of Dalits. Tagore rebuked him for his seemingly ignominious inferences. He mourned the perennial poverty of Calcutta and the socioeconomic decline of Bengal. He detailed these newly plebeian aesthetics in an unrhymed hundred-line poem whose technique of searing double-vision foreshadowed Satyajit Ray's film *Apur Sansar*. Fifteen new volumes appeared, among them prose-poem works *Punashcha* (1932), *Shes Saptak* (1935), and *Patraput* (1936). Experimentation continued in his prose-songs and dance-dramas: *Chitra* (1914), *Shyama* (1939), and *Chandalika* (1938); and in his novels: *Dui Bon* (1933), *Malancha* (1934), and *Char Adhyay* (1934).

Tagore's remit expanded to science in his last years, as hinted in *Visva-Parichay*, 1937 collection of essays. His respect for scientific laws and his exploration of biology, physics, and astronomy informed his poetry, which exhibited extensive naturalism and verisimilitude. He wove the process of science, the narratives of scientists, into stories in *Se* (1937), *Tin Sangi* (1940), and *Galpasalpa* (1941). His last five years were marked by chronic pain and two long periods of illness. These began when Tagore lost consciousness in late 1937; he remained comatose and near death for a time. This was followed in late 1940 by a similar spell. He never recovered. Poetry from these valetudinary years is among his finest. A period of prolonged agony ended with Tagore's death on 7 August 1941, aged eighty; he was in an upstairs room of the Jorasanko mansion he was raised in. The date is still mourned. A. K. Sen, brother of the first chief election commissioner, received dictation from Tagore on 30 July 1941, a day prior to a scheduled operation: his last poem.

*I'm lost in the middle of my birthday. I want my friends, their touch, with the earth's last love. I will take life's final offering, I will take the human's last blessing. Today my sack is empty. I have given completely whatever I had to give. In return if I receive anything—some love, some forgiveness—then I will take it with me when I step on the boat that crosses to the festival of the wordless end.*

### **1.1. Politics:**

Tagore opposed imperialism and supported Indian nationalists, and these views were first revealed in *Manast*, which was mostly composed in his twenties. Evidence produced during the Hindu–German Conspiracy Trial and latter accounts affirm his awareness of the Ghadarites, and stated that he sought the support of Japanese Prime Minister Terauchi Masatake and former Premier Ōkuma Shigenobu. Yet he lampooned the Swadeshi movement; he rebuked it in "The Cult of the Charka", an acrid 1925 essay. He urged the masses to avoid victimology and instead seek self-help and education, and he saw the presence of British administration as a "political symptom of our social disease". He maintained that, even for those at the extremes of poverty, "there can be no question of blind revolution"; preferable to it was a "steady and purposeful education".

Such views enraged many. He escaped assassination—and only narrowly—by Indian expatriates during his stay in a San Francisco hotel in late 1916; the plot failed when his would-be assassins fell into argument. Tagore wrote songs lionising the Indian independence movement. Two of Tagore's more politically charged compositions, "Chitto Jetha Bhayshunyo" ("Where the Mind is Without Fear") and "Ekla Chalo Re" ("If They Answer Not to Thy Call, Walk Alone"),

gained mass appeal, with the latter favoured by Gandhi. Though somewhat critical of Gandhian activism, Tagore was key in resolving a Gandhi–Ambedkar dispute involving separate electorates for untouchables, thereby mooted at least one of Gandhi's fasts "unto death".

## **2.0. Nationalism in the West: Text**

MAN'S HISTORY is being shaped according to the difficulties it encounters. These have offered us problems and claimed their solutions from us, the penalty of non-fulfilment being death or degradation.

These difficulties have been different in different peoples of the earth, and in the manner of our overcoming them lies our distinction.

The Scythians of the earlier period of Asiatic history had to struggle with the scarcity of their natural resources. The easiest solution that they could think of was to organize their whole population, men, women, and children, into bands of robbers. And they were irresistible to those who were chiefly engaged in the constructive work of social cooperation.

But fortunately for man the easiest path is not his truest path. If his nature were not as complex as it is, if it were as simple as that of a pack of hungry wolves, then, by this time, those hordes of marauders would have overrun the whole earth. But man, when confronted with difficulties, has to acknowledge that he is man, that he has his responsibilities to the higher faculties of his nature, by ignoring which he may achieve success that is immediate, perhaps, but that will become a death trap to him. For what are obstacles to the lower creatures are opportunities to the higher life of man.

To India has been given her problem from the beginning of history - it is the race problem. Races ethnologically different have come in this country in close contact. This fact has been and still continues to be the most important one in our history. It is our mission to face it and prove our humanity in dealing with it in the fullest truth. Until we fulfil our mission all other benefits will be denied us.

There are other peoples in the world who have obstacles in their physical surroundings to overcome, or the menace of their powerful neighbours. They have organized their power till they are not only reasonably free from the tyranny of Nature and human neighbours, but have a surplus of it left in their hands to employ against others. But in India, our difficulties being internal, our history has been the history of continual social adjustment and not that of organized power for defence and aggression.

Neither the colourless vagueness of cosmopolitanism, nor the fierce self-idolatry of nation-worship is the goal of human history. And India has been trying to accomplish her task through social regulation of differences, on the one hand, and the spiritual recognition of unity, on the other. She has made grave errors in setting up the boundary walls too rigidly between races, in perpetuating the results of inferiority in her classifications; often she has crippled her children's minds and narrowed their lives in order to fit them into her social forms; but for centuries new experiments have been made and adjustments carried out.

Her mission has been like that of a hostess to provide proper accommodation to her numerous guests whose habits and requirements are different from one another. It is giving rise to infinite complexities whose solution depends not merely upon tactfulness but sympathy and true realization of the unity of man. Towards this realization have worked from the early time of the Upanishads up to the present moment, a series of great

spiritual teachers, whose one object has been to set at naught all differences of man by the overflow of our consciousness of God. In fact, our history has not been of the rise and fall of kingdoms, of fights for political supremacy. In our country records of these days have been despised and forgotten. For they in no way represent the true history of our people. Our history is that of our social life and attainment of spiritual ideals.

But we feel that our task is not yet done. The world-flood has swept over our country, new elements have been introduced, and wider adjustments are waiting to be made.

We feel this all the more, because the teaching and example of the West have entirely run counter to what we think was given to India to accomplish. In the West the national machinery of commerce and politics turns out neatly compressed bales of humanity which have their use and high market value; but they are bound in iron hoops, labelled and separated off with scientific care and precision. Obviously God made man to be human; but this modern product has such marvellous square-cut finish of spirit and a creature made in his own divine image.

But I am anticipating. What I was about to say is this, take it in whatever spirit you like, here is India, of about fifty centuries at least, who tried to live peacefully and think deeply, the India devoid of all politics, the India of no nations, whose one ambition has been to know this world as of soul, to live here every moment of her life in the meek spirit of adoration, in the glad consciousness of an eternal and personal relationship with it. This is the remote portion of humanity, childlike in its manner, with the wisdom of the old, upon which burst the Nation of the West.

Through all the fights and intrigues and deceptions of her earlier history India had remained aloof. Because her homes, her fields, her temples of worship, her schools, where her teachers and students lived together in the atmosphere of simplicity and

devotion and learning, her village self-government with its simple laws and peaceful administration - all these truly belonged to her. But her thrones were not her concern. They passed over her head like clouds, now tinged with purple gorgeousness, now black with the threat of thunder. Often they brought devastations in their wake, but they were like catastrophes of nature whose traces are soon forgotten.

But this time it was different. It was not a mere drift over her surface of life, - drift of cavalry and foot soldiers, richly caparisoned elephants, white tents and canopies, strings of patient camels bearing the loads of royalty, bands of kettledrums and flutes, marble domes of mosques, palaces and tombs, like the bubbles of the foaming wine of extravagance; stories of treachery and loyal devotion, of changes of fortune, of dramatic surprises of fate. This time it was the Nation of the West driving its tentacles of machinery deep down into the soil.

Therefore, I say to you, it is we who are called as witnesses to give evidence as to what the Nation has been to humanity. We had known the hordes of Moghals and Pathans who invaded India, but we had known them as human races, with their own religions and customs, likes and dislikes, - we had never known them as a nation. We loved and hated them as occasions arose; we fought for them and against them, talked with them in a language which was theirs as well as our own, and guided the destiny of the Empire in which we had our active share. But this time we had to deal, not with kings, not with human races, but with a nation, - we, who are no nation ourselves.

Now let us from our own experience answer the question. What is this Nation?

A nation, in the sense of the political and economic union of a people, is that aspect which a whole population assumes when organized for a mechanical purpose. Society as such has no ulterior purpose. It is an end in itself. It is a spontaneous self-expression of man as a social being. It is a natural regulation of human relationships, so

that men can develop ideals of life in cooperation with one another. It has also a political side, but this is only for a special purpose. It is for self-preservation. It is merely the side of power, not of human ideals. And in the early days it had its separate place in society, restricted to the professionals. But when with the help of science and the perfecting of organization this power begins to grow and brings in harvests of wealth, then it crosses its boundaries with amazing rapidity. For then it goads all its neighbouring societies with greed of material prosperity, and consequent mutual jealousy, and by the fear of each other's growth into powerfulness. The time comes when it can stop no longer, for the competition grows keener, organization grows vaster, and selfishness attains supremacy. Trading upon the greed and fear of man, it occupies more and more space in society, and at last becomes its ruling force.

It is just possible that you have lost through habit consciousness that the living bonds of society are breaking up, and giving place to merely mechanical organization. But you see signs of it everywhere. It is owing to this that war has been declared between man and woman, because the natural thread is snapping which holds them together in harmony; because man is driven to professionalism, producing wealth for himself and others, continually turning the wheel of power for his own sake or for the sake of the universal officialdom, leaving woman alone to wither and to die or to fight her own battle unaided. And thus there where cooperation is natural has intruded competition. The very psychology of men and women about their mutual relation is changing and becoming the psychology of the primitive fighting elements rather than of humanity seeking its completeness through the union based upon mutual self-surrender. For the elements which have lost their living bond of reality have lost the meaning of their existence. They, like gaseous particles, forced into a too narrow space, come in continual conflict with each other till they burst the very arrangement which holds them in bondage.

Then look at those who call themselves anarchists, who resent the imposition of power, in any form whatever, upon the individual. The only reason for this is that power

has become too abstract - it is a scientific product made in the political laboratory of the Nation, through the dissolution of the personal humanity.

And what is the meaning of these strikes in the economic world, which like the prickly shrubs in a barren soil shoot up with renewed vigour each time they are cut down? What, but that the wealth-producing mechanism is incessantly growing into vast stature, out of proportion to all other needs of society, - and the full reality of man is more and more crushed under its weight. This state of things inevitably gives rise to eternal feuds among the elements freed from the wholeness and wholesomeness of human ideals, and interminable economic war is waged between capital and labour. For greed of wealth and power can never have a limit, and compromise of self-interest can never attain the final spirit of reconciliation. They must go on breeding jealousy and suspicion to the end - the end which only comes through some sudden catastrophe or a spiritual rebirth.

When this organization of politics and commerce, whose other name is the Nation, becomes all powerful at the cost of the harmony of the higher social life, then it is an evil day for humanity. When a father becomes a gambler and his obligations to his family take the secondary place in his mind, then he is no longer a man, but an automaton led by the power of greed. Then he can do things which, in his normal state of mind, he would be ashamed to do. It is the same thing with society. When it allows itself to be turned into a perfect organization of power, then there are few crimes which it is unable to perpetrate. Because success is the object and justification of a machine, while goodness only is the end and purpose of man. When this engine of organization begins to attain a vast size, and those who are mechanics are made into parts of the machine, then the personal man is eliminated to a phantom, everything becomes a revolution of policy carried out by the human parts of the machine, requiring no twinge of pity or moral responsibility. It is not unusual that even through this apparatus the moral nature of man tries to assert itself, but the whole series of ropes and pulleys creak and cry, the forces of



the human heart become entangled among the forces of the human automaton, and only with difficulty can the moral purpose transmit itself into some tortured shape of result.

This abstract being, the Nation, is ruling India. We have seen in our country some brand of tinned food advertised as entirely made and packed without being touched by hand. This description applies to the governing of India, which is as little touched by the human hand as possible. The governors need not know our language, need not come into personal touch with us except as officials; they can aid or hinder our aspirations from a disdainful distance, they can lead us on a certain path of policy and then pull us back again with the manipulation of office red tape; the newspapers of England, in whose columns London street accidents are recorded with some decency of pathos, need but take the scantiest notice of calamities happening in India over areas of land sometimes larger than the British Isles.

But we, who are governed, are not a mere abstraction. We, on our side, are individuals with living sensibilities. What comes to us in the shape of a mere bloodless policy may pierce into the very core of our life, may threaten the whole future of our people with a perpetual helplessness of emasculation, and yet may never touch the chord of humanity on the other side, or touch it in the most inadequately feeble manner. Such wholesale and universal acts of fearful responsibility man can never perform, with such a degree of systematic unawareness, where he is an individual human being. These only become possible where the man is represented by an octopus of abstractions, sending out its wriggling arms in all directions of space, and fixing its innumerable suckers even into the far-away future. In this reign of the nation, the governed are pursued by suspicions; and these are the suspicions of a tremendous mass of organized brain and muscle. Punishments are meted out, leaving a trail of miseries across a large bleeding tract of the human heart; but these punishments are dealt by a mere abstract force, in which a whole population of a distant country has lost its human personality.

I have not come here, however, to discuss the question as it affects my own country, but as it affects the future of all humanity. It is not about the British Government, but the government by the Nation - the Nation which is the organized self-interest of a whole people, where it is the least human and the least spiritual. Our only intimate experience of the Nation is with the British Nation, and as far as the government by the Nation goes there are reasons to believe that it is one of the best. Then again we have to consider that the West is necessary to the East. We are complementary to each other because of our different outlooks upon life which have given us different aspects of truth. Therefore if it be true that the spirit of the West has come upon our fields in the guise of a storm it is all the same scattering living seeds that are immortal. And when in India we shall be able to assimilate in our life what is permanent in Western civilization we shall be in the position to bring about a reconciliation of these two great worlds. Then will come to an end the one-sided dominance which is galling. What is more, we have to recognize that the history of India does not belong to one particular race but is of a process of creation to which various races of the world contributed - the Dravidians and the Aryans, the ancient Greeks and the Persians, the Mohamedans of the West and those of central Asia. At last now has come the turn of the English to become true to this history and bring to it the tribute of their life, and we neither have the right nor the power to exclude this people from the building of the destiny of India. Therefore what I say about the Nation has more to do with the history of Man than specially with that of India.

