

Arnold's Humanism in the Context of His Thought and Development

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Humanism is dead. The obituary has been recently published in two books. One, in English, is significantly titled The Death of Literature. It announces, with some regret, that

the Bastilles of the old literature, the reality of "literature," the creativity of the author, the superiority of authors and literary works to critics and readers, and the integrity of the literary art work, have now all been stormed. The attackers carried many banners, but all were associated with the political radicalism of recent decades, and all drew their authority in varying ways and degrees from two closely connected skepticisms, structuralism and post - structuralism or deconstruction.(Kernan 77)

The other book is in Arabic and bears a more significant title, mowtu-l-'insaan [The Death of Man]. The author, Addoway, conducts his autopsy, also with regret, by analyzing the major works of leading figures in the Modern Age: Nietzsche, Heidegger, Strauss, Althusser, and Foucault.

Notwithstanding the resuscitating efforts of some

humanists such as Daniel Schwarz in his book The Case for a Humanistic Poetics and Sean Burke in his book The Death and Return of the Author, one has to admit that the humanistic crisis is real, though not peculiarly modern, and that the obituary speaks of idealistic humanism, which, as Burns shows, first came to light in fourteenth-century Europe and was championed and disseminated by such prominent figures as Petrarch, Boccaccio, Erasmus, Thomas More, and Bruno. These, buoyed by optimism, admitted of no limits to man's potential. They tended to see him as a special creature endowed with freedom, consciousness, intelligence, creativity, and initiative, and occupying a central position on earth, which in Ptolemy's astronomy was itself the center of the universe. Just as Ptolemy's astronomy was contradicted by Copernicus', this spirited humanism was early challenged and threatened from inside by internal division and from outside by grim historical realities represented by Machiavelli in Italy and later by Hobbes in England, both of whom stressed man's limitations, weaknesses, and corruptibility and presented the ideals of the sister humanism as wishful thought belied by man's condition in nature, a condition plagued by inequality, injustice, and aggression. Consequently, a sense of mission among humanists evolved. The crusading spirit took the shape of criticism and satire directed against the socio-political system in order to improve man's life on earth. No longer central in the cosmic order, man here lies in need of pity, help, and commiseration, and the necessity arises for a system of rules and values to redress the imbalance of nature.¹

Arnold's efforts in this regard cannot be denied. His humanism, whether as a study of the human spirit, a persistent search for a better life for man, or a sustained and tenacious criticism of Victorian

society, pervades his work both in prose and verse. However, his well-known humanistic program, outlined in his major prose works --apart from its utopian, wishfully contemplative nature-- is permeated by inner inconsistencies, by incoherent views of human nature as he moves from poetry to prose and by complex personal factors, all of which delineate a certain impasse while betraying a persistent process of repression, sublimation, and displacement which informs his development as a writer and a humanist

That religion constitutes one of the foundations of Arnold's humanism hardly stands in need of any proof. For him the ultimate objective of culture is "to make reason and the will of God prevail"(Culture and Anarchy 478), a religiously moral mission as perfect as all theoretical programs. It evidently marks Arnold's imagination, dream, and contemplative spirit, though the possibility of turning it into action through "reading, observing and thinking"(Culture 518) is attested to by the work of two German thinkers, Lessing and Herder, who, having had their lesson from St. Augustine, "humanized knowledge ... broadened the basis of life and intelligence ... worked powerfully to diffuse sweetness and light, to make reason and the will of God prevail"(Culture 500).

However, this basic ideal and ultimate objective, this difficult marriage of the Enlightenment and Medievalism, rests on religious assumptions that Arnold himself undercuts, whether consciously or not. Some of these assumptions are God's existence and the compatibility of His will and reason. Arnold's position in this regard is not consistent enough to sustain such a formidable program, as we shall see. His assaults on religion and Christian sects are widely spread over his career.² In Culture and Anarchy

religion is accused of narrowness of scope. It has failed because it tends to emphasize the soul over and above the other powers at work in man. In his religious writings of the 1870s he betrays a serious disjunction between a positivistic adherence to facts and his emotionally moral convictions. The subject of Literature and Dogma, as he says in the "Preface" to God and the Bible, is to show the "truth and necessity of Christianity, and its power and charm for the heart, mind, and imagination of man, even though the preternatural, which is now its popular sanction, should have to be given up"(1197). Arnold seems to have assigned to himself the redoubtable task of saving Christianity after decapitating it, though God or, at least, His shadow keeps coming back. Christian theologians, he says, distorted Christianity by dealing with the Bible as "scientific and fit matter for the application of their powers of abstruse reasoning to it"(Literature and Dogma 1197). According to this argument, the theologians' reasoning is wrong in admitting aberglaupe, and Arnold is right in rejecting it. So, human reason is not one but multiple. What the theologians accept as true in the Bible, Arnold classifies as fairy-tale stuff. The Second Advent, the Trinity, and immortality are all fairy-tale materials. Satan is a shadow of man's "guilt and terrors"(Dogma 1202). Heaven is also a shadow, like the Greek Olympus.

