IRVING BABBITT

ROUSSEAU AND ROMANTICISM

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Содержание

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INTRODUCTION

Many readers will no doubt be tempted to exclaim on seeing my title: "Rousseau and no end!" The outpour of books on Rousseau had indeed in the period immediately preceding the war become somewhat portentous.[1] This preoccupation with Rousseau is after all easy to explain. It is his somewhat formidable privilege to represent more fully than any other one person a great international movement. To attack Rousseau or to defend him is most often only a way of attacking or defending this movement.

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[1] See, for example, in vol. IX of the *Annales de la Société Jean-Jacques Rousseau* the bibliography (pp. 87-276) for 1912 – the year of the bicentenary.

this movement.

It is from this point of view at all events that the present work is conceived. I have not undertaken a systematic study of Rousseau's life and doctrines. The appearance of his name in my title is justified, if at all, simply because he comes at a fairly early stage in the international movement the rise and growth of which I am tracing, and has on the whole supplied me with the most significant illustrations of it. I have already put forth certain views regarding this movement in three previous volumes.[2] Though each one of these volumes attempts to do justice to a particular topic, it is at the same time intended to be a link in a continuous argument. I hope that I may be allowed to speak here with some frankness of the main trend of this argument both on its negative and on its positive, or constructive, side.

Perhaps the best key to both sides of my argument is found in the lines of Emerson I have taken as epigraph for "Literature and the American College":

> There are two laws discrete
> Not reconciled, —
> Law for man, and law for thing;
> The last builds town and fleet,
> But it runs wild,
> And doth the man unking.

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[2] *Literature and the American College* (1908); *The New Laokoon* (1910); *The Masters of Modern French Criticism* (1912).

On its negative side my argument is directed against this undue emphasis on the "law for thing," against the attempt to erect on naturalistic foundations a complete philosophy of life. I define two main forms of naturalism – on the one hand, utilitarian and scientific and, on the other, emotional naturalism. The type of romanticism I am studying is inseparably bound up with emotional naturalism.

This type of romanticism encouraged by the naturalistic movement is only one of three main types I distinguish and I am dealing for the most part with only one aspect of it. But even when thus circumscribed the subject can scarcely be said to lack importance; for if I am right in my conviction as to the unsoundness of a Rousseauistic philosophy of life, it follows that the total tendency of the Occident at present is away from rather than towards civilization.

On the positive side, my argument aims to reassert the "law for man," and its special discipline against the various forms of naturalistic excess. At the very mention of the word discipline I shall be set down in certain quarters as reactionary. But does it necessarily follow from a plea for the human law that one is a reactionary or in general a traditionalist? An American writer of distinction was once heard to remark that he saw in the world to-day but two classes of persons, – the mossbacks and the mountebanks, and that for his part he preferred to be a mossback. One should think twice before thus consenting to seem a mere relic of the past. The ineffable smartness of our young radicals

is due to the conviction that, whatever else they may be, they are the very pink of modernity. Before sharing their conviction it might be well to do a little preliminary defining of such terms as modern and the modern spirit. It may then turn out that the true difficulty with our young radicals is not that they are too modern but that they are not modern enough. For, though the word modern is often and no doubt inevitably used to describe the more recent or the most recent thing, this is not its sole use. It is not in this sense alone that the word is used by writers like Goethe and Sainte-Beuve and Renan and Arnold. What all these writers mean by the modern spirit is the positive and critical spirit, the spirit that refuses to take things on authority. This is what Renan means, for example, when he calls Petrarch the "founder of the modern spirit in literature," or Arnold when he explains why the Greeks of the great period seem more modern to us than the men of the Middle Ages.[3]

Now what I have myself tried to do is to be thoroughly modern in this sense. I hold that one should not only welcome the efforts of the man of science at his best to put the natural law on a positive and critical basis, but that one should strive to emulate him in one's dealings with the human law; and so become a complete positivist. My main objection to the movement I am studying is that it has failed to produce complete positivists. Instead of facing honestly the emergency created by its break with the past the leaders of this movement have inclined to deny

[3] See his Oxford address *On the Modern Element in Literature*.

the duality of human nature, and then sought to dissimulate this mutilation of man under a mass of intellectual and emotional sophistry. The proper procedure in refuting these incomplete positivists is not to appeal to some dogma or outer authority but rather to turn against them their own principles. Thus Diderot, a notable example of the incomplete positivist and a chief source of naturalistic tendency, says that "everything is experimental in man." Now the word experimental has somewhat narrowed in meaning since the time of Diderot. If one takes the saying to mean that everything in man is a matter of experience one should accept it unreservedly and then plant oneself firmly on the facts of experience that Diderot and other incomplete positivists have refused to recognize.

The man who plants himself, not on outer authority but on experience, is an individualist. To be modern in the sense I have defined is not only to be positive and critical, but also – and this from the time of Petrarch – to be individualistic. The establishment of a sound type of individualism is indeed the specifically modern problem. It is right here that the failure of the incomplete positivist, the man who is positive only according to the natural law, is most conspicuous. What prevails in the region of the natural law is endless change and relativity; therefore the naturalistic positivist attacks all the traditional creeds and dogmas for the very reason that they aspire to fixity. Now all the ethical values of civilization have been associated with these fixed beliefs; and so it has come to pass

that with their undermining by naturalism the ethical values themselves are in danger of being swept away in the everlasting flux. Because the individual who views life positively must give up unvarying creeds and dogmas "anterior, exterior, and superior" to himself, it has been assumed that he must also give up standards. For standards imply an element of oneness somewhere, with reference to which it is possible to measure the mere manifoldness and change. The naturalistic individualist, however, refuses to recognize any such element of oneness. His own private and personal self is to be the measure of all things and this measure itself, he adds, is constantly changing. But to stop at this stage is to be satisfied with the most dangerous of half-truths. Thus Bergson's assertion that "life is a perpetual gushing forth of novelties" is in itself only a dangerous half-truth of this kind. The constant element in life is, no less than the element of novelty and change, a matter of observation and experience. As the French have it, the more life changes the more it is the same thing.

If, then, one is to be a sound individualist, an individualist with human standards – and in an age like this that has cut loose from its traditional moorings, the very survival of civilization would seem to hinge on its power to produce such a type of individualist – one must grapple with what Plato terms the problem of the One and the Many. My own solution of this problem, it may be well to point out, is not purely Platonic. Because one can perceive immediately an element of unity in things, it does not

follow that one is justified in establishing a world of essences or entities or "ideas" above the flux. To do this is to fall away from a positive and critical into a more or less speculative attitude; it is to risk setting up a metaphysic of the One. Those who put exclusive emphasis on the element of change in things are in no less obvious danger of falling away from the positive and critical attitude into a metaphysic of the Many.[4] This for example is the error one finds in the contemporary thinkers who seem to have the cry, thinkers like James and Bergson and Dewey and Croce. They are very far from satisfying the requirements of a complete positivism; they are seeking rather to build up their own intoxication with the element of change into a complete view of life, and so are turning their backs on one whole side of experience in a way that often reminds one of the ancient Greek sophists. The history of philosophy since the Greeks is to a great extent the history of the clashes of the metaphysicians of the One and the metaphysicians of the Many. In the eyes of the complete positivist this history therefore reduces itself largely to a monstrous logomachy.