This history has come to a stage when the moral man, the complete man, is more and more giving way, almost without knowing it, to make room for the political and the commercial man, the man of the limited purpose. This, aided by the wonderful progress in science, is assuming gigantic proportion and power, causing the upset of man's moral balance, obscuring his human side under the shadow of soul-less organization. Its iron grip we have felt at the root of our life, and for the sake of humanity we must stand up and give warning to all, that this nationalism is a cruel epidemic of evil that is sweeping over the human world of the present age, eating into its moral vitality.

I have a deep love and a great respect for the British race as human beings. It has produced great-hearted men, thinkers of great thoughts, doers of great deeds. It has given rise to a great literature. I know that these people love justice and freedom, and hate lies. They are clean in their minds, frank in their manners, true in their friendships; in their behaviour they are honest and reliable. The personal experience which I have had of their literary men has roused my admiration not merely for their power of thought or expression but for their chivalrous humanity. We have felt the greatness of this people as we feel the sun; but as for the Nation, it is for us a thick mist of a stifling nature covering the sun itself.

This government by the Nation is neither British nor anything else; it is an applied science and therefore more or less similar in its principles wherever it is used. It is like a hydraulic press, whose pressure is impersonal and on that account completely effective. The amount of its power may vary in different engines. Some may even be driven by hand, thus leaving a margin of comfortable looseness in their tension, but in spirit and in method their differences are small. Our government might have been Dutch, or French, or Portuguese, and its essential features would have remained much the same as they are now. Only perhaps, in some cases, the organization might not have been so densely perfect, and, therefore, some shreds of the human might still have been clinging to the wreck, allowing us to deal with something which resembles our own throbbing heart.

Before the Nation came to rule over us we had other governments which were foreign, and these, like all governments, had some element of the machine in them. But the difference between them and the government by the Nation is like the difference between the hand loom and the power loom. In the products of the hand loom the magic of man's living fingers finds its expression, and its hum harmonizes with the music of life. But the power loom is relentlessly lifeless and accurate and monotonous in its production.

We must admit that during the personal government of the former days there have been instances of tyranny, injustice and extortion. They caused sufferings and unrest from which we are glad to be rescued. The protection of law is not only a boon, but it is a valuable lesson to us. It is teaching us the discipline which is necessary for the stability of civilization and continuity of progress. We are realizing through it that there is a universal standard of justice to which all men irrespective of their caste and colour have their equal claim.

This reign of law in our present Government in India has established order in this vast land inhabited by peoples different in their races and customs. It has made it possible for these peoples to come in closer touch with one another and cultivate a communion of aspiration.

But this desire for a common bond of comradeship among the different races of India has been the work of the spirit of the West, not that of the Nation of the West. Wherever in Asia the people have received the true lesson of the West it is in spite of the Western Nation. Only because Japan had been able to resist the dominance of this Western Nation could she acquire the benefit of the Western Civilization in fullest measure. Though China has been poisoned at the very spring of her moral and physical life by this Nation, her struggle to receive the best lessons of the West may yet be successful if not hindered by the Nation. It was only the other day that Persia woke up from her age-long sleep at the call of the West to be instantly trampled into stillness by the Nation. The same phenomenon prevails in this country also, where the people are hospitable but the nation has proved itself to be otherwise, making an Eastern guest feel humiliated to stand before you as a member of the humanity of his own motherland.

In India we are suffering from this conflict between the spirit of the West and the Nation of the West. The benefit of the Western civilization is doled out to us in a miserly

measure by the Nation trying to regulate the degree of nutrition as near the zero point of vitality as possible. The portion of education allotted to us is so raggedly insufficient that it ought to outrage the sense of decency of a Western humanity. We have seen in these countries how the people are encouraged and trained and given every facility to fit themselves for the great movements of commerce and industry spreading over the world, while in India the only assistance we get is merely to be jeered at by the Nation for lagging behind. While depriving us of our opportunities and reducing our education to a minimum required for conducting a foreign government, this Nation pacifies its conscience by calling us names, by sedulously giving currency to the arrogant cynicism that the East is east and the West is west and never the twain shall meet. If we must believe our schoolmaster in his taunt that after nearly two centuries of his tutelage, India not only remains unfit for self-government but unable to display originality in her intellectual attainments, must we ascribe it to something in the nature of Western culture and our inherent incapacity to receive it or to the judicious niggardliness of the Nation that has taken upon itself the white man's burden of civilizing the East? That Japanese people have some qualities which we lack we may admit, but that our intellect is naturally unproductive compared to theirs we cannot accept even from them whom it is dangerous for us to contradict.

The truth is that the spirit of conflict and conquest is at the origin and in the centre of the Western nationalism; its basis is not social cooperation. It has evolved a perfect organization of power but not spiritual idealism. It is like the pack of predatory creatures that must have its victims. With all its heart it cannot bear to see its hunting grounds converted into cultivated fields. In fact, these nations are fighting among themselves for the extension of their victims and their reserve forests. Therefore the Western Nation acts like a dam to check the free flow of the Western civilization into the country of the No-Nation. Because this civilization is the civilization of power, therefore it is exclusive, it is naturally unwilling to open its sources of power to those whom it has selected for its purposes of exploitation.

But all the same moral law is the law of humanity, and the exclusive civilization which thrives upon others who are barred from its benefit carries its own death sentence in its moral limitations. The slavery that it gives rise to unconsciously drains its own love of freedom dry. The helplessness with which it weighs down its world of victims exerts its force of gravitation every moment upon the power that creates it. And the greater part of the world which is being denuded of its self-sustaining life by the Nation will one day become the most terrible of all its burdens ready to drag it down into the bottom of destruction. Whenever Power removes all checks from its path to make its career easy, it triumphantly rides into its ultimate crash of death. Its moral brake becomes slacker every day without its knowing it, and its slippery path of ease becomes its path of doom.

Of all things in Western civilization, those which this Western Nation has given us in a most generous measure are law and order. While the small feeding bottle of our education is nearly dry, and sanitation sucks its own thumb in despair, the military organization, the magisterial offices, the police, the Criminal Investigation Department, the secret spy system, attain to an abnormal girth in their waists, occupying every inch of our country. This is to maintain order. But is not this order merely a negative good? Is it not for giving people's life greater opportunities for the freedom of development? Its perfection is the perfection of an egg-shell whose true value lies in the security it affords to the chick and its nourishment and not in the convenience it offers to the person at the breakfast table. Mere administration is unproductive, it is not creative, not being a living thing. It is a steam-roller, formidable in its weight and power, having its uses, but it does not help the soil to become fertile. When after its enormous toil it comes to offer us its boon of peace we can but murmur under our breath that 'peace is good but not more so than life which is God's own great boon.' On the other hand, our former governments were woefully lacking in many of the advantages of the modern government. But because those were not the governments by the Nation, their texture was loosely woven, leaving big gaps through which our own life sent its threads and imposed its designs. I am quite

sure in those days we had things that were extremely distasteful to us. But we know that when we walk barefooted upon a ground strewn with gravel, gradually our feet come to adjust themselves to the caprices of the inhospitable earth; while if the tiniest particle of a gravel finds its lodgment inside our shoes we can never forget and forgive its intrusion. And these shoes are the government by the Nation, - it is tight, it regulates our steps with a closed up system, within which our feet have only the slightest liberty to make their own adjustments. Therefore, when you produce your statistics to compare the number of gravels which our feet had to encounter in former days with the paucity in the present regime, they hardly touch the real points. It is not the numerousness of the outside obstacles but the comparative powerlessness of the individual to cope with them. This narrowness of freedom is an evil which is more radical not because of its quantity but because of its nature.

And we cannot but acknowledge this paradox, that while the spirit of the West marches under its banner of freedom, the Nation of the West forges its iron chains of organization which are the most relentless and unbreakable that have ever been manufactured in the whole history of man.

When the humanity of India was not under the government of the Organization, the elasticity of change was great enough to encourage men of power and spirit to feel that they had their destinies in their own hands. The hope of the unexpected was never absent, and a freer play of imagination, both on the part of the governor and the governed, had its effect in the making of history. We were not confronted with a future which was a dead white wall of granite blocks eternally guarding against the expression and extension of our own powers, the hopelessness of which lies in the reason that these powers are becoming atrophied at their very roots by the scientific process of paralysis. For every single individual in the country of the no-nation is completely in the grip of a whole nation, - whose tireless vigilance, being the vigilance of a machine, has not the human power to overlook or to discriminate. At the least pressing of its button the

monster organization becomes all eyes, whose ugly stare of inquisitiveness cannot be avoided by a single person amongst the immense multitude of the ruled. At the least turn of its screw, by the fraction of an inch, the grip is tightened to the point of suffocation around every man, woman and child of a vast population, for whom no escape is imaginable in their own country, or even in any country outside their own.

It is the continual and stupendous dead pressure of this unhuman upon the living human under which the modern world is groaning. Not merely the subject races, but you who live under the delusion that you are free, are every day sacrificing your freedom and humanity to this fetich of nationalism, living in the dense poisonous atmosphere of world-wide suspicion and greed and panic.

I have seen in Japan the voluntary submission of the whole people to the trimming of their minds and clipping of their freedom by their government, which through various educational agencies regulates their thoughts, manufactures their feelings, becomes suspiciously watchful when they show signs of inclining toward the spiritual, leading them through a narrow path not toward what is true but what is necessary for the complete welding of them into one uniform mass according to its own recipe. The people accept this all-pervading mental slavery with cheerfulness and pride because of their nervous desire to turn themselves into a machine of power, called the Nation, and emulate other machines in their collective worldliness.

When questioned as to the wisdom of its course the newly converted fanatic of nationalism answers that 'so long as nations are rampant in this world we have not the option freely to develop our higher humanity. We must utilize every faculty that we possess to resist the evil by assuming it ourselves in the fullest degree. For the only brotherhood possible in the modern world is the brotherhood of hooliganism.' The recognition of the fraternal bond of love between Japan and Russia, which has lately been celebrated with an immense display of rejoicing in Japan, was not owing to any sudden



recrudescence of the spirit of Christianity or of Buddhism, - but it was a bond established according to the modern faith in a surer relationship of mutual menace of bloodshedding. Yes, one cannot but acknowledge that these facts are the facts of the world of the Nation, and the only moral of it is that all the peoples of the earth should strain their physical, moral and intellectual resources to the utmost to defeat one another in the wrestling match of powerfulness. In the ancient days Sparta paid all her attention to becoming powerful - and she did become so by crippling her humanity, and she died of the amputation.

But it is no consolation to us to know that the weakening of humanity from which the present age is suffering is not limited to the subject races, and that its ravages are even more radical because insidious and voluntary in peoples who are hypnotized into believing that they are free. This bartering of your higher aspirations of life for profit and power has been your own free choice, and I leave you there, at the wreckage of your soul, contemplating your protuberant prosperity. But will you never be called to answer for organizing the instincts of self-aggrandizement of whole peoples into perfection, and calling it good? I ask you what disaster has there ever been in the history of man, in its darkest period, like this terrible disaster of the Nation fixing its fangs deep into the naked flesh of the world, taking permanent precautions against its natural relaxation?

You, the people of the West, who have manufactured this abnormality, can you imagine the desolating despair of this haunted world of suffering man possessed by the ghastly abstraction of the organizing man? Can you put yourself into the position of the peoples, who seem to have been doomed to an eternal damnation of their own humanity, who not only must suffer continual curtailment of their manhood, but even raise their voices in paeans of praise for the benignity of a mechanical apparatus in its interminable parody of providence?

Have you not seen, since the commencement of the existence of the Nation, that the dread of it has been the one goblin-dread with which the whole world has been trembling? Wherever there is a dark corner, there is the suspicion of its secret malevolence; and people live in a perpetual distrust of its back where it has no eyes. Every sound of footstep, every rustle of movement in the neighbourhood, sends a thrill of terror all around. And this terror is the parent of all that is base in man's nature. It makes one almost openly unashamed of inhumanity. Clever lies become matters of self-congratulation.

Solemn pledges become a farce, - laughable for their very solemnity. The Nation, with all its paraphernalia of power and prosperity, its flags and pious hymns, its blasphemous prayers in the churches, and the literary mock thunders of its patriotic bragging, cannot hide the fact that the Nation is the greatest evil for the Nation, that all its precautions are against it, and any new birth of its fellow in the world is always followed in its mind by the dread of a new peril. Its one wish is to trade on the feebleness of the rest of the world, like some insects that are bred in the paralyzed flesh of victims kept just enough alive to make them toothsome and nutritious. Therefore it is ready to send its poisonous fluid into the vitals of the other living peoples, who, not being nations, are harmless. For this the Nation has had and still has its richest pasture in Asia. Great China, rich with her ancient wisdom and social ethics, her discipline of industry and self-control, is like a whale awakening the lust of spoil in the heart of the Nation. She is already carrying in her quivering flesh harpoons sent by the unerring aim of the Nation, the creature of science and selfishness. Her pitiful attempt to shake off her traditions of humanity, her social ideals, and spend her last exhausted resources to drill herself into modern efficiency, is thwarted at every step by the Nation. It is tightening its financial ropes round her, trying to drag her up on the shore and cut her into pieces, and then go and offer public thanksgiving to God for supporting the one existing evil and shattering the possibility of a new one. And for all this the Nation has been claiming the gratitude of history, and all eternity for its exploitation; ordering its band of praise to be struck up

from end to end of the world, declaring itself to be the salt of the earth, the flower of humanity, the blessing of God hurled with all his force upon the naked skulls of the world of no nations.

I know what your advice will be. You will say, form yourselves into a nation, and resist this encroachment of the Nation. But is this the true advice? that of a man to a man? Why should this be a necessity? I could well believe you, if you had said, Be more good, more just, more true in your relation to man, control your greed, make your life wholesome in its simplicity and let your consciousness of the divine in humanity be more perfect in its expression. But must you say that it is not the soul, but the machine, which is of the utmost value to ourselves, and that man's salvation depends upon his disciplining himself into a perfection of the dead rhythm of wheels and counterwheels? that machine must be pitted against machine, and nation against nation, in an endless bull-fight of politics?

