CHAPTER FOUR

NATURE AND CIVILIZATION: SCIENCE, RELIGION, AND POLITICS 1857-1888

'It is a mistake to think that the judgement of mature reason on our favourite author, even if it abates considerably our high-raised estimate of him, is not a gain to us.'[1] The judgement of Arnold's mature reason on Goethe did indeed considerably abate the high-raised estimate of him expressed in the 1853 Preface. In 1885 Arnold was still able to speak of him as 'great', but also as 'the stiff, and hindered, and frigid, and factitious Goethe who speaks to us too often from those sixty volumes of his'.[2] His mature judgement on the German poet—expressed in the essay 'A French Critic on Goethe' (1878)—was an ambivalent one: a 'double judgement' he himself called it. His comments on Goethe's artistic productions, with the exception of the *Gedichte*, are uniformly unfavourable. Even the first part of *Faust*—'undoubtedly Goethe's best work'—is too episodic, too fragmentary, Arnold tells us, to 'produce a single, powerful total-impression'. He cannot find it in himself to extol *Iphigenie* or *Tasso*, and *Faust II* stands condemned as 'symbol, hieroglyphic, and mystification'.[3] He still ranks Goethe 'the greatest poet of modern times', but he finds that it is less as a poet that Goethe truly excels than as 'the clearest, the largest, the most helpful thinker of modern times'. The essay ends on a note of praise with Goethe described 'as a clear and profound modern spirit, as a master-critic of modern life'. Despite the praise, the pervading coolness of Arnold's attitude is evident. This change came about gradually and there are signs of it many years earlier. In the Preface to *Merope* (1857) Arnold expressed an admiring but somewhat reserved attitude to *Iphigenie*. Goethe had produced the effect proper to tragedy, that of 'repose', but in order to achieve it he had avoided the genuinely tragic core of the Iphigeneia legand.[4] Even *Wilhelm Meister*, the large and liberal world view of which had been so attractive to Arnold as an undergraduate, appeared to him in 1866 imperfect as a novel: 'it is as a repository of thoughts and observations that it is so valuable.'[5] In 1864, eleven years after he had spoken of Goethe as 'the greatest critic of all times', Arnold now valued him more justly as 'one of the greatest of critics'.[6] Arnold's literary experience was wider now, and the high-raised estimate of 1853 had to be abated.

Arnold's description of Goethe as a master-critic of modern life is, however, suggestive. It invites us to consider how far Arnold's own efforts as a critic of modern life were modified by his reading of Goethe. Arnold's first essay in the field of politics was the pamphlet *England and the Italian Question* published in 1859, but the interest in social and political issues expressed in it was not new. The letters which Arnold wrote to Clough, to his mother and to his sister Jane ten years earlier, are full of remarks which display a lively awareness of contemporary history and foreshadow, sometimes in detail, the opinions later proclaimed publicly in *Culture and Anarchy*. The interest had always been there in the background, but to the poet the confusion and turmoil of political life often seemed an unedifying spectacle. As he explained to his sister, Jane, in a letter of 10 March 1848:

> It is so hard to sequester oneself here from the rush of public changes and talk, and yet so unprofitable to attend to it. I was myself tempted to attempt some political writing the other day, but in the watches of the night I seemed to feel that in that direction I had some enthusiasm of the head perhaps, but no profound stirring. So I desisted . . .[7]

To 'citizen' Clough the revolutions of 1848 were a stimulant without which he would 'sink into hopeless lethargy', but Arnold was less optimistic than his friend about what they were likely to achieve, and regarded Clough's immersion in the Time-Stream with disapproval.

Arnold's youthful habit of cautious detachment from politics is obviously connected with the conception of his poetic calling outlined in Chapter II (above), and his gradual abandonment of it was probably due to a combination of circumstances. In view of his real interest in the 'Condition of England Question' self-imposed silence must have come to seem a false and artificial course, especially as it became apparent to him that the poetic gifts which detachment was intended to protect were failing. Again, his work as an Inspector of Schools, tedious though it was, assumed increasing importance in his eyes. A letter which Arnold wrote to his wife in 1851 was prophetic:

> I think I shall get interested in the schools after a little time; their effects on the children are so immense, and their future effects in civilizing the next generation of the lower classes, who, as things are going, will have most of the political power in their hands, may be so important.[8]

In 1862 he described 'popular education' as 'a cause in which I have a deep interest'. The defective civilization of the lower classes became a matter of profound concern to Arnold and much of the literary effort of his later years was devoted to working an improvement there.

As Arnold himself indicates in the letter to his wife quoted above, the overriding social issue of his time was the transfer of political power from the aristocracy to other classes, in other words the democratization of society. One of Arnold's few statements about Goethe's attitude to this issue, in the essay 'Heinrich Heine' (1863), reveals a curious misunderstanding of the Weimar poet, which it is instructive to examine in detail. Arnold wrote:

> Modern times find themselves with an immense system of institutions, established facts, accredited dogmas, customs, rules, which have come to them from times not modern. In this system their life has to be carried forward; yet they have a sense that this system is not of their own creation, that it by no means corresponds exactly with the wants of their actual life, that, for them, it is customary, not rational. The awakening of this sense is the awakening of the modern spirit. The modern spirit is now awake almost everywhere; the sense of want of correspondence between the forms of modern Europe and its spirit, between the new wine of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and the old bottles of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, or even of the sixteenth and seventeenth, almost everyone now perceives . . . To remove this want of correspondence is beginning to be the settled endeavour of most persons of good sense. Dissolvents of the old European system of dominant ideas and facts we must all be, all of us who have any power of working: what we have to study is that we may not be acrid dissolvents of it.

Arnold's purpose in the essay was to praise Heine as a 'dissolvent' and liberator, and to indicate that in this Heine (and not, as Carlyle had believed, Tieck and Jean Paul Richter) was the true continuator of Goethe's work for German literature. Thus, a portrait begins to emerge of Goethe as 'that grand dissolvent in an age when there were fewer of them than at present'. Arnold then describes Goethe's method:

> Goethe's profound, imperturbable naturalism is absolutely fatal to all routine thinking; he puts the standard, once for all, inside every man instead of outside him; when he is told, such a thing must be so, there is immense authority and custom in favour of its being so, it has been held to be so for a thousand years, he answers with Olympian politeness, 'But *is* it so? is it so to *me*?' Nothing could be more really subversive of the foundations on which the old European order rested; and it may be remarked that no persons are so radically detached from this order, no persons so thoroughly modern, as those who have felt Goethe's influence most deeply . . . Nevertheless the process of liberation, as Goethe worked it, though sure, is undoubtedly slow; he came, as Heine says, to be eighty years old in thus working it, and at the end of that time the old Middle Age machine was still creaking on, the thirty German courts and their chamberlains subsisted in all their glory; Goethe himself was a minister, and the visible triumph of the modern spirit over prescription and routine seemed as far off as ever . . . in 1830 Heine was in no humour for any such gradual process of liberation from the old order of things as that which Goethe had followed.[9]

It is certainly true, as Arnold says, that Goethe's method, his spirit of enquiry, necessarily tended to undermine some of the assumptions on which 'the old European order' rested, but this fact should direct our attention to a fundamental division of sympathies in Goethe himself.

This division can perhaps be explained best by examining the phrase 'the old European order'. At the risk of gross simplification one could describe this order as having two aspects—a social aspect in an essentially feudal structure of society with government in the hands of a hereditary aristocratic class, and a religious aspect of a 'supernatural' Christianity which appears to justify this feudal structure as ordained. While it is true that Goethe was thoroughly detached from religious 'superstition', it is quite wrong to maintain that Goethe was detached from 'the thirty German courts and their chamberlains'. Indeed Arnold seems a little embarrassed that 'Goethe himself was a minister'—a fact which fits in with the portrait of the detached, thoroughly modern Goethe only if one assumes that he was quietly and deliberately subverting the creaking 'Mediaeval' social order from within. Nothing could be further from the truth. Goethe explicitly approved 'the thirty German courts' because of their tendency to disseminate culture, preferring them to the centralized state with one capital city having a 'monopoly' of culture:

> How is Germany great if not through an admirable national culture which has penetrated all parts of the *Reich* equally. But is it not the individual courts from which this culture spreads and which are its patrons and guardians.[10]

Goethe was no secret Jacobin. His outlook was thoroughly conservative and from the time of the French Revolution on he was implacably hostile to the new democratic dispensation.

One may, I think, disregard the possibility that Arnold was intentionally distorting the facts to suit his argument, so the question naturally arises how he came to make this error. It is not difficult to understand how he came to be unclear about Goethe's political views. Goethe's writings are for the most part strictly apolitical, and it would require a very deliberate reading of them to glean anything of his political outlook. The most explicitly political of his works were written in the 1790s under the impact of the abortive German intervention in France (1792) which he had witnessed personally. For Goethe the supreme concern was the preservation of German culture, which events in France appeared to threaten. His alarm at the prospect of similar happenings in Germany was expressed in two light 'realistic' comedies *Die Aufgeregten* (*Agitation*, 1791) and *Der Bürgergeneral* (*The Citizen-General*, 1793), but after the French armies had repulsed the German intervention on behalf of the Bourbons his alarm deepened and the mood of his works became more serious. Humour and realism were abandoned. *Hermann und Dorothea* (1797) and *Die Natürliche Tochter* (*The Natural Daughter*, 1799-1803) approach close to symbolism, myth and tragedy, but in doing so their obvious political content seems to recede. *Hermann und Dorothea* appears to be nothing more than an epic of bourgeois life until one discerns that it is only the background of fleeing refugees and of the impending invasion of Germany by France that gives significance to the tale of domestic love which occupies most of the narrative. In *The Natural Daughter* Goethe turned his back altogether on contemporary settings, and initially it comes as a suprise to find Goethe describing this verse play about a court intrigue in an unspecified country at an unspecified period of history as a 'vessel in which I hoped to put, with appropriate seriousness, everything that for so many years I had been thinking and writing about the French Revolution and its effects'.[11] During the French occupation, and particularly after the decisive victory of Napoleon's armies at Jena in 1806, Goethe was never diverted from his habit of maintaining complete silence on contentious political matters, and the frankest confessions of his views were made only many years later (between 1823 and 1832) to Eckermann. Even these 'confessions' naturally have the desultory and disconnected quality unavoidable in a 'table-talk'.

It is also possible that Arnold had formed a false impression of Goethe's attitude to democracy from such *Sturm und Drang* pieces as *Götz von Berlichingen* (1773), *Werther* (1774), and *Egmont* (1787). 'Liberty' is a much used word in all these works, and in *Werther*, at least, the shade of Rousseau, the ideological precursor of revolutionary ideas, is ever present. It is true even in these works, however, that the freedom for which Goethe's heroes die is a freedom compatible with a rigidly hierarchical society; his heroes are not republicans. Arnold's earlier interest in Goethe was, as we have seen, primarily concerned with the German poet as a critic of literature and contemporary culture, so, despite the fact that he had absorbed Goethe's conversations with Eckermann thoroughly in the years 1849-53, it is not surprising that when he came to write his essay on Heine in 1863, the politically reactionary character of many of Goethe's statements was either forgotten or simply overlooked.[12]

Arnold's portrait of Goethe in the 'Heine' essay may, however, have had a more specific origin. At the end of Arnold's note-book for 1863 is a list of books headed: 'read—1863 At Athenaeum or Brit. Museum'.[13] This list includes several items which were obviously intended as preparation for the essay on Heine—'Heine's Allemagne and Later Publications, Heine's Romancero and Reisebilder'. All these items are crossed out as read. In the same list is a further item, also crossed out, namely 'Falk's Goethe', and it is probably this which Arnold was referring to in the essay 'A French Critic on Goethe' when he mentioned 'the volumes of Riemer, Falk, Eckermann, the Chancellor von Müller' as some of the places where 'the truly great, the truly significant Goethe is to be found'.[14] The only work on Goethe by Johann Daniel Falk is *Goethe aus näherm persönlichem Umgang dargestellt* (1832), so this would appear to be the work which Arnold had read. But there is a difficulty. Arnold's reading-list for 1864 also includes Falk's Goethe (entry crossed out), and the title appears again on the list for 1866 (without erasure).[15] This succession of entries could, of course, indicate either that Arnold did not complete the reading of Falk in 1863, or that he was so pleased with the volume that he re-read it constantly. The first possibility seems unlikely since Falk's work is less than 200 pages, and the second is hardly more plausible. However, the three entries in the reading lists would be consistent with reference to a three-volume work, and this gives us the vital clue. In 1833, a year after Falk's *Goethe* had appeared in Germany, Sarah Austin, a friend of Carlyle, Crabb Robinson, and William Taylor of Norwich, published a three-volume work entitled *Characteristics of Goethe.*[16] Apart from the Preface the work is not original, but simply a compilation from various German sources, the most important of which, occupying the bulk of the first two volumes, is her translation of Falk's *Goethe aus näherm persönlichen Umgang dargestellt*. (The third volume consists of two anonymous memoirs, from the *Bibliothèque Universelle de Genève* and the *Konversations Lexicon*, and Chancellor von Müller's memoirs on the Grand Duke Karl August and the Grand Duchess Luise.)