Life does not give here an element of oneness and there an element of change. It gives a *oneness that is always changing*. The oneness and the change are inseparable. Now if what is stable and permanent is felt as real, the side of life that is always slipping over into something else or vanishing away entirely is, as every

[4] These two tendencies in Occidental thought go back respectively at least as far as Parmenides and Heraclitus.

student of psychology knows, associated rather with the feeling of illusion. If a man attends solely to this side of life he will finally come, like Leconte de Lisle, to look upon it as a "torrent of mobile chimeras," as an "endless whirl of vain appearances." To admit that the oneness of life and the change are inseparable is therefore to admit that such reality as man can know positively is inextricably mixed up with illusion. Moreover man does not observe the oneness that is always changing from the outside; he is a part of the process, he is himself a oneness that is always changing. Though imperceptible at any particular moment, the continuous change that is going on leads to differences – those, let us say, between a human individual at the age of six weeks and the same individual at the age of seventy – which are sufficiently striking: and finally this human oneness that is always changing seems to vanish away entirely. From all this it follows that an enormous element of illusion – and this is a truth the East has always accepted more readily than the West – enters into the idea of personality itself. If the critical spirit is once allowed to have its way, it will not rest content until it has dissolved life into a mist of illusion. Perhaps the most positive and critical account of man in modern literature is that of Shakespeare:

> We are such stuff
> As dreams are made on, and our little life
> Is rounded with a sleep.

But, though strictly considered, life is but a web of illusion and a dream within a dream, it is a dream that needs to be

managed with the utmost discretion, if it is not to turn into a nightmare. In other words, however much life may mock the metaphysician, the problem of conduct remains. There is always the unity at the heart of the change; it is possible, however, to get at this real and abiding element and so at the standards with reference to which the dream of life may be rightly managed only through a veil of illusion. The problem of the One and the Many, the ultimate problem of thought, can therefore be solved only by a right use of illusion. In close relation to illusion and the questions that arise in connection with it is all that we have come to sum up in the word imagination. The use of this word, at least in anything like its present extension, is, one should note, comparatively recent. Whole nations and periods of the past can scarcely be said to have had any word corresponding to imagination in this extended sense. Yet the thinkers of the past have treated, at times profoundly, under the head of fiction or illusion the questions that we should treat under the head of imagination.[5] In the "Masters of Modern French Criticism" I was above all preoccupied with the problem of the One and

[5] In his *World as Imagination* (1916) E. D. Fawcett, though ultra-romantic and unoriental in his point of view, deals with a problem that has always been the special preoccupation of the Hindu. A Hindu, however, would have entitled a similar volume *The World as Illusion* (māyā). Aristotle has much to say of fiction in his *Poetics* but does not even use the word imagination (φαντασία). In the *Psychology*, where he discusses the imagination, he assigns not to it, but to mind or reason the active and creative rôle (νοῦς ποιητικός). It is especially the notion of the *creative* imagination that is recent. The earliest example of the phrase that I have noted in French is in Rousseau's description of his erotic reveries at the Hermitage (*Confessions*, Livre IX).

the Many and the failure of the nineteenth century to deal with it adequately. My effort in this present work is to show that this failure can be retrieved only by a deeper insight into the imagination and its all-important rôle in both literature and life. Man is cut off from immediate contact with anything abiding and therefore worthy to be called real, and condemned to live in an element of fiction or illusion, but he may, I have tried to show, lay hold with the aid of the imagination on the element of oneness that is inextricably blended with the manifoldness and change and to just that extent may build up a sound model for imitation. One tends to be an individualist with true standards, to put the matter somewhat differently, only in so far as one understands the relation between appearance and reality – what the philosophers call the epistemological problem. This problem, though it cannot be solved abstractly and metaphysically, can be solved practically and in terms of actual conduct. Inasmuch as modern philosophy has failed to work out any such solution, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that modern philosophy is bankrupt, not merely from Kant, but from Descartes.

The supreme maxim of the ethical positivist is: By their fruits shall ye know them. If I object to a romantic philosophy it is because I do not like its fruits. I infer from its fruits that this philosophy has made a wrong use of illusion. "All those who took the romantic promises at their face value," says Bourget, "rolled in abysses of despair and ennui."[6] If any one still holds, as many

[6] Essay on Flaubert in *Essais de Psychologie contemporaine*.

of the older romanticists held, that it is a distinguished thing to roll in abysses of despair and ennui, he should read me no further. He will have no sympathy with my point of view. If any one, on the other hand, accepts my criterion but denies that Rousseauistic living has such fruits, it has been my aim so to accumulate evidence that he will be confronted with the task of refuting not a set of theories but a body of facts. My whole method, let me repeat, is experimental, or it might be less ambiguous to say if the word were a fortunate one, experiential. The illustrations I have given of any particular aspect of the movement are usually only a small fraction of those I have collected – themselves no doubt only a fraction of the illustrations that might be collected from printed sources. M. Maigron's investigation[7] into the fruits of romantic living suggests the large additions that might be made to these printed sources from manuscript material.

My method indeed is open in one respect to grave misunderstanding. From the fact that I am constantly citing passages from this or that author and condemning the tendency for which these passages stand, the reader will perhaps be led to infer a total condemnation of the authors so quoted. But the inference may be very incorrect. I am not trying to give rounded estimates of individuals – delightful and legitimate as that type of criticism is – but to trace main currents as a part of my search for a set of principles to oppose to naturalism. I call attention for example to the Rousseauistic and primitivistic elements

[7] *Le Romantisme et les mœurs* (1910).

in Wordsworth but do not assert that this is the whole truth about Wordsworth. One's views as to the philosophical value of Rousseauism must, however, weigh heavily in a total judgment of Wordsworth. Criticism is such a difficult art because one must not only have principles but must apply them flexibly and intuitively. No one would accuse criticism at present of lacking flexibility. It has grown so flexible in fact as to become invertebrate. One of my reasons for practicing the present type of criticism, is the conviction that because of a lack of principles the type of criticism that aims at rounded estimates of individuals is rapidly ceasing to have any meaning.