You say, these machines will come into an agreement, for their mutual protection, based upon a conspiracy of fear. But will this federation of steam-boilers supply you with a soul, a soul which has her conscience and her God? What is to happen to that larger part of the world, where fear will have no hand in restraining you? Whatever safety they now enjoy, those countries of no nation, from the unbridled license of forge and hammer and turn-screw, results from the mutual jealousy of the powers. But when, instead of being numerous separate machines, they become riveted into one organized gregariousness of gluttony, commercial and political, what remotest chance of hope will remain for those others, who have lived and suffered, have loved and worshipped, have thought deeply and worked with meekness, but whose only crime has been that they have not organized?

But, you say, 'That does not matter, the unfit must go to the wall - they shall die, and this is science,'

No, for the sake of your own salvation, I say, they shall live, and this is truth. It is extremely bold of me to say so, but I assert that man's world is amoral world, not because we blindly agree to believe it, but because it is so in truth which would be dangerous for us to ignore. And this moral nature of man cannot be divided into convenient compartments for its preservation. You cannot secure it for your home consumption with protective tariff walls, while in foreign parts making it enormously accommodating in its free trade of license.

Has not this truth already come home to you now, when this cruel war has driven its claws into the vitals of Europe? when her hoard of wealth is bursting into smoke and her humanity is shattered into bits on her battlefields? You ask in amazement what has she done to deserve this? The answer is, that the West has been systematically petrifying her moral nature in order to lay a solid foundation for her gigantic abstractions of efficiency. She has all along been starving the life of the personal man into that of the professional.

In your medieval age in Europe, the simple and the natural man, with all his violent passions and desires, was engaged in trying to find out a reconciliation in the conflict between the flesh and the spirit. All through the turbulent career of her vigorous youth the temporal and the spiritual forces both acted strongly upon her nature, and were moulding it into completeness of moral personality. Europe owes all her greatness in humanity to that period of discipline, - the discipline of the man in his human integrity.

Then came the age of intellect, of science. We all know that intellect is impersonal. Our life is one with us, also our heart, but our mind can be detached from the personal man and then only can it freely move in its world of thoughts. Our intellect is an ascetic who wears no clothes, takes no food, knows no sleep, has no wishes, feels no love or hatred or pity for human limitations, who only reasons, unmoved through the vicissitudes of life. It burrows to the roots of things, because it has no personal concern

with the thing itself. The grammarian walks straight through all poetry and goes to the root of words without obstruction. Because he is not seeking reality, but law. When he finds the law, he is able to teach people how to master words. This is a power, - the power which fulfils some special usefulness, some particular need of man.

Reality is the harmony which gives to the component parts of a thing the equilibrium of the whole. You break it, and have in your hands the nomadic atoms fighting against one another, therefore unmeaning. Those who covet power try to get mastery of these aboriginal fighting elements and through some narrow channels force them into some violent service for some particular need of man.

This satisfaction of man's needs is a great thing. It gives him freedom in the material world. It confers on him the benefit of a greater range of time and space. He can do things in a shorter time and occupies a larger space with more thoroughness of advantage. Therefore he can easily outstrip those who live in a world of a slower time and of space less fully occupied.

This progress of power attains more and more rapidity of pace. And, for the reason that it is a detached part of man, it soon outruns the complete humanity. The moral man remains behind, because it has to deal with the whole reality, not merely with the law of things, which is impersonal and therefore abstract.

Thus, man with his mental and material power far outgrowing his moral strength, is like an exaggerated giraffe whose head has suddenly shot up miles away from the rest of him, making normal communication difficult to establish. This greedy head, with its huge dental organization, has been munching all the topmost foliage of the world, but the nourishment is too late in reaching his digestive organs, and his heart is suffering from want of blood. Of this present disharmony in man's nature the West seems to have been blissfully unconscious. The enormity of its material success has diverted all its attention

toward self-congratulation on its bulk. The optimism of its logic goes on basing the calculations of its good fortune upon the indefinite prolongation of its railway lines toward eternity. It is superficial enough to think that all to-morrows are merely to-days with the repeated additions of twenty-four hours. It has no fear of the chasm, which is opening wider every day, between man's ever-growing storehouses and the emptiness of his hungry humanity. Logic does not know that, under the lowest bed of endless strata of wealth and comforts, earthquakes are being hatched to restore the balance of the moral world, and one day the gaping gulf of spiritual vacuity will draw into its bottom the store of things that have their eternal love for the dust.

Man in his fulness is not powerful, but perfect. Therefore, to turn him into mere power, you have to curtail his soul as much as possible. When we are fully human, we cannot fly at one another's throats; our instincts of social life, our traditions of moral ideals stand in the way. If you want me to take to butchering human beings, you must break up that wholeness of my humanity through some discipline which makes my will dead, my thoughts numb, my movements automatic, and then from the dissolution of the complex personal man will come out that abstraction, that destructive force, which has no relation to human truth, and therefore can be easily brutal or mechanical.

Take away man from his natural surroundings, from the fulness of his communal life, with all its living associations of beauty and love and social obligations, and you will be able to turn him into so many fragments of a machine for the production of wealth on a gigantic scale. Turn a tree into a log and it will burn for you, but it will never bear living flowers and fruit. This process of dehumanizing has been going on in commerce and politics. And out of the long birth-throes of mechanical energy has been born this fully developed apparatus of magnificent power and surprising appetite, which has been christened in the West as the Nation. As I have hinted before, because of its quality of abstraction it has, with the greatest ease, gone far ahead of the complete moral man. And having the conscience of a ghost and the callous perfection of an automaton, it is causing

disasters of which the volcanic dissipations of the youthful moon would be ashamed to be brought into comparison. As a result, the suspicion of man for man stings all the limbs of this civilization like the hairs of the nettle. Each country is casting its net of espionage into the slimy bottom of the others, fishing for their secrets, the treacherous secrets brewing in the oozy depths of diplomacy. And what is their secret service but the nation's underground trade in kidnapping, murder and treachery and all the ugly crimes bred in the depth of rottenness? Because each nation has its own history of thieving and lies and broken faith, therefore there can only flourish international suspicion and jealousy, and international moral shame becomes anaemic to a degree of ludicrousness. The nation's bagpipe of righteous indignation has so often changed its tune according to the variation of time and to the altered groupings of the alliances of diplomacy, that it can be enjoyed with amusement as the variety performance of the political music hall.

I am just coming from my visit to Japan, where I exhorted this young nation to take its stand upon the higher ideals of humanity and never to follow the West in its acceptance of the organized selfishness of Nationalism as its religion, never to gloat upon the feebleness of its neighbours, never to be unscrupulous in its behaviour to the weak, where it can be gloriously mean with impunity, while turning its right cheek of brighter humanity for the kiss of admiration to those who have the power to deal it a blow. Some of the newspapers praised my utterances for their poetical qualities while adding with a leer that it was the poetry of a defeated people. I felt they were right. Japan had been taught in a modern school the lesson how to become powerful. The schooling is done and she must enjoy the fruits of her lessons. The West in the voice of her thundering cannon had said at the door of Japan, Let there be a Nation - and there was a Nation. And now that it has come into existence, why do you not feel in your heart of hearts a pure feeling of gladness and say that it is good? Why is it that I saw in an English paper an expression of bitterness at Japan's boasting of her superiority of civilization - the thing that the British, along with other nations, has been carrying on for ages without blushing? Because the idealism of selfishness must keep itself drunk with a continual dose of self-

laudation. But the same vices which seem so natural and innocuous in its own life make it surprised and angry at their unpleasantness when seen in other nations. Therefore when you see the Japanese nation, created in your own image, launched in its career of national boastfulness you shake your head and say it is not good. Has it not been one of the causes that raise the cry on these shores for preparedness to meet one more power of evil with a greater power of injury? Japan protests that she has her bushido, that she can never be treacherous to America to whom she owes her gratitude. But you find it difficult to believe her, - for the wisdom of the Nation is not in its faith in humanity but in its complete distrust. You say to yourself that it is not with Japan of the bushido, the Japan of the moral ideals, that you have to deal - it is with the abstraction of the popular selfishness, it is with the Nation; and Nation can only trust Nation where their interests coalesce, or at least do not conflict. In fact your instinct tells you that the advent of another people into the arena of nationality makes another addition to the evil which contradicts all that is highest in Man and proves by its success that unscrupulousness is the way to prosperity, - and goodness is good for the weak and God is the only remaining consolation of the defeated.

Yes, this is the logic of the Nation. And it will never heed the voice of truth and goodness. It will go on in its ring-dance of moral corruption, linking steel unto steel, and machine unto machine; trampling under its tread all the sweet flowers of simple faith and the living ideals of man.

But we delude ourselves into thinking that humanity in the modern days is more to the front than ever before. The reason of this self-delusion is because man is served with the necessities of life in greater profusion and his physical ills are being alleviated with more efficacy. But the chief part of this is done, not by moral sacrifice, but by intellectual power. In quantity it is great, but it springs from the surface and spreads over the surface. Knowledge and efficiency are powerful in their outward effect, but they are the servants



of man, not the man himself. Their service is like the service in a hotel, where it is elaborate, but the host is absent; it is more convenient than hospitable.

Therefore we must not forget that the scientific organizations vastly spreading in all directions are strengthening our power, but not our humanity. With the growth of power the cult of the self-worship of the Nation grows in ascendancy; and the individual willingly allows the nation to take donkey rides upon his back; and there happens the anomaly which must have its disastrous effects, that the individual worships with all sacrifices a god which is morally much inferior to himself. This could never have been possible if the god had been as real as the individual.

Let me give an illustration of this in point. In some parts of India it has been enjoined as an act of great piety for a widow to go without food and water on a particular day every fortnight. This often leads to cruelty, unmeaning and inhuman. And yet men are not by nature cruel to such a degree. But this piety being a mere unreal abstraction completely deadens the moral sense of the individual, just as the man who would not hurt an animal unnecessarily, would cause horrible suffering to a large number of innocent creatures when he drugs his feelings with the abstract idea of 'sport. ' Because these ideas are the creations of our intellect, because they are logical classifications, therefore they can so easily hide in their mist the personal man.

And the idea of the Nation is one of the most powerful anesthetics that man has invented. Under the influence of its fumes the whole people can carry out its systematic programme of the most virulent self-seeking without being in the least aware of its moral perversion, - in fact feeling dangerously resentful if it is pointed out.

But can this go on indefinitely? continually producing barrenness of moral insensibility upon a large tract of our living nature? Can it escape its nemesis forever? Has this giant power of mechanical organization no limit in this world against which it

may shatter itself all the more completely because of its terrible strength and velocity? Do you believe that evil can be permanently kept in check by competition with evil, and that conference of prudence can keep the devil chained in its makeshift cage of mutual agreement?

This European war of Nations is the war of retribution. Man, the person, must protest for his very life against the heaping up of things where there should be the heart, and systems and policies where there should flow living human relationship. The time has come when, for the sake of the whole outraged world, Europe should fully know in her own person the terrible absurdity of the thing called the Nation.

The Nation has thriven long upon mutilated humanity. Men, the fairest creations of God, came out of the National manufactory in huge numbers as war-making and money-making puppets, ludicrously vain of their pitiful perfection of mechanism. Human society grew more and more into a marionette show of politicians, soldiers, manufacturers and bureaucrats, pulled by wire arrangements of wonderful efficiency.

But the apotheosis of selfishness can never make its interminable breed of hatred and greed, fear and hypocrisy, suspicion and tyranny, an end in themselves. These monsters grow into huge shapes but never into harmony. And this Nation may grow on to an unimaginable corpulence, not of a living body, but of steel and steam and office buildings, till its deformity can contain no longer its ugly voluminousness, - till it begins to crack and gape, breathe gas and fire in gasps, and its death-rattles sound in cannon roars. In this war, the death-throes of the Nation have commenced. Suddenly, all its mechanism going mad, it has begun the dance of the furies, shattering its own limbs, scattering them into the dust. It is the fifth act of the tragedy of the unreal.

Those who have any faith in Man cannot but fervently hope that the tyranny of the Nation will not be restored to all its former teeth and claws, to its far-reaching iron arms

and its immense inner cavity, all stomach and no heart; that man will have his new birth, in the freedom of his individuality, from the enveloping vagueness of abstraction.

The veil has been raised, and in this frightful war the West has stood face to face with her own creation, to which she had offered her soul. She must know what it truly is.

She had never let herself suspect what slow decay and decomposition were secretly going on in her moral nature, which often broke out in doctrines of scepticism, but still oftener and in still more dangerously subtle manner showed itself in her unconsciousness of the mutilation and insult that she had been inflicting upon a vast part of the world. Now she must know the truth nearer home.

And then there will come from her own children those who will break themselves free from the slavery of this illusion, this perversion of brotherhood founded upon self-seeking, those who will own themselves as God's children and as no bondslaves of machinery, which turns souls into commodities and life into compartments, which, with its iron claws, scratches out the heart of the world and knows not what it has done.

And we of no nations of the world, whose heads have been bowed to the dust, will know that his dust is more sacred than the bricks which build the pride of power. For this dust is fertile of life, and of beauty and worship. We shall thank God that we were made to wait in silence through the night of despair, had to bear the insult of the proud and the strong man's burden, yet all through it, though our hearts quaked with doubt and fear, never could we blindly believe in the salvation which machinery offered to man, but we held fast to our trust in God and the truth of the human soul. And we can still cherish the hope, that, when power becomes ashamed to occupy its throne and is ready to make way for love, when the morning comes for cleansing the bloodstained steps of the Nation along the highroad of humanity, we shall be called upon to bring our own vessel of

sacred water - the water of worship - to sweeten the history of man into purity, and with its sprinkling make the trampled dust of the centuries blessed with fruitfulness.

### **3.0. Nationalism and Tagore**

Benedict Anderson defines the nation as “imagined community” but acknowledges that it is “notoriously difficult to define, let alone to analyse” “Nation, nationality, nationalism”. Hugh Seton-Watson maintains, “no ‘scientific definition’ of the nation can be devised”. Ernst Gellner observes that nationalism is an ‘invention,’ ‘fabrication’: “Nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it invents nations where they do not exist”. Despite its “mythical” quality, and the difficulties involved in defining it, the phenomenon still enjoys profound political and emotional legitimacy in modern society. Bill Ashcroft et al. affirm that in spite of “all its contentiousness, and the difficulty of theorising it adequately, [nation/nationalism] remains the most implacably powerful force in twentieth century politics”.