In a world characterized by what Miller calls the disappearance of God, the emphasis shifts to Jesus, and Christianity is reduced to his method, secret, and the sweetness of his reasonableness. Jesus' righteousness is summed up in renunciation and conscience. Moreover, Jesus himself is reduced, as in Emerson, to a better man and loses his Christian identity as a member of the Trinity. By humanizing Christ, Arnold makes him a possible prototype of his

aliens, a sublimated human being to be emulated. In a skeptical age, Arnold represses the supernatural, though his decision seems more of a verbal strategy than actual murder, and religion functions more like a pragmatic means to safeguard morality than a system of truths:

Whatever his skepticism as to the alleged meta-physical basis of the traditional classical-Christian synthesis of European civilization, Arnold's chief concern was to provide a means by which men in future might keep the imaginative and emotional supports and safeguards of inherited patterns of thought, feeling and morality. (Delaura 154)

Similar views occurring in various works confirm his position. In a letter to Ernest Fontanes he is dogmatically explicit about his situation. As usual, he lashes out at concrete opponents, this time at the Ritualists and Miss Frances Cobbe, "The force which is shaping the future is with neither; nor with any of the orthodox religions, or with any of the neo-religious developments which propose to themselves to supersede them"(qtd. in Delaura 60). And to crown his position, he in "The Study of Poetry" pronounces the death of religion from failure of its facts and enthrones a sublimated species of poetry in its place, for Arnold's mind is ineluctably theistic:

Our religion has materialized itself in the fact, in the supposed fact; it has attached its emotion to the fact, and now the fact is failing it. But for poetry the idea is everything; the rest is a world of illusion, of divine illusion. Poetry attaches its emotion to the idea; the idea is the fact. The strongest part of our religion to-day is its un-conscious poetry.(299)

In short, Arnold's position on the question of religion is complex and sometimes self-contradictory and extremely oppositional. Delaura delineates it in this way.

Arnold's strategy is complex. Against Orthodox Christians he argues that the notion of a Personal God is unintelligible and unverifiable --according to a special notion of verification. Against the rationalizing philosophical Liberals (whose positivism he accepts) he argues, nevertheless, that the masses need emotional and imaginative support for the practice of morality, considered as a comforting and uplifting poetic testimony to righteousness ... as verified through the whole of man's history. Finally, against what Arnold sees as the compromising non-Christian but theistic devotees of Utilitarianism, he argues that their logic is unsound, since they reject individual Christian doctrines as incredible or irrational but fail to recognize that Christian theology is a logically valid concatenation of probabilities and that only by striking at the root of all theology can individual Christian tenets be cast down.(105-6)

One actually has to speak of positions, for Arnold shifts his grounds very frequently in a series of repressions and displacements. Here, Arnold the thinker, Arnold the poet, Arnold the reformer, Arnold the critic, and Arnold the strategist get mixed up. He apparently cannot rely on faith alone to conceive of God and His will, nor can he rely on reason, according to which God is "unverified and unverifiable"(Delaura

102). However, Christian theology has its logic and God is not completely dead. So, the major religious assumptions of his thought seem to totter because he wants them all and cannot rest with onesidedness, as one can see in Culture and Anarchy. This is his problem, and so with each faction he has to repress one part of his. This is, in my opinion, the essence of his strategy as he searches for the perfect but impossible formula to save the difficult marriage he has envisioned.

And when we consider the non-religious assumptions of Arnold's ideal of cultured people, "to make reason and the will of God prevail," in the light of his other pronouncements, we witness a similar dilemma. In this context, we are on the human level, for, like all humanistic movements, Arnold's humanism rests on some secular, psychological assumptions about human nature. The importance of this component has been highlighted by a modern humanist. Against Foucault's anti-humanistic stand, Noam Chomsky declares, "Our job is to 'try to create the vision of a future just society, that is to create ... a humanistic social theory that is based, if possible, on some firm and humane concept of the human essence or human nature'" (The Foucault Reader 5). In the absence of such carefully and objectively established program, one may find oneself in the unfelicitous position of the protagonist of Rex Warner's novel The Philosopher, whose idealism is smashed by the forces of reality and who ends up as a victim of Fascism.