Falk's portrait is certainly the source of Arnold's expression of admiration for Goethe's 'profound, imperturbable naturalism'. Of several strands in Falk's account of Goethe, this is the most important. A few examples will make this clear:

> It cannot be denied that Goethe's greatness, as observer of nature and as poet . . . must be sought in this objective turn of mind.
>
> Goethe, by his very nature, cannot, must not, will not set a single step which may compel him to quit the territory of experience . . . All conclusions, observations, doctrines, opinions, articles of faith, have value in his eyes only in so far as they connect themselves with this territory, which he has so fortunately conquered.
>
> Repugnance to the super-sensual [*übersinnlich*, outside the realm of sense experience] was an inherent part of his mind.
>
> . . . everything merely learned by rote, was distasteful to him; as was all taught elevation of soul, all taught philosophy, all praying by rote, and so on.[17]

The list of examples could be extended, but it is sufficient to show how much of Falk's account Arnold had absorbed. It is not difficult to see how Arnold's view of Goethe's naturalism as subversive of authority and 'routine thinking' arose.

Arnold's remarks on Goethe in the 'Heine' essay cannot, however, be completely explained by reference to Falk's *Goethe*, because both Falk and Sarah Austin make Goethe's attitude to political questions an important part of their account. It is true that both writers tend to obscure the profoundly anti-democratic bias of Goethe's creed, but nothing in their account explains Arnold's description of Goethe as a secret 'dissolvent' of the aristocratic system. Their description of Goethe must, in fact, have been a striking reminder to Arnold of his own proclaimed attitude to the dangers of political involvement for a creative writer, and of his earlier conception of Goethe. Sarah Austin's Preface stresses many of the same points as Falk:

> To be able to follow Goethe . . . to consider all the questions that most interest and agitate mankind with perfect *indifferency* (using the word in Locke's sense)–requires an imagination as mobile, a temper as impartial, an understanding as large as his . . . To most men (particularly in a country where the divisions of class and sect are so strongly marked as in England) it would be just as possible to transform themselves bodily . . . To them every writer necessarily appears intent on attacking or defending . . . the opinions, actions, or characters of some party. But, it cannot be too often repeated, Goethe was *not* a partisan. He observed and described . . .
>
> Indifferent to many of the questions that are most fiercely debated, he might,–nay rather he *must*–be, for his wide and prophetic glance pierced far beyond the

> strife of the hour . . . are we then justified in accusing him of apathy and selfishness because he had a dread of violent political convulsions; a distrust of the efficacy of abrupt changes in the mechanism of government?
>
> It was not, surely, that he was indifferent to the welfare of mankind, but that he thought it a pernicious illusion to look for healing to sources whence he was persuaded healing could never come. His labours for the improvement of the human race were unwearied, calm, and systematic.

Falk's account defends Goethe in a similar way:

> Certainly the tranquil observer of all the events of this moving and chequered life, and the actual participant, whether doer or sufferer, in its strife and tumult, are characters essentially distinct and incompatible. The latter can by no possibility form an accurate and impartial estimate of his own situation.
>
> There was but one party for which, with such views, he could declare himself: that, namely under whose influence tranquillity might be expected, or even hoped for, let it be found how it might.[18]

In the second volume of *Characteristics* Mrs Austin translated the substance of a speech entitled 'Goethe, Considered as a Man of Action', which von Müller delivered after Goethe's death in 1832. Like Austin and Falk, von Müller was acutely conscious of the hostility that Goethe's silent acquiescence in the French occupation and his apparent indifference to the cause of German nationalism had aroused, and in consequence the tone of his speech was defensive and apologetic. He stressed Goethe's 'elevated point of view', his refusal to allow 'the pure element of his thoughts and works to be troubled by the confused and tumultuous incidents of the day', and his hatred of 'ferocious party spirit'. Goethe, von Müller admitted, was 'disinclined to liberal opinions', but only because he attached relatively little importance to the 'form' of society:

> It was his persuasion that much less could be done for a man from without than from within; and that an honest and vigorous will could make to itself a path, and employ its activity to advantage, under every form of civil society.
>
> Actuated by this persuasion, he held fast to order and obedience to law, as to the main pillars of the public weal. Whatever threatened to retard or to trouble the progress of moral and intellectual improvement . . . or to abandon all that is best and highest in existence to the wild freaks of unbridled passion and the domination of rude and violent men, was, to him, the true tyranny, the mortal foe of freedom, the utterly insufferable evil.[19]

I have quoted from these authors at such length not merely to establish that Arnold's assessment of Goethe's political stance in the 'Heine' essay of 1863 was inaccurate, nor even because their account is, if too uncritical, nevertheless fair and judicious; what is significant about their remarks is their closeness to the view which Arnold had formed of Goethe some ten years earlier. Two of the most important elements in their account recall vividly Arnold's poems 'Resignation' and 'Stanzas in Memory of the Author of "Obermann" '. As I have shown, the view of the poet as a man surveying the tumult of human society from some 'higher', more detached standpoint had a considerable attraction for Arnold as a younger man, and Goethe—the sage of 'wide and luminous view'—was in the Englishman's opinion the archetypal poet of this kind. The usefulness to Arnold of this ideal had diminished as he grew older and less able to produce poetry, but in 1863-64 he met with it again, this time in the context of specifically political involvement. This context possibly suggested to Arnold a new application for the idea of detachment.

With the exception of D. J. DeLaura, Arnold's critics have not sufficiently stressed that the concept of 'Disinterestedness', which he formulated first in his essay 'The Function of Criticism at the Present Time' (1864), is essentially a 'fossil' remnant of his earlier attitude to poetry.[20] In this essay Arnold was developing a line of thought begun in the 1853 Preface and continued in 'On the Modern Element in Literature' (1857). The central question was the relation of the individual poetic talent to its cultural milieu, and in the 1864 essay Arnold arrived at the conclusion that a poetically gifted writer, if he is to thrive, needs to exist in a society permeated by 'ideas'. The poet, Arnold argued, makes beautiful works out of ideas, but he does not himself create these ideas—this is work for the philosopher or scientific discoverer. The poet's is a work of intellectual synthesis, not of invention or creation. Ideas are the poet's raw material. The critic's function, and it is as a critic that Arnold now views himself, is to help to establish a cultural environment in which the production of great literary works is possible. From this it follows that the critic's duty is, in Arnold's famous definition, 'to learn and propagate the best that is known and thought in the world, and thus to establish a current of fresh and true ideas'. In doing this, however, the critic performs a service not merely for creative writers, but for society as a whole. Arnold takes it for granted that the critic's concern is with all literature, even where the subject is politics or religion, and it is 'where these burning matters are in question, that criticism is most likely to go astray'. Critics go astray here, Arnold argues, because it is in these burning matters that they are most likely to be tempted from their duty: 'The rush and roar of practical life will always have a dizzying and attracting effect upon the most collected spectator, and tend to draw him into its vortex'. The critic, therefore, as formerly the poet, must refuse to plunge into the Time-Stream to bellow with the rest, but must instead obey the first 'rule' of his calling. Arnold's 'rule' may be summed up in the word 'disinterestedness':

> And how is criticism to show disinterestedness? By keeping aloof from what is called 'the practical view of things'; by resolutely following the law of its own nature, which is to be a free play of the mind on all subjects which it touches. By steadily refusing to lend itself to any of those ulterior, political, practical considerations about ideas, which plenty of people will be sure to attach to them, which perhaps ought often to be attached to them, which in this country at any rate are quite certain to be attached to them quite sufficiently but which criticism has really nothing to do with . . . For what is at present the bane of criticism in this country? It is that practical considerations cling to it and stifle it. It subserves

> interests not its own. Our organs of criticism are organs of men and parties having practical ends to serve, and with them those practical ends are the first thing and the play of mind the second; so much play of mind as is compatible with the prosecution of those practical ends is all that is wanted.[21]

Arnold's reading of 'Falk's Goethe' before the composition of this essay must have reminded him that Goethe's method was basically sound. The quality of 'indifferency' which Sarah Austin attributes to Goethe has clear affinities with Arnold's 'disinterestedness'–whatever other sources there may be for the notion. For both Arnold and Mrs Austin this particular quality was a rare and precious thing, too little valued in a country so much riven by class and sectarian divisions as England. Von Müller likewise stressed that Goethe's sphere of activity was elevated above that of practical politics, and that he would never permit himself to be made the mouthpiece of 'ferocious party spirit, so disgusting, so hateful to him'.

Arnold's theory of the proper method of criticism only partly defines his own practice as a critic of society. It is true that he always avoided close party ties. He defined himself as a 'Liberal of the future', but that did not make his strictures on the Liberal party any less caustic; indeed he was more severe with his supposed allies than with the Tories–a party for which he would never vote.[22] But in questions of a social and political nature the realm of ideas and the realm of practical application have so much territory in dispute that the border between is often hard to define. Thus Arnold was inevitably led to make eminently practical suggestions to the Liberal government on a variety of contentious issues from secondary education to Church establishments. Further, while persiflage and irony were all that some Liberal nostrums and programmes deserved, other matters seemed to Arnold too serious for irony–Gladstone's handling of the Irish national question in the 1870s and 1880s, for example. As the situation deteriorated, with the Irish members under Parnell successfully obstructing parliamentary activity and Fenian 'outrages' increasing, no voice would have been listened to that did not suggest some practical route out of the morass. Arnold thought Home Rule would be dangerous for Ireland no less than for England, so he opposed it vigorously, and to avoid what he considered to be the evil of a separate Irish parliament he advocated radical concessions to all just demands:– the expropriation of bad absentee-landlords, the granting of a Catholic university, the disestablishment of Anglicanism in Ireland and the transfer of property to the Catholic Church. Once he had taken the plunge in the 1860s, Arnold found the Time-Stream a pleasant enough element in which to disport himself.

The conception of disinterestedness as it was defined in the 1864 essay must gradually have come to appear less relevant to Arnold. In 1866 he was a married man of forty-three with four children growing up in a society whose future was perhaps in the balance. His public office as an 'H.M.I.' enabled him to see how urgent was the need to provide a better education for the poor children of the proletarian masses produced by the uncontrolled expansion of industry, and how great might be the threat to civilized life if this need was not met. A critic was, after all, a man like any other, and, if he saw his society endangered, it was his duty to speak out and give whatever advice or practical help was required. In *Culture and Anarchy* (1869) Arnold had begun to shift his ground: the duty of Culture, which now replaces 'Criticism', is not simply 'the endeavour to *see* and *learn*' or even to 'propagate' the best ideas, but rather to discover 'the universal order which seems to be intended and aimed at in the world . . . in short, the will of God' and to make it *prevail.* The struggle to make right prevail necessarily takes man into the sphere of practical activity which it had been the critic's duty to shun. As Arnold points out, once Culture is considered in this way, its 'moral, social and beneficent character' becomes plain.[23]

There is a revealing passage, too, in the review of the last volumes of Curtius's *History of Greece* which Arnold wrote for the *Pall Mall Gazette* in 1876. There he weighs the respective merits of the man of ideas, Plato, whose *Republic* was as far removed from practical considerations as it is possible for social criticism to be, and Demosthenes, the practical man of action:

> However, in no State, great or small, is it the business of a good citizen to believe that the decline and fall of his country are inevitable, and to resign himself to that belief. The grandeur of Demosthenes, and his civic superiority to a man, even, so fascinating as Plato, consists of his having refused to allow himself to entertain such a belief . . . Dr Curtius shall characterize for us both him and Plato—the divine Plato, who indeed 'passes far beyond that which was comprehended in the moral consciousness of his nation', and who therefore 'stands like a prophet above his times and his people'. But, 'In proportion as Plato in his ideal demands rose above the data of the the circumstances and principles around him, it became impossible to expect that he would exercise a transforming influence upon the great body of the people . . .'
> . . . Towards the followers of Plato, who constituted an intellectual power at Athens, Demosthenes stood in an attitude of direct opposition. For 'he could not but be averse from any philosophy which estranged man from his civic duties, and removed him from the sphere of practical efficiency into the realms of ideas.'[24]

The parallel with Arnold's own position is obvious. Living at a time when the values of civilization appeared to be threatened, he was, as a critic, faced with the choice of existing in the realm of ideas, removed from the sphere of immediate practical efficiency and estranged from his civic duties, or of labouring to exercise a transforming influence on the lives of the great body of the people. From the time of *Culture and Anarchy* onwards Arnold appears to have settled for the latter course. His analysis of English society in this work persuaded him that if civilization was to survive in this country, then the masses to whom the movement of history must inevitably bring political power, needed to be transformed.

In *Culture and Anarchy*, without actually retracting his earlier statements on the critic's need to be detached, Arnold makes the idea of society central to his notion of Culture. He agreed with Wilhelm von Humboldt, whom he described as 'one of the most beautiful souls that have ever existed', that he 'who is isolated is no more able to develop himself than he who is bound by enthralling fetters'.[25]

> Perfection, as culture conceives it, is not possible while the individual remains isolated. The individual is required, under pain of being stunted and enfeebled in his own development to carry others along with him in his march towards perfection, to be continually doing all he can to enlarge and increase the volume of the human stream sweeping thitherward.[26]

Disinterestedness is not, of course, absolutely incompatible with this duty, because disinterestedness and isolation are not identical, but Arnold's growing sense of his social responsibilities tended to dissolve the Goethean position which he had earlier defined for himself and still maintained in the essay of 1864. By 1869 detachment had given way to something not unlike involvement.

