

Modelling the Public Intellectual:

The Case of Matthew Arnold

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By

Tenielle Robyn McLeod

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OR

Dean
College of Graduate Studies and Research
University of Saskatchewan
107 Administration Place
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan S7N 5A2
Canada

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ABSTRACT

My thesis is titled “Modeling the Public Intellectual: The Case of Matthew Arnold.” Matthew Arnold, arguably “the most influential critic of his age” (Trilling 190) has also proven to be an influential model for the public intellectual currently in Canada and elsewhere. The role and work of public intellectuals is complex and who or what they are is the topic of vigorous debate and sometimes extreme disagreement. Because Arnold is so influential and controversial as a literary and social critic, I want to develop and to communicate a better understanding of his achievements and to explore the connection between his work and the role of the public intellectual. To that end, I draw on three of his works, “The Function of Criticism at the Present Time” (1864), *Culture and Anarchy* (1869) and *Literature and Dogma* (1873). In the course of a decade, Arnold asserts and expands the role of criticism in society and the kinds of issues a poet, critic, and inspector of schools feels competent to address while defining his own personal version of “the Victorian Sage” (Holloway). I also want to explore why criticism produced in the nineteenth century, particularly in Arnold’s work, promotes the figure and activities of the public intellectual. Moreover, I will reaffirm, via Arnold’s example, the importance of the relationship between literature and life and show how this connection nourishes the idea of the public intellectual in the English-speaking world.

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Matthew Arnold, arguably “the most influential critic of his age” (Trilling 190) has also proven to be an influential model for the public intellectual currently in Canada and elsewhere, especially in the areas of education and literary studies (Murray 74-5). Moreover, in *Seed-Bed* Robbins concedes that there is a “continuing emphasis on the modern relevance of Arnold’s ideas” (Bloom 74). The role of public intellectuals is complex and who or what they are is the topic of vigorous debate and sometimes extreme disagreement (Posner 2). Because Arnold is so influential and controversial as a literary and social critic, I want to develop and to communicate a better understanding of his achievements and to explore the connection between his work and the role of the public intellectual. To that end, I will draw on three of his works, “The Function of Criticism at the Present Time” (1864), *Culture and Anarchy* (1869), and *Literature and Dogma* (1873). In the course of a decade, Arnold asserts and expands the role of criticism in society and the kinds of issues a poet, critic, and inspector of schools feels competent to address while defining his own personal version of “the Victorian Sage” (Holloway).

I would like to note here the implications of my title, and the resonance of the term “modelling.” The *Oxford English Dictionary Online* defines modelling as “the action of bringing something to a desired or desirable form or condition; the fact of being artistically modelled or shaped so as to appear lifelike; the action or process of eliciting a mode of behaviour by example.” I will argue that Matthew Arnold, in his insistence on the importance of criticism and culture and his connection of literature to life, illustrates some of each definition. Indeed, with language as his tool, he models a function for criticism and culture. This function is carried through his later works as Arnold engages in the process of social and literary criticism while simultaneously eliciting a mode of

behaviour by example. Therefore, I also want to explore why criticism produced in the nineteenth-century, particularly in Arnold's work, promotes the figure and activities of the public intellectual. Moreover, I will reaffirm, via Arnold's example, the importance of the relationship between literature and life and show how this connection nourishes the idea of the public intellectual in the English-speaking world.

In order to understand Arnold's work and his contribution to the role of the public intellectual we must first consider the personal, religious, social, cultural, and political climates in which he matured. Arnold is not a free-standing monolith; indeed, his thought and theories are greatly influenced by many people and movements. One of these very important influences was his father, an educated, dutifully religious, socially concerned Rugby headmaster, who had "an enthusiasm for...poetry and...Tory politics" (Trilling 40). Thomas Arnold had a devotion to history (as it helped confirm his faith) and was charmed by neither dogma nor logic (Trilling 41). When he married and had children, his home was the center of frequent visits and stimulating intellectual conversation. His appointment at Rugby "was the beginning of Arnold's public career...[and] throughout [these] years Thomas Arnold was a leader in the religious and political conflict in England, the conflict between the old and the new" (Trilling 45-46). For Arnold senior, the Church had an important function, the social improvement of man and woman, and he argued that social action, not dogma, would save the Church (Trilling 48). He was a reformer, hating anarchy and revolution, and shared in an ideal of the State whose "essence is power [and whose] aim is human good" (Trilling 53). He desired a unifying faith—an idea that had its benefits as well as its complications—in which the term "Christian" was common to all and he shaped "his" school with the view that

“secular education was a contradiction in terms” (Trilling 64). Despite his “liberal” views on the role of Christianity and the Church of England, Dr. Arnold had quite traditionally conservative views of moral reform and the kind of instruction Rugby should offer. He received the highest respect from his students while maintaining the highest expectations with regard to their moral and intellectual development. Dr. Arnold, however, also had high expectations of himself as teacher: “Intellectually, as well as morally, he felt that the teacher ought himself to be perpetually learning, and so constantly above the level of his scholars” (Stanley 147). His desire was that Rugby would become a place of Christian education but with the practical aim of applying Christian values to the students’ everyday lives. As Stanley suggests, Arnold’s education was “not based upon religion, but was itself *religious*” (110 emphasis his). Rugby school became a sort of microcosm of society, and to many it signified “the spirit of upper middle class England at its best” (Trilling 73).

In 1841 Dr. Arnold senior accepted the Regius Professorship of Modern History at Oxford and he continued to believe, perhaps even more fully than ever, that “in History truth was attainable and that...History would clear the way to faith” (Trilling 74). Redemptive history for the father would become redemptive criticism for the son. Matthew Arnold recognized the limitations of history considered simply as information. Only when criticism is applied to historical information, when it is analyzed, put into context, when it is seen from all sides, can truth and faith be truly attainable. Matthew Arnold’s youth was spent watching his strong, authoritative father function in several different roles and he watched him express strong political, religious, and social criticisms. Dr. Arnold desired for the individual to grow, to strive for perfection and this

sentiment is well captured in a letter from Mr. Price regarding Dr. Arnold's character. "Dr. Arnold's great power as a private tutor resided in this, that he gave such an intense earnestness to life" (Stanley 42). This letter demonstrates the emphasis that Dr. Arnold senior placed on work and on doing that work well, and his power as a public figure partook of a similar moral intensity and sense of possibility and responsibility. With such high expectations and a duty that rests upon ideals come much self-reflection, self-criticism, and, therefore, much doubt. However, that uncertainty does not necessarily equal insincerity or untruth, and Dr. Arnold's desire for and pursuit of perfection is what is most remarkable and prophetic and so evident in the workings of his son.

Matthew Arnold's beliefs and opinions in relation to those of his father are the subject of much debate. However, it is important to note, for my purposes, that Arnold senior clearly influenced Matthew's social and political thought. Although Matthew Arnold strongly disagreed with many of his father's positions, indeed in some ways trying to "cultivate as great a divergence as possible from his father's line" (Trilling 19), we can observe many similarities between these two men and their views. Dr. Arnold had a significant influence on his son's development as a critic, not least in showing how, starting from a disciplinary base—in his case history—one could and should move into a more public role, which brought with it a more expanded role for both faith and intellect. The father also helped seal his son's life-long love for Oxford's "dreaming spires" ("Thyrsis" 19) and lofty aspirations by ensuring he went up to Balliol College with what Arnold senior believed to be the right academic and religious preparation.

Matthew Arnold matured in an age, the Victorian age, of tension and compromise, and of conflicts between science and religion. The Church of England was

challenged by Evangelicalism and Tractarianism and also by science, and Arnold comes on the scene at a time when Anglicanism is less entrenched than it had been. As Fraser states, “The theological basis of Anglicanism in the years before the advent of Tractarianism was extremely weak” (8). What was needed was revitalization and some High Church thinkers and members of the Oxford Movement came to believe that Catholicism, with its aesthetic appeal and a focus on feeling and rituals, could bring about Anglicanism’s revitalization. This attempt to couple poetry with faith, imagination with reason, is an attempt to add sensuality, and therefore appeal, to the Anglican faith. The result was Ritualist controversy—a movement that overlaps with the later Oxford movement—which was a fight between extreme views of traditionalism and liberalism. The Ritualist appealed to the belief in the Sacrifice of Christ at the Eucharist, his real presence in the elements, and to the belief in Christ as an actual sacrifice on the altar. This perception’s stress was on the imagination, on the ability to have faith in Christ’s real presence (Fraser 8-11). Conversely, the Oxford Movement’s appeal was to the intellect, to reason, but later Tractarians realized that in order for the Church to produce moral change, to be successful in its revitalization, there had to be an appeal to imagination or faith in addition to an appeal to the intellect (DeLaura 57-59). The Oxford Movement, then, contained disagreement within itself amongst its members on how to accomplish this revitalization. The two leaders of the original lines of antagonistic thought, the traditional and liberal attitudes, were John Henry Newman and Dr. Thomas Arnold. Newman’s Tracts were “bent upon resisting ‘the assault of Liberalism upon the old orthodoxy of Oxford and England’, a Liberalism centered very strongly in the person of Thomas Arnold” (DeLaura 9). Although both figures believed in the necessity of the

Church for producing moral change, they did not agree on the best method for bringing this about and thus became representative of two powerful factions within the Church of England.

Matthew Arnold was deeply influenced by these two opposing schools of thought. They played a large role in shaping his complicated religious position, and as DeLaura states, “he claimed *both* Oriel traditions as his own, though undoubtedly he was never willing or able to resolve the deep ambiguities of their union in his thinking” (9). In Thomas Arnold, Matthew admired a lack of provinciality, or narrow-mindedness, which he felt most Oriel thinkers possessed (DeLaura 9). For Matthew Arnold, this gave his father an objectivity, which he echoed in his insistence on criticism’s “disinterestedness,” although this term is also indebted to another role model of Arnold’s, Edmund Burke, who will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Two of this thesis. In Newman, Matthew Arnold was fascinated by “that strange Newmanic power of words” (Ward 11) and Arnold’s fascination with Newman’s eloquence and charisma was a lasting one. Moreover, DeLaura discusses Arnold’s 1883 lecture on “Emerson”, found in Arnold’s *Discourses in America*, in which “Newman is presented as a figure of refined aesthetic interest in himself—a man of ‘imagination’, ‘genius’, ‘charm’, and ‘style’, a ‘spiritual apparition’” (DeLaura 15). The dominant and crucial characteristics that Matthew Arnold develops and attributes to criticism and to the critic, or what we would call the public intellectual, can arguably be traced back to both Dr. Thomas Arnold and John Henry Newman.

The political climate of the Victorian age is closely tied to its religious climate. The three main controversies, stemming from religious issues, are identified by Robbins

as: “biblical criticism, Ritualist practice, and the claims of physical science” (5). Arnold is present here where public opinion and commentary engage with these large issues in the form of higher journalism, a phrase used by scholars like John Gross to designate intellectual exchange in the leading periodicals. In *The Rise and Fall of the Man of Letters*, Gross insists that in the 1880s “the quality of the best Victorian journalism was exceptionally high, especially as far as the periodical press [was] concerned” (63). There is both a hunger and a forum for public debate and, as Robbins indicates, “around 1870 the amount of space given to all three [issues] by newspapers and periodicals, and the violence of the partisanship, suggest that there was still excitement for the general reader as well as a feeling of urgency in the devout and the informed” (*Ethical Idealism* 5). The battle of the traditionalists and the liberals took place emphatically in print and, as Collini points out in his Introduction to *Culture and Anarchy*, much of it was in defense of or in response to a “central strain in Victorian political attitudes which insisted on the right of the individual to go about his business of ‘Doing as One Likes’” (Introduction xiv). Although Arnold called himself a Liberal (a term which is infinitely unfixed), as Collini points out Arnold usually qualified this self-characterization. For example he is not a Liberal, but “‘a Liberal tempered by experience’ or, in a phrase he particularly favoured, ‘a Liberal of the future’” (Introduction xxiv). Arnold’s need to qualify his political stance signifies his disdain for smug or narrow pragmatism. He desired social improvement, whereas this individualistic attitude indicated a society with low or no collective aspirations. As Coulling suggests, Arnold’s mission was:

to assist in the ‘intellectual deliverance’ ...and in the acquisition of ideas...;to exalt the ‘serious cheerfulness’ of Sophocles and the nobility of Homer as

examples of lucidity and grandeur for an age of vulgarity, and triviality of mind; to transform the middle class...;to show in the Hellenic ideal the basis for a culture that could solve the political and social problems of modern life; and to find for Christianity an intellectual basis supported by rather than vulnerable to the advances of science. (20)

Arnold uses culture as a means of engaging with the three main politico-religious controversies of the Victorian age, but also as uniting imagination and reason and thereby bringing about social improvement. Coulling depicts Arnold's desire to unite intellect with faith, a desire to inspire the middle class to seek understanding and inspiration in literature, and a desire to bring about positive social change by making a space for both Christianity and science. Arnold does, however, begin with the idea of culture for, as Arnold says in a prescient letter to Clough in 1848, critics "must begin with an Idea of the world in order not to be prevailed over by the world's multitudinousness" (Lang 128). In an age where higher journalism flourishes, and at a time when a nourishing connection between literature and life is needed, Arnold is able to unite his vocation as poet with his sense of social duty. His writings then, become increasingly political, controversial, and critical in order to fulfill his duty to society in its goal of a "growing and becoming" (C&A 62) in the "pursuit of perfection" (C&A 89).

Although appealing to the age and the climate in which Matthew Arnold lived cannot yield a complete and accurate understanding of him, both time and clime help account for his social criticism. Arnold *is* a living contradiction in an age of accomplishment and vulnerability. He is a political conservative, an intellectual and a religious aspirant. Even in poetry, where Arnold begins, he is the embodiment of

contradiction, for when his friends and family discovered that he wrote poetry, they “were puzzled that a book [*The Strayed Reveller*] so gaily titled and by so gay a young man should be so sad” (Trilling 15). But as most critics note, he gave up poetry, the realm of imagination and free play for cultural analysis. It is important to note briefly Arnold’s attraction to Schiller’s aesthetic of free play and that Arnold redeploys it as critical disinterestedness in which there is an interplay of the permissive and prescriptive so as to separate wheat from chaff in order to create newly unified conditions for the exercise of future poetic freedom, which I will discuss in further detail later in this thesis. For Arnold the age was unpoetical “not because it [was] ugly but because it [was] without unity” (Trilling 24). Indeed, in a letter to Clough Arnold complains about “how deeply *unpoetical* the age & all one’s surroundings are. Not unprofound, not ungrand, not unmoving:--but *unpoetical*” (Lang 131). The Victorian age was one in which political and religious issues “deeply, fiercely, and consistently...divided Victorian society” (C&A xviii) and the creative power could not adequately, or alone, deal with these issues. Moreover, imagination had become dangerous for Arnold as poetic practice legitimized despair and hurt faith. For example, in “Dover Beach” he indicates that poetry brings us to a debilitating consciousness of difficulties and doubts in one’s faith. Indeed, his speaker’s “Sea of Faith” (21) is disappearing as he hears only

Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar
Retreating, to the breath
Of the night- wind, down the vast edges drear
And naked shingles of the world...

(25-28)

Instead of a reasonable explanation for God's silence, for example that God's silence *is* the answer, the imagination encourages a dramatic and emotional response to an elusive or even unflattering divine presence. As faith's "roar" quickly becomes a barely audible "breath" we sense the poet's bleak response. Arnold's contemplation of nature in this famous poem leads him inexorably from calm to agitation and bleak despair, a desperate appeal to romantic love as solace, and then to the apparently complete extinction of positive forces in the image of the night-battle. The openness of imagination leads Arnold into an unconsoling view of life in which atheism and suicide seem like valid options, most notably perhaps in "Empedocles on Etna" which was omitted from his 1853 edition of poems because "the disinterested objectivity [had] disappeared" (Preface 1). Although he deplored "too great a commitment to the critical intellect" (Trilling 24) when writing poetry, without the benefit of criticism's bounty imagination preys on itself. In his analysis of the exclusion of "Empedocles on Etna" in the Preface to his 1853 collection of poems, Arnold's fear of the imagination is apparent. The poem signifies a time in the writer's life in which "the dialogue of the mind with itself has commenced" (Preface 1). This produces an acutely painful, challenging situation for the poet and the reader "in which the suffering finds no vent in action...in which there is everything to be endured and nothing to be done" (Preface 3). The imagination that Arnold fears here is that which is no longer opposed to allegory. For Arnold, when poetry becomes true by what it refers to philosophically, theologically, socially or culturally, it loses its authentic function and in turn becomes less true or real. Poetry is important because it can be an example of the imagination at its best and it provides the optimistic outlook on life that Arnold is looking for. As Arnold later explains in "The Study of Poetry" (1888), "in

poetry, where it is worthy of its high destinies, our race, as time goes on, will find an ever surer and surer stay...Poetry attaches its emotion to the idea; the idea is the fact” (*Essays in Criticism* 2, 1-2). Despite the stress Arnold places on the imagination, as the critic in whom “the dialogue of the mind with itself has commenced” (Preface 1), Arnold is compelled to leave poetry because he has lost this sublime sense of the imagination thereby rendering his poetry “poetically faulty” (Preface 3). Therefore, around 1857 when Arnold’s Muse had disappeared (Trilling 158) he renounces imagination and turns to criticism as a justification of his real fear of his own imagination.