Nationalism as a political expression, with people sharing a common geographical boundary and some unifying cultural/political signifier is relatively new, although cultural nationalism has prevailed since the beginning of society. Anderson suggests that the nation as a political institution is the product of European Enlightenment and Industrial Revolution. He argues that the rise of nationalism in Western Europe was made possible by the decline, if not the death, of religious modes of thought, in the wake of the rationalist secularism of the Enlightenment, or the Age of Reason. The guiding principles of this intellectual movement were the glorification of reason and faith in human dignity, both of which were sufficient to break down the old belief systems that gave centrality to the church and a theocentric worldview. Thus a more pragmatic and worldly socio-

political system of nationalism emerged to suit the post-religious, secular world. Anderson explains, “What then was required was a secular transformation of fatality into continuity, contingency into meaning . . . few things were (are) better suited to this end than an idea of nation”.

Ernest Gellner, on the other hand, attributes the emergence of nationalism to the rise of industrial-capitalism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The epochal shift of human society from pre-industrial to industrial economies, he argues, set up the conditions required for the creation of larger social units and economies that would be culturally “homogenous” and cooperative as workforce, thus paving the way for the formation of the more complex and intricate social organisation of the nation-state. Effectively, the expansion of the workforce and the market made the earlier pre-industrial, tribal societies and their structures both inadequate and obsolete.

Timothy Brennan examines the role of literature, especially the novel, in the formation of national consciousness during its early period: “the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries”. He maintains:

*It was the novel that historically accompanied the rise of nations by objectifying the ‘one, yet many’ of national life, and by mimicking the structures of the nation. . . . But it did more than that. Its manner of presentation allowed people to imagine the special community that the nation was.*

Despite literature’s such active complicity in the formation of the institution and the global acceptance of nationalism as the only legitimate form of political organization,

India's myriad-minded poet, Rabindranath Tagore—whom Bertrand Russell considered “worthy of the highest honour” (qtd. in Kripalani 358), and Ezra Pound deemed “greater than any of us” (qtd. in Kripalani 227) as a poet—shared not an iota of positive sentiment towards the ideology. His foremost objection came from its very nature and purpose as an institution. The very fact that it is a social institution, a mechanical organisation, modelled on certain utilitarian objectives in mind, made it unpalatable to Tagore, who was a champion of creation over construction, imagination over reason and the natural over the artificial and the man-made: “Construction is for a purpose, it expresses our wants; but creation is for itself, it expresses our very beings” (“Construction versus Creation,” Soares 59).

Tagore took the view that since nationalism emerged in the post-religious laboratory of industrial-capitalism, it was only an “organisation of politics and commerce” (Nationalism 7), that brings “harvests of wealth”, or “carnivals of materialism” (Soares 113), by spreading tentacles of greed, selfishness, power and prosperity, or churning up the baser instincts of mankind, and sacrificing in the process “the moral man, the complete man . . . to make room for the political and commercial man, the man of limited purpose”. Nationalism, according to Tagore, is not “a spontaneous self-expression of man as social being,” where human relationships are naturally regulated, “so that men can develop ideals of life in co-operation with one another”, but rather a political and commercial union of a group of people, in which they congregate to maximise their profit, progress and power; it is “the organised self-interest of a people, where it is least human and least spiritual”. Tagore deemed nationalism a recurrent threat to humanity, because with its propensity for the material and the rational, it trampled over the human spirit and human emotion; it upset man's moral balance, “obscuring his human side under the shadow of soul-less organisation”.

Thus, Tagore called into question both the constructed aspect of nationalism, which stifled the innate and instinctive qualities of the human individual, and its overemphasis on the commercial and political aspects, at the expense of man's moral and spiritual qualities. Both of these limitations reduced nationalism to an incomplete, monolithic and unipolar ideology—essentially inadequate for human beings given to an inherent multiplicity and seeming contraries, that needed to be unified and synthesised, through a process of soulful negotiation and striking of an axial line between opposites, to create the whole and wholesome person.

As seen previously, Tagore also found the fetish of nationalism a source of war, hatred and mutual suspicion between nations. In *The Home and the World*, Nikhil, Tagore's alter ego in the novel, who is patriotic but wouldn't place nation above truth and conscience says, "I am willing to serve my country; but my worship I reserve for Right which is far greater than country. To worship my country as a god is to bring curse upon it". However, Nikhil's friend, Sandip, a charismatic but unconscionable nationalist, to whom any action in the name of the nation is right, no matter how far it may be from truth or justice, exclaims, "country's needs must be made into a god", and one must "set aside . . . conscience . . . by putting the country in its place". Tagore saw this radical view of Sandip, in which the nation is apotheosised and placed above truth and conscience, as a recipe for disaster. It breeds exclusivism and dogmatism through the Hegelian dichotomous logic of self's fundamental hostility towards the other; thus every nation becomes narcissistic and considers the presence of another a threat to itself; waging war against other nations for its self-fulfilment and self-aggrandisement becomes a justifiable and even "holy" act.

Tagore explains:

*The Nation, with all its paraphernalia of power and prosperity, its flags and pious hymns, its blasphemous prayers in the churches, and the literary mock thunders of its patriotic bragging, cannot hide the fact that the Nation is the greatest evil for the Nation, that all its precautions are against it, and any new birth of its fellow in the world is always followed in its mind by the dread of a new peril.*

Tagore argued that British colonialism found its justification in the ideology of nationalism, as the coloniser came to India and other rich pastures of the world to plunder and so further the prosperity of their own nation. They were never sincere in developing colonised countries/nations, as to convert their “hunting grounds” into “cultivated fields” would have been contrary to their national interest. Like predators (and nationalism, as we saw above, inherently cultivates a rapacious logic), they thrived by victimising and violating other nations, and never felt deterred in their heinous actions by the principles of love, sympathy or universal fellowship. The logic is simple but cruel, and is sustained by a privileging norm, that in order to have rich and powerful nations, some nations ought to be left poor and pregnable: “Because this civilization is the civilization of power, therefore it is exclusive, it is naturally unwilling to open its sources of power to those whom it has selected for its purposes for exploitation”. By its very nature as an organisation, Tagore argued, nationalism could ill afford any altruism in this regard.

One might think that Tagore’s critique of nationalism is a little lofty and far-fetched—“too pious” as Pound might have said; his arguments are layered in atavistic spiritualism and romantic idealism. However, much of what Tagore said is intellectually valid and some of it is borne out by contemporary post-colonial criticism. Critics concur that nation is a necessity, it has laboured on behalf of modernity, and it helps to bolster the present civilization; as a political organisation it befits the social and intellectual



milieu of present-day society, but they hardly claim its moral authority or its beneficial role in the reinforcement of human virtue.

Critics also view the constructed aspect of nationalism as a weakness in the ideology. It is vulnerable to regressing into more natural social units of clan, tribe and race, or language and religious groups. Its very formative process introduces a self-deconstructing logic in it. The process of formation/invention further makes it a potent site of power discourse; although it is meant to stand for horizontal comradeship, exploitation and inequality remain a daily occurrence in its body, and the nation never speaks of the hopes and aspirations of its entire “imagined community.” In conceiving its overarching ideologies it often places the dominant group at the centre, pushing the minority population to the periphery. Thus, instead of a fraternity, it creates a new hierarchy and hegemony within its structure, and exposes the fracture between its rhetoric and reality. Fanon expresses this misgiving, when he says, “National consciousness, instead of being the all-embracing crystallization of the innermost hopes of the whole people [becomes] a crude and fragile travesty of what it might have been [when] the nation is passed over for the race, and the tribe is preferred to the state”.

Several post-colonial critics agree with Tagore’s view that nationalism begets a disquisition of intolerance and “othering.” Ernest Gellner, Benedict Anderson and Tom Nairn have pointed out the irrationality, prejudice and hatred that nationalism generates, and Leela Gandhi speaks of its attendant racism and loathing, and the alacrity with which citizens are willing to both kill and die for the sake of the nation. I have also pointed out in the introduction of the essay how nationalism is often used as a pretext for terrorism, factional or state, and war. Sometimes these wars, especially by the rich and powerful nations, are disguised with expressions of noble intent, such as “liberating the people from an evil dictator” and/or “introducing democracy.” But such rhetoric is always

disingenuous. In a letter to Yone Noguchi, a Japanese writer who had asked for Tagore's moral support for Japan's invasion of China in 1937, in the name of "saving China for Asia" (Dutta 192), Tagore roundly criticizes Noguchi for his naive acceptance of the grotesque rhetoric meant to veil an adventure of greed:

I was amused to read the recent statement of a Tokyo politician that the military alliance of Japan with Italy and Germany was made for 'highly spiritual and moral reasons' and 'had no materialistic considerations behind it.' Quite so. What is not so amusing is that writers and thinkers should echo such remarkable sentiments that translate military swagger into spiritual bravados. (Dutta 192-93)

Thomas Jefferson's observation on the world situation of his day sums up the hypocrisy behind such use of exalted language in war, most tellingly:

*We believe no more in Bonaparte's fighting for the liberties of the seas, than in Great Britain's fighting for the liberties of mankind. The object is the same, to draw to themselves the power, the wealth, and the resources of other nations.* (qtd. in Chomsky 48)

Jefferson's point further helps bolster Tagore's claim that the discourse of nationalism overlaps with the discourse imperialism; the imperialist nations adopt the role of the Lacanian grand Other and seek to inscribe their authority unilaterally over the colonised nations; they are not impelled by the ideology of benevolence towards the colonised countries. Tagore describes them as aggressive people essentially driven by greed; who "go out of their way and spread their coat-tails in other peoples'

thoroughfares, claiming indemnity when these are trodden upon” (Dutta 255). According to Amy Cesaire, the imperial objective is to “thingify” the colonial subjects, and Fanon suggest that the colonisers are inherently bent upon not only plundering the wealth of the colonised nations but also to rob them of their culture: “By a kind of perverted logic, it turns the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures, and destroys it” (154). A classic example of this later instance was the introduction of English language in India in 1835 with the view of anglicising a group of Indians who would serve the colonial cause.

#### **4.0. Conclusion**

In My *Reminiscences*, Tagore humorously recollects that when he was young he was brought up under the rule of the servants, who were not only negligent but also oppressive. To avoid their responsibility, they would often put the young Tagore at a spot in the servants’ quarter, draw a chalk line around him, and warn him “with a solemn face and uplifted finger of the perils of transgressing the circle” (Dutta 57). Tagore, aware of the fate of Sita in Ramayana, for overstepping a similar circle by her husband, would accede to the forceful confinement, but would feel a defiant wish to wipe out the chalk line and find the horizon. This childhood experience became the poet’s lifelong companion; he would feel muffled by any confining circle and challenge it with utmost vigour. The national boundary was another such arbitrary “circle” for him that circumscribed his wish to be one with the rest of mankind. He would not accept such thorny hedges of exclusion or the labels and divisions that stood on the way to the formation of a larger human community. He said that if nationalism is something imaginary, humanity has to readjust their imagination by being more inclusive and encyclopaedic, or by extending the horizon of their mind’s eye, so that the fellowship of the species does not stop at a geographical border, like commodities. He affirms:

Therefore man will have to make another great moral adjustment which will comprehend the whole world of men and not merely the fractional groups of nationality. The call has come to every individual in the present age to prepare himself and his surroundings for this dawn of a new era, when man shall discover his soul in the spiritual unity of all human beings. (Soares 104-05)

Tagore's process calls for a two-way ambiguous negotiation so that nations or communities can flourish and find their own fulfilment and yet rise above exclusivism and provincialism to forge an international community. It is like finding an axial line or a middle ground by shunning excesses, somewhat similar to the Emersonian "double consciousness," where the individual is required to keep his independence and yet not lose his sympathy; or the Whitmanesque celebration of the "self" and the "en-masse," or "I" and "you," in one breath. The moment we spurn national narcissism or chauvinism, and rise above the dichotomous reasoning of self/other, we become part of the Tagoresque "one world," through a recurrent dialogic process.

But to attain that stage, a more fundamental change is required. Currently, the nation is but an organisation of "politics and commerce," focused on power and wealth. As an institution, its chief interest lies in the material well being of its people but not their moral or spiritual health. It reckons the individual's head and stomach but not his heart, where the soul dwells. This will need to be altered through the restoration of the soul to its rightful place. Without the soul, the individual is like a torn-away line of verse looking for the other line that could give it fullness through a rhyme but has been smudged. Soul is what brings creativity and sympathy to the self, and makes the individual human and humane. In an interview with Einstein, Tagore said, "My religion is in the reconciliation of the supernatural man, the universal human spirit, in my own individual being" (Dutta 233). This three way reckoning of the self—in the individual, in humanity and in god, all

connected by an invisible thread—brings the world together in one nest. This is the higher unity of humanity, which is different from corporate globalisation or what Tagore calls, the “mere political or commercial basis of unity” (Soares 105) between nations. His vision is given to a “magnificent harmony” that he believes is the ultimate destiny of humankind: the enlightened individuals and nations coming together to form an enlightened global society.

Tagore’s vision might seem idealistic but it is not unattainable. It calls for a humanitarian intervention into present self-seeking and belligerent nationalism, through the introduction of a moral and spiritual dimension in the institution. It also requires us to step out of history to reinvent a new future for ourselves that respects human dignity and sees every individual and nation as equals, in a true democratic spirit.

The risks for us not to take up Tagore’s trajectory are too high. The current form of nationalism that works rationally within a “lunatic” doctrinal framework is threatening our very survival. Violence is spreading around the world like virus. Our vast killing power is multiplying everyday with the introduction of yet more sophisticated ammunition in our arsenal. Paul Hirst, a leading international social theorist, has predicted that with the prospects of climate change that might attenuate our resources and result in mass migration from a loss of “habitable land in highly populated areas like Bangladesh or the southern coast of China,” or “desertification or water shortages in the Middle East or Southern Europe”; increase in the global income inequality; accretion of human rights violation worldwide; America’s quest for global dominance and challenges from “new ‘beggars’ armies” to the military hegemony, as well as the general selfishness of the developed nations, threatens the world with a “conflict ridden international environment” in the twenty-first century, with the prospects of several conventional wars, “to limited nuclear war”. Such a prospect casts gloom and doom on humanity. Perhaps it

is not too late for us to wake up from our horrific moral slumber and accept the path of international solidarity, peace, harmony and justice paved by the Indian enlightened humanitarian poet, Rabindranath Tagore; by challenging the reigning ideological system of self-seeking nationalism and jingoism, we could still avert the all-consuming nightmare before us and alter the damning course of history.