I should add that if I had attempted rounded estimates they would often have been more favorable than might be gathered from my comments here and elsewhere on the romantic leaders. One is justified in leaning towards severity in the laying down of principles, but should nearly always incline to indulgence in the application of them. In a sense one may say with Goethe that the excellencies are of the individual, the defects of the age. It is especially needful to recall distinctions of this kind in the case of Rousseau himself and my treatment of him. M. Lanson has dwelt on the strange duality of Rousseau's nature. "The writer," he says, "is a poor dreamy creature who approaches action only with alarm and with every manner of precaution, and who understands the applications of his boldest doctrines in a way to reassure conservatives and satisfy opportunists. But the work for its part detaches itself from the author, lives its independent

life, and, heavily charged with revolutionary explosives which neutralize the moderate and conciliatory elements Rousseau has put into it for his own satisfaction, it exasperates and inspires revolt and fires enthusiasms and irritates hatreds; it is the mother of violence, the source of all that is uncompromising, it launches the simple souls who give themselves up to its strange virtue upon the desperate quest of the absolute, an absolute to be realized now by anarchy and now by social despotism."[8] I am inclined to discover in the Rousseau who, according to M. Lanson, is merely timorous, a great deal of shrewdness and at times something even better than shrewdness. The question is not perhaps very important, for M. Lanson is surely right in affirming that the Rousseau who has moved the world – and that for reasons I shall try to make plain – is Rousseau the extremist and foe of compromise; and so it is to this Rousseau that as a student of main tendencies I devote almost exclusive attention. I am not, however, seeking to make a scapegoat even of the radical and revolutionary Rousseau. One of my chief objections, indeed, to Rousseauism, as will appear in the following pages, is that it encourages the making of scapegoats.

If I am opposed to Rousseauism because of its fruits in experience, I try to put what I have to offer as a substitute on the same positive basis. Now experience is of many degrees: first of all one's purely personal experience, an infinitesimal fragment; and then the experience of one's immediate circle, of one's time

[8] *Annales de la Société Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, VIII, 30-31.

and country, of the near past and so on in widening circles. The past which as dogma the ethical positivist rejects, as experience he not only admits but welcomes. He can no more dispense with it indeed than the naturalistic positivist can dispense with his laboratory. He insists moreover on including the remoter past in his survey. Perhaps the most pernicious of all the conceits fostered by the type of progress we owe to science is the conceit that we have outgrown this older experience. One should endeavor, as Goethe says, to oppose to the aberrations of the hour, the masses of universal history. There are special reasons just now why this background to which one appeals should not be merely Occidental. An increasing material contact between the Occident and the Far East is certain. We should be enlightened by this time as to the perils of material contact between men and bodies of men who have no deeper understanding. Quite apart from this consideration the experience of the Far East completes and confirms in a most interesting way that of the Occident. We can scarcely afford to neglect it if we hope to work out a truly ecumenical wisdom to oppose to the sinister one-sidedness of our current naturalism. Now the ethical experience of the Far East may be summed up for practical purposes in the teachings and influence of two men, Confucius and Buddha.[9] To know the Buddhistic and Confucian teachings in their true spirit is to know

[9] I should perhaps say that in the case of Buddha I have been able to consult the original Pāli documents. In the case of Confucius and the Chinese I have had to depend on translations.

what is best and most representative in the ethical experience of about half the human race for over seventy generations.

A study of Buddha and Confucius suggests, as does a study of the great teachers of the Occident, that under its bewildering surface variety human experience falls after all into a few main categories. I myself am fond of distinguishing three levels on which a man may experience life – the naturalistic, the humanistic, and the religious. Tested by its fruits Buddhism at its best confirms Christianity. Submitted to the same test Confucianism falls in with the teaching of Aristotle and in general with that of all those who from the Greeks down have proclaimed decorum and the law of measure. This is so obviously true that Confucius has been called the Aristotle of the East. Not only has the Far East had in Buddhism a great religious movement and in Confucianism a great humanistic movement, it has also had in early Taoism[10] a movement that in its attempts to work out naturalistic equivalents of humanistic or religious insight, offers almost startling analogies to the movement I am here studying.

Thus both East and West have not only had great religious and humanistic disciplines which when tested by their fruits confirm one another, bearing witness to the element of oneness, the constant element in human experience, but these disciplines have at times been conceived in a very positive spirit. Confucius indeed, though a moral realist, can scarcely be called a positivist;

[10] See appendix on Chinese primitivism.

he aimed rather to attach men to the past by links of steel. He reminds us in this as in some other ways of the last of the great Tories in the Occident, Dr. Johnson. Buddha on the other hand was an individualist. He wished men to rest their belief neither on his authority[11] nor on that of tradition.[12] No one has ever made a more serious effort to put religion on a positive and critical basis. It is only proper that I acknowledge my indebtedness to the great Hindu positivist: my treatment of the problem of the One and the Many, for example, is nearer to Buddha than to Plato. Yet even if the general thesis be granted that it is desirable to put the "law for man" on a positive and critical basis, the question remains whether the more crying need just now is for positive and critical humanism or for positive and critical religion. I have discussed this delicate and difficult question more fully in my last chapter, but may give at least one reason here for inclining to the humanistic solution. I have been struck in my study of the past by the endless self-deception to which man is subject when he tries to pass too abruptly from the naturalistic to the religious level. The world, it is hard to avoid concluding, would have been a better place if more persons had made sure they were human before setting out to be superhuman; and this consideration would seem to apply with special force

[11] See, for example, *Majjhima* (Pāli Text Society), I, 265. Later Buddhism, especially Mahāyāna Buddhism, fell away from the positive and critical spirit of the founder into mythology and metaphysics.

[12] Buddha expressed on many occasions his disdain for the *Vedas*, the great traditional authority of the Hindus.

to a generation like the present that is wallowing in the trough of naturalism. After all to be a good humanist is merely to be moderate and sensible and decent. It is much easier for a man to deceive himself and others regarding his supernatural lights than it is regarding the degree to which he is moderate and sensible and decent.

The past is not without examples of a positive and critical humanism. I have already mentioned Aristotle. If by his emphasis on the mediatory virtues he reminds one of Confucius, by his positive method and intensely analytical temper he reminds one rather of Buddha. When Aristotle rises to the religious level and discourses of the "life of vision" he is very Buddhistic. When Buddha for his part turns from the religious life to the duties of the layman he is purely Aristotelian. Aristotle also deals positively with the natural law. He is indeed a complete positivist, and not, like the man of the nineteenth century, positive according to the natural law alone. The Aristotle that should specially concern us, however, is the positive and critical humanist – the Aristotle, let us say, of the "Ethics" and "Politics" and "Poetics." Just as I have called the point of view of the scientific and utilitarian naturalist Baconian,[13] and that of the emotional naturalist Rousseauistic, so I would term the point of view that I am myself seeking to develop Aristotelian. Aristotle has laid down once for all the principle that should guide the

[13] I have explained the reasons for giving this place to Bacon in chapter II of *Literature and the American College*.

ethical positivist. "Truth," he says, "in matters of moral action is judged from facts and from actual life. … So what we should do is to examine the preceding statements [of Solon and other wise men] by referring them to facts and to actual life, and when they harmonize with facts we may accept them, when they are at variance with them conceive of them as mere theories."[14]

It is in this sense alone that I aspire to be called an Aristotelian; for one risks certain misunderstandings in using the name of Aristotle.[15] The authority of this great positivist has been invoked innumerable times throughout the ages as a substitute for direct observation. Aristotle was not only the prop and mainstay of dogma for centuries during the Middle Ages, but dogmatic Aristotelianism survived to no small extent, especially in literature, throughout the neo-classical period. It was no doubt natural enough that the champions of the modern spirit should have rejected Aristotle along with the traditional order of which he had been made a support. Yet if they had been more modern they might have seen in him rather a chief precursor. They might have learned from him how to have standards and at the

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[14] *Eth. Nic.*, 1179 a.