A reading of Arnold's writings demonstrates that human nature is a core issue in his mind and a building block of his theories and programs. In "Literature and Science" the war against the "Nebuchadnezzars" (413) of culture, those who insist

on giving science a prominent place in the curriculum at the expense of the humanities, is declared and waged in the name of the "constitution of human nature"("Science" 415). He speaks of man's fundamental desire for good, which "acts in us when we feel the impulse for relating our knowledge to our sense for conduct and to our sense for beauty"("Science" 417). This instinct works in conjunction with a wider and deeper instinct of "self-preservation," so that the former serves the latter. Apparently, Arnold suggests here that with knowledge conjoined to conduct and beauty one can shape one's life in a such a way as to preserve what is good for one and to perpetuate one's life and existence on earth. Nonetheless, one can detect in such formulation an uneasy balance between a down-to-earth Darwinian view and a Platonic idealism, especially that the line between the individual and the species is vague. Does the desirable self-preservation of one individual override the good of another? Is the good of one compatible with that of another? The Platonic tendencies gain momentum when Arnold expands his views of human nature and speaks of its various aspects. Those are "the power of conduct, the power of intellect, and the power of social life and manners"("Science" 415). When the claims of these powers are "met and adjusted," then it will be possible to attain to a state of "soberness"(Science 407) and "righteousness"("Science" 407) united with "wisdom"(407), these being three Platonic virtues by which the human soul can be elevated. One can see that wholeness is an Arnoldian virtue achieved by connectedness. However, one has to bear in mind that between this optimistic vision and another vision expressed earlier in his verse there is a significant dissonance that defines Arnold's repression and sublimation, as we will see later.

Similarly, human nature figures prominently in his classic Culture and Anarchy. He quotes Montesquieu, "The first motive which ought to impel us to study is the desire to augment the excellence of our nature, and to render an intelligent being yet more intelligent"(473). Perfection is a pivotal issue in his conception of culture as well as in the bulk of his thought: "Culture is then properly described not as having its origin in curiosity, but as having its origin in the love of perfection; it is a study of perfection"(473). Morality is another central issue: "[culture] moves by the force not merely or primarily of the scientific passion for pure knowledge, but also of the moral and social passion for doing good"(473). These two objectives culminate in the ultimate goal of culture, "to make reason and the will of God prevail."

Such culture is best embodied in the aliens, who are Arnold's answer to England's problems at the time. They are an elitist group of cultured people who have overcome their class allegiances and risen above their ordinary selves to be governed by their best selves, "persons who are mainly led, not by their class spirit, but by a general humane spirit, by the love of human perfection"(Culture 538). Additionally, they are distinguished not by "their Barbarianism or their Philistinism, but by their humanity"(Culture 573). These are Arnold's social heroes and saviors, the creations of his vast optimism and giant idealism as they emerge in his diagnosis of the malaise of his world and society, though where to find them and how to breed them remain a matter of great difficulty and mystery.

Such views, worthy as they are, cannot be taken for granted, especially when they are considered with Arnold's other works in the background. On the one

hand, they are based on psychological and philosophical assumptions of grave consequences and weighty implications: the possibility of knowledge, man's ability and willingness to utilize it in order to initiate action, and the necessary connection and compatibility of these two powers. Further, one wonders if there is in human nature a fundamental desire for good as well as an "invincible desire" ("Science" 419) to relate knowledge to the two senses of conduct and beauty. On the other hand, Arnold's poetry, written mainly before the bulk of his prose, shows no aliens acting under real pressures. His poetic "heroes" fall short of his aliens, a fact which means that he had no notion of his cultural supermen during his early stage. In his verse he is compassionate, elegiac, and tragic as he meditates on the painful human condition, whereas in his prose he wages his holy war against the enemies of society -- Barbarians, Philistines, and Populace. Here he is particularly tough, oppositional, and even belligerent in his optimistic mission to define the elements of his humanistic program.

Man in Arnold's prose is perfectible, but in his poetry he is dramatized as simply incapable of perfection, and his knowledge is tenuous and flimsy. In other words, while Arnold's projected, wished-for aliens promise Promethean achievements, his Sisyphean poetic characters plod the steepy and rugged roads of life or are tossed around by hidden forces in a Hardyesque universe, as Persoon demonstrates, though with less force and sarcasm. His short poem "Destiny" epitomizes the whole picture:

Why each is striving, from the old, To love
more deeply than he can? till would be true,
yet still grows cold? --Ask of the Powers

that sport with man.

They yok'd in him, for endless strife, A
heart of ice, a soul of fire, And hurl'd him on
the Field of Life, An aimless unallay'd
Desire.