This turn to criticism is also a turn away from the anti-intellectualism of Victorian society and the realization that “the present age *must* be coped with” (Trilling 31). There is a sense of intellectual deficiency in Victorian society (note Arnold’s use of terms such as ‘Philistine’ which will be discussed in detail in Chapter 2 and Arnold’s frustrations with this deficiency). His frustration is also personal and the turn to criticism is a necessity, a drama, a struggle for his soul. There is a sense that he has to make this work in terms of social improvement as well as personal contentment. In order for criticism to work for the public as well as the private good, it must be understood and practiced as serious, historically necessary, and intelligible in its relationship to creativity. Therefore Arnold aligns himself with people like Goethe, “Europe’s sagest head” (“Memorial Verses” 148), who recognize the shift into prose as a process, not an abandonment so much as a re-empowering of poetry. Trilling points to Goethe who said that “what is really deeply and fundamentally effective—what is truly educative and inspiring, is what remains of the poet when he is translated into prose” (Trilling 31). Certainly I am not implying that what Arnold does as a critic can appropriately or only be seen as

“translation” rather I would argue that Goethe is suggesting that it is inspiring to see what is left of the poet and his or her dedication to truth and beauty, when he or she works in prose. That is, if Arnold believed that poetry should illuminate the human condition by offering a satisfying sense of reality and reconciling human beings with the universe (“Maurice de Guérin” 111) one might ask if these aspirations are apparent in his prose as well. Although Arnold’s turn to criticism is, in part, a response to the intellectual deficiency in Victorian society he also recognized that as a poet he was too apt to be overcome by the world’s multitudinousness. That is, Arnold attributed Victorian intellectual deficiency to disunity, which was because poets (in this instance he is speaking particularly of Keats and Browning) do not “understand that they must begin with an Idea of the world in order not to be prevailed over by the world’s multitudinousness: or if they cannot get that, at least with isolated ideas: & all other things shall (perhaps) be added unto them” (*Letters* 129). However, Arnold’s criticism maintains and advances poetry’s greatest attribute, the grand style, which adds to one’s thoughts and feelings, and elevates one’s mind. And what is connected to the idea of the grand style which “is the expression of the nobility of the poet’s character” (*Letters* 133), is the idea of conduct, which easily moves to the idea of the figure, the critic, the public intellectual.

Arnold supports criticism when it is authoritative and socially influential. It is important to note that higher journalism at this time is very influential with the middle class and is meeting a need that religion either seems unable to meet or prevents people from meeting. Faith was based on fact, and in an age of increased science and intellect, fact failed taking faith with it. In the opening of “The Study of Poetry” Arnold says that

“Our religion has materialised itself in the fact, in the supposed fact; it has attached its emotion to the fact, and now the fact is failing it” (*Essays in Criticism* 2, 1-2). After he turns away from poetry, Arnold creates a path for himself and in order to be authoritative, because authority brings responsibility, he looks for role models in addition to his father and finds one in Edmund Burke. In doing so, he challenges his rearing which was “in the tradition of men who felt themselves mortal vessels of truth” (Trilling 18). Despite the challenge to his father’s tradition, Arnold shares the same sense of duty to society as his father and develops throughout his works what he calls culture, and creates for himself a public to which he can communicate the best ideas and promote the pursuit of perfection.

Arnold, as a man who is influenced by those who came before him and yet maintains a distinctive individuality, appeals to the reader, to society, to his public:

But for us,—who believe in right reason, in the duty and possibility of extricating and elevating our best self, in the progress of humanity towards perfection,—for us the framework of society, that theatre on which this august drama has to unroll itself, is sacred; and whoever administers it, and however we may seek to remove them from their tenure of administration, yet, while they administer, we steadily and with undivided heart support them in repressing anarchy and disorder; because without order there can be no society, and without society there can be no human perfection. (*C&A* 191)

Arnold is not only a part of the “us” that is involved here; he is also a part of the group that “administers” the “right reason” out of a sense of “duty.” The tension here is between cultural ambition and political conservatism. Society unfolds towards perfection within the containing frames of properly constituted political authority and the classical

(“august”) ordering of dramatic action. Arnold expands the realm of the “sacred” to include social order as a pre-requisite for the renewal of Christian faith through culture to which he aspires. Reforming zeal is constrained by civic duty and Arnold calls for support in his purpose for both public and private reasons, and, therefore, his stress on the importance of criticism and culture leads to the figure of the public intellectual.

Chapter One: Prescribing Criticism

“The Function of Criticism at the Present Time,” a lecture delivered in Oxford in October 1864, published in the *National Review* later the same year and then reprinted in *Essays in Criticism* (1865), offers a good avenue into Arnold’s thinking. In this long and important essay we find Arnold’s prescription for what criticism is and ought to do in mid-Victorian Britain. At the time that “The Function of Criticism” was published Arnold still held the Professorship of Poetry at Oxford. He was exercising the authority of critical judgement in both his academic position at Oxford and in his writing, as is seen in *The National Review* (November 1864), the periodical in which “The Function of Criticism” first appeared. And we, a specifically university educated public, must note here that Arnold insists on an informed type of criticism. In the opening of “The Function of Criticism” he equates the critic and the man of letters, and insists that they are not merely uninformed admirers, but evince much more than a simple affection for the topic or the author; they possess both admiration and expertise. Moreover, we must consider Arnold’s intended audience, which becomes clearer when we consider the linguistic cosmopolitanism of the essay, with citations in French and German as well as Virgil’s Latin, and when we note the allusions that go beyond disciplinary parochialism and the narrowly literary. He speaks primarily to fellow intellectuals and a cultivated public. We now have a sense of the authority Arnold wants to give to the critic.

However, with authority comes responsibility and Arnold was exercising the authority of critical judgement, of criticism, of culture, because of his sense of public responsibility in his academic position as well as his literary one. He was concerned about society’s growing provinciality and was interested in the institutions that could

combat it. In the “Literary Influence of Academies,” an essay which first appeared in the *Cornhill Magazine* in August 1866, he argues that although the English did have “energy and honesty” (“Literary Influence” 49) they did not have “an open and clear mind, not a quick and flexible intelligence” (“Literary Influence” 49). And as Coulling suggests “the faults from which [English] literature suffered were therefore precisely those that are prevented by an intellectual center and authority such as academies afford” (140).

Although Arnold’s dislike of provinciality is apparent in the “Literary Influence of Academies,” his attack on Philistinism and the characteristics that accompany this title are explored more fully in “The Function of Criticism at the Present Time.”

In order to elucidate criticism and to explain its importance I will discuss functions such as seeing the object “as in itself it really is” (“Function” 29), creating the “intellectual situation of which the creative power can profitably avail itself” (29) so that “the best ideas prevail (29), exercising “the free play of the mind” (“Function” 35), knowing “the best that is thought and known in the world” (“Function” 37), evincing and promoting “disinterestedness” (37), and engaging with “ever fresh knowledge” (“Function” 49). These cognitive and educative functions can be captured in three broader claims: for the importance of critical perception, for the necessity of criticism as a historically useful activity enabling the next phase of human development, and for the exemplary and transformative force of critical judgement in improving ethical and political as well as cultural standards. The claims advanced by “The Function of Criticism at the Present Time,” foreshadow much of what follows in a more fully elaborated, socially situated, and theologically connected form in *Culture and Anarchy* and *Literature and Dogma*.

Arnold stresses the importance not only of criticism in general, but also of detailed critical perception. Criticism's chief objective is truth or seeing the object "as in itself it really is" ("Function" 29), a formula which is itself rhetorical in its double assurance of accuracy and truth, and it is here that critical power and critical perception are so important. As Arnold points out, the creative power may employ "appointed elements" (29) or avail itself of the "best ideas" ("Function" 28), but it does not have them under its control. Rather, the creative power utilizes ideas "within the control of the critical power" ("Function" 29). Moreover, "it is the business of the critical power...to see the object as in itself it really is" (29). For Arnold truth itself is relative; it is something that escapes us almost as soon as it has been "perceived." It is only a critical power that allows one to *see* the object, and to arrive at a critical perception of the object "as in itself it really is" (29). Only the critical power creates "an intellectual situation of which the creative power can profitably avail itself" (29) and this interdependency between the creative and the critical produces Arnold's version of culture.

The move Arnold makes is toward a regeneration of poetry and literature, and he argues that exercising the creative power without the critical power produces literary creations that are short-lived. Arnold explains the imperfections of literature that were produced by the Romantics or those who "did not know enough" ("Function" 30).

It has long seemed to me that the burst of creative activity in our literature, through the first quarter of this century, had about it in fact something premature; and that from this cause its productions are doomed, most of them, in spite of the sanguine hopes which accompanied and do still accompany them, to prove hardly more lasting than the productions of far less splendid epochs. And this

prematureness comes from its having proceeded without having its proper data, without sufficient materials to work with. (30-31)

Arnold looks forward here to Harold Bloom's Oedipal reading of the Romantics by the Victorians in *The Anxiety of Influence*. Bloom argues that the Romantics (and modern poets for that matter) are doomed to create impoverished and diminished poetic works that are inevitably secondary to the works of their strong precursors, starting with Milton. They are aware of this influence and in turn feel the anxiety of trying to escape their "fathers'" influence by creative patricide. Moreover, there appears to be a discreet appeal to procreation in Arnold's prose and to the unproductive overeagerness of premature ejaculation, an appeal to heterosexual masculinity, the fear of sexual inferiority, and the embarrassment one might feel in producing "premature productions" that are neither "lasting" nor "splendid." Writers that are not nourished by a critical effort—Arnold presumes that the public he is writing to is exclusively male, although the double entendres might not be lost on a female audience either—are rendered impotent (or at least unfulfilling) due to this lack of knowledge, and they cannot create "grand works" unless they *know* more. Although he does not deny the genius of Byron (a strong sexual signifier) he does use Byron as an example of the poet whose work is not "worth much" ("Function" 29), who is neither great nor modern for his lack of "critical effort behind [his genius]" (29). Instead, Arnold projects himself into Goethe and praises the German poet's work which "was nourished by great critical effort" (29) and was therefore enduring and the "best." The stress here, then, is not only on knowing more, but on knowing more subjects "as they really are" (29), which one can only do, Arnold argues, when "a great critical effort" (29) underpins genius and creativity. There is more than an

implied balance of the creative and the critical and its gradual move to societal improvement, and it is important to note Arnold's aesthetic ideology and that it is mapped onto his poetic engagement with Wordsworth, Byron and Goethe. His insistence on Goethe's critical effort, on code, order, and discipline nourished by the creativity of Wordsworth and Byron—on a balance of the creative and the critical—is important to Arnold as both criticism and creativity are properties not only of a good poem, but also of a good society.

Following Arnold's stress on the importance of critical perception in the personal sphere, Arnold then emphasizes the importance of critical perception by applying it to the social and more political spheres. Critical perception is particularly important to a functioning social and political sphere as it is the source of harmony between the realm of ideas and the realm of practice. To demonstrate these terms' interdependency, before he reasserts the necessity of critical perception, he illuminates and complicates this relationship and in turn shows the "anarchy" of extremes. In discussing the French Revolution and its "grand error" ("Function" 33) he points his finger at its reckless, premature movement towards the practical. He believes in the importance of ideas in and of themselves, apart from their practical use, aims and application. For example he says,

the French Revolution, and its movement of ideas, by quitting the intellectual sphere and rushing furiously into the political sphere, ran, indeed, a prodigious and memorable course, but produced no such intellectual fruit as the movement of ideas of the Renaissance, and created, in opposition to itself, what I may call an *epoch of concentration*. (33 emphasis his)

Arnold draws a distinction between the French Revolution, with its “political, practical character” (“Function” 31) and its failed harvest of literary works, and “the great productive time of Greece or...the Renaissance...[which were] disinterestedly intellectual and spiritual movements; movements in which the human spirit looked for its satisfaction in itself and in the increased play of its own activity” (31) and which produced the abundance of works that the period of the French Revolution lacked. As Findlay aptly indicates, for the French Revolution “[t]he ‘movement of ideas’ becomes too invasive and transgressive, and points to the dependence of ideas for success upon an appropriate sphere of operation. Otherwise, the turn outward of ideas from themselves creates resistance and the conditions of self-defeat” (6). In other words, ideas may be mobile yet restricted and incomplete. Arnold makes an implication concerning the impracticability and sterility of the uncultivated crop and the dangers of excessive reason paired with moderate ideas, which produces only “blind love [of practicality] and...blind hatred [of ideas]” (“Function” 31). Here we can note the severity of the language and the irony of enlightenment reason producing blind allegiances and aversions. Indeed, the result of excessive practicality or reason is the inability to “see” or to see the object as in itself it really is.

Arnold’s example of excessive practicality is the Englishman. He says that the Englishman

is like the Lord Auckland of Burke’s day, who, in a memorandum on the French Revolution, talks of ‘certain miscreants assuming the name of philosophers, who have presumed themselves capable of establishing a new system of society’. The Englishman has been called a political animal, and he values what is political and

practical so much that ideas easily become objects of dislike in his eyes, and thinkers ‘miscreants’, because ideas and thinkers have rashly meddled with politics and practice. (“Function” 35)

Arnold is careful to point out that this hatred is unreasonable hatred of ideas in general not just the ideas which meddle with practice, but also those that are connected to “the whole life of intelligence” (35). This sardonic rebuttal of *bluff* anti-intellectualism follows a well-rounded commendation of his role model, Edmund Burke, whose writing, during the French Revolution’s “grand error” (“Function” 33), Arnold distinguished as having a “philosophical truth” (“Function” 34). By contrasting Burke’s authoritative philosophical truth with the Englishman’s scorn of those “miscreants” who assume the name “philosopher,” Arnold discredits the Englishman and reveals another side to his “animal” behaviours. The ultra-pragmatic Englishman lacks precisely the crucial critical perception to see the good in ideas and is much too eager to dismiss foreign ideas and their English supporters as rash and impractical.

Although Arnold insists on the importance of ideas, independent from party politics, he reins them in so as to avoid excess. Arnold’s conservatism shows through when he states that although “[i]deas cannot be too much prized in and for themselves” (“Function” 32) there is a sort of “mania [in] giving an immediate political and practical application to [them]” (32). The mania that Arnold speaks of here, the excess of ideas, has an Empedoclean quality to it. That is, ideas should not be too much prized in and for themselves because this leads to “the dialogue of the mind with itself” (Preface 1) and can only be seen as an unproductive Empedoclean inwardness. There needs to be, then, a balance between ideas and practice and this balance is achieved by the critical perception.

This perception can be attained by insisting on a habitual “return upon [the self]” (“Function” 35). For example, Arnold discusses Burke’s greatness in that “he brings thought to bear upon politics; he saturates politics with thought” (“Function” 34). What is even more impressive, for Arnold, is Burke’s ability not only to maintain this critical perception and his independence from “the world of catchwords and party habits” (34), but still to “be irresistibly carried...by the current of thought to the opposite side of the question” (“Function” 35) even “when one side of a question has long had [his] earnest support and [engaged feelings]” (35). Burke, according to Arnold, has this critical perception which is so important in creating the intellectual situation of which the creative power can profitably avail itself so that the best ideas prevail. Arnold argues for the necessity of criticism or the critical perception, which helps to avoid the extremes of ideas, reason or “anarchy.” Moreover he insists on a responsible relationship between reason and ideas, the creative and the critical, thus insisting on the importance of the critical perception.

Arnold’s next broad claim argues for the necessity of criticism as a historically useful activity in preparing for the next phase of human development. This claim is fully realized by “[t]he notion of the free play of the mind” (35) and knowing “the best that is known and thought in the world” (“Function” 36). Arnold makes the move from arguing for a more practical use of criticism, that is, identifying its function, to reminding the reader that we must avoid extremes. As he optimistically notes, “epochs of concentration cannot well endure for ever; epochs of expansion, in the due course of things, follow them” (36). Arnold persuades his reader by both conceding society’s desire for material progress and by challenging society to move past it:

Then, too, in spite of all that is said about the absorbing and brutalising influence of our passionate material progress, it seems to me indisputable that this progress is likely, though not certain, to lead in the end to an apparition, of intellectual life; and that man, after he has made himself perfectly comfortable and has now to determine what to do with himself next, may begin to remember that he has a mind, and that the mind may be made the source of great pleasure. (36)

Arnold acknowledges a general idea of progress, only to refute it. Progress here is only material progress, and there is the inference of a painful absence of spiritual and intellectual progress of which Arnold is only too aware. This passage forms a firm ground for Arnold's argument towards progress in *Culture and Anarchy*, only his is "the progress of humanity towards perfection" (C&A 181). He challenges the reader not only to use one's mind, but to use it and to find great pleasure. In this challenge we see Arnold's deep concerned commitment to the values of his own class and his distaste for society's practicality, provinciality and unhealthy preoccupation with the pursuit of material progress.