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## PAPER VI

### UNIT V

#### BERTRAND RUSSELL'S *AUTOBIOGRAPHY*

##### 1.0. Introduction:

Bertrand Arthur William Russell, 3rd Earl Russell, (18 May 1872 – 2 February 1970) was a British philosopher, logician, mathematician, historian, social critic and political activist. At various points in his life he considered himself a liberal, a socialist, and a pacifist, but he also admitted that he had never been any of these in any profound sense. He was born in Monmouthshire, into one of the most prominent aristocratic families in Britain.

Russell led the British "revolt against idealism" in the early 20th century. He is considered one of the founders of analytic philosophy along with his predecessor Gottlob Frege, colleague G. E. Moore, and his protégé Ludwig Wittgenstein. He is widely held to be one of the 20th century's premier logicians. With A. N. Whitehead he wrote *Principia Mathematica*, an attempt to create a logical basis for mathematics. His philosophical essay "On Denoting" has been considered a "paradigm of philosophy". His work has had a considerable influence on logic, mathematics, set theory, linguistics, artificial intelligence, cognitive science, computer science, and philosophy, especially philosophy of language, epistemology, and metaphysics.

Russell was a prominent anti-war activist; he championed anti-imperialism and went to prison for his pacifism during World War I. Later, he campaigned against Adolf Hitler, then criticised Stalinist totalitarianism, attacked the involvement of the United States in the Vietnam War, and was an outspoken proponent of nuclear disarmament. In 1950 Russell was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature "in recognition of his varied and significant writings in which he champions humanitarian ideals and freedom of thought".

### **1.0.1. Early Life and Background:**

Bertrand Russell was born on 18 May 1872 at Ravenscroft, Trellech, Monmouthshire, into an influential and liberal family of the British aristocracy. His parents, Viscount and Viscountess Amberley, were radical for their times. Lord Amberley consented to his wife's affair with their children's tutor, the biologist Douglas Spalding. Both were early advocates of birth control at a time when this was considered scandalous. Lord Amberley was an atheist and his atheism was evident when he asked the philosopher John Stuart Mill to act as Russell's secular godfather. Mill died the year after Russell's birth, but his writings had a great effect on Russell's life.

His paternal grandfather, the Earl Russell, had been asked twice by Queen Victoria to form a government, serving her as Prime Minister in the 1840s and 1860s. The Russells had been prominent in England for several centuries before this, coming to power and the peerage with the rise of the Tudor dynasty. They established themselves as one of Britain's leading Whig families, and participated in every great political event from the Dissolution of the Monasteries in 1536–40 to the Glorious Revolution in 1688–89 and the Great Reform Act in 1832.



Lady Amberley was the daughter of Lord and Lady Stanley of Alderley. Russell often feared the ridicule of his maternal grandmother, one of the campaigners for education of women.

### **1.0.2. Childhood and Adolescence**

Russell had two siblings: brother Frank (nearly seven years older than Bertrand), and sister Rachel (four years older). In June 1874 Russell's mother died of diphtheria, followed shortly by Rachel's death. In January 1876, his father died of bronchitis following a long period of depression. Frank and Bertrand were placed in the care of their staunchly Victorian paternal grandparents, who lived at Pembroke Lodge in Richmond Park. His grandfather, former Prime Minister Earl Russell, died in 1878, and was remembered by Russell as a kindly old man in a wheelchair. His grandmother, the Countess Russell (née Lady Frances Elliot), was the dominant family figure for the rest of Russell's childhood and youth.

The countess was from a Scottish Presbyterian family, and successfully petitioned the Court of Chancery to set aside a provision in Amberley's will requiring the children to be raised as agnostics. Despite her religious conservatism, she held progressive views in other areas (accepting Darwinism and supporting Irish Home Rule), and her influence on Bertrand Russell's outlook on social justice and standing up for principle remained with him throughout his life. (One could challenge the view that Bertrand stood up for his principles, based on his own

well-known quotation: "I would never die for my beliefs, I could be wrong".) Her favourite Bible verse, 'Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil' (Exodus 23:2), became his motto. The atmosphere at Pembroke Lodge was one of frequent prayer, emotional repression, and formality; Frank reacted to this with open rebellion, but the young Bertrand learned to hide his feelings.

Russell's adolescence was very lonely, and he often contemplated suicide. He remarked in his autobiography that his keenest interests were in religion and mathematics, and that only his wish to know more mathematics kept him from suicide. He was educated at home by a series of tutors. At age eleven, his brother Frank introduced him to the work of Euclid, which transformed Russell's life.

During these formative years he also discovered the works of Percy Bysshe Shelley. In his autobiography, he writes: "I spent all my spare time reading him, and learning him by heart, knowing no one to whom I could speak of what I thought or felt, I used to reflect how wonderful it would have been to know Shelley, and to wonder whether I should meet any live human being with whom I should feel so much sympathy". Russell claimed that beginning at age 15, he spent considerable time thinking about the validity of Christian religious dogma, which he found very unconvincing. At this age, he came to the conclusion that there is no free will and, two years later, that there is no life after death. Finally, at the age of 18, after reading Mill's "Autobiography", he abandoned the "First Cause" argument and became an atheist.

### **1.0.3. University and First Marriage:**

Russell won a scholarship to read for the Mathematical Tripos at Trinity College, Cambridge, and commenced his studies there in 1890, taking as coach Robert Rumsey Webb. He became acquainted with the younger George Edward Moore and came under the influence of Alfred North Whitehead, who recommended him to the Cambridge Apostles. He quickly distinguished himself in mathematics and philosophy, graduating as a high Wrangler in 1893 and becoming a Fellow in the latter in 1895.

Russell first met the American Quaker Alys Pearsall Smith when he was 17 years old. He became a friend of the Pearsall Smith family—they knew him primarily as 'Lord John's grandson' and enjoyed showing him off—and travelled with them to the continent; it was in their company that Russell visited the Paris Exhibition of 1889 and was able to climb the Eiffel Tower soon after it was completed.

He soon fell in love with the puritanical, high-minded Alys, who was a graduate of Bryn Mawr College near Philadelphia, and, contrary to his grandmother's wishes, married her on 13 December 1894. Their marriage began to fall apart in 1901 when it occurred to Russell, while he was cycling, that he no longer loved her. She asked him if he loved her and he replied that he didn't. Russell also disliked Alys's mother, finding her controlling and cruel. It was to be a hollow shell of a marriage and they finally divorced in 1921, after a lengthy period of separation. During this period, Russell had passionate (and often simultaneous) affairs with a number of women, including Lady Ottoline Morrell and the actress Lady Constance Malleson.

#### 1.0.4. Early Career:

Russell began his published work in 1896 with *German Social Democracy*, a study in politics that was an early indication of a lifelong interest in political and social theory. In 1896 he taught German social democracy at the London School of Economics, where he also lectured on the science of power in the autumn of 1937. He was a member of the Coefficients dining club of social reformers set up in 1902 by the Fabian campaigners Sidney and Beatrice Webb.

He now started an intensive study of the foundations of mathematics at Trinity. In 1898 he wrote *An Essay on the Foundations of Geometry* which discussed the Cayley-Klein metrics used for non-Euclidean geometry. He attended the International Congress of Philosophy in Paris in 1900 where he met Giuseppe Peano and Alessandro Padoa. The Italians had responded to Georg Cantor, making a science of set theory; they gave Russell their literature including the *Formulario mathematico*. Russell was impressed by the precision of Peano's arguments at the Congress, read the literature upon returning to England, and came upon Russell's paradox. In 1903 he published *The Principles of Mathematics*, a work on foundations of mathematics. It advanced a thesis of logicism, that mathematics and logic are one and the same.

At the age of 29, in February 1901, Russell underwent what he called a "sort of mystic illumination", after witnessing Whitehead's wife's acute suffering in an angina attack. "I found myself filled with semi-mystical feelings about beauty... and with a desire almost as profound as that of the Buddha to find some philosophy which should make human life endurable", Russell would later recall. "At the end of those five minutes, I had become a completely different person."

In 1905 he wrote the essay "On Denoting", which was published in the philosophical journal *Mind*. Russell became a fellow of the Royal Society in 1908. The three-volume *Principia Mathematica*, written with Whitehead, was published between 1910 and 1913. This, along with the earlier *The Principles of Mathematics*, soon made Russell world-famous in his field.

In 1910 he became a lecturer in the University of Cambridge, where he was approached by the Austrian engineering student Ludwig Wittgenstein, who became his PhD student. Russell viewed Wittgenstein as a genius and a successor who would continue his work on logic. He spent hours dealing with Wittgenstein's various phobias and his frequent bouts of despair. This was often a drain on Russell's energy, but Russell continued to be fascinated by him and encouraged his academic development, including the publication of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* in 1922. Russell delivered his lectures on Logical Atomism, his version of these ideas, in 1918, before the end of the First World War. Wittgenstein was, at that time, serving in the Austrian Army and subsequently spent nine months in an Italian prisoner of war camp at the end of the conflict.

### **1.0.5. First World War:**

During the First World War, Russell was one of the very few people to engage in active pacifist activities, and in 1916, he was dismissed from Trinity College following his conviction under the Defence of the Realm Act.

Russell played a significant part in the Leeds Convention in June 1917 — a historic event which saw well over a thousand "anti-war socialists" gather; many being delegates from the Independent Labour Party and the Socialist Party, united in their pacifist beliefs and advocating a peace settlement. The international press reported that Russell appeared alongside a number of Labour MPs, including both the future Prime Minister, Ramsey MacDonald, and the future Chancellor of the Exchequer, Philip Snowden and that former Liberal MP, and anti-conscription campaigner, Professor Arnold Lupton, was also a guest. After the event, Russell told Lady Ottoline that, "to my surprise, when I got up to speak, I was given the greatest ovation that was possible to give anybody".

The Trinity incident resulted in Russell being charged a fine of £100, which he refused to pay, hoping that he would be sent to prison. However, his books were sold at auction to raise the money. The books were bought by friends; he later treasured his copy of the King James Bible that was stamped "Confiscated by Cambridge Police".

A later conviction for publicly lecturing against inviting the US to enter the war on Britain's side resulted in six months' imprisonment in Brixton prison in 1918. While in prison, Russell read enormously, and wrote the book *Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy*. He was reinstated in 1919, resigned in 1920, was Turner Lecturer 1926, and became a Fellow again in 1944 and remained as such until 1949.

In 1924, Bertrand again gained press attention when attending a "banquet" in the House of Commons with well-known campaigners, including Arnold

Lupton, who had been both a Member of Parliament and had also endured imprisonment for "passive resistance to military or naval service".

#### **1.0.6. Between the Wars:**

In August 1920 Russell travelled to Russia as part of an official delegation sent by the British government to investigate the effects of the Russian Revolution. He met Vladimir Lenin and had an hour-long conversation with him. In his autobiography, he mentions that he found Lenin rather disappointing, sensing an "impish cruelty" in him and comparing him to "an opinionated professor". He cruised down the Volga on a steamship. His experiences destroyed his previous tentative support for the revolution. He wrote a book *The Practice and Theory of Bolshevism* about his experiences on this trip, taken with a group of 24 others from Britain, all of whom came home thinking well of the régime, despite Russell's attempts to change their minds. For example, he told them that he heard shots fired in the middle of the night and was sure these were clandestine executions, but the others maintained that it was only cars backfiring.

Russell's lover Dora Black, a British author, feminist and socialist campaigner, visited Russia independently at the same time; in contrast to his reaction, she was enthusiastic about the revolution.

The next fall Russell went, accompanied by Dora, to Beijing to lecture on philosophy for one year. He went with optimism and hope, seeing China as then being on a new path. Other scholars present in China at the time included John Dewey and Rabindranath Tagore, the Indian Nobel-laureate poet. Before leaving

China, Russell became gravely ill with pneumonia, and incorrect reports of his death were published in the Japanese press. When the couple visited Japan on their return journey, Dora took on the role of spurning the local press by handing out notices reading "Mr. Bertrand Russell, having died according to the Japanese press, is unable to give interviews to Japanese journalists". Apparently they found this harsh and reacted resentfully.

Dora was six months pregnant when the couple returned to England on 26 August 1921. Russell arranged a hasty divorce from Alys, marrying Dora six days after the divorce was finalised, on 27 September 1921. Their children were John Conrad Russell, 4th Earl Russell, born on 16 November 1921, and Katharine Jane Russell (now Lady Katharine Tait), born on 29 December 1923. Russell supported his family during this time by writing popular books explaining matters of physics, ethics, and education to the layman. Some have suggested that at this point he had an affair with Vivienne Haigh-Wood, the English governess and writer, and first wife (the Eliots did not formally separate until 1933) of T. S. Eliot.

Together with Dora, he founded the experimental Beacon Hill School in 1927. The school was run from a succession of different locations, including its original premises at the Russells' residence, Telegraph House, near Harting, West Sussex. On 8 July 1930 Dora gave birth to her third child Harriet Ruth. After he left the school in 1932, Dora continued it until 1943.

Upon the death of his elder brother Frank, in 1931, Russell became the 3rd Earl Russell. He once said that his title was primarily useful for securing hotel rooms.



Russell's marriage to Dora grew increasingly tenuous, and it reached a breaking point over her having two children with an American journalist, Griffin Barry. They separated in 1932 and finally divorced. On 18 January 1936, Russell married his third wife, an Oxford undergraduate named Patricia ("Peter") Spence, who had been his children's governess since 1930. Russell and Peter had one son, Conrad Sebastian Robert Russell, 5th Earl Russell, who became a prominent historian and one of the leading figures in the Liberal Democratic party.

During the 1930s, Russell became a close friend and collaborator of V. K. Krishna Menon, then secretary of the India League, the foremost lobby for Indian independence in Great Britain.

#### **1.0.7. Second World War:**

Russell opposed rearmament against Nazi Germany, but in 1940 changed his view that avoiding a full-scale world war was more important than defeating Hitler. He concluded that Adolf Hitler taking over all of Europe would be a permanent threat to democracy. In 1943, he adopted a stance toward large-scale warfare, "Relative Political Pacifism": War was always a great evil, but in some particularly extreme circumstances, it may be the lesser of two evils.