[15] I scarcely need remind the reader that the extant Aristotelian writings which have repelled so many by their form were almost certainly not meant for publication. For the problems raised by these writings as well as for the mystery in the method of their early transmission see R. Shute, *History of the Aristotelian Writings* (1888). The writings which Aristotle prepared for publication and which Cicero describes as a "golden stream of speech" (*Acad.* II, 38, 119) have, with the possible exception of the recently recovered *Constitution of Athens*, been lost.

same time not be immured in dogma. As it is, those who call themselves modern have come to adopt a purely exploratory attitude towards life. "On desperate seas long wont to roam," they have lost more and more the sense of what is normal and central in human experience. But to get away from what is normal and central is to get away from wisdom. My whole argument on the negative side, if I may venture on a final summing up, is that the naturalistic movement in the midst of which we are still living had from the start this taint of eccentricity. I have tried to show in detail the nature of the aberration. As for the results, they are being written large in disastrous events. On its constructive side, my argument, if it makes any appeal at all, will be to those for whom the symbols through which the past has received its wisdom have become incredible, and who, seeing at the same time that the break with the past that took place in the eighteenth century was on unsound lines, hold that the remedy for the partial positivism that is the source of this unsoundness, is a more complete positivism. Nothing is more perilous than to be only half critical. This is to risk being the wrong type of individualist – the individualist who has repudiated outer control without achieving inner control. "People mean nowadays by a philosopher," says Rivarol, "not the man who learns the great art of mastering his passions or adding to his insight, but the man who has cast off prejudices without acquiring virtues." That view of philosophy has not ceased to be popular. The whole modern experiment is threatened with breakdown simply because it has

not been sufficiently modern. One should therefore not rest content until one has, with the aid of the secular experience of both the East and the West, worked out a point of view so modern that, compared with it, that of our young radicals will seem antediluvian.

CHAPTER I
THE TERMS CLASSIC AND ROMANTIC

The words classic and romantic, we are often told, cannot be defined at all, and even if they could be defined, some would add, we should not be much profited. But this inability or unwillingness to define may itself turn out to be only one aspect of a movement that from Rousseau to Bergson has sought to discredit the analytical intellect – what Wordsworth calls "the false secondary power by which we multiply distinctions." However, those who are with Socrates rather than with Rousseau or Wordsworth in this matter, will insist on the importance of definition, especially in a chaotic era like the present; for nothing is more characteristic of such an era than its irresponsible use of general terms. Now to measure up to the Socratic standard, a definition must not be abstract and metaphysical, but experimental; it must not, that is, reflect our opinion of what a word should mean, but what it actually has meant. Mathematicians may be free at times to frame their own definitions, but in the case of words like classic and romantic, that have been used innumerable times, and used not in one but in many countries, such a method is inadmissible. One must keep one's eye on actual usage. One should indeed allow for a

certain amount of freakishness in this usage. Beaumarchais, for example, makes classic synonymous with barbaric.[16] One may disregard an occasional aberration of this kind, but if one can find only confusion and inconsistency in all the main uses of words like classic and romantic, the only procedure for those who speak or write in order to be understood is to banish the words from their vocabulary.

Now to define in a Socratic way two things are necessary: one must learn to see a common element in things that are apparently different and also to discriminate between things that are apparently similar. A Newton, to take the familiar instance of the former process, saw a common element in the fall of an apple and the motion of a planet; and one may perhaps without being a literary Newton discover a common element in all the main uses of the word romantic as well as in all the main uses of the word classic; though some of the things to which the word romantic in particular has been applied seem, it must be admitted, at least as far apart as the fall of an apple and the motion of a planet. The first step is to perceive the something that connects two or more of these things apparently so diverse, and then it may be found necessary to refer this unifying trait itself back to something still more general, and so on until we arrive, not indeed at anything absolute – the absolute will always elude us – but at what Goethe calls the original or underlying phenomenon (*Urphänomen*). A fruitful source of false definition is to take as primary in a more or

[16] See his *Essai sur le genre dramatique sérieux*.

less closely allied group of facts what is actually secondary – for example, to fix upon the return to the Middle Ages as the central fact in romanticism, whereas this return is only symptomatic; it is very far from being the original phenomenon. Confused and incomplete definitions of romanticism have indeed just that origin – they seek to put at the centre something that though romantic is not central but peripheral, and so the whole subject is thrown out of perspective.

My plan then is to determine to the best of my ability, in connection with a brief historical survey, the common element in the various uses of the words classic and romantic; and then, having thus disposed of the similarities, to turn to the second part of the art of defining and deal, also historically, with the differences. For my subject is not romanticism in general, but only a particular type of romanticism, and this type of romanticism needs to be seen as a recoil, not from classicism in general, but from a particular type of classicism.

I

The word romantic when traced historically is found to go back to the old French *roman* of which still elder forms are *romans* and *romant*. These and similar formations derive ultimately from the mediæval Latin adverb *romanice*. *Roman* and like words meant originally the various vernaculars derived from Latin, just as the French still speak of these vernaculars as *les langues romanes*; and then the word *roman* came to be applied to tales written in the various vernaculars, especially in old French. Now with what features of these tales were people most struck? The reply to this question is found in a passage of a fifteenth-century Latin manuscript:[17] "From the reading of certain romantics, that is, books of poetry composed in French on military deeds which are for the most part fictitious."[18] Here the term romantic is applied to books that we should still call romantic and for the very same reason, namely, because of the predominance in these books of the element of fiction over reality.

In general a thing is romantic when, as Aristotle would say, it is wonderful rather than probable; in other words, when it violates the normal sequence of cause and effect in favor of

[17] Quoted in Grimm's Dictionary.

[18] Ex lectione quorundam romanticorum, i.e. librorum compositorum in gallico poeticorum de gestis militaribus, in quibus maxima pars fabulosa est.

adventure. Here is the fundamental contrast between the words classic and romantic which meets us at the outset and in some form or other persists in all the uses of the word down to the present day. A thing is romantic when it is strange, unexpected, intense, superlative, extreme, unique,[19] etc. A thing is classical, on the other hand, when it is not unique, but representative of a class. In this sense medical men may speak correctly of a classic case of typhoid fever, or a classic case of hysteria. One is even justified in speaking of a classic example of romanticism. By an easy extension of meaning a thing is classical when it belongs to a high class or to the best class.