He makes an appeal to creativity here, which is necessarily preceded by an appeal to criticism as criticism is "the instrument for [the] discovery and evaluation" of ideas (Trilling 192), in order to promote "curiosity" ("Function" 35). Curiosity here, is a love of a free play—with its prescriptive as well as permissive duty and its appeal to pleasure—of the mind on all things, all subjects (35) and will, Arnold hopes, lead to an epoch of expansion of thought and of ideas. It is impossible here not to recall that in the Preface of 1853 Arnold aptly quotes Schiller who says that "All art...is dedicated to Joy, and there is no higher and serious problem, than how to make men happy. The right art is

that alone, which creates the highest enjoyment” (Preface 2). In Arnold’s appeal to creativity there is that tension, so common in his writing, between freedom and the conservative intellectual civics of an order of ideas. Despite putting the critical power at lower rank than the creative (“Function” 28), Arnold insists that “grand works of literary genius” (28) can only be inspired “by a certain order of ideas” (28). Indeed there are ideas, and there is order, and Arnold feels that this tension is necessary to his idea of culture. By exercising a Schillerian free play of the mind, Arnold redefines the object of criticism as seeking to “know the best that is known and thought in the world” (“Function” 36), and to know this with the aim of creating “a current of true and fresh ideas” (“Function” 37). Here, Arnold insists that criticism must create this abundance of “true and fresh ideas” (37) with an “inflexible honesty” (37) and, more importantly, it must do so while “leav[ing] alone all questions of practical consequences and applications” (37). He insists on this point because a preoccupation with practical consequences stifles criticism. By remaining, for a time, in the purely intellectual sphere, criticism avoids a certain self-centredness. That is, it is free of specific interests, and this “disinterestedness,” which is developed more fully in the next section, becomes the mark of the critic as well as the poet, and therefore also of the healthy society. Criticism, then, creates the atmosphere for creativity, for an abundance of new ideas, and prepares humanity for its next phase of development.

Arnold’s final claim argues for the exemplary and transformative force of critical judgement in improving standards (ethical and political as well as cultural). Here, Arnold evinces and promotes “disinterestedness” (37) and encourages an engagement with “every fresh knowledge” (“Function” 49). In order to claim criticism, or the critic, as that

exemplary and transformative force, we must first examine Arnold's definition of criticism, or the role of the critic. Arnold says that criticism should be disinterested and that a proper critic is one who is "aloof from what is called 'the practical view of things'" ("Function" 37). As Collini points out, the word "disinterested" has suffered from its share of misunderstanding (*Arnold* 56). Perhaps, as Collini explains, Arnold's treatment of disinterestedness is one that collaborates in its own misinterpretation.

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 certain to be attached to them, quite insufficiently, but which criticism has really nothing to do with. ("Function" 37)

The style and substance of this passage are "disinterested" as we can note the interplay of activity and inactivity, engagement and detachment, fatalism and aspiration, the certain and the heavily qualified. Collini rightly asserts that disinterested does not mean uninterested; rather, it means a belief in the work of criticism as a process. For example, Arnold is quick to make a point about the lack of (in England) a journal like the *Revue des Deux Mondes* which has "for its main function to understand and utter the best that is known and thought in the world" ("Function" 37). Arnold is also careful to show that he reads a wide range of English newspapers and periodicals such as the *Edinburgh Review*, the *Quarterly Review*, the *British Quarterly Review*, and the *Times* in order to

demonstrate that he is journalistically plugged in, as any public intellectual needs to be. The point is to remain unattached to, not uninterested in a specific social or political climate or issue. The purpose for Arnold, however, is to also create a climate of creativity and this cannot be accomplished if there “is any attempt to subordinate criticism to some other purpose” (*Arnold* 56). As Findlay states, “Arnold specifies several grounds of critical disinterestedness: the aesthetic idealism of Kant and Schiller (and their converts to ‘free play’); the objective journalism of the *Revue des Deux Mondes*; the East Indian ‘virtue of detachment’ ...; and the aesthetic quietism of Obermann....” (9). Here, the attack against provincialism is linked to a literary public sphere and figures such as Sainte-Beuve as public intellectual whose influence “was mainly in the field of literary criticism, a matter of ‘method’...His tact, his humanistic standard, the objectivity and *curiosité*...above all, the balance struck with unerring precision—these were what Arnold admired and tried to emulate” (Robbins *Arnoldian* 56, emphasis his). For Arnold, criticism must maintain its independence from partisan interests while finding itself a public.

To prepare the reader to accept criticism’s disinterestedness and in order to establish authority for this often confusing term, Arnold evokes Burke as a figure who is able to practice disinterestedness before partisanship, or to make a “return upon himself” (“Function” 35). Arnold quotes the conclusion to Burke’s “Thoughts on French Affairs” and then comments as follows:

That return of Burke upon himself has always seemed to me one of the finest things in English literature, or indeed in any literature. That is what I call living by ideas: when one side of a question has long had your earnest support, when all

your feelings are engaged, when you hear all around you no language but one, when your party talks this language like a steam-engine and can imagine no other, —still to be able to think, still to be irresistibly carried, if so it be, by the current of thought to the opposite side of the question, and like Balaam, to be unable to speak anything but what the Lord has put in your mouth. I know nothing more striking, and I must add that I know nothing more un-English. (“Function” 35)

The duty of criticism—which is also the duty of the critic—is to know the best “irrespective of practice, politics, and everything of the kind” (“Function” 36). Arnold pinpoints this disinterestedness as an exemplary kind of “instinct” which he assigns to Balaam, an “unlikely but compelling visionary” (Findlay 8). Balaam, like Burke, remained committed to an inward state (which in his case allowed him to discern the words of the Holy Spirit) or the world of ideas, free from outward concerns and “the world of catchwords and party habits” (“Function” 34). Disinterestedness is also described by Robbins as “intellectual flexibility...[which is] the virtue of the true critic...[and which avoids] total commitment of a rigid or fanatical kind” (*Arnoldian* 75). This commitment, this return upon oneself, this disinterestedness, enables both Burke and Balaam to assume an objectivity which Arnold greatly admires and which establishes them as responsible critics of society.

It is only when criticism is disinterested, independent from interests of any party or group, that true and fresh ideas can be created. He begins this stage of his argument by addressing the charge of criticism’s “ill” accomplishment (“Function” 38) and explains the reasons why this is the case.

It is because criticism has so little kept in the pure intellectual sphere, has so little detached itself from practice, has been so directly polemical and controversial, that it has so ill accomplished, in this country, its best spiritual work; which is to keep man from a self-satisfaction which is retarding and vulgarizing, to lead him towards perfection, by making his mind dwell upon what is excellent in itself and the absolute fitness of things. (38)

For Arnold, this is not criticism in the true sense. It has a desired practical goal, and it leads to dangerous self-satisfaction, which inspires neither growth nor transformation. There is a gross misconception of an achieved, absolute perfection, which Arnold would argue does exist, but cannot and should not be reached. He criticises Adderley and Roebuck who express this self-satisfaction and the uncritical tone in which they praise the old Anglo-Saxon race (“Function” 38). Contrary to Burke, who returned upon himself in order to recognize the danger of too close an affiliation with a certain group or claim, Adderley and Roebuck not only express their liking for a specific action, but they extend this sentiment and claim the superiority of their race over all others. As Collini states, what Arnold wanted was “to try to open up English consciousness to European ideas and perspectives, and to provoke his readers into an uneasy awareness of the limitations of their established mental habits” (*Arnold* 9). What Adderley and Roebuck are essentially doing is exaggerating, and Arnold has little patience with this. Any exaggeration regarding one’s superiority automatically leads to a type of complacency and inhibits a move towards any type of exemplary transformation; and certainly England’s middle-class was exerting a self-confidence that Arnold detested. As Collini so aptly puts it, Arnold’s argument “was not a matter of forcing the reader to abandon

one position in favour of another, but of putting him in the way of the experience which, when reflected upon, would bring home to him the defects of the frame of mind that had found expression in the erroneous ‘position’ in the first place” (*Arnold* 9).

Arnold goes from discussing what criticism should not do, to what it ought to do. If critical judgement, or criticism, is going to be an exemplary and transformative force in improving ethical, political, as well as cultural standards then there must be some persuasive element to it. He is not talking about deception, where one gives a grand name to something that is not a grand thing. Arnold is, however, setting up his criticism against the criticism that repeatedly offends against openness and accuracy. He explains this persuasive element as an attitude—although he develops it further in *Culture and Anarchy* as the “grand style”—and “insist[s] on the attitude which criticism should adopt towards things in general” (“Function” 49). One of the things, or attitudes that criticism should adopt, according to Arnold, is of course “the idea of a disinterested endeavour to propagate the best that is known and thought in the world, and thus to establish a current of true and fresh ideas” (49). What criticism must do then, is to engage with fresh knowledge. One source of such knowledge is foreign thought. Arnold stresses this point, of criticism’s duty to dwell on foreign thought, because he recognizes, or at least claims to, that England is not the rest of the world (49) and that not all that is the best originates in England. Therefore, the critic must become acquainted with what is considered foreign. This leads Arnold to his final claim, that

[k]nowledge, and ever fresh knowledge, must be the critic’s great concern for himself. And it is by communicating fresh knowledge, and letting his own judgement pass along with it, —but insensibly, and in the second place, not the

first, as a sort of companion and clue, not as an abstract law-giver, —that the critic will generally do most good to his readers. (49)

This passage is notable for its optimistic and hopeful tone, and we feel his shift from criticism's duty to the critic's duty. Arnold is not only creating a place for criticism, but he is writing what Robbins calls "a manifesto of method and principle [and how this is an] important function of the critic" (*Ethical Idealism* 160). The reader also senses a sort of prophet-like quality ascribed to the critic and his or her duty, which is a response to a society (and to Matthew Arnold) who is in need of "an intellectual deliverance from spiritual distress" (Carroll 38) and which prepares us for what comes in *Culture and Anarchy* and *Literature and Dogma*. There is also a desire to do good, and in some ways Arnold is creating a public to receive his work, which he feels may act as the exemplary and transformative force that will save society and himself.

Arnold's understanding of the notion of criticism in "The Function of Criticism" is also already connected to biblical criticism and will never shake off that influence. Indeed his criticism has an authority which gauges the "correctness" or "incorrectness" of all other literary works, religious or otherwise. He says, "It is really the strongest possible proof of the low ebb at which, in England, the critical spirit is, that while the critical hit in the religious literature of Germany is Dr. Strauss's book, in that of France M. Renan's book, the book of Bishop Colenso is the critical hit in the religious literature of England" ("Function" 45). Arnold makes reference to the Colenso controversy (1862) in which he responds to Colenso's published biblical inquiries. "The Bishop and the Philosopher" appeared in the January issue of *Macmillan's Magazine*, and, as Coulling suggests, it is here Arnold first claims "for literary criticism a wider province and a

greater authority than he had previously claimed” (106). And as Arnold attempts to carve out a space for literary criticism, as he is repeatedly drawn into the Colenso controversy, and as it finds its way into “The Function of Criticism,” it is beginning to be clear that the connection between Arnold’s criticism and biblical criticism will be a lasting one. I would argue that each of Arnold’s claims made here contribute to Arnold’s modelling of the public intellectual. The “functions” of criticism become the functions of the critic as these functions take on the quality of characteristics and duties. That is to say, Arnold discusses what criticism should be and what criticism should do, but in doing so he creates a role for himself as critic, which foreshadows much of what is to come in both *Culture and Anarchy* and *Literature and Dogma*. Moreover, Arnold’s function of criticism becomes a model for the function of the critic as a figure embodying a harmony of reason and imagination and promoting both. What evolves in “The Function of Criticism at the Present Time” is a move from acquiring fresh knowledge or the importance of fresh knowledge itself to *communicating* fresh knowledge. Towards the end of the essay there is more stress on the social role of criticism and, as DeLaura indicates, “[b]y the time of *Culture and Anarchy* the ‘social’ motive had changed the entire ethical complexion of Arnold’s ideal” (228). We will explore these implications and their influence on Arnold’s modelling of the critic or what we would call the public intellectual.

Chapter Two: Culture's Social Mission

Sidney Coulling states that *Culture and Anarchy* “is properly read not as a definitive essay in political and social criticism but as a part of a continuing controversy in which Arnold engaged for well over a decade” (210). The controversy began in 1867 when Frederic Harrison, “a determined positivist” (Coulling 182) made a direct challenge to Arnold’s idea of culture. In the *Fortnightly Review* Harrison replied very disapprovingly to Robert Lowe’s thesis that praised the man of culture and in doing so Harrison was directly challenging the thesis of “The Function of Criticism at the Present Time,” in which “the concept of culture had been adumbrated” (Coulling 183). Harrison countered Arnold’s culture on its most important points. That is, Harrison essentially denied culture’s role as the proliferator of “the best that is known and thought in the world” (*C&A* 36) he equated Arnold’s disinterestedness with indecision, and he ridiculed Arnold’s “free play of the mind” (*C&A* 35) by favouring and insisting upon practical solutions to practical problems (Coulling 183).

Arnold, of course, found Harrison and his claims hugely objectionable, and his lecture delivered at Oxford on June 7, 1867, responded to Harrison’s arguments. This lecture was in part the essay on “Culture and Its Enemies” which was eventually published in *The Cornhill Magazine* and which was the first in a series of essays that were to make up *Culture and Anarchy*. Arnold’s essay sparked heated debate in several periodicals with responses ranging from angry name-calling to enthusiastic support. Some of Arnold’s biggest antagonists were publications like the *Illustrated Times*, the

Nonconformist, and the *Mercury*, which were populist and anti-Anglican in their stances, and two of his few supporters were the *Globe and Traveller* and the intellectually powerful and progressive *Westminster Review*. The articles, whether enthusiastic endorsements, intelligent responses, or open protestations, were all useful to Arnold's next essay, which Coulling says (and Arnold's *Letters* confirm) had been underway since early summer (192). "Anarchy and Authority" was supposed to be a single essay, but quickly turned into five essays as "the early numbers of the 'Anarchy and Authority' series were in turn attacked by the periodical press and thus called for further sequels" (192). The criticisms were particularly important as Arnold felt the need to address the four main objections in "Anarchy and Authority" while simultaneously feeling the frustrations of trying to impress a public that he was trying to create. It is important to note here that, as Arnold is trying to create a public for himself, he is realizing that the critic, or what we might call the public intellectual, can only impress part of the public and must therefore choose a particular tone and strategy of admonition and appeal. "Culture and Its Enemies" and "Anarchy and Authority" became *Culture and Anarchy: An Essay in Political and Social Criticism* and evolved out of a dialogue in print, which was both sensitive to and critical of public opinion.

Culture and Anarchy: An Essay in Political and Social Criticism is an example of what has already been mapped in "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time." In *Culture and Anarchy* the functions of criticism fall under one large category, *culture*, which has "its origin in the love of perfection; it is the *study of perfection*" (59; emphasis his). Criticism is further empowered in this famous work, and in *Culture and Anarchy* we see the marriage of the creative and the critical that had been increasingly at odds in

Arnold's own practice as poet and essayist. Culture mediates between the critical or creative self and society, reconciling interests with disinterestedness. This Chapter will expand and explain how the "functions" of criticism are developed within Arnold's "culture" and will connect those claims made in "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time" to those developed in *Culture and Anarchy*. As DeLaura plainly puts it, "'The Function of Criticism' had anticipated *Culture and Anarchy*...[and] '[c]riticism' and 'culture' are overlapping and chronologically continuous terms; the latter absorbs the former...and adds to it an ideal of man's total—moral and intellectual—perfection" (70). The three claims, then, developed in "The Function of Criticism," namely the importance of critical perception, the necessity of criticism as a historically useful activity in preparing for the next phase of human development, and the exemplary and transformative force of critical judgement in improving standards (ethical, political, as well as cultural), are more fully developed in *Culture and Anarchy*. Arnold defines culture as "*a study of perfection* [which] moves by the force, not merely or primarily of the scientific passion for pure knowledge, but also of the moral and social passion for doing good" (C&A 59). This definition is a variation on the rational/ethical, theoretical/practical doublet so common in Arnold's work. Arnold, the good cosmopolitan, also borrows mottos from Montesquieu who says that culture renders "'an intelligent being yet more intelligent'" (C&A 59-60) as well as from Bishop Wilson who says that it is "'[t]o make reason and the will of God prevail'" (C&A 60). Arnold derives the provenance of culture from the Greeks, despite their "lack of moral fibre" (C&A 67-8) by stressing that they had the proper idea of culture, "the idea of beauty and of a human nature perfect on all sides" (67-8). Arnold even goes so far as to personify

culture; indeed he uses phrases such as “culture says...(C&A 65)” and “culture shows...” (C&A 71) which is a dramatic, performative way of describing culture. That is, by personifying culture and giving it the power of speech Arnold is making it as real, human, and capable of agency as possible. Clearly there is an ambiguity to this term *culture*, its definition and its aim, and in order for us to understand Arnold’s meaning and what Arnold means by “perfection,” he feels we need a certain perception and moral receptivity. Therefore, Arnold insists on the importance of critical perception for a proper understanding of culture and its pursuit of perfection.