Arnold must have come to realize that Goethe was not quite as close an ally as he had depicted him to be in the 'Heine' essay of 1863. Arnold's note-books and reading-lists show that his reading of Goethe after this date made a sounder estimate possible. He re-read Goethe's conversations with Eckermann in 1866-67, Riemer's bulky two-volume *Mittheilungen über Goethe* between 1867 and 1870, the 'Maximen und Reflexionen' in 1870, and Burkhardt's edition of *Goethe's Unterhaltungen mit dem Kanzler Friedrich von Müller* in 1874. These are all works in which Goethe's political outlook is plain, and having read them Arnold could hardly still regard Goethe as a dissolvent, at least in intention, of the old European order. Indeed, Arnold used Goethe's frankest admission of political conservatism as an epigraph for *God and the Bible* (1875):

> In the principle, to preserve what exists, to hinder revolutionists from having their way, I am quite at one with the monarchists; only not in the means thereto. That is to say, they call in stupidity and darkness to aid, I reason and light.[27]

For Goethe 'what exists' did not mean only the best of the old culture—as it might have done for Arnold—but rather the social *status quo*.

In the essay 'Democracy' (1861), the earliest and one of the finest statements of his political creed, Arnold considers some alternative views of society to his own, only to reject them as no longer feasible:

> I do not say that grandeur and prosperity may not be attained by a nation divided into the most widely distinct classes, and presenting the most signal inequalities of rank and fortune. I do not say that great national virtues may not be developed in it. I do not even say that a popular order, accepting this demarcation of classes as an eternal providential arrangement, not questioning the natural right of a superior order to lead it, content within its own sphere, admiring the grandeur and high-mindedness of its ruling class . . . may not be a happier body, as to the eye of the imagination it is certainly a more beautiful body, than a popular order, pushing,

> excited, and presumptuous . . . But a popular order of that old-fashioned stamp exists now only for the imagination.[28]

In this passage Arnold had precisely defined, although of course unwittingly, Goethe's conception of society, and rejected it as unmodern. Arnold, in other words, discerned what Goethe did not: that democracy was not a temporary and unnatural aberration confinable to France, but was the necessary culmination of an irresistible historical process. For Goethe the conception of society as an essentially fixed hierarchical structure is fundamental. His perception of hierarchies among the plants and living organisms of the natural world made an analogous social structure, with a rigid division of classes according to their function within society as a whole, appear literally 'natural'. On this view, society itself is conceived of as a complex organism which can exist only if all the parts renounce an independent existence and work solely for the whole. Willingness to forego an illusory independence on the part of individuals and classes is essential to the survival of any state. It is realized in practice by the principle of loyalty to something higher–in a monarchy, to the ruling Monarch. Once this principle is weakened, a process of social dissolution may commence, which, if unchecked, will lead to the kind of anarchy witnessed in France during the Reign of Terror. Anarchy will persist until some authority emerges which is capable of subjugating lesser forces and compelling loyalty: for France, as Goethe saw it, this authority was Napoleon.

Goethe's organic conception of society is closely related to his conviction, which is ethical rather than political, that each individual has a certain sphere of action within which he can operate with benefit to himself and others. This sphere of action is defined for the individual primarily by the social class into which he is born, but also by his natural talents and abilities. For Goethe, one of the greatest personal and civic virtues consisted in recognizing one's own particular sphere, voluntarily restricting oneself to it, and quietly going about one's business there. This meant, of course, that the lower classes were to have no direct influence in government. Von Müller reports Goethe as saying:

> Lucidity in all one's affairs–is very helpful to the individual, if he restricts this to himself; but if he wishes to interfere in the agitated mechanisms of the world, if he thinks he must act, help or hinder independently as a part of the whole according to his own ideas, then he will come to grief all the more easily. One must simply keep oneself to oneself, do what is right quietly in one's own appointed circle.[29]

It was this self-restraint which, Goethe thought, gave meaning and dignity to the most insignificant individual, or as he expressed it in one of his maxims:

> The meanest of men can be complete provided that he moves within the limits of his abilities and attainments, but even excellent qualities are darkened, nullified and destroyed if this indispensably required balance is lost.[30]

Applied to society Goethe's conception justifies the existing class structure:

> The Bürger is as free as the Noble as long as he keeps within the limits which God appointed for him by the class into which he was born.[31]

In that one word 'appointed' (*angewiesen*) a view of the world is implied which is essentially feudal.

In comparison with Goethe's politics, Arnold's appear revolutionary, and nothing illustrates more vividly the distance between the two men than their response to the events of 1789. Goethe was totally unsympathetic to the Revolution, but for Arnold 1789 was a crucial date for the awakening of what he called the 'modern spirit'. It was the Revolution that had given Europe the 'ideas' of equality and of religious, civil, and political liberty; these ideas had 'left their trace', he argued, 'in half the beneficial reforms through Europe'. But as a people the French had been 'unripe for the task they . . . set themselves to do'.[32] The ideas had been sound in themselves, but the world had not been ready for them. The French had attempted to put them into practice too soon; they had rushed into the realm of practical action when it would have been safer to remain in that of theory. Their organization of democratic ideas was 'crude', and the attempt to establish a state on the basis of them was premature.[33] While Goethe, preferring tyranny to anarchy, revered Napoleon as a 'daemonic' figure outside the standards of conventional morality, Arnold saw in him a man 'under the fatal spell of his personal ambition and ungovernable self-will'.[34]

Culture and Anarchy was, of course, Arnold's longest and most substantial single work in the field of social and political criticism, but it represents incompletely his social and political thinking. If the shorter periodical pieces, collected and published in *Mixed Essays* (1879) and *Irish Essays* (1882), are ignored, then Arnold's position on political matters appears more conservative than in fact it was. His refusal to worship at the shrine of freedom and his insistence that the Liberal Party's faith in the virtue of 'doing as one likes' threatened England with anarchy may strike modern readers as a crudely disguised defence of the existing order, but his recommendation of the virtues of renouncement and self-restraint, and his promotion of the idea of state authority as opposed to individualism, have nothing to do with social conservatism. Arnold was no enemy of liberty, but he wished to remind his audience that liberty was a means and not an end in itself, or, as Arminius more pointedly expressed it, that 'Freedom, like Industry, is a very good horse to ride;–but to ride somewhere'.[35] This reminder, however, detracts neither from his commitment to democracy, nor from the qualified egalitarianism of his basic political creed. Arnold was constantly emphasizing the serious defects that existed in the very structure of English society. 'We are trying to live on', he wrote in the essay 'Equality' (1878), 'with a social organisation of which the day is over'.[36] Political power was still in the hands of an aristocratic élite, but this defect could be altered and corrected; he ended his essay 'Democracy' (1861) with the words:

> Human thought, which made all institutions, inevitably saps them resting only in that which is absolute and eternal.[37]

It is this confidence in the control of human affairs by the agency of human thought which links Arnold with the radical tradition of English politics and which distances him, on this issue at least, from his admired mentor Burke.

'Law-makers or revolutionaries who promise both freedom and equality are either charlatans or fanatics', said Goethe, whose hierarchic conception of society stands in direct opposition to Arnold's idea of the value of greater social equality.[38] One of Arnold's favourite phrases for describing the state of English society was 'an upper class materialised, a middle class vulgarised, a lower class brutalised', and he put the blame for this condition on the great inequalities of wealth which existed in England.[39] In Arnold's view the aristocracy as a class was being corrupted by its wealth. He was acutely conscious that dissipations and distractions, to which the aristocracy by its high rank and splendour was tempted, were slowly eating away the high sense of conduct that had once been the aristocrat's saving grace. The danger for the rest of society was great:

> Then, as to the effect upon the welfare of the community, how can that be salutary, if a class which, by the very possession of wealth, power and consideration, becomes a kind of ideal or standard for the rest of the community, is tried by ease and pleasure more than it can well bear . . .?

In consequence the ideal revered by the rest of society, instead of being 'intelligence and strenuous virtue', was a purely material one of wealth, comfort, and ease. The large bulk of the middle class, which with its lesser wealth was not exposed to the same temptation, was left without any high ideal of life towards which it could aspire. In its turn the working class was also left without an ideal by which it could raise itself from its brutalized condition of drunkenness and venality.[40] The social fabric was threatened 'wherever there is an immense inequality of conditions and property; such inequality inevitably depresses and degrades the inferior masses'.[41] For Arnold a measure of equality was a *sine qua non* of social culture. 'Certainly equality will never of itself give us a perfect civilisation', he wrote in 1878, 'but, with such inequality as ours, a perfect civilisation is impossible'.[42] To Goethe aristocracy meant the preservation of culture, to Arnold it was a threat. The aristocracy with its almost exclusive possession of land and wealth was, Arnold believed, 'in a great degree' the cause of England's miserable social condition, and with fitting caution he drew the inescapable conclusion: the social and political power of the aristocracy had to be diminished.[43]

Behind Arnold's analysis of the three classes lies the question which had presented itself with unremitting insistence to all social theorists since the time of Milton—the question where in society authority was to be located. As Northrop

Frye has shown, in a brilliant essay, English writers from Milton to Burke and J. S. Mill have offered a variety of contradictory answers.[44] The revolutionary answer of Milton locates 'true' authority, that is, spiritual rather than temporal authority, in reason and revelation (to a Christian reason and revelation must eventually coincide). Such spiritual authority is necessarily superior and antagonistic to temporal authority which rests merely on the habits and traditions of a fallen humanity. The conservative answer of Burke refuses to acknowledge any such opposition of spiritual and temporal authority. On the contrary, it fuses the two, and locates the new compound in the ascendant class. Yet, dissimilar as Burke's and Milton's answers appear, they share a common premise, namely that the ultimate origin of authority is not human but divine. This was not a premise which the more secular-minded Arnold could accept. He investigates the respective claims of England's three classes to be made the source of authority in society as a whole, only to dismiss them all. In their stead he puts a notion intended to transcend the idea of class–the notion of Culture. The source of spiritual authority is now the best that has been thought and known; in other words, the source is human, for this authority is nothing other than the collective wisdom of humanity derived from experience. The extremes of revolution and reaction are thus dissolved, while the road to a better civilization remains open. The collective wisdom needs only to be embodied in a social 'best self' for a harmonious community to emerge.

It is hardly an exaggeration to say that for Goethe the problem of authority did not exist. The French Revolution failed; the old European order was shaken, but it survived. Goethe was a minister in a ruling class which appeared to him unoppressive and humane. His mental energies were fully engaged by poetry and science, and the question what right his class had to govern produced only an irritated and dismissive reply:

> What right we have to rule, we don't ask: we just rule. Whether the people has the right to depose us, we don't bother about that: we simply take care that it isn't tempted to do it.[45]

This curt maxim indicates more succinctly than any argument how foreign to Arnold Goethe's political thinking really was.

Given this basic divergence between Goethe's and Arnold's respective outlooks on political matters, it is now possible to suggest some points of connexion without fear of misrepresenting the total picture. Eckermann once questioned Goethe about his reasons for not having used his poetic talents to further the German cause during the French occupation, and Goethe replied:

> How could I write songs of hatred without feeling any hatred myself!–And, between ourselves, I didn't hate the French, although I thanked God when we were rid of them. And how could I, to whom only culture and barbarism are things of importance, hate a nation which is one of the most cultivated on earth and to which I owe so great a part of my own development.[46]

Goethe's answer reminds us that in at least one respect he was in agreement with Arnold. The political opinions of both men were subordinate to their concern for civilization, and the choice between culture and barbarism, culture and anarchy, was always for them the supreme consideration. Arnold certainly did not believe that democracy was superior to feudalism in any absolute sense; he did not share with Bentham, whom he despised, any feeling of indignation toward the past. To Arnold, democracy was simply an inevitable historical development, and civilization was threatened by any futile attempt to hold back the movement of history by maintaining a superseded social structure. For Goethe, German civilization was threatened chiefly by the hostility of democracy to the life of the Courts, but for both men any political act was to be judged primarily in relation to its effect upon national culture, and both were agreed also that without 'order' no national culture was possible.

Goethe's dread of anarchy is one of the characteristics most stressed by the writers of 'Falk's Goethe'. Falk wrote of his subject that, 'There was but one party for which . . . he could declare himself: that namely, under whose influence tranquillity might be expected or even hoped for, let it be found how it might'. Von Müller concurred: 'he [Goethe] held fast to order and obedience to law, as to the main pillars of the public weal'.[47] Falk and von Müller were quite right in their judgement, which is amply confirmed by Goethe himself. As I have already suggested, it was the experience of chaos in the German campaign in France which led Goethe to an 'authoritarian' position in political questions. In his account of the siege at Mainz he wrote: 'It is simply in my nature, but I would rather commit any injustice than endure disorder'.[48] The same sentiment was later formulated in a maxim:

> It is better that you suffer an injustice than that the world be without law.
> Therefore let each man submit to the law.[49]

Without the restraints imposed by law the baseness of undeveloped human nature, its fury, malice, and spiteful weakness, would break loose and take control. Until men had learned to rule themselves they should never speak of freedom.[50] Goethe's humanism extends only to this limit.