Before World War II, Russell taught at the University of Chicago, later moving on to Los Angeles to lecture at the UCLA Department of Philosophy. He was appointed professor at the City College of New York (CCNY) in 1940, but

after a public outcry the appointment was annulled by a court judgment that pronounced him "morally unfit" to teach at the college due to his opinions—notably those relating to sexual morality, detailed in *Marriage and Morals* (1929). The protest was started by the mother of a student who would not have been eligible for his graduate-level course in mathematical logic; many intellectuals, led by John Dewey, protested his treatment. Albert Einstein's oft-quoted aphorism that "great spirits have always encountered violent opposition from mediocre minds" originated in his open letter supporting Russell's appointment dated 19 March 1940, to Morris Raphael Cohen, a professor emeritus at CCNY. Dewey and Horace M. Kallen edited a collection of articles on the CCNY affair in *The Bertrand Russell Case*. He soon joined the Barnes Foundation, lecturing to a varied audience on the history of philosophy; these lectures formed the basis of *A History of Western Philosophy*. His relationship with the eccentric Albert C. Barnes soon soured, and he returned to Britain in 1944 to rejoin the faculty of Trinity College.

#### **1.0.8. Later Life:**

During the 1940s and 1950s, Russell participated in many broadcasts over the BBC, particularly *The Brains Trust* and the Third Programme, on various topical and philosophical subjects. By this time Russell was world-famous outside of academic circles, frequently the subject or author of magazine and newspaper articles, and was called upon to offer opinions on a wide variety of subjects, even mundane ones. En route to one of his lectures in Trondheim, Russell was one of 24 survivors (among a total of 43 passengers) in an aeroplane crash in Hommelvik in October 1948. He said he owed his life to smoking since the people who drowned were in the non-smoking part of the plane. *A History of Western*

*Philosophy* (1945) became a best-seller and provided Russell with a steady income for the remainder of his life.

In 1943, Russell expressed support for Zionism: "I have come gradually to see that, in a dangerous and largely hostile world, it is essential to Jews to have some country which is theirs, some region where they are not suspected aliens, some state which embodies what is distinctive in their culture".

In a speech in 1948, Russell said that if the USSR's aggression continued, it would be morally worse to go to war after the USSR possessed an atomic bomb than before it possessed one, because if the USSR had no bomb the West's victory would come more swiftly and with fewer casualties than if there were atom bombs on both sides. At that time, only the United States possessed an atomic bomb, and the USSR was pursuing an extremely aggressive policy towards the countries in Eastern Europe which it was absorbing into its sphere of influence. Many understood Russell's comments to mean that Russell approved of a first strike in a war with the USSR, including Nigel Lawson, who was present when Russell spoke. Others, including Griffin, who obtained a transcript of the speech, have argued that he was merely explaining the usefulness of America's atomic arsenal in deterring the USSR from continuing its domination of Eastern Europe. However, just after the atomic bombs exploded over Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Russell wrote letters, and published articles in newspapers from 1945-1948, stating clearly that it was morally justified and better to go to war against the USSR using atomic bombs while the USA possessed them and before the USSR did. After the USSR exploded the atomic bomb, Russell changed his position 180 degrees and advocated now the total abolishment of atomic weapons.

In 1948, Russell was invited by the BBC to deliver the inaugural Reith Lectures—what was to become an annual series of lectures, still broadcast by the BBC. His series of six broadcasts, titled *Authority and the Individual*, explored themes such as the role of individual initiative in the development of a community and the role of state control in a progressive society. Russell continued to write about philosophy. He wrote a foreword to *Words and Things* by Ernest Gellner, which was highly critical of the later thought of Ludwig Wittgenstein and of ordinary language philosophy. Gilbert Ryle refused to have the book reviewed in the philosophical journal *Mind*, which caused Russell to respond via *The Times*. The result was a month-long correspondence in *The Times* between the supporters and detractors of ordinary language philosophy, which was only ended when the paper published an editorial critical of both sides but agreeing with the opponents of ordinary language philosophy.

In the King's Birthday Honours of 9 June 1949, Russell was awarded the Order of Merit, and the following year he was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature. When he was given the Order of Merit, George VI was affable but slightly embarrassed at decorating a former jailbird, saying, "You have sometimes behaved in a manner that would not do if generally adopted". Russell merely smiled, but afterwards claimed that the reply "That's right, just like your brother" immediately came to mind. In 1952 Russell was divorced by Spence, with whom he had been very unhappy. Conrad, Russell's son by Spence, did not see his father between the time of the divorce and 1968 (at which time his decision to meet his father caused a permanent breach with his mother).

Russell married his fourth wife, Edith Finch, soon after the divorce, on 15 December 1952. They had known each other since 1925, and Edith had taught

English at Bryn Mawr College near Philadelphia, sharing a house for 20 years with Russell's old friend Lucy Donnelly. Edith remained with him until his death, and, by all accounts, their marriage was a happy, close, and loving one. Russell's eldest son John suffered from serious mental illness, which was the source of ongoing disputes between Russell and his former wife Dora. John's wife Susan was also mentally ill, and eventually Russell and Edith became the legal guardians of their three daughters, two of whom were later diagnosed with schizophrenia.

In September 1961, at the age of 89, Russell was jailed for seven days in Brixton Prison after taking part in an anti-nuclear demonstration in London, for "breach of peace". The magistrate offered to exempt him from jail if he pledged himself to "good behaviour", to which Russell replied: "No, I won't."

In 1962 Russell played a public role in the Cuban Missile Crisis: in an exchange of telegrams with Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev, Khrushchev assured him that the Soviet government would not be reckless. Russell sent this telegram to President Kennedy:

YOUR ACTION DESPERATE. THREAT TO HUMAN SURVIVAL. NO CONCEIVABLE JUSTIFICATION. CIVILIZED MAN CONDEMNS IT. WE WILL NOT HAVE MASS MURDER. ULTIMATUM MEANS WAR... END THIS MADNESS.

According to historian Peter Knight, after JFK's assassination, Russell, "prompted by the emerging work of the lawyer Mark Lane in the US ... rallied

support from other noteworthy and left-leaning compatriots to form a *Who Killed Kennedy Committee* in June 1964, members of which included Michael Foot MP, Caroline Benn, the publisher Victor Gollancz, the writers John Arden and J. B. Priestley, and the Oxford history professor Hugh Trevor-Roper. Russell published a highly critical article weeks before the Warren Commission Report was published, setting forth *16 Questions on the Assassination* and equating the Oswald case with the Dreyfus affair of late 19th-century France, in which the state wrongly convicted an innocent man. Russell also criticised the American press for failing to heed any voices critical of the official version.

#### **1.0.9. Political Causes:**

Russell spent the 1950s and 1960s engaged in political causes primarily related to nuclear disarmament and opposing the Vietnam War. The 1955 Russell–Einstein Manifesto was a document calling for nuclear disarmament and was signed by eleven of the most prominent nuclear physicists and intellectuals of the time. In 1966–67, Russell worked with Jean-Paul Sartre and many other intellectual figures to form the Russell Vietnam War Crimes Tribunal to investigate the conduct of the United States in Vietnam. He wrote a great many letters to world leaders during this period.

In 1956, immediately before and during the Suez Crisis, Russell expressed his opposition to what he viewed as European imperialism in the Middle East. He viewed the crisis as another reminder of what he saw as a pressing need for a more effective mechanism for international governance, and to restrict national sovereignty to places such as the Suez Canal area "where general interest is involved". At the same time the Suez Crisis was taking place, the world was also

captivated by the Hungarian Revolution and the subsequent crushing of the revolt by intervening Soviet forces. Russell attracted criticism for speaking out fervently against the Suez war while ignoring Soviet repression in Hungary, to which he responded that he did not criticise the Soviets "because there was no need. Most of the so-called Western World was fulminating". Although he later feigned a lack of concern, at the time he was disgusted by the brutal Soviet response, and on 16 November 1956, he expressed approval for a declaration of support for Hungarian scholars which Michael Polanyi had cabled to the Soviet embassy in London twelve days previously, shortly after Soviet troops had already entered Budapest.

In November 1957 Russell wrote an article addressing US President Dwight D. Eisenhower and Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev, urging a summit to consider "the conditions of co-existence". Khrushchev responded that peace could indeed be served by such a meeting. In January 1958 Russell elaborated his views in *The Observer*, proposing a cessation of all nuclear-weapons production, with Britain taking the first step by unilaterally suspending its own nuclear-weapons program if necessary, and with Germany "freed from all alien armed forces and pledged to neutrality in any conflict between East and West". US Secretary of State John Foster Dulles replied for Eisenhower. The exchange of letters was published as *The Vital Letters of Russell, Khrushchev, and Dulles*.

Russell was asked by *The New Republic*, a liberal American magazine, to elaborate his views on world peace. He suggested that all nuclear-weapons testing and constant flights by planes armed with nuclear weapons be halted immediately, and negotiations be opened for the destruction of all Hydrogen bombs, with the number of conventional nuclear devices limited to ensure a balance of power. He proposed that Germany be reunified and accept the Oder-Neisse line as its border,

and that a neutral zone be established in Central Europe, consisting at the minimum of Germany, Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia, with each of these countries being free of foreign troops and influence, and prohibited from forming alliances with countries outside the zone. In the Middle East, Russell suggested that the West avoid opposing Arab nationalism, and proposed a United Nations peacekeeping force to guard Israel's frontiers to ensure that Israel was protected from aggression and prevented from committing it. He also suggested Western recognition of the People's Republic of China, and that it be admitted to the UN with a permanent seat on the UN Security Council.

He was in contact with Lionel Rogosin while the latter was filming his anti-war film *Good Times, Wonderful Times* in the 1960s. He became a hero to many of the youthful members of the New Left. In early 1963, in particular, Russell became increasingly vocal in his disapproval of the Vietnam War, and felt that the US government's policies there were near-genocidal. In 1963 he became the inaugural recipient of the Jerusalem Prize, an award for writers concerned with the freedom of the individual in society. In 1964 he was one of eleven world figures who issued an appeal to Israel and the Arab countries to accept an arms embargo and international supervision of nuclear plants and rocket weaponry. In October 1965 he tore up his Labour Party card because he suspected Harold Wilson's Labour government was going to send troops to support the United States in Vietnam.



#### **1.0.10. Final Years and Death:**

Russell published his three-volume autobiography in 1967, 1968, and 1969. Russell made a cameo appearance playing himself in the anti-war Hindi film *Aman* which was released in India in 1967. This was Russell's only appearance in a feature film.

On 23 November 1969 he wrote to *The Times* newspaper saying that the preparation for show trials in Czechoslovakia was "highly alarming". The same month, he appealed to Secretary General U Thant of the United Nations to support an international war crimes commission to investigate alleged torture and genocide by the United States in South Vietnam during the Vietnam War. The following month, he protested to Alexei Kosygin over the expulsion of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn from the Writers Union.

On 31 January 1970 Russell issued a statement condemning Israel's aggression in the Middle East, and in particular, Israeli bombing raids being carried out deep in Egyptian territory as part of the War of Attrition. He called for an Israeli withdrawal to the pre-Six-Day War borders. This was Russell's final political statement or act. It was read out at the International Conference of Parliamentarians in Cairo on 3 February 1970, the day after his death.

Russell died of influenza on 2 February 1970 at his home, Plas Penrhyn, in Penrhyndeudraeth, Merionethshire, Wales. His body was cremated in Colwyn Bay on 5 February 1970. In accordance with his will, there was no religious ceremony; his ashes were scattered over the Welsh mountains later that year.

In 1980 a memorial to Russell was commissioned by a committee including the philosopher A. J. Ayer. It consists of a bust of Russell in Red Lion Square in London sculpted by Marcelle Quinton.

## **2.0. Russell's Views on Philosophy:**

Russell is generally credited with being one of the founders of analytic philosophy, but he also produced a body of work that covers logic, the philosophy of mathematics, metaphysics, ethics and epistemology, including his 1913 *Theory of Knowledge* and the related article he wrote for the 1926 edition of *Encyclopædia Britannica*.

### **2.0.1. Analytical Philosophy:**

Bertrand Russell helped to develop what is now called "Analytic Philosophy." Alongside G. E. Moore, Russell was shown to be partly responsible for the British revolt against idealism, a philosophy greatly influenced by G. W. F. Hegel and his British apostle, F. H. Bradley. This revolt was echoed 30 years later in Vienna by the logical positivists' "revolt against metaphysics." Russell was particularly critical of a doctrine he ascribed to idealism and coherentism, which he dubbed the doctrine of internal relations; this, Russell suggested, held that to know any particular thing, we must know all of its relations. Russell argued that this would make space, time, science and the concept of number not fully intelligible. Russell's logical work with Whitehead continued this project.

Russell and Moore were devoted to clarity in arguments by breaking down philosophical position into their simplest components. Russell, in particular, saw formal logic and science as the principal tools of the philosopher. Russell did not think we should have separate methods for philosophy. Russell thought philosophers should strive to answer the most general of propositions about the world and this would help eliminate confusions. In particular, he wanted to end what he saw as the excesses of metaphysics. Russell adopted William of Ockham's principle against multiplying unnecessary entities, Occam's Razor, as a central part of the method of analysis.

### **2.0.2. Logic and Philosophy of Mathematics:**

Russell had great influence on modern mathematical logic. The American philosopher and logician Willard Quine said Russell's work represented the greatest influence on his own work.

Russell's first mathematical book, *An Essay on the Foundations of Geometry*, was published in 1897. This work was heavily influenced by Immanuel Kant. Russell later realised that the conception it laid out would make Albert Einstein's schema of space-time impossible. Thenceforth, he rejected the entire Kantian program as it related to mathematics and geometry, and rejected his own earliest work on the subject.

Interested in the definition of number, Russell studied the work of George Boole, Georg Cantor, and Augustus De Morgan. Materials in the Bertrand Russell

Archives at McMaster University include notes of his reading in algebraic logic by Charles Sanders Peirce and Ernst Schröder. In 1900 he attended the first International Congress of Philosophy in Paris, where he became familiar with the work of the Italian mathematician, Giuseppe Peano. He mastered Peano's new symbolism and his set of axioms for arithmetic. Peano defined logically all of the terms of these axioms with the exception of *0*, *number*, *successor*, and the singular term, *the*, which were the primitives of his system. Russell took it upon himself to find logical definitions for each of these. Between 1897 and 1903 he published several articles applying Peano's notation to the classical Boole-Schröder algebra of relations, among them *On the Notion of Order*, *Sur la logique des relations avec les applications à la théorie des séries*, and *On Cardinal Numbers*. He became convinced that the foundations of mathematics could be derived within what has since come to be called higher-order logic which in turn he believed to include some form of unrestricted comprehension axiom.