This helpless, divided, blind creature of desire is a far cry from man as projected in Arnold's prose, which scintillates with high hopes and expectations. While one may accept Daniel's view that "the concept of social utility provides an integral part of Arnold's conception of culture"(9), his verse presents a difficult picture. Here man is a battlefield of impulses and forces that somehow stifle will and cloud vision. What one wills is frustrated by desire, and what one intends is foiled by mysterious powers. His poem "Human Life" provides the image. No one can claim that on life's sea one has kept "uninfringed ... [one's] nature's law." A necessary elaboration concludes the poem:

Even so we leave behind,
As, charter'd by some unknown Powers,
We stem across the sea of life by night,
The joys which were not for our use
design'd;--
The friends to whom we had no natural right,
The homes that were not destined to be ours.

Another Hardy-esque theme concludes his poem "To Marguerite, in Returning a Volume of the Letters of Ortis":

Who order'd, that their longing's fire
Should be, as soon as kindl'd, cool'd?
Who renders vain their deep desire?--
A God, a God their severance ruled!

And bade betwixt their shores to be
The unplumb'd, salt, estranging sea.

In this regard, one may introduce Arnold's vision of old age, only to realize that it is mournful and even distressful, contrasting sharply with Browning's vision in "Rabbi Ben Ezra":

What is it to grow old?
Is it to lose the glory of the form,
The lustre of the eye?
Is it for beauty to forego her wreath?
--Yes, but not this alone. ("Growing Old")

The crescendo rises until it peaks with

It is --last stage of all--
When we are frozen up within, and quite
The phantom of ourselves,
To hear the world applaud the hollow ghost
Which blamed the living man.

Even self-knowledge, that great classical ideal, is hardly attainable, no matter how passionately one seeks it:

And on earth we wander, groping, reeling;
Powers stir in us, stir and disappear.
Ah, and he, who placed our master-feeling,
Fail'd to place our master-feeling clear.

We but dream we have our wish'd -for
powers.
Ends we seek we never shall attain. ("Self-
Deception")

The same theme is taken up in "The Buried Life." Men

live in disguise, "alien to the rest / Of men, and alien to themselves," since they are driven by separate laws, symbolized in each by the buried stream. So, even if they seem to be eddying forth here and there, they are actually governed by the predetermined forces of their respective inner selves. Identity, being predestined and fixed, makes free action impossible. Fate is in control:

Fate, which foresaw
How frivolous a baby man would be--
By what distractions he would be possess'd,

.....
Bade through the deep recesses of our breast
The unregarded river of our life
Pursue with indiscernible flow its way;
And that we should not see
The buried stream, and seem to be
Eddying at large in blind uncertainty,
Though driving on with it eternally.
("The Buried Life")

The rare moment of self-knowledge, when love unlocks the breast and man "becomes aware of his life's flow," is overclouded with skepticism, "And then he thinks he knows/The hills where his life rose,/And the sea where it goes" (emphasis mine). Thus, with such decrepit capacity for knowledge, one is worse off since one cannot have the chance of relating it to other powers of conduct, beauty, and social life to maintain one's good and existence on earth. Thus, wholeness is disintegrated.

In the light of the above, it seems that Arnold's Sisyphean characters have a large capacity for suffering. Even his "heroes" seem to belie his wishful formulas. They are aliens and escapists: anti-social, egoistic, and solipsistic. This failure to integrate

appears on another level, producing another fracture in the psyche of Arnold's "heroes," who are alienated from their communities and default any meaningful equitable interaction with the people around them. Thus, they suppress another power envisioned by Arnold, the power of social life. Here, too, his aspirations and expectations soar too high above common earth. If we consider some of his great poems, we meet some of his "heroes," who are somehow aloof, isolated, even anti-social, developing a relation of superiority towards their fellow men. The dominant relation is that of a teacher inculcating ideas in a student in rather inappropriate conditions. What results is ill-timed, incongruous pedantry, "theorizing and preaching." The speaker in "Dover Beach" is a flagrant example. Although we sympathize with him in the abstract as one of the sages of the age, he is hardly sympathetic in the poetic frame. Anthony Hecht's "The Dover Bitch: A Criticism of Life" may not qualify as a critical appraisal of the poem, but its titillating sarcasm is not, after all, irrelevant or irreverent. Empedocles is another example -- pedantic, aloof, boastful, and narcissistic, all in a tedious and brusque manner. Even when he is considering suicide, he cannot relinquish his pedestal as a teacher to those around him although he is proving at every step his incapacity to put his philosophy to a life-saving practice, sinking instead in self-pity and ennui. Having preached at great length to Pausanias, he ruminates in melancholy:

But I
The weary man, the banish'd citizen,
Whose banishment is not his greatest ill,
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!
And the world hath the day, and must break
thee,
Not thou the world. With men thou canst not
live,
Their thoughts, their ways, their wishes,
are not thine;
And being lonely thou are miserable,
For something has impair'd thy spirit's
strength,
And dried its self-sufficing fount of joy.