As for Matthew Arnold, it is undeniable that his urbanity was ruffled more by the fear of civil disturbance than by any other single factor. There is not much sweetness, and even less light, in his support for Dr Arnold's suggestion for handling mass demonstrations:

> As for rioting, the old Roman way of dealing with that is always the right one; flog the rank and file, and, fling the ring-leaders from the Tarpeian rock.[51]

But to accuse Arnold of being an enemy of democracy on the strength of this rather silly outburst would be totally unjust. 'Anarchy' now seems too strong a word to describe the tearing down of the railings in Hyde Park, but to a generation nearer than we are to the Revolutions of 1789, 1830, and 1848 mass gatherings of the working-class appeared to be the first step on the slippery slope to violence and mob-rule. A quick transition to democratic government was not worth the price of anarchy. A 'revolution by due course of law', in the Duke of Wellington's words, was what Arnold desired, and until the time was fully ripe he was content to see the executive power deal firmly with any manifestations of civil violence, whether in England or Ireland.[52] 'Force till right is ready', a phrase borrowed from Joubert, was one of Arnold's favourite maxims.[53] Although this attitude is no longer fashionable, it is difficult to disagree with Arnold when he says:

> . . . a State in which law is authoritative and sovereign, a firm and settled course of public order, is requisite if man is to bring to maturity anything precious and lasting now, or to found anything precious and lasting for the future.[54]

This belief is at the root of Arnold's hatred of disorder, and it was shared by Goethe: if unrestrained liberty threatened civilization both men saw no option but to approve whatever curbs on individual freedom government deemed necessary. Of course, one does not need to explain Arnold's attitude by reference to Goethe. The rejection of violence was almost universal among those whom Arnold most admired.

The word 'civilization' has occurred frequently in the preceding discussion, and it is instructive to enquire what Arnold meant by it, because his thinking on this matter typifies the complex nature of his relationship to Goethe during the latter part of his life. In *Culture and Anarchy* he analysed English society in terms of its class structure–although with Arnold 'class' must be understood as an ethical concept (i.e. related to behaviour) not as an economic one–but his discussion of the Barbarians, Philistines, and Populace was essentially only one element in a wider analysis, that of 'civilization' or 'culture' itself. In Arnold's view, a perfect civilization had to show a balance between the two forces to which he gave the names 'Hebraism' and 'Hellenism'. Hebraism signifies 'ethical sense' or 'sense of proper conduct', while Hellenism signifies 'intelligence' and 'aesthetic sense'. Civilization, Arnold held, depended primarily on conduct–he never tired of reiterating his conviction that conduct was three-fourths of life–and, as he argued in front of an American audience, 'moral causes govern the standing and the falling of States'.[55] However, if no nation could survive without a proper sense of conduct, and Arnold points to the decline of Ancient Greece, Rome, and modern France as examples of the dangers of moral degeneracy, no civilization could be perfect that lacked the intellectual flexibility to test the soundness of its moral sense, or the feeling for beauty required to sense 'the fitness of things'. The English, Arnold believed, were endowed with a high sense of morality, but were sorely wanting in the finer gifts of intellect, and the defects of English civilization–the exterior ugliness of industrial society, the ineptitude of the political leaders–could all be traced to this deficiency. In other words, perfect civilization could only come as the resultant of a balance of forces:

> . . . the necessary means towards civilization may be said to be, first and foremost, expansion; and then, the power of expansion being given, these other powers have to find their account in it:— the power of conduct, the power of intellect and knowledge, the power of beauty, the power of social life and manners.[56]

Any nation which disregarded one or more of these 'powers' could not expect to enjoy a lasting and harmonious social order.

The structure of Arnold's thought, whether applied to literary style or social civilization, remains the same, and it is not hard to see how his view of civilization relates to his earlier concern with 'style'. In literature the grand style was impaired if any single aspect of the literary artefact was given excessive emphasis and allowed to take precedence over the total shaping of the whole work. So, in social life also, high civilization could only be attained if all the powers which make up man's humanity were developed, not independently, one at the expense of another, but harmoniously and in balanced relationship with each other. I have shown in earlier chapters how Arnold derived his original conceptions of 'wholeness' and 'the grand style' from Goethe, so it is tempting to ascribe an equally important place to Goethe's influence on his social thinking. But this would be quite mistaken. Goethe never applied his ideas in the field of literature and art to social and political matters, and although there are many occasions in *Culture and Anarchy* where the language seems to have a Goethean ring—whenever, in fact, Arnold speaks of 'true human perfection as a *harmonious* perfection, developing all sides of our humanity; and as a *general* perfection developing all sides of our society'—this is due to the derivation of the structure of Arnold's thinking from a Goethean model, rather than to any direct influence.[57]

Indeed, in *Culture and Anarchy*, Arnold was much more directly indebted to Wilhelm von Humboldt than to Goethe, though Humboldt himself had of course breathed the air of classical Weimar. Humboldt's 'master-thought' was the development of the individual citizen in his perfect individuality, and he was suspicious of any state action—in education, for example—to bring about this end, which he believed could only have a stultifying effect. Hence the agreement of his views with Arnold's is limited. Nevertheless, in *The Spheres and Duties of Government* the thought and expression could often be Arnold's own:

> The true end of Man, or that which is prescribed by the eternal and immutable dictates of reason, and not suggested by vague and transient desires, is the highest and most harmonious development of his powers to a complete and consistent whole.

And again:

> . . . man has it in his power to avoid . . . one-sidedness, by striving to unite the separate faculties of his nature, often singly exercised; by bringing into spontaneous co-operation . . . and endeavouring to increase and diversify the powers with which

> he works, by harmoniously combining them, instead of looking for a mere variety of objects for their separate exercise.[58]

The idea of 'harmony' in this sense has obviously a very distinguished pedigree in European thought. The concept of 'justice' as set out by Plato in *The Republic*, has for its basis this very idea: a man cannot be truly happy if the higher elements of his nature are enthralled by the lower, and the just man is the man in whom a real order and harmony among these elements has been established. This example illustrates the special problems for any study of 'influence' posed by Arnold's electicism: he had read some Plato at Rugby School, more when preparing for the Oriel Fellowship examination in 1847-48, and his reading-lists show him to have been re-reading the Greek philosopher in 1867-68.[59] By the time of his writing *Culture and Anarchy*, the main-stream of Arnold's thought was fed from many sources, and to separate the individual currents with any degree of certainty is an arduous and perhaps impossible task.

For Arnold, as for Humboldt, the development towards perfection could only take place in a social context. It was not possible, Arnold thought, for an individual to perfect himself in a society which was not itself improving its condition. Therefore, the duty of the individual lay not merely in self-development, but in social responsibility and the effort to help others perfect themselves. Goethe's experience of society in a state of turmoil had persuaded him otherwise. Confronted with the fact of a foreign occupation of his country Goethe had felt powerless. There was nothing else for him to do but go quietly about his own tasks, pursuing his scientific enquiries and developing his talent as a poet. Social and political freedom were not absolutely necessary.

> If a man has freedom to live a healthy life and to go about his own business, then he has freedom enough, and everyone can easily have that much.

Nor was Goethe impressed by the idea that 'each man should work for the common weal, as an indispensable condition of his own happiness'—a point of view put to him by Eckermann. Goethe rejoined:

> I would have thought that each man should rather start with himself and his own happiness first from which eventually the common happiness will not fail to arise.[60]

Once again it is the question of the individual's responsibility as a social being which marks the point of divergence between Arnold's opinions and Goethe's.[61]

Although there are few tangible links between Goethe's conception of civilization and that elaborated by Arnold, it is still true that Arnold associated his own views strongly with Goethe. Civilization was threatened, Arnold thought, not simply by 'monster' meetings in public parks—to him an emblem of the coming chaos—but also, and more insidiously, by democracy itself. Arnold's approval of social democracy as historically inevitable was hedged by a certain reserve. The poet who put into the mouth of Empedocles the words,

Great qualities are trodden down,
And littleness united
Is become invincible,[62]

was not, one feels, a democrat by instinct. The fear that the new political order might bring with it a reverence for the tastes and standards of the multitude told strongly with Arnold. Indeed, it was evidently one of his oldest and most deeply-felt political insights, for as early as 1848 he expressed to his mother an anxiety about 'a wave of more than American *vulgarity*, moral, intellectual, and social, preparing to break over us'.[63] In *Culture and Anarchy*, some twenty years later, he wrote that 'excellence dwells among high and steep rocks, and can only be reached by those who sweat blood to reach her'.[64] No one who maintains this view is likely to be deluded by any fanciful trust in the inherent soundness of the masses.

It was in America that Arnold preached most fervently his elitist doctrine of the 'remnant'. True excellence of any kind must necessarily belong only to 'the few' in society; it is unthinkable that any really high standard of culture should become generally established. That was Arnold's message in his 'Numbers' lecture, and it is a point of view which maintains a precarious co-existence with his avowed belief in democracy. Not that he was ever tempted with Carlyle to advocate a more or less benevolent tyranny by the cultivated minority: instead, he insisted that, while the governors of a country ought to be drawn from the 'remnant', it was the democratic responsibility of society to ensure that it was ruled by its 'best self'.[65] Although Goethe is not among the authorities summoned by Arnold in support of his argument in 'Numbers'—Plato and Isaiah were quite sufficient to give it respectability—he was well aware that Goethe held a similar opinion. In his note-books under 1881 Arnold had copied out a quotation from Eckermann: 'Do not imagine one could make anything natural and beautiful popular'.[66] And when, in 'Numbers', he expressed the opinion that 'the majority is and must be in general unsound', he was merely repeating, in slightly milder form, Goethe's remark to von Müller that, 'The mass, the majority is necessarily always absurd and misguided'.[67]

Arnold has a name for the mediocrity which threatened the high excellence that was the goal of individual man's and society's striving, and it was a name which he derived from Goethe—*das Gemeine*. The concept is central to Arnold's concern for the state of English civilization, and it figures prominently in his writing's from 1865, the year of publication of *Essays in Criticism* (first series), to his death in 1888. He first used the expression in his essay on 'The Literary Influence of Academies' where it signifies 'the atmosphere of commonplace habitual to most of us'; in other words *das Gemeine* is the essence of Philistinism, the very air it breathes.[68] In *On the Study of Celtic Literature* (1867) Arnold developed this definition. The danger for a Germanic nation whose characteristic virtue was its moral strength, that quality of 'steadiness with honesty', lay in 'the humdrum, the plain and ugly, the ignoble: in a word, *das Gemeine, die Gemeinheit*, that curse of Germany, against which Goethe was all his life fighting'.[69] Within these two definitions is contained the full range of significance that Arnold attached to the word–the plain, the ugly, the ignoble, the vulgar, the mediocre, the common, the average–and it served him well. He made use of it as a convenient 'shorthand' expression for anything which fell short of his high ideal. It expressed concisely the besetting fault of American society with its worship of the average man and its inferior higher education, or even the danger to English society if Dissenters were allowed to adopt their own form of burial service in public churchyards.[70] Trivial though the matter of the Burials Bill seems to us now, in Arnold's eyes it embodied an issue of principle. The emphasis which Liberal cant placed upon the value of unrestricted individual freedom seemed to Arnold to have contributed significantly to the spread of the harmful notion that there existed no such things as high ideals of excellence, and that, on the contrary, there were merely the diverse tastes and predilections of individuals. If this were indeed so, then Liberal egalitarianism could further insist that the tastes of all men should be treated with equal seriousness and accorded equal recognition in the national life. Arnold was naturally hostile to liberalism so conceived, and at the root of this hostility was his horror of *das Gemeine*.

Culture and civilization were for Arnold states attained only by the greatest exertion–by the sweating of blood–but *das Gemeine* was the habitual, the commonplace, the slough into which man or nation too readily sank. The individualist creed of Victorian Liberalism seemed in danger of eroding the very foundation of civilized life, the belief in objective and real excellence, and in the value of effort in striving to attain it. Civilized standards stood in need of defence, and so it was that Arnold advocated ideas which, he hoped, would expose the clichés of liberal individualism. Against the principle of 'voluntaryism' in education–the philistine middle-class providing for the schooling of its children by its own unaided action and thus perpetuating its own inadequate ideals and standards–Arnold set the principle of State supervision of education to ensure that satisfactory standards were maintained. Dismayed by the fragmentation of religious life into innumerable dissenting sects, notable chiefly for the intellectual absurdity of their doctrines and the vulgarity of their forms of worship, Arnold spoke out for the principle of Church establishment as a means of excluding the worst excesses of sectarianism and of preserving whatever was sound and good in the Anglican and Catholic traditions. In *Culture and Anarchy* he expressedly linked Goethe's name with his own animosity to the wilfulness and self-assertion involved in sectarian religion:

> One may say that to be reared a member of a national Church is in itself a lesson of religious moderation, and a help towards culture and harmonious perfection. Instead of battling for his own private forms for expressing the inexpressible and defining the undefinable, a man takes those which have commended themselves most to the religious life of his nation; and while he may be sure that within those forms the religious side of his own nature may find its satisfaction, he has leisure

> and composure to satisfy other sides of his nature as well.
>
> But with the member of a Nonconforming or self-made religious community, how different! The sectary's *eigene große Erfindungen*, as Goethe calls them—the precious discoveries of himself and his friends for expressing the inexpressible and defining the undefinable in peculiar forms of their own, cannot . . . but fill his whole mind.[71]

The passage with its borrowing from Goethe is revelatory of the way in which certain ideas cohered in Arnold's mind. When Goethe spoke of 'eigene große Erfindungen', he was not referring to the private caprice of sectarian worship but to the writing of drama.[72] He was telling Eckermann that it was preferable to make use of material already at hand, like the legends of Greece, where characters and incidents are already worked out and developed, than to resort always to one's 'own great inventions'. Obviously, therefore, the context of Goethe's remark does not justify Arnold's use of it, but it at once reminds us that in the 1853 Preface Arnold has approved the practice of dramatists in ancient Greece where a 'few actions . . . eminently adapted for tragedy, maintained almost exclusive possession of the . . . stage'. That is, the individual Greek writer suppressed his own choice in favour of tradition, and this in turn reminds us of Arnold's eloquent concluding appeal:

> 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.[73]

Caprice, then, like *das Gemeine*, must be the negation of culture, for culture is the truly excellent, the best that has been thought and known in the world, and it was this inherited store of real culture which, Arnold believed, the critic was duty-bound to disseminate and to transmit to succeeding generations.