The type of romanticism referred to in the fifteenth-century manuscript was, it will be observed, the spontaneous product of the popular imagination of the Middle Ages. We may go further and say that the uncultivated human imagination in all times and places is romantic in the same way. It hungers for the thrilling and the marvellous and is, in short, incurably melodramatic. All students of the past know how, when the popular imagination is left free to work on actual historical characters and events, it quickly introduces into these characters and events the themes of universal folk-lore, and makes a ruthless sacrifice of reality to the love of melodramatic surprise. For example, the original nucleus of historical fact has almost

[19] Perhaps the most romantic lines in English are found in one of Camillo's speeches in *The Winter's Tale* (IV, 4):a wild dedication of yourselves To unpath'd waters, undream'd shores. This "wild dedication" is, it should be noted, looked upon by Camillo with disfavor.

disappeared in the lurid melodramatic tale "Les quatre fils Aymon," which has continued, as presented in the "Bibliothèque Bleue," to appeal to the French peasant down to our own times. Those who look with alarm on recent attacks upon romanticism should therefore be comforted. All children, nearly all women and the vast majority of men always have been, are and probably always will be romantic. This is true even of a classical period like the second half of the seventeenth century in France. Boileau is supposed to have killed the vogue of the interminable romances of the early seventeenth century which themselves continue the spirit of the mediæval romances. But recent investigations have shown that the vogue of these romances continued until well on into the eighteenth century. They influenced the imagination of Rousseau, the great modern romancer.

But to return to the history of the word romantic. The first printed examples of the word in any modern tongue are, it would seem, to be found in English. The Oxford Dictionary cites the following from F. Greville's "Life of Sidney" (written before 1628, published in 1652): "Doe not his Arcadian romantics live after him?" – meaning apparently ideas or features suggestive of romance. Of extreme interest is the use of the word in Evelyn's "Diary" (3 August, 1654): "Were Sir Guy's grot improved as it might be, it were capable of being made a most romantic and pleasant place." The word is not only used in a favorable sense, but it is applied to nature; and it is this use of the word in connection with outer nature that French and German literatures

are going to derive later from England. Among the early English uses of the word romantic may be noted: "There happened this extraordinary case – one of the most romantique that ever I heard in my life and could not have believed,"[20] etc. "Most other authors that I ever read either have wild romantic tales wherein they strain Love and Honor to that ridiculous height that it becomes burlesque,"[21] etc. The word becomes fairly common by the year 1700 and thousands of examples could be collected from English writers in the eighteenth century. Here are two early eighteenth-century instances:

"The gentleman I am married to made love to me in rapture but it was the rapture of a Christian and a man of Honor, not a romantic hero or a whining coxcomb."[22]

> Whether the charmer sinner it or saint it
> If folly grow romantick I must paint it.[23]

The early French and German uses of the word romantic seem to derive from England. One important point is to be noted as to France. Before using the word *romantique* the French used the word *romanesque* in the sense of wild, unusual, adventurous – especially in matters of sentiment, and they have

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[20] *Pepys's Diary*, 13 June, 1666.

[21] Thomas Shadwell, Preface to the *Sullen Lovers*, 1668.

[22] *Spectator*, 142, by Steele.

[23] Pope, 2d Epistle, *Of the Character of Women*.

continued to employ *romanesque* alongside *romantique*, which is now practically used only of the romantic school. A great deal of confusion is thus avoided into which we fall in English from having only the one word romantic, which must do duty for both *romantique* and *romanesque*. An example of *romantique* is found in French as early as 1675;[24] but the word owed its vogue practically to the anglomania that set in about the middle of the eighteenth century. The first very influential French example of the word is appropriately found in Rousseau in the Fifth Promenade (1777): "The shores of the Lake of Bienne are more wild and romantic than those of the Lake of Geneva." The word *romantique* was fashionable in France especially as applied to scenery from about the year 1785, but without any thought as yet of applying it to a literary school.

In Germany the word *romantisch* as an equivalent of the French *romanesque* and modern German *romanhaft*, appears at the end of the seventeenth century and plainly as a borrowing from the French. Heidigger, a Swiss, used it several times in his "Mythoscopia romantica,"[25] an attack on romances and the wild and vain imaginings they engender. According to Heidigger the only resource against romanticism in this sense is religion. In Germany as in France the association of romantic with natural

[24] Cf. *Revue d'hist. litt.*, XVIII, 440. For the Early French history of the word, see also the article *Romantique* by A. François in *Annales de la Soc. J. – J. Rousseau*, V, 199-236.

[25] First edition, 1698; second edition, 1732.

scenery comes from England, especially from the imitations and translations of Thomson's "Seasons."

In the second half of the eighteenth century the increasingly favorable use of words like Gothic and enthusiastic as well as the emergence of words like sentimental and picturesque are among the symptoms of a new movement, and the fortunes of the word romantic were more or less bound up with this movement. Still, apart from its application to natural scenery, the word is as yet far from having acquired a favorable connotation if we are to believe an essay by John Foster on the "Application of the Epithet Romantic" (1805). Foster's point of view is not unlike that of Heidigger. Romantic, he says, had come to be used as a term of vague abuse, whereas it can be used rightly only of the ascendancy of imagination over judgment, and is therefore synonymous with such words as wild, visionary, extravagant. "A man possessing so strong a judgment and so subordinate a fancy as Dean Swift would hardly have been made romantic … if he had studied all the books in Don Quixote's library." It is not, Foster admits, a sign of high endowment for a youth to be too coldly judicial, too deaf to the blandishments of imaginative illusion. Yet in general a man should strive to bring his imagination under the control of sound reason. But how is it possible thus to prevail against the deceits of fancy? Right knowing, he asserts very un-Socratically, is not enough to ensure right doing. At this point Foster changes from the tone of a literary essay to that of a sermon, and, maintaining a thesis

somewhat similar to that of Pascal in the seventeenth century and Heidigger in the eighteenth, he concludes that a man's imagination will run away with his judgment or reason unless he have the aid of divine grace.

II

When Foster wrote his essay there was no question as yet in England of a romantic school. Before considering how the word came to be applied to a particular movement we need first to bring out more fully certain broad conflicts of tendency during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, conflicts that are not sufficiently revealed by the occasional uses during this period of the word romantic. In the contrast Foster established between judgment and imagination he is merely following a long series of neo-classical critics and this contrast not only seemed to him and these critics, but still seems to many, the essential contrast between classicism and romanticism. We shall be helped in understanding how judgment (or reason) and imagination came thus to be sharply contrasted if we consider briefly the changes in the meaning of the word wit during the neo-classical period, and also if we recollect that the contrast between judgment and imagination is closely related to the contrast the French are so fond of establishing between the general sense (*le sens commun*) and the private sense or sense of the individual (*le sens propre*).