Culture is a study and pursuit of perfection, which has as its characters sweetness and light. Arnold defines sweetness and light as beauty and intelligence (C&A 66). However, the phrase “sweetness and light” is taken from Swift’s *Battle of the Books*. In this satire Swift tells the story of the bee and the spider, the ancients and the moderns, who were battling each other. The way in which each conducted him or herself in this battle is of importance. The spider, who “boasted of not being obliged to any other creature, but of drawing and spinning out all from himself...produced nothing but wrangling and satire” while the bee “went straight to nature, gathering his support from the flowers of the field and the garden, without damage to them...had produced honey and wax and furnished mankind with ‘the two noblest of things, which are sweetness and light’” (Ward and Trent, et al). The OED captures the disposition that a person with “sweetness” should have, according to Arnold, which includes characteristics such as “pleasantness...graciousness, gentleness, kindness [and] mildness” (*OED Online*). Arnold’s “light” resonates with several of the OED’s definitions as well, such as “divine favour...to reach full understanding...to be converted...to make known” (*OED Online*).

The terms are most notable for their biblical and intellectual dimensions of which Arnold was most certainly aware and which clearly demonstrate who his primary audience is. Sweetness and light lend themselves to a definition of Arnold's culture that is not elitist in the exclusionary but in the aspirational sense. That is to say, the characters of sweetness and light keep Arnold's culture from becoming something vulgar or elitist and exclusionary, available only to the few or to the uninterested many. As Arnold says, culture, whose pursuit is perfection and therefore whose pursuit is sweetness and light, "works differently. It [culture] does not try to teach down to the level of inferior classes, it does not try to win them for this or that sect of its own, with ready-made judgments and watchwords. It seeks to do away with classes" (*C&A* 79). That is, culture encourages the birth of intellectuals from various social classes whose members are educated in an environment which encourages them to view social and political problems from various perspectives. Moreover, sweetness and light imply a high standard, an education and a nature that has previously been regarded as elitist, but it is a high standard presented to the masses as an ideal. Although there are indications of Arnold's awareness of his social role or responsibility in "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time," it is really in *Culture and Anarchy* where this sense of duty is fully expressed and explored. He says that "men [and women] are all members of one great whole, and the sympathy which is in human nature will not allow one member to be indifferent to the rest" (*C&A* 62). Although the problems that universalising can provoke are evident here, Arnold's main concern, and rightly so, is with society's health which is dependent upon everyone. Rather than simplifying the idea of perfection, so that the masses may understand and seek to attain it, Arnold challenges them to pursue sweetness and light, beauty and

intelligence, so that they can understand his idea of perfection while the standard of perfection remains elevated and elusive. Sweetness and light encourage a critical perception and a proper conception of culture and its benefits. Moreover, a critical perception is crucial to understanding Arnold's idea of culture and to his argument that it can improve society. In order to achieve a critical perception we must have "a finely tempered nature" (C&A 66). This nature is achieved through sweetness and light, so that we may acquire "exactly the notion of perfection as culture brings us to conceive it" (C&A 66). Arnold's insistence prepares the reader to "accept" his version of culture, which is distinct from that culture "which is founded solely on the scientific passion for knowing" (C&A 60).

Arnold's essay titled "Sweetness and Light" performs what it prescribes. That is, Arnold writes in such a way that the reader needs a critical perception to "get" what Arnold is prescribing. For example, his definition of culture as the study of perfection (C&A 59) is an answer that leads to more questions. Arnold insists on a critical perception so that we "get" what he is saying, and so that we "see" the object, that is culture, as it really is. He is purposely elusive, telling us first what culture is so that the opportunity arises for the reader to ask questions. What does it mean to study perfection and what is perfection anyway? Arnold takes the reader on a journey of questions and answers, of conceptions and misconceptions, in order that we may achieve a critical understanding of culture and how it can benefit society. That is, Arnold insists on a critical perception in order that we may see culture as it really is. However, seeing culture as it really is, insisting on a critical perception, is complicated. A passage in *On*

Translating Homer (1861) stresses Arnold's insistence on the critical perception and his recognition of how complicated it is.

The 'thing itself' with which one is here dealing,—the critical perception of poetic truth [perfection],—is of all things the most volatile, elusive, and evanescent; by even pressing too impetuously after it, one runs the risk of losing it. The critic of poetry should have the finest tact, the nicest moderation, the most free, flexible, and elastic spirit imaginable; he should be indeed the 'ondoyant et divers,' the *undulating and diverse* being of Montaigne.

("On Translating Homer," 194)

Clearly a critical perception is crucial to understanding Arnold's idea of culture and perfection, and by drawing on Montaigne, the subtle, skeptical creator of the modern essay, Arnold implies a rigorous, but patient pursuit of the basis and nature of knowledge. However, it is, as Arnold concedes, "most volatile, elusive, and evanescent." I would argue that this is one of the most important functions of sweetness and light, of that finely tempered nature that Arnold discusses. As characteristics of perfection, sweetness and light are what culture strives for. That is, instead of trying to focus on the end, on pinning down a particular idea or theory, sweetness and light insist on a notion of perfection that stresses "a growing and a becoming [and this] is the character of

perfection as culture conceives it” (*C&A* 62). Robbins reinforces this point: “[t]hat perfection as a goal cannot be attained, Arnold knows and says. To conceive of it, however, free of doctrinal or doctrinaire rigidity, can aid man in an amoeboid progress towards a realisable goal, ‘the humanisation of man in society’” (*APF* 14). Critical perception is important here, not only to understand sweetness and light, but to understand Arnold’s culture as an active, unfinishable process.

In order to clarify culture, its characteristics and its aim, Arnold pairs it with other notions and proceeds to compare and contrast culture with these notions. The importance of critical perception is obvious because it is the element that can perceive the similarities and differences between two concepts and it is the element that can reveal where sweetness and light lie and interplay. The hope is, I would argue, that if the reader can use a critical perception to see other objects as they really are, then the reader can see culture as it really is. Moreover, if the reader can see one “thing” accurately then s/he can see or has already seen the web of relations around it. For example, in the following passage, Arnold acknowledges religion’s public and private contributions to society and admits to similarities between religion and culture.

And religion, the greatest and most important of the efforts by which the human race has manifested its impulse to perfect itself,—religion, that voice of the deepest human experience,—does not only enjoin and sanction the aim which is the great aim of culture, the aim of setting ourselves to ascertain what perfection is, and to make it prevail; but also, in determining generally in what human perfection consists, religion comes to a conclusion identical with that which

culture,—culture seeking the determination of this question through *all* the voices of human experience which have been heard upon it, of art, science, poetry, philosophy, history, as well as of religion, in order to give a greater fullness and certainty to its solution,—likewise reaches. (C&A 61)

Although Arnold concedes the similarities between culture and religion in this passage, as he performs a quest as well as describing one, he is also sensitive to the likely protests that Victorian society, largely frustrated with religion, would express against such a claim, while preparing the reader to accept culture as a better alternative to religion's failed attempt at human perfection. As Collini puts it, "the Victorian reading public could be stirred by religion as by no other subject...[and] Many of the great intellectual controversies of the century were either directly about religion, or else were given an extra dimension of intensity by their bearing on religious belief" (*Arnold* 93). We sense here Arnold's perception of society's dissatisfaction with and distrust of religion, and he wants to embrace this moment in time so that, instead of completely rejecting religion, English society can recognize that their disillusionment is necessary if a deeper and more meaningful life is to take its place. He also recognizes that both religion and culture acknowledge that human perfection is within us: "Religion says: *The kingdom of God is within you*; and culture, in a like manner, places human perfection in an *internal* condition, in the growth and predominance of our humanity proper" (C&A 61-2; emphasis his). That is, perfection must begin with ourselves and it begins with culture or knowing the best that is known and thought. Moreover, both religion and culture place emphasis on perfection as a notion of growing and becoming rather than of having and resting (C&A 62), and they both insist on the same obligation of promoting the kingdom

of God, thereby increasing and hastening one's own happiness (*C&A* 62). Arnold encourages critical perception in order that the reader can recognize both the personal and social benefits and limitations of religion as inspiration and aspiration.

Indeed, in anticipation of disgruntled cynical or principled secular replies to his praise of religion, while consistently reminding the reader that religion has been the best attempt at human perfection, Arnold illuminates the limitations of religion and the limitations of a non-critical reliance on religion.

Indeed, the strongest plea for the study of perfection as pursued by culture, the clearest proof of the actual inadequacy of the idea of perfection held by the religious organisations,—expressing, as I have said, the most widespread effort which the human race has yet made after perfection,—is to be found in the state of our life and society with these in possession of it...I say that when our religious organisations,—which I admit to express the most considerable effort after perfection that our race has yet made,—land us in no better result than this [public poverty and private opulence], it is high time to examine carefully their idea of perfection. (*C&A* 71)

Here, Arnold condones a certain dissatisfaction with religion as this is the necessary first step in seeing things as they really are. However, he concludes this phase of his argument by promoting culture. He says that English reliance on religious organisations and on their idea of human perfection is a “mere belief in machinery, and unfruitful [and that this can only be] wholesomely counteracted by culture, bent on seeing things as they are, and on drawing the human race onwards to a more complete, a harmonious

perfection” (C&A 71). Religion possesses some sweetness, some light, and a critical perception can recognize this while also recognizing religion’s limitations. Arnold advocates for “a harmonious expansion of *all* the powers which make the beauty and worth of human nature” (C&A 62; emphasis his), which is consistent with Humboldtian “many-sided” criticism and inquiry, whereas Trilling points out that “religion puts an exclusive emphasis on merely a few powers or even on only one—the moral” (268). Arnold implies a need for balance between openness and moral essentialism that only culture, with critical perception as its tool, can discern.

The difference between religion and culture lies in the idea of disinterestedness. While both religion’s and culture’s aim is human perfection, Arnold argues that in Victorian society the religious or spiritual powers have been stressed at the expense of other human powers and that religious organisations have become fanatical and inflexible, mechanical even, making their idea of perfection constraining and dogmatic. What Arnold felt was beautiful about religion has been depreciated and tainted by representatives from dominant groups. For Arnold, the beauty of religion has become connected to interests, and this is dangerous because interest is so often the illusion of community and the reality of domination (Findlay 3). Moreover, these representatives opt for empty conformity and this is, Arnold would argue, style without substance. The result is a certain vulgarity, in which faith has become, at best, a faith in outward circumstances and machinery, and at worst, an aestheticization of the interests of representatives of dominant groups. Here, culture differs in that it promotes the development of all human faculties, a free play of these faculties, with a focus on the process rather than on the end, thereby portraying the necessary disinterestedness that

Arnold introduced in “The Function of Criticism at The Present Time.” Culture encourages a perfection which has as its characters sweetness and light, whose tendency is towards that receptivity, which “enables a man to see” (C&A 71). Here, Arnold notes Oxford’s failure, despite his deep love for the place, “to seize one truth—the truth that beauty and sweetness are essential characters of a complete human perfection” (C&A 73). That is, his idea of perfection must have sweetness and light as its distinctive properties. Oxford is right but defeated nonetheless; Oxford uses its detachment to see clearly, but it cannot carry the day with the public while remaining within its sanctuary. Thus Arnold prepares the reader to see the need for public intellectuals to go forth, go public, as Arnold is doing, after the kind of intellectual and moral preparation that Oxford offers its scholars. It is also important to note that while Arnold is criticising religion and its limitations, and while culture is often seen by some and attributed to him as an alternative to religion, he is also reserving a permanent and necessary space for faith. After all, perfection lies in *all* voices of human experience, including devout ones, and Arnold recognizes that those who have a flexible understanding of faith rather than a dogmatic one will be more likely to “see” the value of culture and its contribution to a healthy society. Critical perception is crucial here as that faculty which insists on seeing the object as it really is, as that faculty which challenges any dogmatic, unswerving allegiance to a particular organisation, and as that faculty which encourages culture and disinterestedness, and discourages when it cannot disallow blind partisanship.

A misconception of culture leads to a misconception of perfection, which Arnold argues is painfully recognisable in Victorian society. A critical perception enables a recognition of misconception in order to see the object as it really is. Moreover, he

recognizes that his claim for culture and its function in society will meet resistance. He says,

The idea of perfection as *inward* condition of the mind and spirit is at variance with the mechanical and material civilisation in esteem with us, and nowhere, as I have said, so much in esteem as with us. The idea of perfection as a *general* expansion of the human family is at variance with our strong individualism, our hatred of all limits to the unrestrained swing of the individual's personality, our maxim of 'every man for himself'. Above all, the idea of perfection as a *harmonious* expansion of human nature is at variance with our want of flexibility, with our inaptitude for seeing more than one side of a thing, with our intense energetic absorption in the particular pursuit we happen to be following. (C&A 63; emphasis his)

Again, religion and culture have something in common, namely their struggle against the selfish and crudely empiricist response to a less immediately practical version of human perfection. Laissez-faire economics, "a phrase expressive of the principle that government should not interfere with the action of individuals, esp. in industrial affairs and in trade" (*OED online*), had given rise in Victorian England to more sweeping impatience with regulation or control of any sort. As Collini states, Arnold is "concerned less with particular policies than with the deeper attitudes they expressed...[which include] exaggerated individualism, low aspiration...a kind of hubris...the ethos of popular Liberalism...proud of its material achievements and dismissive of cultivation and refinement..." (*Arnold* 81). In the case of laissez-faire economics, the reaction against a

feeling of too much government restriction was a selfish and empiricist response and eventually state non-interference was regarded as essential to the operation of the “free” market. For religion, and more specifically culture, Arnold challenges individualistic attitudes that are concerned with personal gain and closed-minded pursuits that cannot see all sides of a thing. He even criticises the bad intellectual of Jacobinism whose ways include “violent indignation with the past, abstract systems of renovation applied wholesale, a new doctrine drawn up in black and white for elaborating down to the very details a rational society for the future” (C&A 76). Arnold argues that the ways of Jacobinism lead to narrow thinking and narrow ideas. Also, similar to faith whose major currents follow and are named for the leader who began or pushed forth the idea, Jacobinism promotes the same way of thinking. Arnold insists that one must see not only the good side of a person or idea, but the limited and transient side as well (C&A 77) and he scolds the reader for lacking the critical perception needed to recognize the bad habits that have developed in Victorian society. *Culture and Anarchy* indicates Arnold’s desire to acknowledge and to challenge what some have argued and might still argue is a rather lofty goal for culture.

Critical perception also creates the intellectual situation of which the creative power can properly avail itself so that the best ideas prevail. That is, by inspiring a pursuit of sweetness and light, Arnold creates the intellectual situation of which the creative power can properly avail itself so that the best idea(s) can prevail. Arnold’s best idea is of course culture, which holds its ideal of human perfection. It is only a critical perception that can see value in sweetness and light, as they are important factors in creating a healthy and responsible society. By having an affinity for beauty and

sweetness, we also experience a direct “sentiment against hideousness and rawness” (C&A 73). The society Arnold is targeting is one concerned with machinery and is preoccupied with industrial superiority and personal wealth. Overemphasising money and machinery teaches “a man to value himself not on what he *is*, not on his progress in sweetness and light, but on the number of railroads he has constructed, or the bigness of the tabernacle he has built...[which is] nothing excellent” (C&A 75; emphasis his). Perhaps Arnold had in mind Isambard Kingdom Brunel, the archetypal captain of industry during the Victorian period in England, whose record of achievements only mentions the tunnels, ships, and bridges he engineered and mentions virtually nothing of the type of person he was (Rolt). Clearly Brunel’s value is deeply rooted in what he constructed and not in who he was. Arnold feared a society that placed too much value in this “machinery.” An inadequate situation, an inadequate mind, cannot produce the best ideas and critical perception is important if we are to change what we value. Arnold creates an awareness of dissatisfaction, so that old ideas and habits can be left and new ideas and agendas can be sought. Once dissatisfaction is realized, culture, that is, the pursuit of perfection and of sweetness and light, can begin. Arnold argues that by pursuing sweetness and light, one pursues perfection as culture conceives it. He also uses examples of historical moments in which sweetness and light were worked for and as a result, were moments of happiness.