Empedocles, in short, drifts in limbo, having neither the capacity to enjoy life with others on equal footing nor the credentials of self-sufficiency.

Such is the plight of the Scholar-Gipsy, who decides to live outside society and time, leading a gipsy life in self-imposed exile, and who, contrary to Arnold's preaching about man's fundamental desire for good, comes to no such thing,

Who, tired of knocking at preferment's door
One summer-morn forsook
His friends, and went to learn the gipsy-
lore
And roam'd the world with that wild
brotherhood,
And came, as most men deem'd, to little good,
But came to Oxford and his friends no more.

And if he decides to return to civilized life, it is only when he can be a teacher imparting the secrets of gipsy life to a willing and enthusiastic audience, when he can be a self-appointed and self-important teacher. Surprisingly, Arnold seems to relate to such a selfish, anti-social, uncommitted gipsy impulse, while in his prose he dreams of a fulfilled and

fulfilling life of the best self of his aliens, those emblems of culture. A certain paradox lurks in the lines: "Thou hast not lived, why should'st thou perish, so?/Thou hadst one aim, one business, one desire;/Else wert thou long since numbered with the dead!/Else hadst thou spent, like other men, thy fire!" It is good to have escaped social life among men and women of equal standing, to have fled living with them, felt with them, suffered with them, and died with them, for better or worse. The Scholar-Gipsy, Empedocles, and the Dover lover have a great deal of the recluse, of Hamlet, of the Byronic hero, and of the young Arnold, but very little of the social activist, the social worker, or the aliens. They stand in contradistinction with the fulfilling whole life Arnold preaches so vehemently in "Literature and Science," as we have seen.

Moreover, Arnold's characters are presented in the throes of a conflict which amounts to a tragedy and which underlines the poet's tragic vision of life. The tragic situation, as John Farrell argues, obtains when the tragic hero is caught in the whirlpool of change(99-118) or, rather, as the poet himself puts it, "wandering between two worlds, one dead,/The other powerless to be born." Falkland, as Farrell shows, is such a tragic hero, "Arnold attempts to generalize the fate of his protagonists by relating their experience to a tragic disorder in the movement of history"(102). This romantic vision makes them guiltless victims rather than victimizers. Empedocles is "Arnold's most impressive portrayal of the guiltless hero"(Farrell 109). Burham calls him "the modern part of Arnold, the part of him that had to live in the burning plain of Victorian England, condemned to be subject to the flux of a thousand divided aims, condemned to live the nightmare of history"(9). The persona of "Dover Beach" is another "modern" man at

war with history, with the Sophoclean world of "ebb and flow," though he seems to have softened into a state of mellow acquiescence and even of hopeful expectation that human misery is, by a mysterious law of nature, bound to subside.

Nevertheless, Arnold's tragic hero is also a victim of himself, thus becoming somehow an enemy of himself and a force against his "fundamental desire for good." Farrell hints at an "inadequacy inherent in his [Empedocles'] temperament"(109). Actually, this inadequacy is a tragic flaw that accelerates his fall and wrings his heart in the meantime. In this way, character becomes an enslaving power that fetters the hero's body and mind rather than a tool of self-fulfillment towards his inherent desire for good, let alone perfection. Sometimes, the hero can grasp the forces at work in history and society but cannot bring himself to act in order to alleviate his sufferings. It seems that he becomes a lover of pain, a masochist luxuriating in his afflictions and contemplating a distressful order of things and values experienced with his lost paradise in the background.

Empedocles and the Dover lover are seen in varying degrees in the grips of such a situation. Adhering to a vanishing standard, they do nothing but to disparage the present. They, somehow, identify with the absolute standard. Empedocles becomes this standard and consequently fails to see the present realistically and objectively, eschewing it as if it were an epidemic. Such solipsism explains his refusal to realize that the absolute is not some fixed Platonic idea but rather the very process of history itself, the flux of change and development, a fact which the Dover lover has managed to grasp and embrace, though reluctantly. Callicles, who stands for this burgeoning understanding of the new absolute and who is thus

determined to celebrate nature, poetry, and music,
knows that Empedocles is to blame:

He is too scornful, too high-wrought, too
bitter.

'Tis not the times, 'tis not the sophists vex
him;

There is some root of suffering in himself,
Some secret and unfollow'd vein of woe,
Which makes the time look black and sad to
him.

As a result, Empedocles cannot live here and now; he chooses death, but not until he rails irresponsibly and blindly against the world and mankind as the cause of his fall. His solipsism is further characterized as a mind "preying on itself." Knowing what may remedy his condition, he turns his back to it. Actually, he believes that man's desire for good, which is fundamental for Arnold, is the root of a serious delusion that "the world does but exist that welfare to bestow." So, he has settled down into a state of futile dejection and idle reflection on the human condition on earth, persisting in his blindness to his own good. Theoretically, he can see the new law, but psychologically he is too rigid to change. In his case knowledge does not necessarily lead to action.