In the sixteenth century prime emphasis was put not upon common sense, but upon wit or conceit or ingenuity (in the sense of quickness of imagination). The typical Elizabethan strove to excel less by judgment than by invention, by "high-flying liberty of conceit"; like Falstaff he would have a brain "apprehensive,

quick, forgetive, full of nimble, fiery, and delectable shapes." Wit at this time, it should be remembered, was synonymous not only with imagination but with intellect (in opposition to will). The result of the worship of wit in this twofold sense was a sort of intellectual romanticism. Though its origins are no doubt mediæval, it differs from the ordinary romanticism of the Middle Ages to which I have already referred in being thus concerned with thought rather than with action. Towards the end of the Renaissance and in the early seventeenth century especially, people were ready to pursue the strange and surprising thought even at the risk of getting too far away from the workings of the normal mind. Hence the "points" and "conceits" that spread, as Lowell put it, like a "cutaneous eruption" over the face of Europe; hence the Gongorists, and Cultists, the Marinists and Euphuists, the *précieux* and the "metaphysical" poets. And then came the inevitable swing away from all this fantasticality towards common sense. A demand arose for something that was less rare and "precious" and more representative.

This struggle between the general sense and the sense of the individual stands out with special clearness in France. A model was gradually worked out by aid of the classics, especially the Latin classics, as to what man should be. Those who were in the main movement of the time elaborated a great convention, that is they *came together* about certain things. They condemned in the name of their convention those who were too indulgent of their private sense, in other words, too eccentric in their imaginings.

A Théophile, for example, fell into disesteem for refusing to restrain his imagination, for asserting the type of "spontaneity" that would have won him favor in any romantic period.[26]

The swing away from intellectual romanticism can also be traced in the changes that took place in the meaning of the word wit in both France and England. One of the main tasks of the French critics of the seventeenth century and of English critics, largely under the lead of the French, was to distinguish between true and false wit. The work that would have been complimented a little earlier as "witty" and "conceited" is now censured as fantastic and far-fetched, as lacking in judicial control over the imagination, and therefore in general appeal. The movement away from the sense of the individual towards common sense goes on steadily from the time of Malherbe to that of Boileau. Balzac attacks Ronsard for his individualistic excess, especially for his audacity in inventing words without reference to usage. Balzac himself is attacked by Boileau for his affectation, for his straining to say things differently from other people. In so far his wit was not true but false. La Bruyère, in substantial accord with Boileau, defines false wit as wit which is lacking in good

[26] Cf. his *Elégie à une dame*.Mon âme, imaginant, n'a point la patienceDe bien polir les vers et ranger la science.La règle me déplaît, j'écris confusément:Jamais un bon esprit ne fait rien qu'aisément.…Je veux faire des vers qui ne soient pas contraints…Chercher des lieux secrets où rein ne me déplaise,Méditer à loisir, rêver tout à mon aise,Employer toute une heure à me mirer dans l'eau,Ouïr, comme en songeant, la course d'un ruisseau.Ecrire dans un bois, m'interrompre, me taire,Composer un quatrain sans songer à le faire.

sense and judgment and "in which the imagination has too large a share."[27]

What the metaphysical poets in England understood by wit, according to Dr. Johnson, was the pursuit of their thoughts to their last ramifications, and in this pursuit of the singular and the novel they lost the "grandeur of generality." This imaginative quest of rarity led to the same recoil as in France, to a demand for common sense and judgment. The opposite extreme from the metaphysical excess is reached when the element of invention is eliminated entirely from wit and it is reduced, as it is by Pope, to rendering happily the general sense —

What oft was thought but ne'er so well expressed.

Dr. Johnson says that the decisive change in the meaning of the word wit took place about the time of Cowley. Important evidences of this change and also of the new tendency to depreciate the imagination is also found in certain passages of Hobbes. Hobbes identifies the imagination with the memory of outer images and so looks on it as "decaying sense."[28] "They who observe similitudes," he remarks elsewhere, making a distinction that was to be developed by Locke and accepted by Addison, "in case they be such as are but rarely observed by others are said to have a good wit; by which, in this occasion, is meant a good fancy" (wit has here the older meaning). "But they who

[27] *Caractères*, ch. V.

[28] His psychology of the memory and imagination is still Aristotelian. Cf. E. Wallace, *Aristotle's Psychology*, Intr., lxxxvi-cvii.

distinguish and observe differences," he continues, "are said to have a good judgment. Fancy without the help of judgment is not worthy of commendation, whereas judgment is commended for itself without the help of fancy. Indeed without steadiness and direction to some end, a great fancy is one kind of madness." "Judgment without fancy," he concludes, "is wit" (this anticipates the extreme neo-classical use of the word wit), "but fancy without judgment, not."

Dryden betrays the influence of Hobbes when he says of the period of incubation of his "Rival Ladies": "Fancy was yet in its first work, moving the sleeping images of things towards the light, there to be distinguished and either chosen or rejected by judgment." Fancy or imagination (the words were still synonymous), as conceived by the English neo-classicists, often shows a strange vivacity for a faculty that is after all only "decaying sense." "Fancy without judgment," says Dryden, "is a hot-mouthed jade without a curb." "Fancy," writes Rymer in a similar vein, "leaps and frisks, and away she's gone; whilst reason rattles the chain and follows after." The following lines of Mulgrave are typical of the neo-classical notion of the relation between fancy and judgment:

> As all is dullness when the Fancy's bad,
> So without Judgment, Fancy is but mad.
> Reason is that substantial, useful part

Which gains the Head, while t' other wins the Heart.[29]

The opposition established by the neo-classicist in passages of this kind is too mechanical. Fancy and judgment do not seem to coöperate but to war with one another. In case of doubt the neo-classicist is always ready to sacrifice fancy to the "substantial, useful part," and so he seems too negative and cool and prosaic in his reason, and this is because his reason is so largely a protest against a previous romantic excess. What had been considered genius in the time of the "metaphysicals" had too often turned out to be only oddity. With this warning before them men kept their eyes fixed very closely on the model of normal human nature that had been set up, and imitated it very literally and timorously. A man was haunted by the fear that he might be "monstrous," and so, as Rymer put it, "satisfy nobody's maggot but his own." Correctness thus became a sort of tyranny. We suffer to the present day from this neo-classical failure to work out a sound conception of the imagination in its relation to good sense. Because the neo-classicist held the imagination lightly as compared with good sense the romantic rebels, were led to hold good sense lightly as compared with imagination. The romantic view in short is too much the neo-classical view turned upside down; and, as Sainte-Beuve says, nothing resembles a hollow so much as a swelling.

[29] *An Essay upon Poetry* (1682).