Russell then discovered that Gottlob Frege had independently arrived at equivalent definitions for *0*, *successor*, and *number*, and the definition of number is now usually referred to as the Frege-Russell definition. Russell drew attention to Frege's priority in 1903, when he published *The Principles of Mathematics*. The appendix to this work, however, described a paradox arising from Frege's application of second- and higher-order functions which took first-order functions as their arguments, and Russell offered his first effort to resolve what would henceforth come to be known as the Russell Paradox. Before writing *Principles*, Russell became aware of Cantor's proof that there was no greatest cardinal number, which Russell believed was mistaken. The Cantor Paradox in turn was shown (for example by Crossley) to be a special case of the Russell Paradox. This caused Russell to analyse classes, for it was known that given any number of elements, the number of classes they result in is greater than their number. This in

turn led to the discovery of a very interesting class, namely, the class of all classes. It contains two kinds of classes: those classes that contain themselves, and those that do not. Consideration of this class led him to find a fatal flaw in the so-called principle of comprehension, which had been taken for granted by logicians of the time. He showed that it resulted in a contradiction, whereby  $Y$  is a member of  $Y$ , if and only if,  $Y$  is not a member of  $Y$ . This has become known as Russell's paradox, the solution to which he outlined in an appendix to *Principles*, and which he later developed into a complete theory, the Theory of types. Aside from exposing a major inconsistency in naive set theory, Russell's work led directly to the creation of modern axiomatic set theory. It also crippled Frege's project of reducing arithmetic to logic. The Theory of Types and much of Russell's subsequent work have also found practical applications with computer science and information technology.

Russell continued to defend logicism, the view that mathematics is in some important sense reducible to logic, and along with his former teacher, Alfred North Whitehead, wrote the monumental *Principia Mathematica*, an axiomatic system on which all of mathematics can be built. The first volume of the *Principia* was published in 1910, and is largely ascribed to Russell. More than any other single work, it established the speciality of mathematical or symbolic logic. Two more volumes were published, but their original plan to incorporate geometry in a fourth volume was never realised, and Russell never felt up to improving the original works, though he referenced new developments and problems in his preface to the second edition. Upon completing the *Principia*, three volumes of extraordinarily abstract and complex reasoning, Russell was exhausted, and he felt his intellectual faculties never fully recovered from the effort. Although the *Principia* did not fall prey to the paradoxes in Frege's approach, it was later proven by Kurt Gödel that neither *Principia Mathematica*, nor any other consistent system of primitive

recursive arithmetic, could, within that system, determine that every proposition that could be formulated within that system was decidable, i.e. could decide whether that proposition or its negation was provable within the system.

Russell's last significant work in mathematics and logic, *Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy*, was written while he was in jail for his anti-war activities during World War I. This was largely an explication of his previous work and its philosophical significance.

### **2.0.3. Philosophy of Language:**

Russell made language, or more specifically, *how we use language*, a central part of philosophy, and this influenced Ludwig Wittgenstein, Gilbert Ryle, J. L. Austin, and P. F. Strawson, among others, who used many of the techniques that Russell originally developed. Russell, and GE Moore, argued that clarity of expression is a virtue.

A significant contribution to philosophy of language is Russell's theory of descriptions, set out in *On Denoting* (*Mind*, 1905). Frank P. Ramsey described this paper as "a paradigm of philosophy." The theory considers the sentence "The present King of France is bald" and whether the proposition is false or meaningless. Frege had argued, employing his distinction between sense and reference, that such sentences were meaningful but neither true nor false. Russell argues that the grammatical form of the sentence disguises its underlying logical form. Russell's Theory of Definite Descriptions enables the sentence to be

construed as meaningful but false, without commitment to the existence of any present King of France. This addresses a paradox of great antiquity (e.g. "That which is not must in some sense be. Otherwise, how could we say of it that it is not?" etc.), going back at least as far as Parmenides. In Russell's own time, Meinong held the view of that which is not being in some sense real; and Russell held this view prior to *On Denoting*.

The problem is general to what are called "definite descriptions." Normally this includes all terms beginning with "the," and sometimes includes names, like "Walter Scott." (This point is quite contentious: Russell sometimes thought that the latter terms shouldn't be called names at all, but only "disguised definite descriptions," but much subsequent work has treated them as altogether different things.) What is the "logical form" of definite descriptions: how, in Frege's terms, could we paraphrase them to show how the truth of the whole depends on the truths of the parts? Definite descriptions appear to be like names that by their very nature denote exactly one thing, neither more nor less. What, then, are we to say about the proposition as a whole if one of its parts apparently isn't functioning correctly?

Russell's solution was, first of all, to analyse not the term alone but the entire proposition that contained a definite description. "The present king of France is bald," he then suggested, can be reworded to "There is an  $x$  such that  $x$  is a present king of France, nothing other than  $x$  is a present king of France, and  $x$  is bald." Russell claimed that each definite description in fact contains a claim of existence and a claim of uniqueness which give this appearance, but these can be broken apart and treated separately from the predication that is the obvious content of the proposition. The proposition as a whole then says three things about some

object: the definite description contains two of them, and the rest of the sentence contains the other. If the object does not exist, or if it is not unique, then the whole sentence turns out to be false, not meaningless.

One of the major complaints against Russell's theory, due originally to Strawson, is that definite descriptions do not claim that their object exists, they merely presuppose that it does.

Wittgenstein, Russell's student, achieved considerable prominence in the philosophy of language after the posthumous publication of the *Philosophical Investigations*. In Russell's opinion, Wittgenstein's later work was misguided, and he decried its influence and that of its followers (especially members of the so-called "Oxford school" of ordinary language philosophy, whom he believed were promoting a kind of mysticism). He wrote a foreword to Ernest Gellner's *Words and Things* which was a fierce attack on the Oxford School of Ordinary Language philosophy and Wittgenstein's later work and was supportive of Gellner in the subsequent academic dispute. However, Russell still held Wittgenstein and his early work in high regard, he thought of him as, "perhaps the most perfect example I have ever known of genius as traditionally conceived, passionate, profound, intense, and dominating." Russell's belief that philosophy's task is not limited to examining ordinary language is once again widely accepted in philosophy.



#### **2.0.4. Logical Atomism:**

Perhaps Russell's most systematic, metaphysical treatment of philosophical analysis and his empiricist-centric logicism is evident in what he called logical atomism, which is explicated in a set of lectures, "The Philosophy of Logical Atomism," which he gave in 1918. In these lectures, Russell sets forth his concept of an ideal, isomorphic language, one that would mirror the world, whereby our knowledge can be reduced to terms of atomic propositions and their truth-functional compounds. Logical atomism is a form of radical empiricism, for Russell believed the most important requirement for such an ideal language is that every meaningful proposition must consist of terms referring directly to the objects with which we are acquainted, or that they are defined by other terms referring to objects with which we are acquainted. Russell excluded some formal, logical terms such as *all*, *the*, *is*, and so forth, from his isomorphic requirement, but he was never entirely satisfied with our understanding of such terms. One of the central themes of Russell's atomism is that the world consists of logically independent facts, a plurality of facts, and that our knowledge depends on the data of our direct experience of them. In his later life, Russell came to doubt aspects of logical atomism, especially his principle of isomorphism, though he continued to believe that the process of philosophy ought to consist of breaking things down into their simplest components, even though we might not ever fully arrive at an ultimate atomic fact.

### 2.0.5. Epistemology:

Russell's epistemology went through many phases. Once he shed neo-Hegelianism in his early years, Russell remained a philosophical realist for the remainder of his life, believing that our direct experiences have primacy in the acquisition of knowledge. While some of his views have lost favour, his influence remains strong in the distinction between two ways in which we can be familiar with objects: "knowledge by acquaintance" and "knowledge by description". For a time, Russell thought that we could only be acquainted with our own sense data—momentary perceptions of colours, sounds, and the like—and that everything else, including the physical objects that these were sense data of, could only be inferred, or reasoned to—i.e. known by description—and not known directly. This distinction has gained much wider application, though Russell eventually rejected the idea of an intermediate sense datum.

In his later philosophy, Russell subscribed to a kind of neutral monism, maintaining that the distinctions between the material and mental worlds, in the final analysis, were arbitrary, and that both can be reduced to a neutral property—a view similar to one held by the American philosopher/psychologist, William James, and one that was first formulated by Baruch Spinoza, whom Russell greatly admired. Instead of James' "pure experience," however, Russell characterised the stuff of our initial states of perception as "events," a stance which is curiously akin to his old teacher Whitehead's process philosophy.

### 2.0.6. Philosophy of Science:

Russell claimed that he was more convinced of his *method* of doing philosophy than of his philosophical conclusions. Science was one of the principal components of analysis. Russell was a believer in the scientific method, that science reaches only tentative answers, that scientific progress is piecemeal, and attempts to find organic unities were largely futile. He believed the same was true of philosophy. Russell held that the ultimate objective of *both* science and philosophy was to *understand* reality, not simply to make predictions.

Russell's work contributed to philosophy of science's development into a separate branch of philosophy. Much of Russell's thinking about science is expressed in his 1914 book, *Our Knowledge of the External World as a Field for Scientific Method in Philosophy*, which influenced the logical positivists.

Russell held that of the physical world we know only its abstract structure except for the intrinsic character of our own brain with which we have direct acquaintance (Russell, 1948). Russell said that he had always assumed copunctuality between percepts and non-percepts, and percepts were also part of the physical world, a part of which we knew its intrinsic character directly, knowledge which goes beyond structure. His views on science have become integrated into the contemporary debate in the philosophy of science as a form of Structural Realism, people such as Elie Zahar and Ioannis Votsis have discussed the implications of his work for our understanding of science. The seminal article "The Concept of Structure in *The Analysis of Matter*" by William Demopoulos and

Michael Friedman was crucial in reintegrating Russell's views to the contemporary scene.

Russell wrote several science books, including *The ABC of Atoms* (1923) and *The ABC of Relativity* (1925).

### **2.0.7. Ethics:**

While Russell wrote a great deal on ethical subject matters, he did not believe that the subject belonged to philosophy or that when he wrote on ethics that he did so in his capacity as a philosopher. In his earlier years, Russell was greatly influenced by G.E. Moore's *Principia Ethica*. Along with Moore, he then believed that moral facts were objective, but known only through intuition; that they were simple properties of objects, not equivalent (e.g., pleasure is good) to the natural objects to which they are often ascribed (see Naturalistic fallacy); and that these simple, undefinable moral properties cannot be analysed using the non-moral properties with which they are associated. In time, however, he came to agree with his philosophical hero, David Hume, who believed that ethical terms dealt with subjective values that cannot be verified in the same way as matters of fact.

Coupled with Russell's other doctrines, this influenced the logical positivists, who formulated the theory of emotivism or non-cognitivism, which states that ethical propositions (along with those of metaphysics) were essentially meaningless and nonsensical or, at best, little more than expressions of attitudes

and preferences. Notwithstanding his influence on them, Russell himself did not construe ethical propositions as narrowly as the positivists, for he believed that ethical considerations are not only meaningful, but that they are a vital subject matter for civil discourse. Indeed, though Russell was often characterized as the patron saint of rationality, he agreed with Hume, who said that reason ought to be subordinate to ethical considerations.

#### **2.0.8. Religion and Theology:**

For most of his adult life Russell maintained that religion is little more than superstition and, despite any positive effects that religion might have, it is largely harmful to people. He believed religion and the religious outlook (he considered communism and other systematic ideologies to be forms of religion) serve to impede knowledge, foster fear and dependency, and are responsible for much of the war, oppression, and misery that have beset the world.

In his 1949 speech, "Am I an Atheist or an Agnostic?", Russell expressed his difficulty over whether to call himself an atheist or an agnostic:

As a philosopher, if I were speaking to a purely philosophic audience I should say that I ought to describe myself as an Agnostic, because I do not think that there is a conclusive argument by which one can prove that there is not a God. On the other hand, if I am to convey the right impression to the ordinary man in the street I think that I ought to say that I am an Atheist, because, when I say that I

cannot prove that there is not a God, I ought to add equally that I cannot prove that there are not the Homeric gods.

—Bertrand Russell, *Collected Papers*, vol. 11, p. 91

However, in the 1948 BBC Radio Debate between Bertrand Russell and Frederick Copleston, Russell chose to assume the position of the agnostic, though it seems to have been because he admitted to not being able to prove the non-existence of God:

Copleston: Well, my position is the affirmative position that such a being actually exists, and that His existence can be proved philosophically. Perhaps you would tell me if your position is that of agnosticism or of atheism. I mean, would you say that the non-existence of God can be proved?

Russell: No, I should not say that: my position is agnostic.

—Bertrand Russell v. Fr. Copleston, *1948 BBC Radio Debate on the Existence of God*

Though he would later question God's existence, he fully accepted the ontological argument during his undergraduate years:

For two or three years...I was a Hegelian. I remember the exact moment during my fourth year [in 1894] when I became one. I had gone out to buy a tin of

tobacco, and was going back with it along Trinity Lane, when I suddenly threw it up in the air and exclaimed: "Great God in Boots! – the ontological argument is sound!"

—Bertrand Russell, *Autobiography of Bertrand Russell*, pg. 60

This quote has been used by many theologians over the years, such as by Louis Pojman in his *Philosophy of Religion*, who wish for readers to believe that even a well-known atheist-philosopher supported this particular argument for God's existence. However, elsewhere in his autobiography, Russell also mentions:

About two years later, I became convinced that there is no life after death, but I still believed in God, because the "First Cause" argument appeared to be irrefutable. At the age of eighteen, however, shortly before I went to Cambridge, I read Mill's *Autobiography*, where I found a sentence to the effect that his father taught him the question "Who made me?" cannot be answered, since it immediately suggests the further question "Who made God?" This led me to abandon the "First Cause" argument, and to become an atheist.

—Bertrand Russell, *Autobiography of Bertrand Russell*, pg. 36

Russell made an influential analysis of the omphalos hypothesis enunciated by Philip Henry Gosse—that any argument suggesting that the world was created as if it were already in motion could just as easily make it a few minutes old as a few thousand years:

There is no logical impossibility in the hypothesis that the world sprang into being five minutes ago, exactly as it then was, with a population that "remembered" a wholly unreal past. There is no logically necessary connection between events at different times; therefore nothing that is happening now or will happen in the future can disprove the hypothesis that the world began five minutes ago.