Further lines of continuity suggest themselves. In 'The Study of Poetry' (1880) Arnold argued that the role of poetry in modern life would become increasingly important as human beings began to learn that neither the natural sciences nor supernatural religion were in themselves sufficient to meet their spiritual needs, but that poetry, 'the breath and finer spirit of knowledge', as Wordsworth had called it, was the medium in which all truths could exist harmoniously, as they had once done in religion. Poetry was to be the religion of the future. 'Poetry', in the sense intended by Arnold, is all great poetry, past, present, and future, that 'mighty river of poetry' to which 'the stream of English poetry' is a tributary. In defence of the institution of poetry stands criticism, admitting only 'poetry of a high order of excellence', and so it follows that we 'must accustom ourselves to a high standard and to a strict judgement'. Naturally enough, Arnold mentions the force which is antagonistic to excellence, and its name now is 'charlatanism':

> In poetry, which is thought and art in one, it is the glory, the eternal honour, that charlatanism shall find no entrance . . . Charlatanism is for confusing or obliterating the distinctions between excellent and inferior, sound and unsound or only half-sound, true and untrue or only half-true.

Plainly, then, charlatanism follows on from 'caprice' and 'das Gemeine', and it is part of Arnold's purpose in this essay to suggest a way of finding which poetry is really excellent. This is to discover the 'real' estimate of a poet's work, as opposed to the 'historic' or 'personal' estimates. Arnold's method can be summed up in one sentence:

> . . . there can be no more useful help for discovering what poetry belongs to the class of the truly excellent, and can therefore do us most good, than to have always in one's mind lines and expressions of the great masters, and to apply them as a touchstone to other poetry.[74]

The 'touchstone' idea is, of course, basically the same as the more familiar notion of 'taste', the literary tact which a critic acquires by making himself familiar with the best which has been thought, known, and written in the world. Arnold's argument is bedevilled by circularity: we find out what is excellent by measuring it by the standard of what we already know to be excellent–Homer, Dante, Shakespeare. But how can we know, unless there are further standards of excellence by which these can in turn be measured? To this admittedly awkward question there is no answer other than that we know because experience tells us it is so. The great lines and passages are the elementary particles, as it were, of literary excellence: it is not possible to go beyond them, they are the ultimate arbiters. The idea of 'touchstones' is Arnold's attempt at a sort of literary naturalism. He is attempting to put criticism on the firm basis of 'experience', that is, the literary experience of the past, as it is transmitted down the ages to us through the medium of culture.

It is not difficult to show that Arnold's argument coincided exactly with Goethe's belief in the necessity of using admitted excellence, not simply as the substance on which any man striving to develop his artistic taste must nourish himself, but also as a criterion for judging whatever new matter presented itself for evaluation. As Eckermann's mentor once remarked in conversation:

> . . . one cannot develop one's taste through studying the moderately good, but only through the highest excellence. Hence I show you only what is best; and if you consolidate this, then you will have a criterion for other things which you will not overestimate but nevertheless still appreciate.[75]

Goethe was not maintaining, as Arnold had done, that the application of touchstones in establishing high standards of poetry was the task of criticism–as a kind of institutionalized Good Taste–and necessary for the continuance of civilization. The coincidence of their opinion here is not, I believe, due to borrowing in any direct sense, but rather to a more fundamental similarity of their naturalistic conception of culture as the transmission of experienced value. (Arnold could, after all, have encountered his 'touchstone' theory, in germ at least, in Wordsworth's 'Advertisement' to the first edition of the Lyrical Ballads: 'An accurate taste in poetry . . . is an acquired talent, which can only be produced by severe thought, and a long continued intercourse with the best models of composition'.) It was a naturalism which Arnold rightly recognized as thoroughly Goethean and which he sought to advocate and, in his own way, to emulate.

One concept elaborated by Arnold in 'The Study of Poetry', namely that of a 'mighty river of poetry' to which the literatures of individual nations contribute, reveals the real link between Arnold's 'Europeanism' and Goethe's idea of *Weltliteratur*. If culture is the best that has been known and thought in the world, then obviously no single national literature can claim exclusive possession of culture, and the critic, whose duty it is to get to know and to propagate this 'best', must have the proper range of knowledge. Therefore we have Arnold's advice to critics of English literature:

> One may say, indeed, to those who have to deal with the mass–so much better disregarded–of current English literature, that they may at all events endeavour, in dealing with this, to try it, so far as they can, by the standard of the best that is known and thought in the world; one may say, that to get anywhere near this standard, every critic should try and possess one great literature, at least, besides his own; and the more unlike his own the better. But, after all, the criticism I am really concerned with . . . is a criticism which regards Europe as being, for intellectual and spiritual purposes, one great confederation, bound to a joint action and working to a common result; and whose members have, for their proper outfit, a knowledge of Greek, Roman, and Eastern antiquity, and of one another.[76]

One would not perhaps have associated such ideas with Goethe at all, if Arnold had not in the essay 'Wordsworth' (1879) repeated this statement about Europe and added: 'This was the ideal of Goethe'.[77] Arnold might, of course, simply have been thinking of Goethe's aphorism that 'No man who knows only his own language knows even that', but the fullness of Arnold's statement of Goethe's ideal suggests that he had something more substantial in mind, i.e. the notion of *Weltliteratur*.[78]

In actual fact Goethe's ideal was not as close to his own as Arnold believed. Comparison is difficult since Goethe's thoughts on the subject were desultory and are scattered rather widely throughout the conversations, letters, and critical essays of his latter years, but some points are immediately obvious. For Goethe the age of *Weltliteratur* was only beginning to dawn: he speaks of World Literature as something which is 'taking shape' or 'hoped for', whereas for Arnold the term signified primarily Europe's literary heritage, its past.[79] Goethe viewed the new age as the product of easier communications (erleichterter Communication) between nations, and conceived a role for German as the *lingua franca* of 'spiritual commerce':

> Whoever understands and studies the German language finds himself at a market where all nations offer their wares; he plays the interpreter while growing rich himself.

The advantages of a state of world literature, as opposed to separate national literatures isolated from each other, consisted in the mutual stimulation which would thereby be fostered. Goethe did not envisage, or desire, a uniform culture throughout all European nations—'there is no question of nations having to think alike'— but he was aware that any national literature will stagnate if cut off from foreign influence. A further benefit which was to result from the increased contact between national literatures was the growth of mutual tolerance and understanding, and the lessening of hostile prejudice. The distinctive peculiarities would not disappear, but the truly valuable parts of a national culture (*das wahrhaft Verdienstliche*) must belong to humanity as a whole.[80]

This is clearly no exhaustive account of Goethe's conception of *Weltliteratur*. but enough has been said to demonstrate that its primary implications for him were not the same as those stressed by Arnold. For the English critic the great inheritance of European literature provides a standard by which to measure the productions of English literature. His description of the act of 'measurement' as a process of juridical evaluation—'to try English literature by the standard of the best that is known and thought in the world'—reminds us not merely of the primacy of evaluation over analysis in Arnold's view of criticism, but also of the fundamental unity of his thought: for the relation of European culture to English culture appears to parallel that of literary academies to individual writers—Arnold envisages academies as a 'literary tribunal' or, quoting Sainte-Beuve, a 'haut jury' before which the individual author is 'tried'. The underlying principle is the necessity of 'deference to a standard higher than one's own habitual standard in intellectual matters, a . . . respectful recognition of a superior ideal'.[81] The same relationship clearly obtains, or should obtain, between the individual and the state—'the common reason of society ought to check the aberrations of individual eccentricity'—and between the dissenting sect and the established religion. All Arnold's dichotomies, whether between provinciality and classical centrality, between provinciality and totality, between the grand style and the Tennysonian picturesque, can be resolved into the fundamental dichotomy between 'the whole and the parts'.[82] Wholeness is harmony and joy, fragmentation is anarchy and misery. The reason for Arnold's association of his own ideas of a supra-national European culture, both incorporating and transcending national literatures, with Goethe should now be self-evident. 'One's own habitual standards in intellectual matters' are, after all, exactly what is meant by 'caprice', '*eigene große Erfindungen*', '*das Gemeine*', individual eccentricity and charlatanism, and it is these which are transcended by the 'superior ideal' of a European culture.

This conception of a division between the wishes of the individual and the claims of a superior authority is at the heart of Arnold's ethical consciousness, for the individual's submission to this superior authority is in his view the fundamental moral act. For Arnold, as for Goethe, the ethical life could be conceived as a dialectic of freedom and restraint, and morality as essentially renunciation. Indeed, it was in acknowledgement of this dialectic that Arnold described himself as a 'Liberal tempered by experience, reflection, and renouncement'.[83] If it was true to say with Spinoza that 'Life itself consists . . . in the effort *to affirm one's own essence*', then the freedom of self-affirmation must be admitted as valid, because it was this effort which underlay the necessary human urge towards change, development, and progress.[84] But the liberty of self-affirmation was only one half of the picture:

> And we no more allow absolute validity to the Philistine's stock maxim, *Liberty is the law of human life*, than we allow it to the opposite maxim, which is just as true, *Renouncement is the law of human life*.[85]

Real liberty, therefore, is not the absence of restraint but lies in the subordination of the 'ordinary' self to the idea of a perfected humanity–the best possible self. In a note on the passage quoted R. H. Super points out that 'Renouncement is the law of human life', a maxim used by Carlyle as the thesis of *Sartor Resartus*, is taken from *Wilhelm Meister*. Arnold entered in his note-book under 1872 Goethe's comment in *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, 'Everything calls upon us to renounce', and perhaps had these words in mind as he wrote.[86] Certainly the passage in *Culture and Anarchy* where the idea of renouncement is applied to married life reveals Arnold's intelligence at its most sensitive and would have enjoyed Goethe's unqualified approval:

> And man's true humanity, and therefore his happiness, appears to lie much more, so far as the relations of love and marriage are concerned, in becoming alive to the finer shades of feeling which arise within these relations, in being able to enter with tact and sympathy into the subtle instinctive propensions and repugnances of the person with whose life his own life is bound up, make them his own, to direct and govern in harmony with them the arbitrary range of his personal action, and thus to enlarge his spiritual and intellectual life and liberty, than in remaining insensible to these finer shades of feeling and this delicate sympathy, in giving unchecked range, so far as he can, to his mere personal action, in allowing no limits or government to this except such as a mechanical external law imposes, and in thus really narrowing, for the satisfaction of his ordinary self, his spiritual and intellectual life and liberty.[87]

Not, of course, that Arnold needed to read *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* in order to learn that in marriage renunciation of arbitrary desire was essential.

There is, I believe, good evidence to support the view that Arnold associated his conception of culture as a cumulative historical process with Goethe. Arnold's aversion to divorce was deep-seated. The publicity given to court proceedings in divorce cases, and the 'mire of unutterable infamy' which was there revealed, presented a spectacle so hideous that Arnold found 'the marriage theory of

Catholicism refreshing and elevating'.[88] G. W. E. Russell attributed Arnold's aversion to

> . . . his strong sense . . . that the sacredness of marriage, and the customs that regulate it, were triumphs of culture which had been won, painfully and with effort, from the unbridled promiscuity of primitive life. To impair that sacredness, to dislocate those customs, was to take a step backwards into darkness and anarchy.[89]

Russell's comment shows an acute perception of Arnold's view of culture as something conquered from a 'nature' which is basically amoral. In *God and the Bible* (1875) the question of sexual morality was again discussed, and it was Arnold's intention to establish the precepts of Judaic-Christian morality on a sounder basis than that which supposed certain actions to be wrong simply because God forbade them. The only sound basis was that of 'experience'. In other words, adultery and fornication are not wrong because God disapproves of them, but because the experience of mankind teaches us that 'freedom' in sexual behaviour is in reality a kind of bondage. Hence, anything which tended to weaken the ties enjoined by the Seventh Commandment, was a backward step towards

> . . . that old, chaotic, dark, almost ante-human time, from which slowly and painfully man had emerged when the real history and religion of our race began.

Arnold then goes on to enlist Goethe's support for this view with a quotation from a conversation with von Müller:

> He [Goethe] says: 'What culture has won of nature we ought on no account to let go again, at no price to give up. In the notion of the sacredness of marriage, Christianity has got a culture-conquest of this kind, and of priceless value, although marriage is, properly speaking, unnatural'. Unnatural, he means to say, to man in his rudimentary state, before the fixing of moral habits had formed the right human nature.[90]

In the light of this discussion one is better able to understand Arnold's remark in a letter to his mother of 3 March 1865:

> No one has a stronger and more abiding sense than I have of the 'daemonic' element—as Goethe called it—which underlies and encompasses our life; but I think, as Goethe thought, that the right thing is, while conscious of this element, and of all that there is inexplicable round one, to keep pushing on one's posts into the darkness, and to establish no post that is not perfectly in light and firm.[91]

It appears that Arnold has partly misconstrued Goethe's meaning in the expression *das Dämonische*. For Goethe there was indeed a daemonic element, dark and inexplicable, inwoven in the texture of existence, but he did not, as Arnold implies, conceive of it as something against which one has to do battle.[92] What is interesting, however, about Arnold's oddly colonialist metaphor of establishing outposts in the great, uncharted darkness is, apart from his association of the idea with Goethe, its implication of the same progressive and cumulative conception of human development that we found, in germ at least, in the 1853 Preface; and, as in *Culture and Anarchy* and the discussion of sexual morality in *God and the Bible* quoted above, this development is conceived in terms of conquest and struggle. Clearly, the spirit of the age had left its mark on Arnold. Darwin's *The Origin of Species*, which appeared in 1859, had raised disturbing considerations concerning the nature and origin of human social morality even for a man like Arnold, who had already abandoned orthodox supernatural religion. 'Public spirit', which Bishop Butler could so easily take for granted, now had to be viewed as 'a slow conquest from rudimentary human nature', and the origins of conscience sought, not in some divine fiat, but in that 'vast, dimly lighted, primordial region of the natural genesis of man's affections and principles'.[93]

I have until now carefully avoided any attempt to show definite links between Arnold's conception of culture and development, and Goethe's thinking on these matters, other than that Arnold consciously associated his own ideas with the German poet. But the time has come to ask whether Arnold was correct or mistaken in attributing to Goethe ideas similar to his own. It is useful to begin with the phrase '*das Gemeine*' which generated the preceding discussion. We have seen how the fear which Arnold felt concerning the erosion of cultural standards in a democratic society was shared, to an even intenser degree, by Goethe, but we must now inquire whether the range of significance which Arnold attached to the phrase '*das Gemeine*' was Goethean or whether it was Arnold's own invention.