III

Because the classicism against which romanticism rebelled was inadequate it does not follow that every type of classicism suffers from a similar inadequacy. The great movement away from imaginative unrestraint towards regularity and good sense took place in the main under French auspices. In general the French have been the chief exponents of the classic spirit in modern times. They themselves feel this so strongly that a certain group in France has of late years inclined to use interchangeably the words classicist and nationalist. But this is a grave confusion, for if the classic spirit is anything at all it is in its essence not local and national, but universal and human. To be sure, any particular manifestation of classicism will of necessity contain elements that are less universal, elements that reflect merely a certain person or persons, or a certain age and country. This is a truth that we scarcely need to have preached to us; for with the growth of the historical method we have come to fix our attention almost exclusively on these local and relative elements. The complete critic will accept the historical method but be on his guard against its excess. He will see an element in man that is set above the local and the relative; he will learn to detect this abiding element through all the flux of circumstance; in Platonic language, he will perceive the One in the Many.

Formerly, it must be admitted, critics were not historical

enough. They took to be of the essence of classicism what was merely its local coloring, especially the coloring it received from the French of the seventeenth century. If we wish to distinguish between essence and accident in the classic spirit we must get behind the French of the seventeenth century, behind the Italians of the sixteenth century who laid the foundations of neo-classical theory, behind the Romans who were the immediate models of most neo-classicists, to the source of classicism in Greece. Even in Greece the classic spirit is very much implicated in the local and the relative, yet in the life of no other people perhaps does what is universal in man shine forth more clearly from what is only local and relative. We still need, therefore, to return to Greece, not merely for the best practice, but for the best theory of classicism; for this is still found in spite of all its obscurities and incompleteness in the Poetics of Aristotle. If we have recourse to this treatise, however, it must be on condition that we do not, like the critics of the Renaissance, deal with it in an abstract and dogmatic way (the form of the treatise it must be confessed gave them no slight encouragement), but in a spirit akin to Aristotle's own as revealed in the total body of his writings – a spirit that is at its best positive and experimental.

Aristotle not only deals positively and experimentally with the natural order and with man so far as he is a part of this order, but he deals in a similar fashion with a side of man that the modern positivist often overlooks. Like all the great Greeks Aristotle recognizes that man is the creature of two laws: he

has an ordinary or natural self of impulse and desire and a human self that is known practically as a power of control over impulse and desire. If man is to become human he must not let impulse and desire run wild, but must oppose to everything excessive in his ordinary self, whether in thought or deed or emotion, the law of measure. This insistence on restraint and proportion is rightly taken to be of the essence not merely of the Greek spirit but of the classical spirit in general. The norm or standard that is to set bounds to the ordinary self is got at by different types of classicists in different ways and described variously: for example, as the human law, or the better self, or reason (a word to be discussed more fully later), or nature. Thus when Boileau says, "Let nature be your only study," he does not mean outer nature, nor again the nature of this or that individual, but representative human nature. Having decided what is normal either for man or some particular class of men the classicist takes this normal "nature" for his model and proceeds to imitate it. Whatever accords with the model he has thus set up he pronounces natural or probable, whatever on the other hand departs too far from what he conceives to be the normal type or the normal sequence of cause and effect he holds to be "improbable" and unnatural or even, if it attains an extreme of abnormality, "monstrous." Whatever in conduct or character is duly restrained and proportionate with reference to the model is said to observe decorum. Probability and decorum

are identical in some of their aspects and closely related in all.[30] To recapitulate, a general nature, a core of normal experience, is affirmed by all classicists. From this central affirmation derives the doctrine of imitation, and from imitation in turn the doctrines of probability and decorum.

But though all classicists are alike in insisting on nature, imitation, probability and decorum, they differ widely, as I have already intimated, in what they understand by these terms. Let us consider first what Aristotle and the Greeks understand by them. The first point to observe is that according to Aristotle one is to get his general nature not on authority or second hand, but is to disengage it directly for himself from the jumble of particulars that he has before his eyes. He is not, says Aristotle, to imitate things as they are, but as they ought to be. Thus conceived imitation is a creative act. Through all the welter of the actual one penetrates to the real and so succeeds without ceasing to be individual in suggesting the universal. Poetry that is imitative in this sense is, according to Aristotle, more "serious" and "philosophical" than history. History deals merely with what has happened, whereas poetry deals with what may happen according to probability or necessity. Poetry, that is, does not portray life literally but extricates the deeper or ideal truth from the flux of

[30] The French Academy discriminates in its *Sentiments sur le Cid* between two types of probability, "ordinary" and "extraordinary." Probability in general is more especially reserved for action. In the domain of action "ordinary" probability and decorum run very close together. It is, for example, both indecorous and improbable that Chimène in the *Cid* should marry her father's murderer.

circumstance. One may add with Sydney that if poetry is thus superior to history in being more serious and philosophical it resembles history and is superior to philosophy in being concrete.

The One that the great poet or artist perceives in the Many and that gives to his work its high seriousness is not a fixed absolute. In general the model that the highly serious man (ὁ σπουδαῖος) imitates and that keeps his ordinary self within the bounds of decorum is not to be taken as anything finite, as anything that can be formulated once for all. This point is important for on it hinges every right distinction not merely between the classic and the romantic, but between the classic and the pseudo-classic. Romanticism has claimed for itself a monopoly of imagination and infinitude, but on closer examination, as I hope to show later, this claim, at least so far as genuine classicism is concerned, will be found to be quite unjustified. For the present it is enough to say that true classicism does not rest on the observance of rules or the imitation of models but on an immediate insight into the universal. Aristotle is especially admirable in the account he gives of this insight and of the way it may manifest itself in art and literature. One may be rightly imitative, he says, and so have access to a superior truth and give others access to it only by being a master of illusion. Though the great poet "breathes immortal air," though he sees behind the shows of sense a world of more abiding relationships, he can convey his vision not directly but only imaginatively. Aristotle, one should observe, does not establish any hard and fast opposition between

judgment and imagination, an opposition that pervades not only the neo-classical movement but also the romantic revolt from it. He simply affirms a supersensuous order which one can perceive only with the help of fiction. The best art, says Goethe in the true spirit of Aristotle, gives us the "illusion of a higher reality." This has the advantage of being experimental. It is merely a statement of what one feels in the presence of a great painting, let us say, or in reading a great poem.