If I have not shrunk from saying that we must work for sweetness and light, so neither have I shrunk from saying that we must have a broad basis, must have sweetness and light for as many as possible. Again and again I have insisted how those are the happy moments of humanity, how those are the marking epochs of a

people's life, how those are the flowering times for literature and art and all the creative power of genius, when there is a *national* glow of life and thought, when the whole of society is in the fullest measure permeated by thought, sensible to beauty, intelligent and alive. Only it must be *real* thought and *real* beauty; *real* sweetness and *real* light. (C&A 79; emphasis his)

We hear Arnold's response to accusations propelled towards him by Edward Miall, editor of the *Nonconformist*, of his sympathies with the oppressor, not the oppressed (Coulling 187) and of accusations from the Leeds *Mercury* which described Arnold and the man of culture as pretentious and conceited (Coulling 187). Indeed this is certainly, in part, a discreet educator's adaptation of utilitarian discourse. However, as I discussed before, rather than simplifying the idea of perfection, so that the masses may understand, Arnold challenges them to pursue sweetness and light, beauty and intelligence, so that they can understand his idea of perfection while the standard of perfection remains elevated if admittedly elusive. He promotes education so that culture and perfection can be available to all, as it is necessary to a unified humanity. As Simon Heffer clarified in a talk on *The Westminster Hour* (BBC) on June 15, 2003,

Arnold recognised that culture could be 'an engine of social and class distinction', though that is why he wished to spread it out as far as he possibly could. He called this propagation of education the extension of 'sweetness and light'. 'Sweetness and light', to the modern ear, sounds almost twee. But he could not have chosen a better metaphor and it is, beyond even his poetry itself, Arnold's most famous phrase. It conveys the mellifluousness and harmony of the highest aesthetics and

the brightness and warmth of true civilisation: what Winston Churchill, in a memorable speech in 1940 when he sought to describe the counterpoint to Hitler's chill darkness, called the 'broad sunlit uplands'. To Arnold, sweetness and light, or learning for learning's sake, had a religious purpose. (“Culture and Anarchy Revisited”)

The legacy of Newman is apparent here, as well as a sense of nostalgia for Newman's movement, which created and nourished a “keen desire for beauty and sweetness” (C&A 74). We also sense, in his use of terms like “real sweetness” and “real light,” his view that others have gotten it wrong and he knows what the “real” is. Moreover, Arnold defends his culture against attacks that claim it is elitist and impractical, by assigning to culture a “broad basis.” Culture, as the pursuit of perfection, the pursuit of sweetness and light, creates an atmosphere, or intellectual situation in which men (and women) “may use ideas, as it uses them itself, freely,—nourished, and not bound by them” (C&A 79).

Arnold's main concern in preparing the public to accept culture is to promote sweetness and light, to work towards sweetness and light. However, he also recognizes that sweetness and light have to be accessible to as many as possible and this is a common theme throughout *Culture and Anarchy*. But Arnold's fear of anarchy is apparent here too. Arnold's chapter “Hebraism and Hellenism” focuses on this second goal by bringing his argument back into balance, by stressing conduct in addition to stressing intelligence and beauty. In other words, “Hebraism and Hellenism” is Arnold's attempt to explain perfection, and therefore culture more fully, and to justify why it works—because it manages excess and puts Arnold's fear of anarchy to rest. The stress

is placed on the balance of Hebraism and Hellenism. As Jacobowitz points out, “For Arnold, an excess of Hebraism which entered English society through Puritanism was responsible for the harmful proliferation of a social machinery which may have made the nation strong, but neglected the spiritual growth of its people” (Jacobowitz). As with sweetness and light, and culture, the aim of promoting Hebraism and Hellenism is human perfection. “Hebraism and Hellenism” contributes to our understanding of Arnold’s “perfection.” As Arnold points out, “Hebraism and Hellenism are, neither of them, the *law* of human development...they are, each of them, *contributions* to human development” (C&A 133). Further, each is important to man’s and woman’s betterment or perfection because “by alterations of Hebraism and Hellenism, of a man’s intellectual and moral impulses, of the effort to see things as they really are and the effort to win peace by self-conquest, the human spirit proceeds” (C&A 134). But what are Hebraism and Hellenism? Arnold’s “Hebraism” certainly includes characteristics of the Hebrew language, the attributes of the Hebrew people, their character or nature and their method of thought or system of religion (OED Online). What is more notable is the OED’s inclusion of Arnold’s application of Hebraism as “that mode of human thought and action of which the ancient Hebrew is taken as the type; the moral, as opposed to the intellectual, theory of life” (OED Online). In addition, Arnold’s “Hellenism” includes characteristics of the Greek language, the imitation or adoption of Greek characteristics, and the national character or spirit of the Greeks (OED Online). And again Arnold’s application of Hellenism as “that form of culture, or ideal of life, of which the ancient Greek is taken as the type” (OED Online) is included. These entries, in what remains a very Victorian lexicon, attest to the historical and referential complexity of these two

terms, and their strong connections still attest today to Arnold's handling of them. The OED gives a useful (if starkly summary) sense that Arnold's emphasis on Hebraic energy and Hellenic intelligence is both reductive and expansive. Arnold selects one characteristic from many in the case of each tradition, but also brings out the force of each term by coupling, contrasting, and glossing further the traditions in which they feature prominently.

In *Culture and Anarchy* Arnold gives various definitions of the terms, which demonstrates both their complexity and their interdependence. First he says that Hebraism and Hellenism are each a force (C&A 126), Hebraism being the "energy driving at practice...[a] sense of the obligation of duty, self-control, and work...[and an] earnestness in going manfully with the best light we have" (C&A 126), and Hellenism as "the intelligence driving at those ideas which are...the basis of right practice, the ardent sense for all the new and changing combinations of them which man's development brings with it, the indomitable impulse to know and adjust them perfectly" (C&A 126). He then goes on to say that Hellenism's "uppermost idea...is to see things as they really are" and Hebraism's "uppermost idea...is conduct and obedience" (C&A 127). Arnold finally states each term's main idea. "The governing idea of Hellenism is *spontaneity of consciousness*; that of Hebraism, *strictness of conscience*" (C&A 128). But as Collini points out, it is helpful to examine what each term attacks. He summarizes that "Hebraism attacks wrongdoing, moral laxness, and weakness of will; Hellenism attacks ignorance, ugliness, and rigidity of mind" (Arnold 82). Arguably, Arnold sensed an imbalance himself following in the project of "Sweetness and Light" and felt that "by bringing into prominence the forces of 'sweetness and light' he would find it possible to

conceive of a goal or ideal of perfection, in which an enlightened Hebraism would play a vital and harmonious role” (Robbins *APF* 30). While seeing things as they really are is important to his definition of culture, and while both beauty and intelligence are crucial to creating the intellectual situation of which the creative power can avail itself so that the best ideas prevail, Arnold also wants to insist on conduct, on useful activity in preparing for the next phase of human development. Arnold anticipated the arguments that would follow, which criticized him for putting too much stress on the Hellenic rather than the Hebraic, on the thinking rather than on the doing. By coupling Hellenism with Hebraism, an enticing synthesis of complementary forms of authority and practice, and by focusing on conduct, on obedience, Arnold is preparing the reader, or perhaps reminding the reader, of his second claim while also preparing the reader to accept the idea of the public intellectual.

Arnold’s second claim follows logically as he argues for the necessity of culture as a historically useful activity in preparing for the next phase of human development by exercising a free play of the mind and by knowing the best that is thought and known in the world. For culture to be a historically useful tool in human development, Arnold argues that one must require people to require more of themselves. Arnold’s culture puts selfish and individualistic attitudes under the microscope and challenges people to do something useful, something that will contribute to the pursuit of human perfection. In the essay titled “Doing as One Likes” Arnold concedes that in his essay “Sweetness and Light” he dealt with sweetness (beauty) more than light (intelligence) and explains that “it evidently remains to speak also of intelligence, or light, as a character of perfection” (81). Arnold recognizes an intellectual deficiency in England largely due to a lack of

State action, a lack of a collective authority. That is, he feels that the English national character, without the authority of State power and action, lacks intelligence and power and as his desire is for the ideal of human perfection, to Arnold the English national character falls short. In this essay, Arnold argues for the idea of the State as an entity which can assume a certain disinterestedness free from class interests, and which can represent a collective and communal “best self” (C&A 99)—note the cleverness of rehabilitating selfishness as a form of beneficial *unselfishness*—that is essential to Arnold’s definition of progress as a process of growing and becoming. This is a sort of prescription for useful activity or culture, which is criticized for being an activity of inactivity, a balance of the physical, mental, spiritual capacities, which not only discourages doing as one likes, but which encourages seeking a collective “best self.” As Collini aptly states, by promoting a free play of the mind and an engagement with the best that is known and thought, Arnold hoped “to enlarge the horizons and expand the sympathies of all ‘sides’, optimistic that a mind with access to the standards established by ‘the best that has been thought and said’ could never rest content with partisan simplicities” (*Arnold* 9).

As sweetness helps one to see the object as it really is and as it helps to create the intellectual situation of which the creative power can properly avail itself so that the best ideas prevail, light exercises the free play of the mind and insists on knowing the best that is thought and known in the world. What Arnold is doing, in a sense, is educating the imagination and re-imagining education. That is, he advocates a free play of the mind while simultaneously insisting on knowing the best that is thought and known in the world. I mentioned earlier that for Arnold, our ordinary selves and experiences are not

good enough, and doing as one likes is ordinary, and as we shall see, too often anarchical.

Northrop Frye states that

Matthew Arnold pointed out that we live in two environments, an actual social one and an ideal one, and that the ideal one can only come from something suggested in our education. [Therefore we live] in both a social and a cultural environment, and only the cultural environment, the world we study in the arts and sciences, can provide the kind of standards and values we need if we're to do anything better than adjust. (*Educate Imagination* 66)

Frye agrees that Arnold's culture, as it gives us light (*C&A* 82) also provides the kind of standards and values needed to proceed in the pursuit of perfection, which is better than merely "adjusting" to change. By using a word like "adjust" Frye implies the need to engage with issues that surround us and to consider the connection between literature and life in order to educate the imagination and to stop merely doing as one likes.

"Doing As One Likes" is a direct response to Mr. John Bright's "*assertion of personal liberty*" (*C&A* 83; emphasis his) and his allegiance to the Constitution "which stops and paralyses any power in interfering with the free action of individuals" (*C&A* 83). Arnold abhorred this blind praise of the Constitution and feared the anarchical results which would surely follow the free action of individuals, particularly members of the working class. As Heffer states, "Arnold feared that without education people would be subject to 'random and ill-regulated action'. Through lack of information, untrained thinking, or limited experience they might perceive a state of affairs as being ideal and beneficial when, in fact, it was rotten and harmful" ("Culture and Anarchy Revisted").

For example Arnold ridicules the excess of Bradlaugh who is “capable...of running us all into great dangers and confusion” (C&A 98) and who, as “notorious”, is another negative example that Arnold thinks is far different from, and inferior to, his role as public intellectual. Therefore, Arnold tackles that form of action which is not intelligent, and which is not a useful activity for preparing for the next phase of human development.

Arnold responds first, however, to those who criticize his idea of culture, who say that it is “not practical” (C&A 81) and “that it is very easy to sit in one’s study and find fault with the course of modern society” (C&A 81). Against this charge of impractical actions, Arnold highlights modern society’s actions which have neither sweetness nor light.

So that if I can show what my opponents call rough or coarse action, but what I would rather call random and ill-regulated action,—action with insufficient light, action pursued because we like to be doing something and doing it as we please, and do not like the trouble of thinking and the severe constraint of any kind of rule,—if I can show this to be, at the present moment, a practical mischief and dangerous to us, then I have found a practical use for light in correcting this state of things, and have only to exemplify how, in cases which fall under everybody’s observations, it may deal with it. (82-3)

Arnold clearly distinguishes between different forms of action. As Robbins states, it was important for Arnold “to distinguish between straw-fire enthusiasms for action as such, and a reasoned, informed commitment to action of a necessary and inevitable kind” (*Arnoldian Principle* 17). Robbins also notes Arnold’s sentiments towards ill-regulated

action that are identified as early as 1848 in a letter to Clough which states, “the present spectacle in France is a fine one; mostly so indeed to the historical swift-kindling man, who is not over-haunted by the pale thought, that, after all man’s shiftings of posture, restat vivere “ (*Letters* 86). What both the 1848 passage in *Letters* and the passage in “Doing As One Likes” have in common is Arnold’s stress on the importance of “right action based on right thinking” (*Arnoldian Principle* 18). Arnold not only challenges his public to scrutinize their actions in order to ensure that they are indeed useful, he also warns against the dangers of anarchy and prepares the reader to pursue a “best self,” which can only be understood and accomplished by an educated public because bad “habits make it hard for us to come at the idea of a high best self, of a paramount authority [in religion, literature and politics]” (*C&A* 114).

We discussed earlier the necessity of critical perception and Arnold expands this idea here by showing the anarchy which results from a misconception of light. That is, misunderstood light results in anarchy. English society believes that doing as one likes is a clear-sighted way of living. A belief in machinery, a belief in personal liberty and a belief in freedom in and of itself all “tends to anarchy” (*C&A* 85), which is certainly not useful in preparing for the next phase of human development. The result of these beliefs is a renewed need for culture, if culture,

which simply means trying to perfect oneself, and one’s mind as part of oneself, brings us light, and if light shows us that there is nothing so very blessed in merely doing as one likes, that the worship of the mere freedom to do as one likes is worship of machinery, that the really blessed thing is to like what right reason

ordains, and to follow her authority, then we have got a practical benefit out of culture. We have got a much wanted principle, a principle of authority, to counteract the tendency to anarchy which seems to be threatening us. (C&A 89)

Authority is introduced here as that principle whose function it is to counteract anarchy. Arnold's fear of anarchy is apparent and he is preparing the reader to acknowledge the lack of intelligence in English society and to recognize the benefits of a State authority with the humanizing face and mission of culture. Arnold recognizes the need for authority, but he also understands the importance of a collective pursuit of perfection. As Heffer states:

If the state had to impose a social order that would prevent anarchy, it was better it did it with the wholehearted consent of the people. Such consent, he [Arnold] knew, would be supplied only if the people's idea of perfection, and that of those who ruled them, happened to coincide. Both parties, the governors and the governed, would need greater, and matching, intelligence. ("Culture and Anarchy Revisited")

Light or intelligence is the character of perfection that is necessary for a public, with a tendency towards anarchy, to see the benefits of a responsible State authority. An educated public will have confidence in State authority because they have confidence in culture as a pursuit of perfection, independent of individual or class interest. Moreover, culture is the means by which each class can become unified in the idea of a best self, which the State will represent. As Arnold clarifies, the State is "the nation in its collective and corporate character, entrusted with stringent powers for the general

advantage, and controlling individual wills in the name of an interest wider than that of individuals” (C&A 83) and which exercises “right reason” (C&A 89). Arnold’s argument is for accountability. Arnold believes in a State authority, inspired by light and recognized as necessary by those that have light, in order to push society into its next phase of human development.

In order for the public to put its faith, with its religious as well as social inflections, in a State authority, Arnold blurs and perhaps even eradicates the lines between social classes. He claims to transcend class interest in favour of a unified and collective interest. However, as Findlay points out, interest is often the illusion of community and the reality of domination and he identifies Burke’s concern with “the displacement of Protestant ‘interest’ by Protestant ‘ascendancy’ in Ireland (O’Brien 527) as an ominous threat to social tolerance and civil society” (Findlay 3). By arguing that Arnold transcends interest, we can argue that he poses a threat to social tolerance and civil society. However, Findlay also asks, can Arnold “save interest from hardening into ascendancy by somehow assimilating it within disinterestedness?” (Findlay 3). I would argue that Arnold’s idea of a best self does transcend “interest” in the dominating sense, in that it has its grounding in culture, which is a disinterested endeavour “to come at reason and the will of God by means of reading, observing, and thinking” (C&A 94). As I stated before, the idea of the best self transcends interest in a paradoxical way by suggesting that working towards a fluid idea of perfection, a fluid idea of a best self, is in everyone’s best interest. If authority rested in one of the classes, the aristocracy, the middle class, or the working class, the result would be a lack of growth, a lack of ideas that are essential for an epoch of expansion, like the present in which Arnold must work.

For example, Arnold states that although the aristocratic class has some good qualities, it lacks light and therefore it lacks ideas necessary for growth and for the nourishing of Arnold's version of culture. The middle class rests in self-satisfaction, and puts its emphasis on having and resting rather than on growing and becoming. Because culture puts its emphasis on the pursuit of perfection, as "a perpetual advance in beauty and wisdom", middle class values are also at variance with Arnold's culture. Finally, the working class, "pressed constantly by the hard daily compulsion of material wants" is, according to Arnold, "still an embryo, of which no one can yet quite foresee the final development; and from its not having the same experience and self knowledge as the aristocratic and middle classes" (*C&A* 97). Arnold illuminates the deficiencies of each class in order to prepare the reader to accept the idea of authority resting in the State, which represents a collective best self. Culture is therefore necessary as that useful activity which prepares the population for the next phase of human development, and here it recognises a need for authority to rest in a responsible entity, which has both sweetness and light.

Arnold's third claim with reference to "Barbarians, Philistines, Populace" and "Hebraism and Hellenism" insists on the exemplary and transformative force of culture in improving ethical, political, as well as cultural standards, and it does so by promoting disinterestedness, and by encouraging an engagement with ever fresh knowledge. Here he brings his claims from "Sweetness and Light" and "Doing as One Likes" into the practical sphere. Arnold begins "Barbarians, Philistines, Populace" claiming to be a "plain, unsystematic writer, without a philosophy" (*C&A* 102), with a modesty that is difficult to believe but useful in producing an inclusive feeling in the reader. He is

revealing, in his opinion, the faults of the aristocratic class, middle class, and working class, and prescribing culture as the agent that will improve the standards and lives of each class, in particular the middle class. As we discussed earlier, each class has some particular quality or qualities that render it incapable of positive growth and transformation. There is an insistence on the need for culture as a remedy to the “dismal...[and] staunch” (C&A 105) characteristics of these classes. It is culture that brings the idea of the State as a principle and centre of authority. For Arnold to be able to suggest the idea of the State, he has to address each class which “deem[s] itself fit to provide the principle of authority and to act upon it” (Trilling 276). So Arnold challenges the “fitness” of each class for such a position of authority and he encourages a sort of transcendental idea of rising above classes in order to promote the idea of a whole community, which is the State (Trilling 276). Each class, for Arnold, has faults and is “guilty” of resting in an ordinary state; choosing one class to represent authority would, for Arnold, ensure endless, useless competition and conflict. Therefore culture, which suggests the idea of the State, recognises that there is no basis for firm, responsible power in any class’s ordinary self. By suggesting a community authority in the idea of the State, which is represented by the “best self”, culture ensures transformation while avoiding anarchy. That is, culture acts as both the exemplary and the transformative force for improving standards as it encourages society to rest authority with a best self that requires a continuous growing and becoming.