The apparent source of the phrase, or at least the one indicated by Arnold, is Goethe's poem 'Epilog zu Schillers Glocke'. But the poem itself is of little help, because it tells us virtually nothing of what Goethe understood by *das Gemeine* other than, whatever it was Schiller escaped it. Arnold's explication of the phrase as 'the atmosphere of commonplace habitual to most of us' does not derive from the poem itself, but he had rightly noted that it is used so frequently by Goethe elsewhere than it does indeed deserve to be called a Goethean idea. When one examines these other occasions of its use it quickly becomes apparent that Arnold had absorbed the essential content of Goethe's meaning, even though this meaning was not quite so precise or fixed as Arnold's citing of it might suggest. For example, the 'Maximen und Reflexionen', the collection of aphorisms from which Arnold quoted continually in his note-books, contains several on the theme of *das Gemeine*. Only two, however, have a really close relevance to Arnold's thought:

> Life, however common [*gemein*] it appears, however easily it seems content with the habitual and everyday, nevertheless secretly fosters certain higher demands and looks around for means of satisfying them.[94]

Here, there is not only the specific connexion of *das Gemeine* with the habitual and commonplace, but also the source perhaps of Arnold's statement in the essay 'Civilization in the United States' that what is common and ignoble 'is notwithstanding its admitted prevalence, contrary to a deep-seated instinct of human nature and repelled by it'.[95]

In Book 19 of *Dichtung und Wahrheit* Goethe discusses the abuse of the word 'genius' among the Germans and the 'happy effects' of Kantian philosophy:

> And so the Germans, among whom *das Gemeine* threatens to gain the upper hand far more frequently than among other nations, almost sacrificed the loveliest blossom of language, that seemingly foreign word, but a word which in reality belongs equally to all nations:–if the feeling for the highest and best, new-established once again by a deeper philosophy, had not happily reasserted itself.[96]

On this occasion Goethe not only specifically contrasts *das Gemeine* with 'the feeling for the highest and best', but also points to it as a particular failing of Germans–as Arnold does in *On the Study of Celtic Literature* (see above, p. 117) This meaning is reinforced by the passage from *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* in which Goethe argued:

> Man is disposed to involve himself with the commonest of things (*dem Gemeinsten*); mind and senses become blunted so easily to impressions of the beautiful and perfect, that one should preserve one's capacity for feeling them by every possible means.[97]

Here again the significance which attaches to *das Gemeine* is precisely that which Arnold attributed to it, and although it is obvious that his use of the phrase to describe, in a specifically political context, the uglier aspects of contemporary civilization, could not derive from the German poet, the ideas which underlie it are, as Arnold himself clearly recognized, thoroughly Goethean.

The second of Goethe's aphorisms which makes reference to *das Gemeine* appears at first sight rather puzzling:

> People say: Artist, study Nature! But it is no small matter to develop the excellent from the base (*dem Gemeinen*), the beautiful from the formless.[98]

In this instance the phrase seems to signify (without overt disapproval) the raw, inchoate material from which the artist must create the shaped, meaningful object, the work of art. One might have passed over this aphorism as simply another occasion when the connexion with Arnold's thought is too tenuous to be of any importance, if it were not for the fact that, of all the aphorisms dealing with *das Gemeine*, this is the only one which Arnold copied into his note-book.[99] In it *das Gemeine*, like *das Dämonische* in Arnold's letter to his mother quoted above, signifies nature in its 'undeveloped' state, before art and before culture.

Some distinctions, however, must be drawn between Arnold's and Goethe's meaning. In the first place, Arnold's conception of social culture as a cumulative development, advancing on the basis of human achievements won from a nature essentially hostile to the imposed limitations of morality, has a much more distinctly ethical stress than the corresponding conception in Goethe. With Goethe the primary antithesis is between Art and Nature, not—as with Arnold—between Culture and Nature. When Goethe writes of this antithesis, human morality is not uppermost in his mind:

> The noblest demand which is made of an artist, is always this: that he should keep close to nature, study her, copy her, produce something similar to her phenomena.
>
> How great, indeed how huge this demand is, is not always recognized, and the true artist learns it only as his development progresses. Nature is separated from art by a huge chasm, which genius alone, without external aids, is incapable of crossing.
>
> Everything we perceive around us, is merely raw material . . .[100]

Even when Goethe considers the question of art and artists in their social context, it is evident that the emphasis is less ethical than with Arnold, although the conception of cumulative development on the basis of the achievements of the past is the fundamental assumption which also underlines Goethe's thinking.

It is important to realize that this conception was an 'assumption' with Goethe; it appeared to him self-evident, a truism. Only once did Goethe feel it necessary to elaborate the idea and to defend it. This was in 1795 when a literary journal, the *Berlinische Archiv*, published an impertinent article on contemporary prose-writers complaining anonymously of the lack of any writer among the Germans of 'classic' stature. Goethe's reply, 'Literarischer Sansculottismus', set out the conditions under which a national classic could arise. He stressed above all the necessity of an already advanced culture as a precondition for the appearance of a classic author. Younger writers now enjoyed an advantage which had not been available to Goethe's generation:

> . . . the good fortune, which young men now enjoy who develop earlier and achieve more quickly a pure style appropriate to their subject, to whom do they owe this if not to their predecessors who laboured incessantly under many kinds of difficulty throughout the last half of this century, each developing himself in his own way? In this way a sort of invisible school has arisen, and the young man who enters it, finds a much larger and brighter circle than earlier writers . . .[101]

The conception of cultural development as a cumulative and co-operative effort, which is implied here, finds further expression in Goethe's conversations with Eckermann. For example, in a conversation about the painter Raphael he comments:

> Whenever you see a great master, you always find that he has used the achievement of his predecessors, and it is precisely this which makes him great. Men like Raphael don't grow out of the ground. They built upon antiquity and the best that had been done before them.

Again, in the conversation from which Arnold took Goethe's remark about the dangers of *eigene große Erfindungen*, Goethe offered Eckermann the following advice in the same key:

> Everyone thinks he himself must know what's best, and in that way many are lost completely and many are trapped in error for a long time. But there is no more time for error, that is why we old men were there; and what use would all our searching and erring have been, if you younger people were merely going to tread the same ground? We would never get any further! Error can be reckoned to the credit of the older generation because we didn't find the paths already trodden; but more is demanded of those who come after, they shouldn't repeat the erring and searching but should utilize the advice of old men and advance forthwith along the right way.[102]

A connected idea is expounded in the essay 'Deutscher Naturdichter' when Goethe considers the case of men of talent born into a hostile environment. Gifted men born at a pre-cultural stage of history belong to this category, and it is to such anonymous talents, Goethe thought, that we owe the first growths of knowledge, myth, legend, philosophy, and history. Their situation is almost unthinkable in modern times, Goethe argued, except when a gifted man is born into the lower classes and remains cut off from the advanced and widespread culture of the day. One mark of an advanced culture is the permanent presence of the exemplary achievements of past artists ('Muster und Vorbilder') from which rules and theories of artistic practice can be abstracted.[103] These are Arnold's 'wholesome regulative laws', the real rules of artistic practice derived from the accumulated *experience* of great artists in the past, of which Arnold spoke in the 1853 Preface.[104] These are the rules which the Dilettante ignores, but which must be preserved and transmitted to succeeding generations if the practice of poetry is to survive. In the context of these ideas one can begin to discern the origin of Arnold's admiration for Goethe's 'naturalism'.

The final question, namely whether Arnold did or did not derive from Goethe the idea of cultural advance as a process of accumulated victory over nature is perhaps unanswerable. One of Arnold's best critics has no doubts. In a suggestive but regrettably undeveloped note on Arnold, W. Robbins wrote:

> It is hard to see how Arnold's definitions of cultural totality could reflect merely 'preconceived attitudes', and it can safely be asserted that the modern and naturalistic Goethe was largely responsible for the attitude or 'ruling idea' in Arnold which came closest to being 'scientific'–namely, his insistence that established customs, beliefs, creeds and intellectual patterns must come before the joint tribunal of general culture and cumulative human experience.[105]

It is hard to be so categorical. With both Arnold and Goethe the ideas which we have been considering had the status of axioms, basic assumptions which governed much of their thinking. There is no doubt that Arnold firmly associated these ideas with Goethe, and possibly even believed that he had derived them from him, but the ethical emphasis in Arnold's view of culture is his own–or, at least, certainly not Goethe's. The essential structure of Arnold's conception of culture is present in outline in the 1853 Preface where its relation to Goethe is immediate and direct: the ideas of *Culture and Anarchy* are basically an elaboration of this conception, but with the stress shifted to morality as the primary constituent of both individual culture and social civilization. The relation to Goethe of Arnold's ideas in *Culture and Anarchy* is, therefore, less immediate and direct than in the Preface.

Arnold's strictures on Protestantism in *Culture and Anarchy* (1869) were not always kindly received, and in the years that followed he was obliged to set out and defend his own religious position. *St Paul and Protestantism* was published in 1870; *Literature and Dogma* followed in 1873, *God and the Bible* in 1875, and *Last Essays on Church and Religion* in 1877. It now remains to consider Goethe's relationship to Arnold's religious thought, and in particular to investigate the meaning of Arnold's 'naturalism' and what it owes to the German poet and scientist. It has already been suggested that Goethe may well have been among the intellectual influences which contributed to the breaking-up of Arnold's belief in orthodox Christianity many years before when he was an undergraduate at Oxford, but this is mainly a matter for conjecture.[106] In the case of the mature and developed opinions expressed in his published writings it is possible to proceed with more assurance, for we know in detail what Arnold thought and what he had already learned from Goethe. But one is immediately confronted with a new difficulty. Arnold's religious writings are strewn with so many references and acknowledgements to Goethe that one could easily assume at the outset a close correspondence between the religious views of the two men. But Goethe's religious beliefs are highly problematical, and it is not easy to see how his ideas could have contributed, to any significant extent, to the forming of Arnold's religious position since he never troubled to define or defend his views on God, religion, and Christianity in anything like the detail or fullness of Arnold's theological writings. He remained outside religious controversy far more resolutely than Arnold, and he became impatient if his opinions on religious subjects were solicited too importunately. He told his over-zealous friend Lavater flatly that he was 'not anti-Christian, not un-Christian but decidedly non-Christian', and when the pious Gretchen enquired after Faust's beliefs she was gently rebuked with the question 'Who can name Him?' and its corollary 'Words are sound and smoke/Obscuring Heaven's bright glow'.[107] As Goethe explained to his friend Jacobi, he did not like to feel committed to one specific set of opinions:

> With the many divergent tendencies of my being, one mode of thinking is not enough; as a poet and artist I am a Polytheist, as a scientist on the other hand I am a Pantheist, and one as firmly as the other. If for my personality, as a moral being, I need one God then I can manage that too.[108]

One cannot imagine Arnold subscribing with much enthusiasm to any of the views expressed in these characteristically Goethean remarks. However, Goethe did have more definite opinions on religious matters than the letter to Jacobi suggests. In conversation with such intimate friends as Eckermann, Riemer, Falk, and von Müller he spoke quite candidly. In the last years of his life Goethe was more willing to talk on questions of faith than he had been in his youth, and since Arnold was well acquainted with the records of these conversations, he certainly knew the measure of agreement between his own ideas and Goethe's.