Such is the case of the Dover lover, who suffers from the Empedocles' complex as he confronts the flux of history. A keen observer and interpreter of life as he dissects it at Dover, he is incapable of going beyond thought and dogmatic preaching to his girl/wife as seeing, hearing, and analyzing prove impotent and idle defense mechanisms vacillating between escape and fake control, while the forces of history --natural, impersonal, and supernatural-- do their task, irrespective of man's thoughts and wishes:

The Sea of Faith

Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's
shore

Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furl'd.

But now I only hear

Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,

Retreating, to the breath

Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear

And naked shingles of the world.

The concluding lines outline the position of a man who, knowledgeable, moralistic, and sensitive as he is, cannot do anything about his dark reality, "And we are here as on a darkling plain/Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,/Where ignorant armies clash by night." Such is the plight of the Dover lover as well as Empedocles. Something stifles them from within, a burning sense of agony and despair, a noble rigidity of character causing a paralysis of the soul and body as they idly and impotently watch history unfold impersonally, irrevocably, and uncontrollably. History in both cases may be the occasion of tragedy, but character is its actual cause.

Eventually, the disjunction between knowledge and conduct re-erupts powerfully and is even institutionalized in Culture and Anarchy as a polarized division under the name of Hellenism and Hebraism. In what seems as an instance of the return of the repressed, Arnold speaks of these as two passions which alternate in civilizations and history and which can only be united in wishful thought. Hellenism is a passion for knowing, and Hebraism for doing. The dichotomy is complete, "And these two forces we may regard as in some sense rivals, -- rivals not by the necessity of their own nature, but as exhibited in man and his history,-- and rivals dividing

the empire of the world between them"(558). He adds, "Hebraism and Hellenism --between these two points of influence moves our world"(558). In other words, man's nature does not pass spontaneously and necessarily from knowledge to action. Obviously, what Arnold is envisioning is a nature higher than ordinary common nature. Again, he is torn between what is real and what is ideal, between gloomy reality and fantastic dream. His poetic "heroes" are often so caught up, like Hamlet, in the whirlpool of thought, self-analysis, and meditation that they seem to be waiting for some external, impersonal force to deliver them from the suffocating realities of the here and now, though, unfortunately, Godot does not show up. As aliens, in the negative sense, they reject any integration with the world around them, but such alienation is to be repressed giving way to the new aliens of Arnold's sublimating mind.

On the basis of the above argument, humans are unhappy in Arnold's poetry because they, almost by constitution, are afflicted by a serious disjunction between knowledge and action, by an inability to recognize the law of flux, and by a desperate clinging to an absolute standard of values and ideas. Empedocles, the Dover lover, and the Scholar-Gipsy all illustrate this tragic situation in different degrees. The first, governed by Thanatos not Eros, resolves the "to be or not to be" question by jumping into Etna. The second refuses to celebrate love at Dover and chooses to sit and wait. The third seeks self-fulfillment outside time and society, making of his escape a mission to learn the secrets of gipsy life in order to impart it later to established society, a promise he does not keep. The three "heroes," also in varying degrees, fail to connect what seems in Arnold's theoretical framework a perfect synthesis of knowledge, conduct, beauty, and social life, all fused

together under the guidance of the principles of good and self-preservation that are inherent in man, a fusion that takes account of the whole man as history unfolds.

It is no wonder, then, that Arnold withdrew "Empedocles on Etna" from his 1853 Poems, and the decision has sparked a number of insightful critical theories which attempt to explain it in view of Arnold's career as a poet, thinker, and social critic. Jonathan Culler finds the reason in Carlyle's influence,

... the chapter on the Everlasting Yea in Sartor Resartus. Under the guise of solving an aesthetic problem Arnold has solved a moral one: he has attempted to cure his hero --and himself-- of Romantic morbidity by the advice of Carlyle to forget about oneself, turn outward upon the world, and engage in practical action.(202)

Culler adds, "The main significance ... of Arnold's rejection of 'Empedocles on Etna' and his writing the preface of 1853 is that he was thereby moving from subjectivity to objectivity"(203); that is, from Romanticism to Victorianism.

Culler's argument answers some important questions about Arnold's career. However, it suggests that the change was a willful and deliberate act, a fact which, while dividing Arnold into two, renders his sincerity questionable after that major poem of his career.