In *Matthew Arnold*, Trilling devotes an entire chapter to *Culture and Anarchy* and challenges Arnold’s notion of a “State based on classes voided of interest” (253). Before Arnold can better explain the idea of the State, he illuminates the faults of each class. For

example, the Barbarians or aristocracy, despite being credited with reinvigorating and renewing a worn out Europe (*C&A* 105) “brought with them that staunch individualism, as the modern phrase is, and that passion for doing as one likes, [and] the assertion of personal liberty” (*C&A* 105). Moreover, their culture “was an exterior culture mainly...[which] consisted principally in outward gifts and graces, in looks, manners, accomplishments, prowess...[and the] inward gifts which had part in it were the most exterior...they were courage, a high spirit, self-confidence” (*C&A* 106). Although some of these qualities are admirable, and Arnold admits this, the Barbarians are not perfect, nor do they have the idea of perfection as a growing and becoming. Arnold knowingly chooses a term that has resonant historical implications and which identifies precisely those weaknesses which impede perfection. The *OED Online* defines a barbarian as “one whose language and customs differ from the speaker's; one who has an insufficiency of light; one outside the pale of Christian civilization; a rude, wild, uncivilized person; an uncultured person, or one who has no sympathy with literary culture.” Arnold is demonstrating that there are, or can be, different ideas about what barbarianism means and he anticipates protestations as the aristocracy certainly distinguishes itself from any class that is uncivilized or uncultured. The problem that Arnold identifies is that the aristocracy views the love of machinery and exterior accomplishments as perfection. There is arrogance in the aristocracy’s ordinary self that puts emphasis on doing as one likes. According to Arnold, the Barbarians’ ethical, political, and cultural standard is not high enough and culture, which promotes the “best self,” acts as that exemplary and transformative force that improves standards.

The Philistines or middle class suffer a similar critique from Arnold; however, it is this class, of which Arnold is a part, which he is most concerned with. The *OED Online* defines “philistine” as “one of an alien warlike people, of uncertain origin, who occupied the southern sea-coast of Palestine, and in early times constantly harassed the Israelites; (humorously applied to) person(s) regarded as ‘the enemy’, into whose hands one may fall, e.g. bailiffs, literary critics, etc.; formerly, also, to the debauched or drunken; a person deficient in liberal culture and enlightenment, whose interests are chiefly bounded by material and commonplace things. But often applied contemptuously by connoisseurs of any particular art or department of learning to one who has no knowledge or appreciation of it; sometimes a mere term of dislike for those whom the speaker considers ‘bourgeois’; characteristic of, or of the nature of, the modern ‘Philistine’; uncultured; commonplace; prosaic.” This term clarifies Arnold’s disdain for his class’s anti-intellectualism. In “Barbarians, Philistines, Populace,” Arnold says the middle class has a certain self-satisfaction about it (*C&A* 103). This feeling of self-satisfaction is a defect in that it eschews “the idea of self-transformation, of growing towards some measure of sweetness and light not yet reached” (103). Further, this term “gives the notion of something particularly stiff-necked and perverse in the resistance to light and its children” (*C&A* 105). The class then, according to Arnold, is lacking culture, which Arnold argues is the exemplary and transformative force that is crucial to improving standards.

Finally, Arnold discusses the Populace, or working class, which is “the mass of the people of a community, as distinguished from the titled, wealthy, or educated classes; the common people; *invidiously*, the mob, the rabble” (*OED Online*). This class is what

Arnold calls “the working class” (C&A 103). As Arnold says, “The defect of this class would be the falling short in what Mr. Frederic Harrison calls those ‘bright powers of sympathy and ready powers of action’” (103). This class, its rising population, its unintelligence and vulgarity, its desire to march where it likes, meet where it likes, bawl where it likes, and break what it likes (C&A 107) concerns Arnold because its rising numbers result in a larger number of the population being uneducated. An uneducated mass will surely not strive for a “best self,” which Arnold argues is necessary for the pursuit of perfection. Here, culture acts as an exemplary and transformative force for improving standards, in that it educates the masses to see things as they really are, to do away with a love of machinery and of doing as one likes, in order to pursue reason and the will of God and to make them prevail.

Following this division of English society into three distinct classes, Arnold proceeds to explain why he did this and reasserts a commonality among all three classes:

Thus we have got three distinct terms, *Barbarians*, *Philistines*, *Populace*, to denote roughly the three great classes into which our society is divided; and though this humble attempt at a scientific nomenclature falls, no doubt, very far short in precision of what might be required from a writer equipped with a complete and coherent philosophy, yet, from a notoriously unsystematic and unpretending writer, it will, I trust, be accepted as sufficient. (C&A 107)

Arnold cleverly undercuts society’s blind love of science and deficient imagination as he divides society into distinct and rigid classes, which is obviously problematic, and then explains his reasons for doing so are justifiable as a rudimentary adherence to scientific

law. His position is clear in an ironically self-deprecating way. He follows this classification by reminding the reader that an English Barbarian will find in himself both something of the Philistine and something of the Populace (*C&A* 108), thus complicating the divisions he has offered.

Arnold then creates a place for his work as literary critic and promoter of culture.

He says:

But in each class there are born a certain number of natures with a curiosity about their best self, with a bent for seeing things as they are, for disentangling themselves from machinery, for simply concerning themselves with reason and the will of God, and doing their best to make these prevail;—for the pursuit, in a word, of perfection. (109)

These figures, with a bent towards curiosity, are led to culture and are led to an idea of a best self. They are, in a sense, awakened to the realization that there is something better than an ordinary self and as a result have the ability to awaken a passive and complacent society, to inspire a belief in excellence. However, in anticipation of Gramsci (1891-1937) who later claims that everyone can be an intellectual, Arnold is quick to point out that this kind of thinking, this idea of the best self, is accessible to all not only to those deemed “genius.” Arnold is quick to clarify, however, as does Gramsci, that although everyone is an intellectual, not everyone has the function of an intellectual (Gramsci 3). More specifically, there is a distinction that comes with knowing and doing, with understanding and being able to have influence over others. Arnold anticipates this concept and this is clear in his identification of “aliens” within each of these classes “who

are mainly led, not by their class spirit, but by a general *humane* spirit, by the love of human perfection” (110). Moreover, he asserts that the number of aliens will fluctuate based on two things, an innate instinct towards perfection, and outside encouragement. It is important to note Arnold’s version of alien as it is not labour based, as in the Marxian tradition within which Gramsci works, but is based in a specialized notion of the “humane.” That is, it accepts individuality even if it goes against the spirit of the age. For Arnold, embracing the idea of a best self, or as O’Hara so aptly puts it, “a democracy of educated imaginations” (669), and as a result suffering alienation from society is better than upholding the status quo and as a result causing one’s individuality to disintegrate. What Arnold is doing here is encouraging the masses towards an idea of a best self, while persuading them to rest authority with those “aliens” who have a natural inclination and curiosity to seek a best self. Essentially, he both argues for culture, and creates a space for himself as a promoter of culture. In creating this space, those promoters of culture are embodiments of a best self and therefore make up the State as the State represents the best self. Arnold creates, then, not only a space for intellectual work, but also an authority for literary critics and what we would call the public intellectual. Therefore, while portraying the exemplary and transformative force of culture in improving standards, he is also modelling the public intellectual and portraying the exemplary and transformative force of this figure in improving standards.

Arnold’s next chapter in *Culture and Anarchy*, “Porro Unum Est Necessarium” or “The One Thing Needful”, which follows “Hebraism and Hellenism”, directly challenges Victorian society to come to its best on all points. More specifically, he accuses Victorian society of adopting the ideal of “the one thing needful” and the narrow attitude

which accompanies it. By making direct reference to the Bible passage Luke 10:42 in his title, Arnold is simultaneously condemning a “wrong” version of the one thing needful while preparing the reader to accept his “right” version, namely culture. He is suggesting that instead of busying oneself with the unimportant details as Martha did, Victorian society should sit, listen, and broaden all sides of human nature. Perhaps appropriately, Arnold’s three claims, the importance of critical perception, the necessity of criticism or culture as a historically useful activity in preparing for the next phase of human development, and the exemplary and transformative force of critical judgement in improving ethical, political, as well as cultural standards, are all brought together if not repeated. As “the currents seem to converge, and together to bear us along towards culture” (C&A 151), the space Arnold is trying to create for himself as critic becomes more obvious.

Before prescribing culture, however, Arnold generously supplies the reader with the reason why they adopted the ideal of “the one thing needful.” In the Arnoldian way of “here’s the question” and “here’s the answer” Arnold blames Victorian society’s misconception on an excess of Hebraism, or *strictness of consciousness* (C&A 138). He asks “Why, in fact, should good, well-meaning, energetic, sensible people, like the bulk of our countrymen, come to have such light belief in right reason, and such an exaggerated value of their own independent doing, however crude?” (C&A 138). He answers “because of an exclusive and excessive development in them, without due allowance for time, place and circumstance, of that side of human nature...we have given the general name of Hebraism” (C&A 138). We have heard about the drawbacks of an excess of Hebraism before in “Hebraism and Hellenism.” Indeed he is reiterating a need

for culture, for critical perception which will allow, he argues, for a balance of Hebraism and Hellenism. Arnold resurrects religion in this chapter as well, and stresses that religion fails because of an excess of Hebraism, strict obedience without necessary intelligence, as it leads to disillusionment. But, optimistic as Arnold often is, he does not prescribe doing away with religion or with the Bible; rather, he blames the state of Victorian England on misconception—on the way the Bible is read and the way religion has been followed or practiced. Moreover, he challenges those who would argue that ““religion gives fire and strength, and the world wants fire and strength even more than it wants sweetness and light”” (C&A 140). For Arnold, this religion will ultimately fail as it is insufficient in a world that is “not all of one piece” (C&A 141). A fluid understanding of ourselves, of the Bible, of religion as culture conceives it and as only culture can conceive it, essentially saves religion and English society. Again, culture, as it provides the necessary critical perception, is his antidote to this misconception of religion and of Victorian society.

While Arnold disparages the narrow attitude which accompanies allegiance to the notion of “the one thing needful” he is quick to prescribe his own, or the “real” *unum necessarium* (C&A 142). Arnold’s second claim is restated here, and although he seems to be prescribing that which he had previously critiqued, at least Arnold prescribes one thing which has many sides and which places its importance in the process, not the end. That is, Arnold’s culture has an allegiance to the process of perfection and Arnold argues that culture is the one thing needful and is a useful activity in preparing for the next phase of human development in that it insists on coming to *our* (note the implications) best at all points, whatever they may be. And at this point, or Arnold’s point in history, he

argues that Hellenism is lacking and should be “more wanted [than Hebraism]” (C&A 142). We can see here that, as Arnold prescribes culture as the antidote to a vulgar Victorian society by promoting sweetness and light, he also carves out a place for himself and his work.

Arnold’s third claim, regarding the exemplary and transformative force of critical judgement in improving standards, is intertwined with Arnold’s fear that his life and work will have no place in Victorian society. Arnold sees a significant and pessimistic flaw in having a standard and in viewing that standard as the end. As Arnold says, “so fatal is the notion of possessing, even in the most precious words or standards, the one thing needful...and of there being no duty left for us except to make our practice square exactly with them” (C&A 145). Culture promotes a commitment to improving standards. For Arnold who is “accused of preaching up a spirit of inaction” (C&A 151), culture permits him to “minister to the diseased spirit of [his] time” (C&A 152) as this is a society that he has to live in too.

Arnold’s final chapter in *Culture and Anarchy*, “Our Liberal Practitioners” is a chapter that speaks directly to those who would accuse Arnold of promoting inaction and is his attempt at bringing culture into the “practical” sphere in hopes of destabilizing things deemed “practical”. His three claims are, then, put to the test and vindicated. This chapter has a timelessness to it in that it makes us, at all times in history, question the values and actions of “our” liberal practitioners and highlights what actions Liberals without sweetness and light take. Arnold criticizes five “practical operations” of the Liberals, the disestablishment of the Irish Church, the proposal of the Real Estate

Intestacy Bill, the attempt to enable a man to marry his dead wife's sister, the Liberal free-trade policy, and the Liberals' present pursuit of practical operations (excessive Hebraising), which can collectively be summarized as a criticism of Liberal lip service, ostentation, and superficiality. That is, Arnold accuses Liberals of being irresponsibly critical, of searching for societal wrongs, magnifying them and classifying them as "definite evils" (C&A 157) in order to punish by the use of law. Arnold argues that this use of "mechanical maxim[s]" (C&A 157) encourages individualistic thinking and attitudes, and discourages free play of the mind. Essentially, he accuses the Liberals of being illiberal. Approaching political issues in a non-partisan fashion is much more useful and Arnold attempts to demonstrate how culture can achieve this non-partisan success towards human perfection. By not going along with these practical operations Arnold shows the critic or public intellectual's usefulness in the practical sphere. As Arnold claims, as a disseminator of culture, as a public intellectual (the space Arnold is determined to make for himself), "we minister better to the diseased spirit of our time by leading it to think about the operation of our Liberal friends...than by lending a hand to this operation ourselves" (C&A 168). Here, Arnold is carving a place for himself and the public intellectual in politics, the typically "practical" sphere. Essentially he is arguing for the practicality of the public intellectual.

Arnold's "Conclusion" to *Culture and Anarchy* is his one last attempt to convert. It is an arguably weak effort as he uses fear mongering, claiming that culture keeps "us" safe. He says "Through culture seems to lie our way, not only to perfection, but even to safety" (C&A 180). Arnold's fear of anarchy is again apparent here as he anticipates, or perhaps presumptuously diagnoses, reader confusion and equates confusion with danger.

Moreover, Arnold again addresses the protests against his inaction and stresses that the “friends of culture [cannot] expect to take the believers in action by storm” (C&A 183). Arnold’s increasing sense of duty and responsibility to the Victorian public, and to himself, “of extricating and elevating our best self, in the progress of humanity towards perfection” (C&A 180), is somewhat overshadowed by his preoccupation with repressing anarchy with what actually seems like the lack of a plan. Arnold does not end with a bang, but I would argue that he chooses not to. He recognizes that culture has to be a genuine choice and that cultural change has to begin in the mind of the nation (C&A 186). It is a difficult sell, to be sure, to promote education before action at a time when action is held so far above intelligence. However, even here Arnold is optimistic, if not desperate to believe, that there is a place for him and his culture as he moves towards a figure or figures, the friends of culture, who have developed all sides of their nature in order to promote his culture. Victorian society is indeed in danger if aestheticizing politics is all it takes to make workers go happily (and blindly) along with the decisions of those in power. Arnold’s hope, then, is that culture will make obvious to those followers that those in power may have style but they lack greatness, and culture, which has both greatness and style. Perhaps his need to explain away his seeming inaction while criticising the obsession with the actions of others causes Arnold to concentrate on it that much more. That is, the second phase of his career, which focuses on religious writing, can as Carroll points out “best be interpreted as a microcosmic epoch of Hebraistic ‘concentration’ within Arnold’s own history” (85), and one could argue that this Hebraistic concentration leads Arnold to examine action and the best model to perform it.

Chapter Three: Faith, Culture and the Public Intellectual

Literature and Dogma: An Essay Towards a Better Apprehension of the Bible (1873), although not Arnold's only work on religion, is his major work on religion and the most popular of his works published in his lifetime. *Literature and Dogma* follows *St. Paul and Protestantism*, an essay that directly followed *Culture and Anarchy* and in which Arnold undertook "to show that the doctrinal differences that separate the Dissenters from the Church are in fact founded on a misreading of Scripture, especially of St. Paul" (apRoberts 178). Further to this first objective, R.H. Super argues that in *St. Paul and Protestantism* Arnold also sets out to demonstrate "that historically, in England, the Church had always had a strong disposition...toward Christian unity which should now dispose it to welcome the comprehension of Dissent and should dispose Dissent to regard the Church as its friend, not its enemy" (Super 80). Both essays, however, share Arnold's concern "to shape an argumentative tool that will go to the root of Christian theology and undercut all present positions" (DeLaura 102). This tool is, of course, culture and we will discuss how Arnold's cultural criticism discredits theology yet re-establishes religion's (particularly Christian) importance. Or as Collini explains, "he [Arnold] called upon criticism to deliver the truth of the Bible from the clutches of the literalists and the pedants" (*Arnold* 100). Another dominant theme of *Literature and Dogma* is Arnold's "conception of religion's developmental or evolutionary nature" (Trilling 331). That is, Arnold argues that although religion comes to mean different things as people's consciousness of it changes, this does not necessarily signify religion's increasing irrelevance; rather, it signifies a growing relevance and necessity of religion for a healthy society. A critical perception is necessary to see religion's relevance. Also,

we can directly connect this to Arnold's argument for the necessity of culture as a historically useful activity in preparing for the next phase of human development as he asserts "the *necessity* of the law of righteousness" (Trilling 331; emphasis his).