—Bertrand Russell, *The Analysis of Mind*, 1921, pp. 159–60; cf. *Philosophy*, Norton, 1927, p. 7, where Russell acknowledges Gosse's paternity of this anti-evolutionary argument.

As a young man, Russell had a decidedly religious bent, himself, as is evident in his early Platonism. He longed for eternal truths, as he makes clear in his famous essay, "A Free Man's Worship", widely regarded as a masterpiece of prose, but a work that Russell came to dislike. While he rejected the supernatural, he freely admitted that he yearned for a deeper meaning to life.

Russell's views on religion can be found in his book, *Why I Am Not a Christian and Other Essays on Religion and Related Subjects*. Its title essay was a talk given on 6 March 1927 at Battersea Town Hall, under the auspices of the South London Branch of the National Secular Society, UK, and published later that year as a pamphlet. The book also contains other essays in which Russell considers a number of logical arguments for the existence of God, including the first cause argument, the natural-law argument, the argument from design, and moral arguments. He also discusses specifics about Christian theology.



His conclusion:

Religion is based, I think, primarily and mainly upon fear. It is partly the terror of the unknown and partly, as I have said, the wish to feel that you have a kind of elder brother who will stand by you in all your troubles and disputes. [...] A good world needs knowledge, kindness, and courage; it does not need a regretful hankering after the past or a fettering of the free intelligence by the words uttered long ago by ignorant men.

—Bertrand Russell, *Why I Am Not a Christian and Other Essays on Religion and Related Subjects*

### **3.0. His Influence on Philosophy:**

As Nicholas Griffin discusses in the introduction to *The Cambridge Companion to Bertrand Russell*, Russell had a major influence on modern philosophy, especially in the English-speaking world. While others were also influential, notably Frege, Moore, and Wittgenstein, Russell made analysis the dominant methodology of professional philosophy. The various analytic movements throughout the last century all owe something to Russell's earlier works. Even Ray Monk, no admirer of Russell's personal snobbery, characterized his work on the philosophy of mathematics as intense, august and incontestably great and acknowledged in the preface to the second volume of his biography that he is one of the indisputably great philosophers of the twentieth century.

Russell's influence on individual philosophers is singular, perhaps most notably in the case of Ludwig Wittgenstein, who was his student between 1911 and 1914.

Wittgenstein had an important influence on Russell as he himself discusses in his *My Philosophical Development*. He led him, for example, to conclude, much to his regret, that mathematical truths were purely tautological truths, however it is doubtful that Wittgenstein actually held this view, which he discussed in relation to logical truth, since it is not clear that he was a logicist when he wrote the *Tractatus*. What is certain is that in 1901 Russell's own reflections on the issues raised by the paradox that takes his name Russell's Paradox, led him to doubt the intuitive certainty of mathematics. This doubt was perhaps Russell's most important 'influence' on mathematics, and was spread throughout the European universities, even as Russell himself laboured (with Alfred North Whitehead) in an attempt to solve the Paradox and related paradoxes, such as Burali-Forti. As Stewart Shapiro explains in his *Thinking About Mathematics*, Russell's attempts to solve the paradoxes led to the ramified theory of types, which, though it is highly complex and relies on the doubtful axiom of reducibility, actually manages to solve both syntactic and semantic paradoxes at the expense of rendering the logicist project suspect and introducing much complexity in the PM system. Philosopher and logician F.P. Ramsey would later simplify the theory of types arguing that there was no need to solve both semantic and syntactic paradoxes to provide a foundation for mathematics. The philosopher and logician George Boolos discusses the power of the PM system in the preface to his *Logic, logic & logic*, stating that it is powerful enough to derive most classical mathematics, equating the power of PM to that of Z, a weaker form of set theory than ZFC (Zermelo-Fraenkel Set theory with Choice). In fact, ZFC actually does circumvent Russell's paradox by restricting the comprehension axiom to already existing sets by the use of subset axioms.

Russell wrote (in *Portraits from Memory*, 1956) of his reaction to Gödel's 'Theorems of Undecidability':

I wanted certainty in the kind of way in which people want religious faith. I thought that certainty is more likely to be found in mathematics than elsewhere. But I discovered that many mathematical demonstrations, which my teachers wanted me to accept, were full of fallacies ... I was continually reminded of the fable about the elephant and the tortoise. Having constructed an elephant upon which the mathematical world could rest, I found the elephant tottering, and proceeded to construct a tortoise to keep the elephant from falling. But the tortoise was no more secure than the elephant, and after some twenty years of arduous toil, I came to the conclusion that there was nothing more that I could do in the way of making mathematical knowledge indubitable.

Evidence of Russell's influence on Wittgenstein can be seen throughout the *Tractatus*, which Russell was instrumental in having published. Russell also helped to secure Wittgenstein's doctorate and a faculty position at Cambridge, along with several fellowships along the way. However, as previously stated, he came to disagree with Wittgenstein's later linguistic and analytic approach to philosophy dismissing it as "trivial", while Wittgenstein came to think of Russell as "superficial and glib", particularly in his popular writings. However, Norman Malcolm tells us in his recollections of Wittgenstein that Wittgenstein showed a deference towards Russell such as he never saw him show towards any one, and even went so far as to reprimand students of his who criticised Russell. As Ray Monk relates in his biography of Wittgenstein, Wittgenstein used to say that Russell's books should be bound in two covers, those dealing with mathematical philosophy in blue, and every student of philosophy should read them, while those

dealing with popular subjects should be bound in red and no one should be allowed to read them.

Russell's influence is also evident in the work of Alfred J. Ayer, Rudolf Carnap, Alonzo Church, Kurt Gödel, David Kaplan, Saul Kripke, Karl Popper, W. V. Quine, John R. Searle, and a number of other philosophers and logicians.

Some see Russell's influence as mostly negative,[citation needed] primarily those who have criticised Russell's emphasis on science and logic. Russell often characterised his moral and political writings as lying outside the scope of philosophy, but Russell's admirers and detractors are often more acquainted with his pronouncements on social and political matters, or what some (e.g., biographer Ray Monk) have called his "journalism," than they are with his technical, philosophical work. There is a marked tendency to conflate these matters, and to judge Russell the philosopher on what he himself would definitely consider to be his non-philosophical opinions. Russell often cautioned people to make this distinction. Beginning in the 1920s, Russell wrote frequently for *The Nation* on changing morals, disarmament and literature. In 1965, he wrote that the magazine "...has been one of the few voices which has been heard on behalf of individual liberty and social justice consistently throughout its existence."

Russell left a large assortment of writing. From his adolescent years, he wrote about 3,000 words a day, with relatively few corrections; his first draft nearly always was his last, even on the most complex, technical matters. His previously unpublished work is an immense treasure trove, and scholars continue to gain new insights into Russell's thought.

## **4.0. Autobiography:**

An autobiography is a written account of the life of a person written by that person. Autobiographical works can take many forms, from the intimate writings made during life that were not necessarily intended for publication (including letters, diaries, journals, memoirs, and reminiscences) to a formal book-length autobiography.

Formal autobiographies offer a special kind of biographical truth: a life, reshaped by recollection, with all of recollection's conscious and unconscious omissions and distortions. The novelist Graham Greene said that, for this reason, an autobiography is only "a sort of life" and used the phrase as the title for his own autobiography (1971).

### **4.0.1. Origin of the Term:**

The word 'autobiography' was first used deprecatingly by William Taylor in 1797 in the English periodical the Monthly Review, when he suggested the word as a hybrid but condemned it as 'pedantic'; but its next recorded use was in its present sense by Robert Southey in 1809. The form of autobiography however goes back to antiquity. Biographers generally rely on a wide variety of documents and viewpoints; an autobiography, however, may be based entirely on the writer's memory. Closely associated with autobiography (and sometimes difficult to precisely distinguish from it) is the form of memoir.

#### **4.0.2. The Emergence of Autobiography:**

There are but few and scattered examples of autobiographical literature in antiquity and the Middle Ages. In the 2nd century bce the Chinese classical historian Sima Qian included a brief account of himself in the *Shiji* (“Historical Records”). It may be stretching a point to include, from the 1st century bce, the letters of Cicero (or, in the early Christian era, the letters of St. Paul), and Julius Caesar’s *Commentaries* tell little about Caesar, though they present a masterly picture of the conquest of Gaul and the operations of the Roman military machine at its most efficient. Generally speaking, autobiography in its modern, Western sense can be considered to have emerged in Europe during the Renaissance, in the 15th century. One of the first examples was written in England by Margery Kempe.

In her old age Kempe, a religious mystic of Norfolk, dictated an account of her bustling, far-faring life, which, however concerned with religious experience, reveals her somewhat abrasive personality. One of the first full-scale formal autobiographies was written a generation later by a celebrated humanist publicist of the age, Enea Silvio Piccolomini, after he was elevated to the papacy, in 1458, as Pius II. In the first book of his autobiography—misleadingly named *Commentarii*, in evident imitation of Caesar—Pius II traces his career up to becoming pope; the succeeding 11 books (and a fragment of a 12th, which breaks off a few months before his death in 1464) present a panorama of the age.

The autobiography of the Italian physician and astrologer Geronimo Cardano and the adventures of the goldsmith and sculptor Benvenuto Cellini in

Italy of the 16th century; the uninhibited autobiography of the English historian and diplomat Lord Herbert of Cherbury, in the early 17th; and Colley Cibber's *Apology for the Life of Colley Cibber, Comedian* in the early 18th—these are representative examples of biographical literature from the Renaissance to the Age of Enlightenment. The latter period itself produced three works that are especially notable for their very different reflections of the spirit of the times as well as of the personalities of their authors: the urbane autobiography of Edward Gibbon, the great historian; the plainspoken, vigorous success story of an American who possessed all talents, Benjamin Franklin; and the introspection of a revolutionary Swiss-born political and social theorist, the *Confessions* of Jean-Jacques Rousseau—the latter leading to two autobiographical explorations in poetry during the Romantic period in England, William Wordsworth's *Prelude* and Lord Byron's *Childe Harold*, cantos III and IV.

#### **4.0.3. Types of Autobiography:**

An autobiography may be placed into one of four very broad types: thematic, religious, intellectual, and fictionalized. The first grouping includes books with such diverse purposes as *The Americanization of Edward Bok* (1920) and Adolf Hitler's *Mein Kampf* (1925, 1927). Religious autobiography claims a number of great works, ranging from *The Confessions of St. Augustine* in the Middle Ages to the autobiographical chapters of Thomas Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus* and John Henry Cardinal Newman's *Apologia* in the 19th century. That century and the early 20th saw the creation of several intellectual autobiographies, including the severely analytical *Autobiography* of the philosopher John S. Mill and *The Education of Henry Adams*. Finally, somewhat analogous to the novel as biography is the autobiography thinly disguised as, or transformed into, the novel.

This group includes such works as Samuel Butler's *The Way of All Flesh* (1903), James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916), George Santayana's *The Last Puritan* (1935), and the novels of Thomas Wolfe. Yet in all of these works can be detected elements of all four types; the most outstanding autobiographies often ride roughshod over these distinctions.

## **5.0. The Prologue to Bertrand Russell's *Autobiography*:**

### **What I Have Lived For**

Three passions, simple but overwhelmingly strong, have governed my life: the longing for love, the search for knowledge, and unbearable pity for the suffering of mankind. These passions, like great winds, have blown me hither and thither, in a wayward course, over a great ocean of anguish, reaching to the very verge of despair.

I have sought love, first, because it brings ecstasy - ecstasy so great that I would often have sacrificed all the rest of life for a few hours of this joy. I have sought it, next, because it relieves loneliness--that terrible loneliness in which one shivering consciousness looks over the rim of the world into the cold unfathomable lifeless abyss. I have sought it finally, because in the union of love I have seen, in a mystic miniature, the prefiguring vision of the heaven that saints and poets have imagined. This is what I sought, and though it might seem too good for human life, this is what--at last--I have found.

With equal passion I have sought knowledge. I have wished to understand the hearts of men. I have wished to know why the stars shine. And I have



tried to apprehend the Pythagorean power by which number holds sway above the flux. A little of this, but not much, I have achieved.

Love and knowledge, so far as they were possible, led upward toward the heavens. But always pity brought me back to earth. Echoes of cries of pain reverberate in my heart. Children in famine, victims tortured by oppressors, helpless old people a burden to their sons, and the whole world of loneliness, poverty, and pain make a mockery of what human life should be. I long to alleviate this evil, but I cannot, and I too suffer.

This has been my life. I have found it worth living, and would gladly live it again if the chance were offered me.

## **6.0. Russell's Influence on Society:**

Political and social activism occupied much of Russell's time for most of his life. Russell remained politically active almost to the end of his life, writing to and exhorting world leaders and lending his name to various causes.

Russell argued for a "scientific society", where war would be abolished, population growth limited, and prosperity shared. He suggested the establishment of a "single supreme world government" able to enforce peace, claiming that "the only thing that will redeem mankind is co-operation".

Russell was an active supporter of the Homosexual Law Reform Society, being one of the signatories of A.E. Dyson's 1958 letter to *The Times* calling for a change in the law regarding male homosexual practices, which were partly legalised in 1967, when Russell was still alive.

In "Reflections on My Eightieth Birthday" ("Postscript" in his *Autobiography*), Russell wrote: "I have lived in the pursuit of a vision, both personal and social. Personal: to care for what is noble, for what is beautiful, for what is gentle; to allow moments of insight to give wisdom at more mundane times. Social: to see in imagination the society that is to be created, where individuals grow freely, and where hate and greed and envy die because there is nothing to nourish them. These things I believe, and the world, for all its horrors, has left me unshaken".

Russell often characterized his moral and political writings as lying outside the scope of philosophy, but Russell's admirers and detractors are often more acquainted with his pronouncements on social and political matters, or what some (e.g., biographer Ray Monk) have called his "journalism," than they are with his technical, philosophical work. There is a marked tendency to conflate these matters, and to judge Russell the philosopher on what he himself would certainly consider to be his non-philosophical opinions. Russell often cautioned people to make this distinction. Beginning in the 1920s, Russell wrote frequently for *The Nation* on changing morals, nuclear disarmament and literature. In 1965, he wrote that the magazine "...has been one of the few voices which has been heard on behalf of individual liberty and social justice consistently throughout its existence."

### **Sources/Suggested Reading:**

1. <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bertrand\\_Russell](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bertrand_Russell)>

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