The same question was also addressed by Kenneth Allott, who adds some details, though the thrust of his argument does not shift considerably: "The increasing difficulty Arnold found in writing poetry

after "Empedocles on Etna " was ... due ultimately to his decision to hold back something of himself in the act of creation ... and this decision is connected with his need to settle down, come to terms with ordinary life, and 'mature'"(68). Allott bases his argument on a letter Arnold sent to his sister in which the poet voices his dissatisfaction with his tragedy *Merope* and mentions the sacrifices exacted by good poetry, which combines "' perfection in the region of thought and feeling'"(qtd. in Allott 68) with "'perfection of form'"(qtd. in Allott 68). He adds, by implication, that "he cannot bear anything not very good"(qtd. in Allott 68). All this can be readily understood in the light of his many public duties which began to overburden him physically and mentally.

Both Culler and Allott are exclusively concerned with "Empedocles on Etna," though Arnold's verse as a whole depicts passionately and sadly a vision of the sorrowful human condition. Moreover, "difficulty" could be taken to indicate a significant dimension of Arnold: his striving for perfection in this field as well as in others. This ambition points to a process of sublimation, which culminates, as I have said earlier, in a theory of poetry as religion and in a series of prose works that sublimate his poetic vision of the possibilities of mankind in the emergence of his new heroes, the aliens.

As for the transformation from subjectivity to objectivity, something which the two critics subscribe to, this needs a re-consideration which should begin with some questions. In human sciences what do subjectivity and objectivity signify? Are they to be viewed in terms of subject matter or method? In many of his poems Arnold addresses the human condition, though lyrically and elegiacally. This is objectivity in the choice of matter, but not in tone.

In prose he addresses public matter, but the perspective is subjective.

It is true that one may find strong support for his rejection of subjectivity in his 1853 "Preface," but, apart from its being indirect, it applies to the poem under consideration. He denounces two forms of subjectivity. First, he condemns what might be called historical subjectivity where an ancient subject is inconsistently presented from a contemporary viewpoint. His "Empedocles on Etna" illustrates this form:

Into the feelings of a man so situated there entered much that we are accustomed to consider as exclusively modern. ... 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. ("Preface" 185)

The other form of subjectivity deals with the principle that a

" true allegory of the state of one's own mind in a representative history ... is perhaps the highest thing that one can attempt in the way of poetry" ("Preface" 193). This form is also condemned in connection with his strong bias for the ancients against the moderns.

As for the mainspring of his new program, it falls neatly into line with his unceasing self-amelioration, with the ancients serving as models. He strives to be one who chooses "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"("Preface" 201). Actually, this is what defines his progress and unifies his canon and career: a series of repressions succeeded by sublimation. In 1849 he published The Strayed Reveller, and Other Poems, signed by the half-revelatory "A," but soon he repressed it. In 1852 he published "Empedocles on Etna," and Other Poems. However, he was still dissatisfied. In 1853 he issued his Poems without "Empedocles on Etna." The poem was repressed because of his new noble conviction of the function of poetry. In other words, the poem was repressed, though his post-1853 works betray vestigious returns of the repressed.

Similarly, his humanistic quest follows the same pattern. It starts with an extended elegy on the human condition, an elegy that rises sometimes to tragic heights with agony and half-despair not softened by Hardy's sarcasm and irony. He then moves towards more positive thinking, along the same lines shown above. He banishes his fears and doubts, providing himself and his readers with hope and promise of better times, and seeking perfection on both personal and social levels. The same Arnold breathes throughout. His objectivity is, I believe, subjectivity on a higher level, a form of sublimation supervening a repression. This is the delight he experiences and that he hopes to infuse into his readers without compromising his sincerity.

The psychological process of repression and sublimation appears more clearly in another way. For example, the word "alien" is employed in a negative sense in his poem "The Buried Life," suggesting a pathetic and painful state. This same word is used as the name of his cultural heroes in Culture and Anarchy. So, the word is repressed in one sense and

sublimated into a noble one. Loneliness, isolation, detachment, and aloofness take on positive connotations as they turn into freedom from class interests and into disinterestedness. The process is laid out in *Culture and Anarchy*, where aliens are defined as an elitist group of social workers who have repressed their "ordinary" selves(536) and live by their best selves, who have repressed their individual interests and live for communal welfare. Egoistic superiority in his poetry, which takes the form of a person teaching others, becomes now positive altruistic leadership. Man, divided and aimless in his poetry, is now a unified, fully integrated person, self-conscious and socially-oriented. Finally, poetry, as we have seen, is elevated from grief without outlet, through elegy, tragedy, and delight, to religion. This is the rising curve of Arnold's thought and life.