Connected to the idea and importance of righteousness, which will be explained further later in this chapter, is its grandeur. The idea of religion's or righteousness' grandeur, with its both aesthetic and imperialistic implications, can be connected to Arnold's final claim for the exemplary and transformative force of critical judgement or culture in improving standards.

In *Literature and Dogma* Arnold develops his cultural critique more fully still in the context of belief. Arnold is, by this stage in his career, known to use art and faith as primary sources of socialization and education. Here, we can trace Arnold's claims about the importance of critical perception, the necessity of criticism as a historically useful activity in preparing for the next phase of human development, and the exemplary and transformative force of critical judgement in improving standards (ethical and political as well as cultural). As Trilling points out, "criticism demands that intelligence be not acrid, that it go hand in hand with 'moral balance' and 'nobleness of soul and character'" (208), and I will argue that in *Literature and Dogma* this claim is fully realized. This book stresses the inwardness of "man," feeling, emotion, but does so from a position emphatically that of a public intellectual concerned to teach several publics.

The earlier claim that Matthew Arnold *is* contradiction is not less true with regard to his religious writings. As apRoberts explains about these writings,

secularists have sometimes felt nervous about them, suspecting a frowsty 'Victorian' interest, and even—since the works profess to be Christian—an

indecent supernaturalism; while supernaturalists have been nervous about the secular approach and the rationalism. (vii)

Literature and Dogma is just one of these religious writings which, due to the complexity of the topic and argument, make both secularists and supernaturalists nervous. I would concede, however, DeLaura's broad claim which states that Arnold's object in *Literature and Dogma* is "to develop a religious position, *for the masses*, which is nontheistic and yet draws upon the imaginative and emotional fullness of specifically Christian and hence Biblical sources" (102). Arnold does this by applying culture, knowing the best that is thought and said in the world, to religion and then publishing a shorter, popular edition of his work which is reproduced in the 1895 Macmillan edition.

More specifically, just as *Culture and Anarchy* emerged out of Arnold's need to address four main objections to "Anarchy and Authority," *Literature and Dogma* emerged out of what Trilling calls "four important considerations" (317). These considerations stemmed from things that Arnold said, did, or wrote and which he feels he must address:

He had attacked the religion of Dissent as a source of political discord and he must now show, on grounds of doctrine and of ecclesiastical polity, why Puritanism need no longer be schismatic from the national Church. He had spoken—"in a hasty moment," says T.S. Eliot—of the will of God which is the ultimate sanction of the idea of the State and now he must demonstrate the existence and nature of that God and that will. He had based government on the 'possible Socrates' in each man's breast and he must show how that Socrates might be educed....And last, he had not yet settled scores with his youthful

cosmological problems....[He needed] to rescue the world from the cheerless conclusions of science and to establish Joy.” (Trilling 318)

Certainly this is no small task for Arnold. However, *Literature and Dogma*, by further developing Arnold’s three claims which we discussed in the previous two chapters, succeeds in developing his cultural critique and theory of religion-literature (apRoberts 239) that leads us so appropriately into the figure and functions of the public intellectual.

Arnold’s claim for the importance of critical perception for improving standards can be connected to a need to understand why he could not let go of faith. DeLaura smartly highlights a passage from Arnold’s “The Study of Poetry” (1888) which I would argue explains, in part, why Arnold could not let go of faith:

The future of poetry is immense, because in poetry, where it is worthy of its high destinies, our race, as time goes on, will find an ever surer and surer stay. There is not a creed which is not shaken, not an accredited dogma which is not shown to be questionable, not a received tradition which does not threaten to dissolve. Our religion has materialised itself in the fact, in the supposed fact; it has attached its emotion to the fact, and now the fact is failing it. But for poetry the idea is everything; the rest is a world of illusion, of divine illusion. Poetry attaches its emotion to the idea; the idea *is* the fact. The strongest part of our religion to-day is its unconscious poetry. (*EC* 1-2) (DeLaura 197)

DeLaura identifies this passage as “Arnold’s most important statement on the quasi-religious function of poetry in the modern world” (139). Here it is not religion itself which is failing it is that religion has lost its imaginative element by being materialised in the fact. Arnold recognized religion’s poetry and its practical applications to a society

that was in need of hope. DeLaura also highlights Pater who said that “Dogmas are precious as memorials of a class of sincere and beautiful spirits, who, in a past age of humanity struggled with many tears, if not for true knowledge, yet for a noble and elevated happiness. That struggle is the substance, the dogma only its shadowy expression” (DeLaura 197). Indeed dogma has its use in that it is produced by a desire to understand, and curiosity is at the very heart of Arnold’s culture. However, despite the possible sympathies for dogma, “for Arnold, [dogma] always runs the risk of its self-righteousness and absoluteness” (apRoberts 279). We must note here Arnold’s modest but determined exploration of his subtitle, *An Essay Towards a Better Apprehension of the Bible* and the implied opposition between literature and dogma. As in *Culture and Anarchy* with its undeniable implication of mutual exclusion—one has either culture OR anarchy—*Literature and Dogma* suggests the same and asks the reader to choose literature. Although Arnold had no tolerance for dogma, which religion had become, he could not let go of faith and therefore he set out to explain why the Bible was important and to establish it as authoritative and useful literature.

A literary sensibility and a critical perception save religion from becoming dogma, a distorted and grotesque concept, by opposing any absolute or final religious truth. That is, it challenges Arnold’s Hebraism, the one-sided and limiting view of the religious. As Walters puts it so eloquently:

No addition of texts, no *accumulation* of knowledge will dissolve the distortions and perversions of a comprehension that arises from a devotion to and embrace of ‘absolute and final truth’. Fundamentally, the Puritans suffer from *fundamentalism*—not a shortage of knowledge but a type of knowing, which, as

Arnold says directly, amounts to not knowing at all....The very notion of such a ‘Truth with a capital “T”’—the denial...--is manifestly *anti-cultural*. The existence (whatever that would mean) of a single eternal truth is the death of culture. If the answer to the question is fundamental and therefore utterly *unquestionable*, the result will be not cultivation but preservation—and even that only in the form of mummification, which is to say a mere veil over active putrefaction. There cannot be a *culture* of fundamentalism (in any form, whether religious or otherwise)...Dogma is not the embodiment of culture but rather its entombment. (Walters 356; emphasis his)

A critical perception shows us the danger of pretentiously adhering to a single and absolute truth. In *Literature and Dogma* Arnold says that “the man who believes that his truth on religious matters is so absolutely the truth, that...he cannot but do good with it, is...always a man whose truth is half blunder and wholly useless” (vi). Clearly implicated here is dogma’s social indictment and its uselessness. Arnold is showing how the improper perception of religion can render it useless as an agent which had been and could be again “the most important of the efforts by which the human race has manifested its impulse to perfect itself” (C&A 61).

Dogma, religion’s Achilles’ heel, fails in large part due to its literal interpretation of the Bible. Max Müller, a friend of Arnold’s at Oxford and an accomplished student of comparative philology and myth, explains a sentiment that Arnold arguably shared:

We shall no longer try to force a literal sense on words which, if interpreted literally, must lose their true and original purport, we shall no longer interpret the Law and the Prophets as if they had been written in the English of our own century, but read them

in a truly historical spirit, prepared for the many difficulties, undismayed by many contradictions, which so far from disproving the authenticity, become...the strongest confirmatory evidence of the age, the genuineness, and the real truth of ancient sacred books. (Müller 206-7)

Arnold says himself that he is “quite willing...to call the Bible and its religion *all-important*” (*L&D* viii) and would therefore also be willing to show how the difficulties and contradictions which Müller mentions can indeed be confirmatory evidence of the real truth of this ancient and sacred book. In order to “see” the Bible, to see the object as in itself it really is, Arnold stresses the importance of a critical perception.

A critical perception is, for Arnold, a “pure” perception similar to the “pure” knowledge that Walters speaks of which “entails an endless, infinite pursuit”(354) and maintains its own endless and infinite characteristics. It seems apparent then, just as Arnold’s *Culture and Anarchy* suggests a choice—you either have culture *or* you have anarchy—*Literature and Dogma* suggests the same. Moreover, we sense Arnold’s suggestion of choosing culture over anarchy and literature over dogma; however, we also sense that by posing this question (culture or anarchy/literature or dogma?) Arnold is posing “the enduring, fundamental, essential question [and] Arnold allows us to see that culture can indeed be the ‘glue’ that binds together a multicultural (and multireligious) society—but only insofar as it severs any attachment to the particularization and positionality of cultural identity and persists only as the dis-position of the critical question” (Walters 365). For Arnold, a pure perception recognizes that the “best” place to be is no place at all, free from position and open to the idea of the eternal question and the search for a better understanding.

The pure perception, the critical perception, recognizes the necessity of the imagination, of metaphor. Arnold argues against theology in that it claims to rely on a literal interpretation of the Bible. He argues that religion will fail if it is based on fact because as our intellect increases we recognize the fallibility of faith that is based on fact. apRoberts points out that Arnold, in his discussion of morality and religion, identifies a difference of degree between these two ideas (191-2). In *Literature and Dogma* Arnold does this, apRoberts says, by combining, challenging, and itemizing terms and ideas as either literal or metaphorical. He contrasts these two ideas by setting them up against each other. For example, he sets up a prosy Old Testament proverb (literal) against the poetry of the Old Testament (metaphorical), another Old Testament proverb (literal) against a poetic Psalm passage (metaphorical), a scientific statement (literal) against a Wordsworth metaphor (metaphorical) (apRoberts 193). The argument or strategy implicates metaphor as the element common to both religion and poetry. Moreover, as apRoberts points out, Arnold invites us to test on our psyches the effects of group A (literal) as compared to the effects of group B (metaphorical) in order to oblige us to recognize the emotive power of B in the Latinate sense of *emoveo*, having the power to *dislodge*, to *move*, to *change* men; to recognize that all group B items are metaphorical; to analyze them as metaphor; to consider that the pretense or approximation of metaphor carries more meaning than the literal; to realize that these expressions do not lose in power when we realize they are ‘not true’, but they gain in power rather, and that to misunderstand these metaphors as literal or scientific statement is to miss the power and the point. (194)

Like his juxtaposition of literary touchstones, Arnold juxtaposes the literal and the metaphorical and therefore asks the reader to question already held perceptions. What Arnold is demonstrating above by this comparison, is the discursive, affective and ethical functions of criticism or culture. That is, criticism promotes a critical perception which, in this case, accepts the validity of the metaphorical and more generally the figurative and the poetic, while also illuminating and adding significance to the metaphor. Arnold asks the reader to examine how he or she feels about a matter and presses him or her to “dwell upon it” (*L&D* 21). Here, criticism is at work “making order in the chaos of one’s impressions” (*L&D* 22). This practice of concentration encourages an outcome of “seeing things as they are” (*C&A* 59) and promotes a critical perception or notion of a “whole self...a best self...a permanent self” (*L&D* 22), which is Arnold’s understanding of the chief focus and duty of criticism or culture. We know that he is talking about criticism or culture because he pinpoints the difference between a “habitual dwelling on the rules [of conduct]” (*L&D* 22) and “that constant turning them over in the mind...that *sense* of their beneficence” (*L&D* 22 emphasis mine). Here, the perception does not simply arrive out of habit, but out of the constant application of criticism, which results in the critical perception. Access to and time spent with culture, the best that has been known and thought in the world, prepares the mind to exert itself to discover the connection between the literal and figurative meanings, between what is called literature and what is called dogma.

The complications of language show the necessity of critical perception. Critical perception is important to viewing the Bible as literature not dogma, and in doing so, Arnold is re-establishing the Bible’s utility and authority. Northrop Frye’s *The*

Educated Imagination simplifies and explains what I would argue Arnold has already identified. Frye distinguishes between three different types of English language or reasons for using words (*Educated Imagination* 6). There is ordinary language, used for conversation, monologue and self-expression; working or technical language, which is how we communicate on a social level; and finally there is the language of the imagination, which produces literary language such as poetry, plays, and novels. He then goes on to distinguish between the arts and the sciences. Sciences begin with the world in which we live and try to explain its laws using the imagination (mental constructs of models). The arts are different. Art “begins with the world we construct, not with the world we see. It starts with the imagination, and then works towards ordinary experience: that is, it tries to make itself as convincing and recognizable as it can” (*Educated Imagination* 6). I would say, then, that the Bible is an early book, one of the first works of literature, that brings together the arts and the sciences and this is part of the reason why Arnold stressed its importance. Is it both? Using myth and metaphor it explains the kind of world the people of the Book live in and how we are to learn from it, yet it also discusses an ideal world, a heavenly place that only exists in the realm of the imagination in the sense that it is not the present world we live in.

Frye also says that “the language of literature is associative: it uses figure of speech, like the simile and the metaphor, to suggest an identity between the human mind and the world outside it, that identity being what the imagination is chiefly concerned with” (*EI* 12). The Bible, as a form of literature, uses this language and is therefore suggesting God (specifically the Christian version) as the identity between the human mind and the world outside it. It takes the same type of mental exertion to comprehend

God as it does to understand Arnold's culture, and understandings of each will change over time. These understandings are, for Arnold, only useful if it is understood that they are provisional, not dogmatic. The critical perception is important to this understanding of culture as it gives the Bible its literary status while re-establishing its authority and social benefits. In *The Great Code*, Frye's main text on this subject as it claims to be a study of the Bible from the point of view of a literary critic (*Great Code* xi), he says that the Bible has verbal structures which remind the reader of myths —by myth Frye means plot or narrative (*Great Code* 31)—and that the “oratorical style of the Bible...unit[es] the poetic and the concerned” (*Great Code* 49), which gives the Bible its authority and which highlights its social benefits. That is, “as a story, it [the Bible] is re-created in literature; as a story with a specific social function, it is a program of action for a specific society” (*Great Code* 49). A critical perception “sees” the usefulness in giving the Bible a literary status as it regains its authority and social influence. Although it may seem sacrilegious to some to give the Bible a literary status (there are those that would argue that it is divine only and that it cannot be both literary and divine), I would argue that it is only when we understand the Bible as an example of literature that it can maintain its permanent relevance. As a literary work, which uses simile and metaphor “to suggest an identity between the human mind and the world outside it” (*Educated Imagination* 12), it maintains a permanence because as Frye points out, metaphor is important as it remains even when belief ceases to exist (*Educated Imagination* 13). Here, we have literary rather than divine inspiration, which in Victorian England is crucial to re-establishing the Bible's significance in personal and social life. Although the Bible's teachings may not have divine significance for some, it maintains its imaginative and literary significance,

and this state too, is provisional. The Bible as literature is not dogma because the imagination and its imaginative quality, its literary quality, does not allow it to be. Culture is the chain between the imaginative, ideal world and the real world. As apRoberts states, “culture may be the saving grace, which makes sense of our lives and constitutes the chief fact about ourselves as human beings” (*Arnold and God* viii). And culture, when connected to religion, implies a doing, not simply a knowing. Also, religion’s stress on conduct gets us away from simply looking at the world to doing something about it, which can be connected to Arnold’s next claim on the necessity of criticism/culture in the next phase of human development.

Arnold’s next broad claim argues for the necessity of criticism as a historically useful activity in preparing for the next phase of human development. Like his father, Arnold clearly insisted that religion was a necessary part of people’s growth towards perfection. It follows then that religion, like criticism, would be viewed as a useful and necessary activity in preparing for the next phase of human development. As Trilling explains, “of equal importance with Arnold’s idea of the moral essence of all religion, is his conception of religion’s developmental or evolutionary nature, a dominant theme in *Literature and Dogma*” (331). Although Arnold argues for the necessity of religion in human development, more precisely he argues that the criticism of religion is a historically useful activity in preparing for the next phase of human development. Trilling states that “*Literature and Dogma* is in large part the history of the religious idea, both in this inversion and its true and healthy growth” (334). Trilling is correct. However, we must remember that history and criticism are very close in effect with Higher Criticism of the Bible and the reconstruction of revelation as poetry, history, and

myth. Therefore, I would argue that *Literature and Dogma* is also a *criticism* of the religious idea which is necessary for its true and healthy growth.