Contrary to one's first impressions Arnold probably did not mean to indicate by his frequent reference to Goethe in his theological writings that the position which he was elaborating directly derived from the German. Arnold's was a Goethean position only in so far as the ideas and opinions which he expressed could have been expected to have had the German poet's general approval.[109] This at least is how Arnold himself seems to have viewed the nature of his relationship to Goethe on religious matters. After advancing his own theory of the authorship of the Fourth Gospel Arnold remarked that he 'would cheerfully consent to submit to the judgement of any competent tribunal; only the judges . . . ought not to be professors of the theological faculties of Germany, but Germans like Lessing, Herder, and Goethe'.[110]

One should remember thatArnold did not claim permanent and absolute validity for his religious ideas:

> Thought and science follow their own law of development, they are slowly elaborated in the growth and forward pressure of humanity . . . and their ripeness and unripeness . . . are not an effect of our wishing or resolving. Rather do they seem brought about by a power such as Goethe figures by the *Zeit-Geist* or Time-Spirit . . .[111]

Arnold could therefore feel entitled to the authority conferred by Goethe's agreement simply by regarding his own views as views which Goethe would have acknowledged had he been Arnold's contemporary. The principle of 'development' was, after all, admitted by Goethe. F. Neiman has shown how the term 'Zeitgeist', which Arnold seems to have found in Goethe's essay on Wolfian theories of Homer, 'Homer noch einmal', gradually changed in meaning for the English writer.[112] At first it signified little more than 'fashion' or 'the spirit of the age', but later it came to mean the active, almost purposeful force of historical development. This notion of development belongs to a conception of periodicity in history which Arnold could have encountered in his father's writings or in the writings of Burke, Niebuhr, and others.[113] The latter significance with which Arnold endows the term 'Zeitgeist', is not, however, justified by Goethe's use of it. Admittedly, Riemer recorded Goethe's conviction that 'Religion itself, like time, like life and knowledge, is in a state of constant advance and development', and that was quite enough for Arnold's purposes; he approvingly copied the maxim into his note-book under 1868.[114] But the fact remains that Goethe was no more a philosopher of history than he was a theologian.[115]

Nevertheless, Arnold could still point to significant areas of agreement between himself and Goethe. Arnold's work in the field of religious controversy had two aspects. Firstly he wished to demonstrate the inadequacy of religion as it then was, and secondly to suggest a 'rational' form of religion to suit the modern age. Arnold's endeavours were consequently constructive. He started from the premise of the unsurpassed value of Christian ethics. This premise Goethe accepted:

> No matter how far spiritual culture progresses, however much the sciences grow in range and depth, however much the human mind broadens,–it will never pass beyond the greatness and moral cultural of Christianity as it shines forth in the Gospels![116]

Like Arnold, who saw how grossly the 'strife, jealousy, wrath, contentions and backbitings', which marked the separation of the dissenting Puritan sects from the Established Church, contrasted with Christ's 'sweet reasonableness', and his message of love, joy, peace, patience, mildness, and self-control, Goethe found the spirit of sectarianism, with its hatred and rancour, intolerable.

Arnold's aim in *St Paul and Protestantism* was to show that Puritanism was 'based on a blunder', that for three centuries it has 'been pounding away . . . at St Paul's wrong words, and missing his essential doctrine'. With its insistence on the doctrines of predestination, original sin and justification by faith, Puritanism encouraged its followers 'to look, in religion, not so much for an arduous progress on their own part, and the exercise of their activity, as for strokes of magic, and what may be called a sensational character'.[117] Goethe agreed; he could never approve any doctrine which made human activity and effort at improvement appear futile.[118] To both men the essence of religion was not dogma but 'that which binds and holds us to the practice of righteousness'.[119] Falk reports Goethe as having said:

> If Protestants sought to define more clearly what ought to be loved, done, and taught . . . without compelling any man to assent to dogmas tortured, with afflicting presumption, into a conformity to this or that rule . . . I should myself be the first to visit the church of my brethren in religion, with sincere heart, and to submit myself with willing edification to the general, practical confession of a faith which connected itself so immediately with action.[120]

For Arnold the control of personal conduct was always the main consideration, 'at the very lowest computation' three-fourths of human life.[121] When in his reading he encountered Goethe's maxim, 'Nothing in life, apart from health and virtue, is to be valued more highly than knowledge and science; nor is anything achieved so easily, purchased so cheaply; the only effort is *being still*, the only cost is *time*, which we cannot save without spending', he copied it into his note-book with the comment of agreement: 'Primacy of Tugend [Virtue]'.[122]

Given this common belief in the necessity of religion to address primarily the moral life of man, one is not surprised to find that Goethe and Arnold shared a similar high regard for the Bible–the Bible properly conceived, that is. Goethe saw that the Bible contained contradictions, but he hated the destructive, mocking criticism of sceptics.[123] The Bible was dear to him because he owed to it, he claimed, almost his entire moral education as a child.[124] Arnold stressed that the real–i.e., moral–value of the Bible was unimpaired by the 'unscientific' nature of the narrative. It was important to read the Bible aright: popular religion was in error in taking the figurative language of the Bible literally, while the learned religion of the Bishops and theologians was wrong in attempting to construct from it a system of metaphysics. Arnold copied into his note-book under 1879 Goethe's maxim on the role of the Bible in education:

> There is, and will continue to be, much argument about the use and harm of teaching the Bible. To me it is clear: it will do harm, as it always has, if used dogmatically and fantastically; it will do good, as it always has, if received didactically and sensitively.[125]

And under 1878 he copied a comment made by a contemporary of Goethe; 'He [Goethe at the age of twenty-four] has high respect for Christian religion, but not in the form represented by our theologians'.[126] There are other parallels too. For example, Arnold could justifiably feel that he had Goethe's support in regarding any religion as 'but an *approximation* to the truth'.[127] Or again: in spite of his high regard for men's religious sense, Arnold still set religion as such below culture, for culture–as the best that has been thought and known–included religion within itself. Goethe seemed to agree; at least, the sentence of Goethe's which Arnold liked to quote, 'He who has art and science has religion too' could reasonably be interpreted to imply the subordination of religion to culture.[128]

It would, however, be wrong to infer from the general similarity of attitude which I have outlined above, that Arnold was in the formulation of his attitude deeply indebted to Goethe, or was, in any sense, following him. Arnold's works on religion are detailed expositions of a carefully worked out and defined point of view, and there is nothing in Goethe's writings to compare with them. The sources of most of Arnold's quotations from Goethe in the religious writings are the conversations with Eckermann, Riemer, and von Müller, and the aphorisms of the 'Maximen und Reflexionen'. The very nature of the sources precludes a really profound influence; the conversations are usually desultory and mainly concerned with topics other than religion, and an aphorism–however, wise, concise and suggestive–could hardly have stimulated Arnold to produce such a bulky work as *Literature and Dogma*. Arnold's references to Goethe in his religious writings undoubtedly indicate the pleasure he felt in discovering an ally of stature and authority, but it is unlikely that his religious works would have been very different, either in shape or substance, had Goethe's agreement not been there. D. J. DeLaura has expressed the view that 'Arnold is nowhere more Goethean than in his adoption of the role as healer and reconciler' of Hellenic and Judaic-Christian positions, but this seems to me to distort and to exaggerate Goethe's relevance to Arnold's religious thinking.[129] While DeLaura is certainly correct in describing Goethe's and

Arnold's position as 'mediatorial', a crucial distinction is overlooked. Arnold's position was consciously and actively mediatorial. His writings are addressed to a primarily Christian audience and attempt to convince it of the values of Hellenism. Goethe was never an apostle for any cause, and his position was mediatorial only in so far as it drew upon the culture of both Jew and Greek alike. Certainly, this must have been a source of Goethe's attractiveness for Arnold, but for the real relationship of Goethe to Arnold's religious thought we must turn our attention again to the idea of 'naturalism'.

This is the opinion of W. Robbins also: 'The "profound naturalism" of Goethe is throughout *Literature and Dogma* brought to bear upon man's anthropomorphism and the tendency to see in religious *Aberglaube* [superstition] the science rather than the poetry of life'.[130] Robbins does not elaborate, but he has at least raised an interesting question, for 'naturalism' of a sort does indeed run throughout all Arnold's religious writings. Arnold's expressed aim was to establish religion on 'the firm basis of observation and experiment'.[131] To achieve this aim would be to find for religion a real source of authority, and the only authority which the modern intelligence would accept. The modern supporter of religion, therefore, must assert nothing which cannot be 'verified', and the only adequate verification is reference to experience: 'observation', 'experience', 'real', 'verify', 'verifiable' are words which are repeated constantly through *Literature and Dogma*. This is the essence of Arnold's naturalism, and in principle it accords absolutely with Goethe's. Falk said of him:

> All conclusions, observations, doctrines, opinions, articles of faith, have value in his eyes only in so far as they connect themselves with this territory of experience, which he has so fortunately conquered.[132]

The same opposition of authority and experience is stressed by Riemer in his account of Goethe's 'faith', which was not, he says, 'the usual, traditionary Christianity of the Church, accepted on authority without verification or testing'; his aspiration was to approach 'the Highest' by observation of Nature– *Naturbetrachtung und Naturerforschung*.[133] Basically, therefore, Arnold and Goethe did indeed profess allegiance to the same principle, but clearly it is no less important to enquire whether they applied this naturalism in a similar way, and whether they arrived at similar conclusions.

When Arnold examined the intellectual basis on which religion in his day rested he found it totally inadequate. Religion as it then was, he argued, would inevitably lose its hold over the masses as the dissolving influence of the scientific outlook made itself felt. The central objection to Christian dogma, of whatever Church, was that it was not 'sure', that it assumed what could not be 'verified'. The fundamental error lay in its notion of God as, in Arnold's scornful phrase, 'a magnified and non-natural man', a notion which remained the same even when dressed up in the impressive but vacuous language of theology as 'a Great Personal First Cause . . . the moral and intelligent Governor of the universe'.[134] All of this, says Arnold, adapting a maxim of Goethe's, is merely *Aberglaube*–superstition, 'over-belief'.[135] The idea of a personal God is 'poetry', not fact; it is no more–and again a Goethean maxim was appropriate–than the product of man's anthropomorphic consciousness.[136]

What then remains of religion when its mythic accretions are stripped away? Arnold intended his answer to be reassuring, for what remains is morality. Morality, he insists, does not require the supernatural sanction of a wrathful God dispensing eternal measures of punishment and reward. Its authority can be established and verified by reference to experience. This is Arnold's message of joy for his troubled, uncertain contemporaries, but it is at this point, when he tries to show that religion can after all be rebuilt upon a firm basis of observation and experiment, that he is least convincing.[137] Arnold realized that morality alone was too austere ever to attract and hold the mass of mankind; but religion 'lighted up' morality, touched it with emotion, and thus made it a force capable of influencing for the better the actions of all men, not just the exceptional few.[138] Arnold viewed his task as two-fold: he had firstly to show that the tenets of Christian ethics were verifiable, and secondly that the reduced form of religion which he proposed would still be capable of exerting on human behaviour the required restraint.

Arnold's strategy in pursuing the second of these tasks is interesting. He tried to retain the emotionally charged language of the old religion, in particular the term 'God', while applying it to his new naturalistic conceptions. Until 'we are agreed as to what we mean by *God*, we can never . . . understand one another or discuss seriously'. He considers it impossible any longer to believe in a 'personal first cause', but not impossible to believe that 'all things . . . have what we call a law of their being, and . . . to tend to fulfil it'. Whether or not we call this law by the name of 'God' is a matter of choice, but, if we do so, then at least we have the advantage of having given the name to 'a certain and admitted reality'.[139] Leaving aside the question whether this law is as certain as Arnold supposes, one wonders at the purpose of juggling like this with the word 'God'. Of course, Arnold wishes to make the term 'scientific', but it is hard to see how this impersonal law could ever be a substitute for the old personal God as an object of religious devotion. Not only is Arnold at pains to retain the language of religion, but even its forms. Thus, he envisaged a renovated Church of England accepting the new conception of God, but continuing as 'a great national society for the promotion of goodness', and in the essay 'A Comment on Christmas' (1885) he foresaw the survival of the Christian calendar even under the dynasty of science.[140] The festivals of Christmas, Lent, and Whitsuntide would continue to be celebrated in homage to the eternal ideas of 'pureness', 'temptation', and 'spirit'.[141]

It might be remarked that Arnold's speculations on the future of religion are inappropriate in a professed naturalist, but the 'prophetic' aspect of his thought is comparatively unimportant. Much more central to Arnold's naturalism is his contention that the essential moral tenets of Christianity represent necessary and eternal facts of nature, truths of reason, which can be verified and will survive.

Though Arnold was not the first to make such claims as these–Butler and Coleridge before him argued the natural truth of Christianity–they are nevertheless remarkable from someone committed to the principle of 'verifiability'. In *God and the Bible* Arnold described 'experience' in a way which seems almost to place him in the empiricist tradition of such philosophers as Locke, Hume, J. S. Mill, and Bertrand Russell, as 'that source of all our knowledge'.[142] But the crux of the matter is precisely what is meant by, or allowed as, experience. One must wonder, for example, what sort of experience could conceivably verify the proposition that there is an 'enduring power, not ourselves, which makes for righteousness',–which Arnold held to be a certain and admitted reality.[143] Clearly, this is not the 'experience' spoken of by Locke and Hume, nor is it something that can be put under a microscope or examined in a laboratory.