On the other hand, subjectivity remains strong in Arnold even after his 1853 Preface. His conservatism, which Delaura discusses at length(168 ff.), his hankering after a lost utopia, and his idealism put him in the company of men like Carlyle, Newman, and Pater. It is as a conservative in an age of rapid and cataclysmic change that he must have felt his tragic situation, as "Stanzas from the Grand Chartreuse" shows. Somehow, as an intellectual, he was losing his ground in an age of more aggressive and more effective social, political, and economic forces. Intellectual life, as Houghton shows(14-16), was forfeiting its prestige, and knowledge was being infested with relativism⁵² which he calls provinciality, a term used to describe the absence of an "intellectual metropolis like an academy"("The Literary Influence of Academies" 283). *Culture*, which remains his focal point, is brought into the discussion, for "to get rid of provinciality is a certain stage of culture"("Academies" 283).

And it is this mission of eradicating provinciality that Arnold assigns to himself, a fact which reflects an acute awareness of his tragic situation as a humanist fighting a last-ditch battle for established standards, a position reminiscent of Empedocles:

It is not that there do not exist in England, as in France, a number of people perfectly able to discern what is good ... from what is bad, and preferring what is good; but they are isolated, they form no powerful body of opinion, they are not strong enough to set a standard, up to which even the journey-work of literature must be brought, if it is to be vendible. ("Academies" 280)

The issue is now clear. The forces of culture, including Arnold himself, are not sufficiently strong nor well-organized to stand against the encroaching forces of provinciality, relativism, and anarchy. The repressed material gives force to his already passionate personal involvement, which explains his oppositional attitudes as he addresses public matters, clashing almost with everybody --with the Middle classes, Liberalism, Barbarians, Philistines, Populace, Laissez-faire, materialism, mechanism, Puritanism, Harrison, Bright, Bentham, Pascal, The Times, The Daily Telegraph, and a host of other enemies. Empedocles-like, Arnold is at war with the times. His subjectivity is still active.

Another aspect of Arnold's living subjectivity is his strong affiliation with Oxford and loyalty to its values and standards. As an Oxford scholar, he is involved in the battle for culture, for sweetness and light, for which that institution stands. The relation is tinged with lyricism, "Beautiful city! So venerable, so lovely, so unravaged by the fierce intellectual life

of our country, so serene!"("Oxford, The Home of Lost Causes" 468-9). The defeat of Oxford in the social battle begins to take on a personal color, for the Oxford of sweetness and light is also the Oxford of lost causes: "I say boldly that this our sentiment for beauty and sweetness, our sentiment against hideousness and rawness, has been at the bottom of our attachment to so many beaten causes, of our opposition to so many triumphant movements"(Culture 491).

Such are the features of Arnold's humanism on its two levels. Man, as a pitiable creature thrown on this earth under the influence of numerous forces and passions but always governed by irrevocable fate, seems irreconcilable with Arnold's cultured man who is governed by his love of perfection and who aims at "making reason and the will of God prevail." In such a Hardy-esque universe, where resignation is the most efficacious antidote, Arnold's idealistic humanism seems luxurious, detached, and even cruel. It wavers between the dream and the nightmare, fantasy and reality, but only to be tortured and disfigured. It appears that while Arnold's verse gives vent to his unconscious doubts and fears and to his innermost glimpses into the human condition, his prose, following an act of repression of his horrible, nightmarish visions, functions as a sublimation, a dogged defense mechanism aiming at keeping the distressful truths at bay. His return to tragedy towards the end of his career is significant. Falkland, as Farrell argues, is another Empedocles, who is never completely dead in Arnold's mind. His essay on Falkland, first published in 1877, is his way of suggesting that there is no exit out of the hurly-burly of the human condition, that man is caught in a Heideggerian fashion. The uncanny return of the repressed sadly concludes Arnold's humanistic quest,

while it underscores the repressions and highlights the sublimations which push him towards dogmatic absolutism, towards another level of subjectivity, for Arnold's prose is as much Arnold as his verse, and both help to identify a man at war with history, refusing to dispel a vision of a better world and perhaps a better man. Unfortunately, in such a complicated process and for such a complex personality, "consistency" seems to have been betrayed twice, first in presenting an ancient subject in modern clothes and second in solving modern problems according to ancient models, for, after all, Arnold's aliens are, to a large extent, modelled after Plato's philosophers.

Thus, Arnold's humanism is a valuable contribution to its field. Actually, its very limitations serve as flashlights showing the need for a truly disinterested humanistic program based on a sound and realistic knowledge of human nature and abilities in the context of society and history and for a concerted coordination on the ground between criticism and political action. So, while Arnold's humanism has a great deal of the optimism of the Enlightenment, it savors of the modern and post-modern sense of crisis.

NOTES

1. For more information on humanism see Hans Baron, Paul Oskar Kristeller, and Johan Huizinga.
2. For more details on Arnold's religion and culture see Pat McCarthy and Joseph Carroll.

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