Although there was disagreement about whether it was religion itself that changed and evolved or whether it was our conception of a firm idea that changed and evolved, I would argue that Arnold was more aligned with the latter argument. Indeed, it could be argued that criticism is necessary as that tool which manages and challenges the ever-changing idea of religion. However, given Arnold's open acknowledgement of Newman's influence on his religious thought, it seems plausible that Arnold would align himself with Newman's "conception of religion as an Idea originally and completely given" (Trilling 332) and his claim that the Idea itself does not change "but the human understanding of it grows and exfoliates" (332). Moreover, Newman says that

from the nature of the human mind, time is necessary for the full comprehension and perfection of great ideas; and that the highest and most wonderful truths, though communicated to the world once for all by inspired teachers, could not be comprehended all at once by the recipients, but, as being received and transmitted by minds not inspired and through media which were human, have required only the longer time and deeper thought for their full elucidation. (21)

In this passage, one could easily replace "time" with "criticism," which is "necessary for the full comprehension and perfection of great ideas" (Newman 21), in order to see more fully the similarity between Newman's views and Arnold's. However, Trilling points out an important difference between these two learned scholars. Whereas Newman sees development in a straight line, Arnold sees it as undulant (Trilling 333). This point may not seem worth mentioning except that a development, which occurs in a straight line

may require less effort. That is, Newman assumes that the passage of time alone is enough to bring society to a better understanding of religion. Arnold, however, recognizes that a society without culture, a society that does not work to know the best that is known and thought, will very likely remain mediocre and perhaps even lose its way; or when religion no longer makes sense because of scientific knowledge, a society without imagination, without culture, will simply discard religion, what Arnold argues is “the greatest and most important of the efforts by which the human race has manifested its impulse to perfect itself” (C&A 61). We must note here Arnold’s distinction between the bad or damaging alterations of doubt, which are captured in his poetry and which are, I would argue, a result of a belief in dogma, and the invigorating fluctuations of a living faith which is “*the being able to cleave to a power of goodness appealing to our high and real self, not to our lower and apparent self*” (L&D 215; emphasis his). As Trilling further explains, because Arnold recognized that the human spirit was affected by the conditions of the times and therefore responded differently at different times, Arnold’s understanding required that he undertake research in both psychology and anthropology (333). Arnold’s concept of undulating development, which heaves and surges, rises and falls, and which is unlike Newman’s concept of linear development, requires a tool to keep it on a reasonable and present course. For example, in *Literature and Dogma* Arnold recalls a time in history when considering individual books of the Bible, “degrees of value were still felt, and all parts of the Bible did not stand on the same footing, and were not taken equally” (xxiv). He goes on to explain that in addition to the books that are in every Bible now, there were many books which were rejected because “a true critical sense” (xxiv) was at work. Moreover, he suggests that because the books were

not placed in the Canon of Scripture based on merit alone, that criticism has yet more work to do. However, Arnold states that “the whole discussion died out, not because the matter was sifted and settled and a perfect Canon of Scripture deliberately formed; it died out as mediaeval ignorance deepened, and because there was no longer knowledge or criticism enough left in the world to keep such a discussion alive” (*L&D* xxv). Therefore Arnold argues for a balance of emotion and intellect—this balance can be achieved by culture—and human development is in danger of massive digression without the necessary tool to bring it back and to prepare it for the next phase of human development.

Criticism is a necessary tool for the next phase of human development also because it saves the Bible from being discarded altogether or from becoming entombed by dogmatism. Arnold is writing in a time of religious crisis when a literal interpretation of the Bible clashed with entrenched habits of faith and pastoral authority. Historically people witnessed contradictions to their faith such as prosperity of the sinner, the rise and power of great unrighteous kingdoms, and an unsuccessful Israel (*L&D* 60-3). Moreover, he says that in the process of human development the masses had lost their awe for religion. The result was that “many of the most successful, energetic, and ingenious of the artisan class...[were] now found either of themselves rejecting the Bible altogether, or following teachers who [told] them the Bible is an exploded superstition” (*L&D* vi). Therefore he revisits culture and its claim to knowing the best that is thought and known in the world. Here, Arnold discusses how letters, or criticism, provide a tactful and fair-minded way in which to study the Bible (*L&D* 46).

Arnold also discusses language and how our language is inadequate to describe God (*L&D* 35-36). Language in the Bible is literary, not scientific—it requires imagination

for its productive interpretation. Arnold states that “by knowing letters, by becoming conversant with the best that has been thought and said in the world, we become acquainted not only with history, but also with the scope and powers, of the instruments men employ in thinking and speaking” (*L&D* 46-7). With appropriate interpretation, which comes from cultural critique, the Bible, that “ideal of perfected human consciousness” (DeLaura 109), gains authority. Moreover, culture leads to a “justness of perception” (*L&D* xxi), which is crucial to reading the Bible as literature and not dogma. A proper reading of the Bible identifies crucial matters of conduct and morality contained within its pages, and the social implications here are obvious. Arnold reasserts the Bible’s importance as the only thing, with its “comforting and uplifting poetic testimony to *righteousness*” (DeLaura 105 emphasis his), that can provide emotional and imaginative support for the masses’ practice of morality (DeLaura 105). We must remember that, for Arnold, the members of the masses’ are members of the middle class and most likely to produce public intellectuals. Therefore, Arnold uses cultural criticism to save the Bible from being completely discarded or deadeningly preserved in order to reassert its moral and social benefits for the next phase of human development.

Finally, culture or criticism is necessary as a historically useful activity in preparing for the next phase of human development, as it makes the activity that one undertakes useful. Arnold introduces the idea of conduct here. He talks about distractions (23) and how they prevent one from becoming religious (in the dispositional, processive sense rather than the dogmatic sense) because we are unable to dwell upon important religious matters, we are unable to attain a critical perception. Arnold is again encouraging *useful* activity which will prepare us for the next phase of human development. The change

from *Culture and Anarchy* to *Literature and Dogma* is not necessarily the focus on conduct, or what the right conduct is, but what the source of the right conduct is. In *Culture and Anarchy* Arnold's source is culture; that culture can in fact lead to perfection. However, in *Literature and Dogma* Arnold says that "the generality of mankind...[gets] as far as the notion of morals or conduct" (*L&D* 24). Therefore, Arnold's faith in culture does not recede; rather, he sees culture's and criticism's usefulness in better understanding perfection, which is, he would argue, found in the Bible. Moreover, righteousness, found by a responsible and critical reading of the Bible, is key to human perfection. According to Arnold, even the righteous, although they succeed farther than the general public in understanding righteousness, favour conduct that is "capable...of almost infinitely different degrees of force and energy in the performance of it...and these degrees may vary from day to day" (*L&D* 25). The insinuation is that we alone cannot habitually practice right conduct, in which criticism plays a large part. That is, as Arnold says, "there is so much that belongs to the *not ourselves* in conduct...and the more we value it, attend to it, the more we feel this" (26 emphasis his). He does acknowledge the different results of such a connection, but insists that the connection of individuals to the *not ourselves* often results in right conduct with all of its imperialistic and aesthetic implications.

Every one knows of what differences of operation men's dealing with this power has in different places and times shown itself capable; how here they have been moved by the *not ourselves* to a cruel terror, there to a timid religiosity, there again to a play of imagination; almost always, however, connecting with it, by some string or other, conduct. (26)

As Arnold expresses a critical view of the supra-personal, he is prescribing the “not ourselves” as a polemical tool or the tool with which to avoid doing as one likes, in order that one may do something useful that prepares for an advancement towards the next phase of human development. He is not prescribing religion necessarily, but the idea of religion as culture sees it, and religion, as culture sees it, is a useful tool in preparing for the next phase of human development.

The idea of religion’s or righteousness’ grandeur, with its both aesthetic and imperialistic implications, can be connected to Arnold’s final claim for the exemplary and transformative force of critical judgement or culture in improving standards. Arnold recognizes religion’s beauty but feels that if religion is to be part of education, which Arnold feels is imperative for society’s improvement, it has to maintain its own disinterestedness. DeLaura says that “the social end of education for Newman...was similar [to Arnold’s]: ‘it aims at raising the intellectual tone of society, at cultivating the public mind, at purifying the national taste, at supplying true principles to popular enthusiasm and fixed aims to popular aspiration, at giving enlargement and sobriety to the ideas of the age’” (DeLaura 69). Arnold agreed with Newman that education (with culture at its core) was fundamental to society’s ethical, political and cultural improvement. For Arnold, however, Christian teaching was to be the most important element of education as it raised ideals and required the imagination, and was what would increase education’s chances of having widespread social benefits. But Arnold also recognized the danger of incorporating a dogmatic religion into the education system. He felt that religion had been depreciated and tainted by representatives from dominant groups. Therefore, culture is necessary to keep religion free from interest and to enable it

to regain its healthy authority and position in society and in education. Arnold's solution for anarchy is, of course, culture, and particularly in the case of religion's role in educational institutions the State acts as the enemy of anarchy. It is important to note, during Arnold's time, the emergence of a public state system for the control of denominational schools and his involvement in this process (Trilling 185-8). For Arnold, the State that is guided by culture acts as the critical perception saving the education system from dogmatic religion. As Arnold so plainly puts it, "*The State is of the religion of all its citizens, without the fanaticism of any of them*" (C&A 154; emphasis his).

Arnold's engagement with ever fresh knowledge does not speak to knowing more (indeed he has always said that knowing more means nothing unless it is knowing the best that has been thought and said), but rather it does speak to a special type of knowing. The Bible is part of Arnold's best that has been thought and said and indeed to him Christianity is "the greatest and happiest stroke ever yet made for human perfection." (L&D 98). But in his explanation as to why Christianity is the best effort made towards human perfection, Arnold challenges the reader to examine the Bible and Christianity critically and to see that Christianity rooted in culture rather than prophetic fulfillment or rigid providence is part of knowing better and improving standards. He says "Prediction and miracle were attributed to it [Christianity] as its supports because of its grandeur, and because of the awe and admiration which it inspired" (L&D 98). However, there is danger, Arnold warns, in fantastic accretions. Religion, whose proof is reliant on prediction and miracle, is threatened with being discarded altogether. Arnold pushes us to know critically, to use critical judgement or culture as it enables us to read the Bible as literature—to be open to this fresh knowledge of it as our consciousness of it changes.

In *Culture and Anarchy* Arnold emphasizes the importance of improving standards internally and in *Literature and Dogma* this emphasis is more fully realized. Arnold shifts the focus from religion's benefits to the social and national realms, to religion's benefits in the personal and inner realms. For Arnold, transformation must begin in the personal and private realm before it can become public. Here is Arnold's most remarkable and obvious shift to the figure of the critic, to the public intellectual. As Trilling points out, "the religion of the Old Testament had been chiefly a matter of national and social conduct; the new datum of religion that Jesus brought was personal" (336). Arnold also argues that "Jesus made his followers first look within and examine themselves...[and] self-examination, self-renouncement, and mildness were, therefore, the great means by which Jesus Christ renewed righteousness and religion" (*L&D* 81). The argument for personal transformation before public transformation is aligned with what Arnold argues in *Culture and Anarchy* when he stresses the importance of Hellenism, of ideas, of intelligence. If Arnold's Victorian society needed an example of the significant impact a person (divine or otherwise) who has sweetness and light could make, Jesus was it and Arnold was reminding them of Jesus' significant public role.

Finally, Arnold argues for culture's importance in identifying what true righteousness really is, which will secure man's [and woman's] happiness and which is necessary for human perfection. Arnold says that righteousness (specifically Christian), which is "the method and the secret and the sweet reasonableness of Jesus" (*L&D* 329) must be properly understood and that only culture can save it from being dogmatically misinterpreted. Essentially, Arnold goes from showing the necessity of righteousness, to returning to the necessity of his culture. Culture's role here is twofold. First, culture is

that tool necessary for the proper conception or understanding of Jesus as both an exemplary and transformative figure and as a public intellectual, and second, culture is embodied in the figure of Jesus as that critical perception which makes religion relevant. Jesus is both a figure who demonstrates historically useful activity in preparing for the next phase of human development and an exemplary and transformative force in improving standards. This final claim goes back to *Culture and Anarchy* and Arnold's idea of a best self. I said before that culture acts as both the exemplary and the transformative force for improving standards as it encourages society to rest authority with a best self that requires continuous growing and becoming. Jesus, as culture conceives him, gives us a concrete idea of what a best self, a public intellectual, should look like. And in identifying with Jesus, and by connecting Arnold's version of culture with Jesus as a figure who promotes culture, Arnold is creating that necessary space for himself.

The idea of Jesus is the human idea of culture. That is, Jesus, whether divine Saviour, or influential teacher, demonstrates what Arnold hopes culture can accomplish. In *Culture and Anarchy* we saw Arnold's increasing preoccupation with Hebraism, and although Arnold stresses the need to put Hellenism first, to stress intelligence over action, he is not convinced that this will happen in Victorian society. Moreover, I would argue that Arnold's writing shifts towards the figure, towards "doing" because that is what society called for and because Arnold feared failing in print. As apRoberts says, "Language, metaphor, and myth are bound to man's [and woman's] sociality—they are nothing if not shared" (228). However, Arnold did not abandon his Hellenism and found in Jesus the perfect balance of both and the key to secure his future as critic.

Conclusion

As arguably “the most influential critic of his age” (Trilling 190), Matthew Arnold has indeed proven to be an influential model for the public intellectual currently in Canada and elsewhere. In his three works explored in this thesis, we can see not only Arnold’s interest in writing, but also his sense of duty to society, particularly in areas of ethics, politics, and culture. Moreover, perhaps as a result of significant dissatisfaction with Victorian society, we see Arnold stressing the importance of culture in promoting a healthy society. His connection of literature and life through the medium of criticism is key to understanding his shift of mission from poet and educational bureaucrat to that of public intellectual.

What began in “The Function of Criticism at the Present Time” and *Culture and Anarchy* as the promotion of culture finds its best exemplar in Jesus. That is, we must note the shift from culture, identified as criticism in “The Function of Criticism at the Present Time,” to culture as a characteristic and practice necessary to seeing things as they really are and a concept which can secure happiness. The shift thus accomplished in *Culture and Anarchy* gives way in Arnold’s turn to culture as embodied in the figure of Jesus as the ultimate public intellectual in *Literature and Dogma*. Critical judgement or culture is embodied in a person, in Jesus, and the effect this has on the masses (note the strongly social as well as spiritual implications again) is significant, life-changing and arguably permanent as Jesus has become a crucial historical, if not divine, figure in the world.

Despite Arnold's return to faith and religious writing, he was devoted to culture above all else as, for Arnold, only it possessed the disinterestedness which could satisfy an increasingly secular public while maintaining its allegiance to the imagination. Even in his promotion of a specifically Christian faith, if not for him certainly for the masses, he recognized culture as the tool necessary for "apprehending this God of the Bible rightly and not wrongly" (*L&D* 350). Essentially culture is necessary to avoid anarchy, to ensure you have literature and not dogma, and as Arnold felt increasing frustration both privately and publicly, his turn to culture is an attempt to save society and himself. Whatever his success in his own times, Arnold's example of connecting life to literature and the promoting of culture has lived on inside and outside the academy.

Today we can see Arnold's continuing influence in the lives of modern day public intellectuals. We see his claims, for the necessity of culture, for the necessity of cultural criticism as a historically useful activity in preparing for the next phase of human development, and for the exemplary and transformative force of critical judgement in improving ethical, political, as well as cultural standards. Moreover, his popular phrases, "sweetness and light", "pursuit of perfection", "disinterestedness", are echoed, eschewed, expanded upon and connected to new, if not original, claims. For example in *Edward Said and the work of the critic: speaking truth to power*, edited by Paul Bové, Arnold's "disinterestedness" emerges. When asked, in an interview with Jaqueline Rose, if the intellectual should cease criticizing authority and take on a role of support when the previously oppressed take over authority (27), Said responds by saying that "the role of the intellectual is never to give unconditional support" (Bové 27). In *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race*, Robert J.C Young invokes and deconstructs

Arnold's "culture," claiming that "Arnold's theory of culture is in fact fully immersed within the ideology of his time" (58) in order to demonstrate how contemporary cultural theories of post-colonialism and ethnicity operate in complicity with nineteenth-century patterns of thought and definitions of race and culture. Or we can look at more politically minded public intellectuals such as Susan Sontag and Michael Ignatieff, both human rights activists, who felt it their duty as public intellectuals to comment on the events of September 11 by challenging the action (or reaction) of those in government. More specifically, Ignatieff, as an example of a Canadian public intellectual, has many qualities which Arnold argues a critic should have. That is, he is university educated and socially engaged, culturally cosmopolitan, has held academic positions at Harvard, Oxford and Cambridge, and was director of the Carr Center for Human Rights Policy (Wikipedia). Ignatieff has also made his mark in print as an author and journalist, as a documentary filmmaker, and is now even more politically engaged as a Canadian member of parliament and deputy leader of the Liberal opposition in the House. Ignatieff is explicitly and severely secular in his own sense of vocation, but his ethical concerns and critique of anarchy may represent in part what Arnold looked for in a liberalism of the future.

I would also argue that Arnold's contribution to the idea of the public intellectual (in very broad and general terms) has led to subcategories or very narrow categories of the public intellectual. For example, some even more specific classifications now include the secular or liminal intellectual, the critical intellectual, the expert intellectual, the specific intellectual, the general intellectual, the private intellectual and so on. This can lead to confusion in the midst of intellectual and social ferment. However, as Posner

indicates, “the term ‘public intellectual’ [can] be defined in a way that would demarcate a coherent albeit broad body of expressive activity” (2) and that the work of public intellectuals can broadly include (or at the very least should include) “clarifying issues, exposing the errors of other public intellectuals, drawing attention to neglected issues, and vivifying public debate” (3). The work that Posner pushes for is, I would argue, exactly what Arnold was working out as the necessary work of criticism, the critic, and what I would identify as the public intellectual. And Arnold does so with courage and critical acumen, and within the frame of an anti-dogmatic Christian faith.

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