It can of course be objected in Arnold's favour that there are other kinds of experience than the experience provided by the senses, and it is to these kinds of experience that he constantly refers. One has an example of this in *St Paul and Protestantism*, when Arnold considers the message of St Paul, the message of Resurrection. He maintains that Puritanism has misinterpreted St Paul, taking 'Resurrection' wrongly to refer to a rising to new life after death. In fact, Arnold says, the primary meaning of Resurrection in St Paul's mature theology was a rising to new life on this side of the grave; that it was possible for men to 'die' to their old inferior selves, and to 'rise again' to a new self in the superior life of righteousness. St Paul's message, Arnold claims, can be verified by reference to experience. But it is essentially one's own experience of one's own inner moral life; the message is verified by 'science', but the science of 'psychology'.[144]

Here, then, is the root of Arnold's dilemma–a dilemma of which he seems never to have been conscious–and it is expressed succinctly in Robbins's comment, 'The empirical experience of a moral power operative in human life is too subjective to sustain the kind of objectification Arnold wants'.[145] Arnold wrote:

> For, as man advances in his development, he becomes aware of two lives, one permanent and impersonal, the other transient and bound to our contracted self; he becomes aware of two selves, one higher and real, the other inferior and apparent; and that the instinct in him truly to live, the desire for happiness, is served by following the first self and not the second.[146]

If one now imagines any individual retorting to this statement that these perceptions do not form part of *his* awareness, one can appreciate the problem which would face Arnold, for statements of this kind cannot be verified. There is no objective evidence to support them. The very phrasing of the above passage, by presenting the point of view as beyond dispute, inhibits the objection I have envisaged. But the proposition that 'man has two selves etc.' is clearly not a fact of human nature of the same order of demonstrability as the proposition that 'blood circulates round the body through the veins and arteries'. Nevertheless, this is what

Arnold implicitly claims for it when he describes it as 'scientific' or 'verifiable'. Arnold would have us believe it a great natural truth that 'To righteousness belongs happiness'.[147] He speaks of the 'natural victoriousness of virtue, even in this world'; he tells us that 'nations and men, whoever is shipwrecked, is shipwrecked on conduct'; that it is 'moral causes which govern the standing and the falling of States'.[148] Statements of this sort are not scientific. A naturalist of a more rigorous sort, Marx, suggested that the standing and falling of nations had something to do with economic causes.[149]

Arnold's attempt to find for morality a rigorously scientific–but not materialistic–basis was unsuccessful. In the effort to support statements such as those I have quoted above he was driven inevitably to cite literary authorities. Thus the biblical narrative of Israel has, we are told, 'evidential force' for the importance of righteousness, and to lend weight to the idea of 'self-renouncement' Arnold produces an impressive array of witnesses in Horace, Aristotle, Plato, and, of course, Goethe.[150] Goethe was a favourite 'witness'. A stanza from the poem 'Selige Sehnsucht' containing the words 'Stirb und werde'–'Die and become'–is used by Arnold as evidence for St Paul's conception of 'necrosis'–dying to the old self–and resurrection, while a maxim from Riemer's *Mittheilungen* helps to reveal the 'profound natural truth of the idea of [sexual] pureness'.[151] Whatever name one gives to 'evidence' of this sort, it is not naturalism. Goethe, a greater naturalist, would probably have been flattered by the use Arnold made of his name, but he would not have approved of Arnold's method:

> The time will come when men will believe in me, and quote me as authority for this and that I had rather, however, they would assert their right, and open their *own* eyes, so that they might see what lies before them.[152]

Arnold did not find it easy to reconcile the authoritarian principles of classicism and the individualistic ones of naturalism.

Having thus examined what Arnold understood by naturalism, and his attempt to apply its criteria of verification in the statement of his own religious beliefs, it is now possible to consider his idea of 'immortality' and to relate it to Goethe's thinking on the same subject. Arnold made the fullest statement of his position in *Literature and Dogma*. He conceded that continuance after death cannot be proven, pointing to the lack of solidity in the arguments of Plato's *Phaedo*, but he alleges that, in considering 'immortality', hope and anticipation 'may well be permitted to come in'. Arnold does not seek a better argument, he seeks only to provide a 'true basis' for this permissible hope, a basis which will be compatible with the 'experimental process' that he advocates. Abandoning the 'fairy-tales' of popular religion, he begins with 'certainties'.

> And a certainty is the sense of *life*, of being truly *alive*, which accompanies righteousness. If this experimental sense does not rise to the sense of being inextinguishable, that is probably because our experience of righteousness is really

so very small . . . At any rate, we have in our experience this strong sense of *life from righteousness* to start with; capable of being developed, apparently, by progress in righteousness into something immeasurably stronger.[153]

Here Arnold leaves it deliberately vague whether he envisages what Allott has called 'conditional immortality'–i.e., immortality for the few, extinction for the many. One is uncertain whether those individuals whose experience of righteousness is 'small' are included in the scheme of Arnold's immortality, or not. Is immortality only for those with righteousness, or is it for all regardless of their moral achievement? Arnold seems to be arguing only that, if we do not sense the inextinguishability of life, it is because we are not sufficiently advanced in 'righteousness'.

One might not have suspected that the notion of 'conditional immortality' was at all involved in Arnold's account, if one had not already known that the idea appealed to him. It is present, in essence, in his letter to Clough of 29 September 1848:

Farewell, my love, to meet I hope at Oxford: not alas in Heaven: tho: thus much I cannot but think: that our spirits retain their conquests: that from the height they succeed in raising themselves to, they can never fall. Tho: this uti possedetes principle may be compatible with entire loss of individuality and of the power to recognize one another.[154]

Here, immortality is only for those who 'raise themselves'. In 'Rugby Chapel' Arnold addresses his late father:

O strong soul, by what shore
Tarriest thou now? For that force,
Surely, has not been left vain!
Somewhere, surely, afar,
In the sounding labour-house vast
Of being, is practised that strength,
Zealous, beneficent, firm!

The connexion of immortal life with the 'force' manifested in this life, is further developed by Arnold in the sonnet 'Immortality':

No, no! the energy of life may be
Kept on after the grave, but not begun;
And he who flagged not in the earthly strife,

From strength to strength advancing–only he,
His soul well-knit, and all his battles won,
Mounts, and that hardly, to eternal life.[155]

Allott has pointed out that the idea of immortality for the few behind these lines appears to be connected with a remark which Goethe made to Eckermann.[156]

I do not doubt our continued existence, for Nature cannot do without the entelechy. But we are not all immortal in the same way, and to manifest oneself as a great entelechy in the future, one has to be one here.[157]

However, Goethe's statement implies, it seems to me, not that some do achieve immortality whereas others do not, but rather that all achieve it in some measure. What is 'conditional' is not the fact of continued existence, but its quality: to have a 'great' future existence, one must achieve 'greatness' here. And this idea is closer to that expressed by Arnold in his letter to Clough of 1848–our spirits retain the height they have succeeded in raising themselves to.[158],

The profounder connexion of Arnold's idea with Goethe's lies surely elsewhere. On the whole, Goethe was less tentative on the question of immortality than Arnold. 'I have the firm conviction that our spirit is a being of quite indestructible nature'.[159] The proof of immortality, Goethe told von Müller, lay in each man's breast–'it was impossible for a thinking creature to conceive of non-being'–but as soon as one tried to prove this inner perception objectively and philosophically for dogmatic purposes, one became lost in contradictions.[160] Nevertheless, Goethe desired, like Arnold, to suggest a naturalistic basis for the belief in immortality, and this he found in the concept of 'activity':

> My conviction that our existence continues after death stems from the concept of activity; for if I work unceasingly until the end, then nature is bound to allot me a new form of existence, when the present form is no longer able to endure my spirit.[161]

It was with this thought that he comforted his friend Zelter, whose only surviving son died in 1827: 'The entelechic monad has only to persevere in unresting activity', he wrote, 'if this becomes its second nature, then it will not lack occupation in eternity'.[162] Prompted by Wieland's death in 1813, Goethe discussed these ideas again with Falk, whose account of the conversation Arnold read in 1865. (The 'Immortality' sonnet was 'probably written in July or August 1863', see *Poems*, p. 488.) Goethe stressed that 'ideas which are without a firm foundation in the sensible world . . . bring no conviction to me; for that, in what concerns the operations of nature, I want to *know*, not merely to conjecture or believe'. Still, he thought, the hypothesis which he put forward did not contradict observation:

> . . . it is something to have attained to that pitch of refined wit, of tender, elegant thought, which predominated so delightfully in Wieland's soul; it is something to have possessed that industry, that iron persistency and perserverance, in which he surpassed us all . . . *The destruction of such high powers of soul is a thing that never, and under no circumstances, can even come into question.*[163]

The entelechy or monad (the terms are interchangeable) was the life-principle, the principle of activity in any organism, and it was this principle–orthodox theology would probably call it the 'soul'–which continued in existence after the organism itself had passed away.[164] In the conversation with Falk Goethe speculates that the monad may manifest itself in any new form, for example, as a 'star' or 'ant', and in the letter to Zelter quoted above he leaves it to God whether the entelechy would have any remembrance of this life. Clearly, then, Goethe was considerably bolder in his speculations about immortality than Arnold, and the doctrine of metempsychosis, or transmigration of souls, to which Goethe's idea comes close, held little attraction for the English naturalist. Nevertheless, in 'Rugby Chapel' and 'Immortality' the core of Arnold's indebtedness to Goethe lies in his assertion that it was 'activity'–his father's 'force'–rather than personality which survived the body's decay. The fact that Arnold did not make more of these ideas in his account of immortality in *Literature and Dogma* is not surprising. They were imaginative notions suitable to be entertained in poems, but they were not verifiable.

There can be no doubt that Arnold's demand for observation and experiment as the only adequate basis for religious belief was made out of deference to the scientific *Zeitgeist*, and one can be equally sure that Arnold thought of himself as a follower or continuator of Goethean naturalism. In a sense he was quite right, but in this matter there are differences between the two men which are quite as fundamental as any similarities. Arnold's 'nature'–and, as he himself lamented, what pitfalls there are in that word–was emphatically not Goethe's.[165] Even in youth the English poet had only a faint sense of material nature; poems such as 'Resignation', 'The Youth of Nature' and 'The Youth of Man' attest to his interest in 'nature', but in 'nature' primarily as an intellectual conception of universal necessity rather than in the physical reality. His 'nature' was, oddly for a poet, a basically philosophical notion, and the feeling of dissatisfaction with which one reads a poem like 'The Youth of Man' derives surely from Arnold's failure to connect his idea closely with any observed reality. In the religious works of Arnold's later years the conception of nature is, despite his claim that it is scientific, even more decidedly ethical and philosophical.

It is doubtful whether in questions of ethics the criteria of scientific verification can ever provide more than an interesting analogy. Goethe certainly looked upon the moral and religious–*das Sittliche, Religiöse*–as areas quite separate from the study of nature, and to this extent at least Arnold can be said to have misunderstood the naturalism of the German poet.[166] Indeed, Arnold's relationship with the natural sciences was never a satisfactory one. He professed admiration for the interesting discoveries of science, although one cannot avoid the suspicion that this was mainly lip-service, but really he could not see that science had very much to do with culture or education. Nothing illustrates this better than a reference which Arnold made to Goethe in *God and the Bible*:

> If Goethe could say that all which was really worth knowing in all the sciences he had ever studied would go into one small envelope, how much more may one say this of . . . biblical criticism.[167]

Goethe did indeed make such a remark:

> If I were to write down the sum of all that is worth knowing in the various sciences

> with which I have employed myself throughout my life, the manuscript would be so small that you might carry it home in your pocket in the cover of a letter.[168]

One can imagine the kind of statement the manuscript would include that Newton was wrong, light being one and indivisible, or that man's intermaxillary bone (discovered by Goethe) proved that man was a creature akin to animals and not, as theology taught, an altogether separate creature. Goethe's remark was intended as no disparagement of science, and it is useful to remember that he could also say of the earth's motion round the sun that it was the greatest, most sublime discovery ever made, in his eyes more important than the entire Bible![169]

For Goethe, 'nature' was that which could be apprehended by the senses, and hence he was in this respect closer to Wordsworth with his 'rocks and stones and trees' than to Arnold. Only later in the century when Darwin revealed the actual process of natural development as a remorseless struggle for survival could men begin to see nature as she really is, 'red in tooth and claw'. Goethe's scientific studies, in optics, natural history, botany, geology, and morphology, which were so central to his outlook and were really the essence of his naturalism, were totally foreign to Arnold. True, both men 'saw' God in Nature, but it was a different God and a different Nature. Arnold saw God in 'the stream of tendency by which all things seek to fulfil the law of their being'.[170] But impressive as this statement sounds, it is essentially empty, because Arnold was really concerned only with 'man', whose 'law of being' he deemed to be righteousness, and not with 'all things'; it is empty because Arnold's observation of life had not breadth enough to supply it with the content it requires. In short, steadily as Arnold saw life, he did not see it whole. Goethe was filled with an admiring sense of nature's unceasing activity, her overflowing fecundity:

> Why is nature always lovely? everywhere lovely? everywhere meaningful? eloquent . . . Is it not because nature is in eternal movement, eternally creating anew . . .?[171]

It was nature's 'open secret', the mystery and apparent inexplicability of her creative laws, that fascinated Goethe and prompted him to take up the natural sciences; and it was in this creativity that God, he believed, could be discerned. To observe and comprehend nature's laws—the law by which the flower grows from seed through stem and leaf to culminate in bloom—was actually to *see* God in operation, and in so far as these laws were universal and 'necessary', binding, as it were, even on God, then Nature and God were one.[172]

These few remarks on Goethe's 'nature' do no more than scratch the surface of a huge topic, but for my purposes it is enough, since it suggests the great differences between Goethe's view and Arnold's. But to stress these differences does not imply a criticism of Arnold, even if the Englishman does suffer by the comparison, because they were made inevitable by the years which separated the lives of the two men. Arnold could not learn from Goethe's science because it had been largely superseded. That profound sense of awe before the ‘simplest’ natural phenomenon, Arnold could not feel; the once haunted air was empty, mystery conquered, ironically, by the experimental method which both he and Goethe had advocated. From Goethe Arnold had indeed learned that naturalism which was his main intellectual habit, but unlike Goethe he applied it primarily to man’s inner moral life. The visible, external world had in Arnold’s day become the territory of the scientist, and Arnold had neither the talent nor the training to venture there. This fact represents the most significant difference between the two men, and also the main limitation on the immense usefulness which Goethe had for Arnold.