IV

After this attempt to define briefly with the help of the Greeks the classical spirit in its essence we should be prepared to understand more clearly the way in which this spirit was modified in neo-classical times, especially in France. The first thing that strikes one about the classicism of this period is that it does not rest on immediate perception like that of the Greeks but on outer authority. The merely dogmatic and traditional classicist gave a somewhat un-Greek meaning to the doctrines of nature and imitation. Why imitate nature directly, said Scaliger, when we have in Virgil a second nature? Imitation thus came to mean the imitation of certain outer models and the following of rules based on these models. Now it is well that one who aims at excellence in any field should begin by a thorough assimilation of the achievements of his great predecessors in this field. Unfortunately the neo-classical theorist tended to impose a multitude of precepts that were based on what was external rather than on what was vital in the practice of his models. In so far the lesson of form that the great ancients can always teach any one who approaches them in the right spirit degenerated into formalism. This formalistic turn given to the doctrine of imitation was felt from the outset to be a menace to originality; to be incompatible, and everything hinges at last on this point, with the spontaneity of the imagination. There was an important

reaction headed by men like Boileau, within the neo-classical movement itself, against the oppression of the intuitive side of human nature by mere dogma and authority, above all against the notion that "regularity" is in itself any guarantee of literary excellence. A school of rules was succeeded by a school of taste. Yet even to the end the neo-classicist was too prone to reject as unnatural or even monstrous everything that did not fit into one of the traditional pigeon-holes. One must grant, indeed, that much noble work was achieved under the neo-classical dispensation, work that shows a genuine insight into the universal, but it is none the less evident that the view of the imagination held during this period has a formalistic taint.

This taint in neo-classicism is due not merely to its dogmatic and mechanical way of dealing with the doctrine of imitation but also to the fact that it had to reconcile classical with Christian dogma; and the two antiquities, classical and Christian, if interpreted vitally and in the spirit, were in many respects divergent and in some respects contradictory. The general outcome of the attempts at reconciliation made by the literary casuists of Italy and France was that Christianity should have a monopoly of truth and classicism a monopoly of fiction. For the true classicist, it will be remembered, the two things are inseparable – he gets at his truth through a veil of fiction. Many of the neo-classicists came to conceive of art as many romanticists were to conceive of it later as a sort of irresponsible game or play, but they were, it must be confessed, very inferior to

the romanticists in the spontaneity of their fiction. They went for this fiction as for everything else to the models, and this meant in practice that they employed the pagan myths, not as imaginative symbols of a higher reality – it is still possible to employ them in that way – but merely in Boileau's phrase as "traditional ornaments" (*ornements reçus*). The neo-classicist to be sure might so employ his "fiction" as to inculcate a moral; in that case he is only too likely to give us instead of the living symbol, dead allegory; instead of high seriousness, its caricature, didacticism. The traditional stock of fiction became at last so intolerably trite as to be rejected even by some of the late neo-classicists. "The rejection and contempt of fiction," said Dr. Johnson (who indulged in it himself on occasion) "is rational and manly." But to reject fiction in the larger sense is to miss the true driving power in human nature – the imagination. Before concluding, however, that Dr. Johnson had no notion of the rôle of the imagination one should read his attack on the theory of the three unities[31] which was later to be turned to account by the romanticists.

Now the three unities may be defended on an entirely legitimate ground – on the ground namely that they make for concentration, a prime virtue in the drama; but the grounds on which they were actually imposed on the drama, especially in connection with the Quarrel of the Cid, illustrate the corruption of another main classical doctrine, that of probability

[31] In his *Preface* to Shakespeare.

or verisimilitude. In his dealings with probability as in his dealings with imitation, the neo-classical formalist did not allow sufficiently for the element of illusion. What he required from the drama in the name of probability was not the "illusion of a higher reality," but strict logic or even literal deception. He was not capable of a poetic faith, not willing to suspend his disbelief on passing from the world of ordinary fact to the world of artistic creation. Goethe was thinking especially of the neo-classical French when he said: "As for the French, they will always be arrested by their reason. They do not recognize that the imagination has its own laws which are and always must be problematic for the reason."

It was also largely under French influence that the doctrine of decorum, which touches probability at many points, was turned aside from its true meaning. Decorum is in a way the peculiar doctrine of the classicist, is in Milton's phrase "the grand masterpiece to observe." The doctrines of the universal and the imitation of the universal go deeper indeed than decorum, so much deeper that they are shared by classicism with religion. The man who aspires to live religiously must no less than the humanist look to some model set above his ordinary self and imitate it. But though the classicist at his best meditates, he does not, like the seeker after religious perfection, see in meditation an end in itself but rather a support for the mediatory virtues, the virtues of the man who would live to the best advantage in this world rather than renounce it; and these virtues may be said to be summed up

in decorum. For the best type of Greek humanist, a Sophocles let us say, decorum was a vital and immediate thing. But there enters into decorum even from the time of the Alexandrian Greeks, and still more into French neo-classical decorum, a marked element of artificiality. The all-roundness and fine symmetry, the poise and dignity that come from working within the bounds of the human law, were taken to be the privilege not of man in general but of a special social class. Take for instance verbal decorum: the French neo-classicists assumed that if the speech of poetry is to be noble and highly serious it must coincide with the speech of the aristocracy. As Nisard puts it, they confused nobility of language with the language of the nobility. Decorum was thus more or less merged with etiquette, so that the standards of the stage and of literature in general came to coincide, as Rousseau complains, with those of the drawing-room. More than anything else this narrowing of decorum marks the decline from the classic to the pseudo-classic, from form to formalism.

While condemning pseudo-decorum one should remember that even a Greek would have seen something paradoxical in a poem like Goethe's "Hermann und Dorothea" and its attempt to invest with epic grandeur the affairs of villagers and peasants. After all, dignity and elevation and especially the opportunity for important action, which is the point on which the classicist puts prime emphasis, are normally though not invariably associated with a high rather than with a mean social estate. In general one should insist that the decorum worked out under French auspices

was far from being merely artificial. The French gentleman (*honnête homme*) of the seventeenth century often showed a moderation and freedom from over-emphasis, an exquisite tact and urbanity that did not fall too far short of his immediate model, Horace, and related him to the all-round man of the Greeks (καλὸς κἀγαθός). To be sure an ascetic Christian like Pascal sees in decorum a disguise of one's ordinary self rather than a real curb upon it, and feels that the gap is not sufficiently wide between even the best type of the man of the world and the mere worldling. One needs, however, to be very austere to disdain the art of living that has been fostered by decorum from the Greeks down. Something of this art of living survives even in a Chesterfield, who falls far short of the best type of French gentleman and reminds one very remotely indeed of a Pericles. Chesterfield's half-jesting definition of decorum as the art of combining the useful appearances of virtue with the solid satisfactions of vice points the way to its ultimate corruption. Talleyrand, who marks perhaps this last stage, was defined by Napoleon as "a silk stocking filled with mud." In some of its late exemplars decorum had actually become, as Rousseau complains, the "mask of hypocrisy" and the "varnish of vice."

One should not however, like Rousseau and the romanticists, judge of decorum by what it degenerated into. Every doctrine of genuine worth is disciplinary and men in the mass do not desire discipline. "Most men," says Aristotle, "would rather live in a disorderly than in a sober manner." But most men do not admit

any such preference – that would be crude and inartistic. They incline rather to substitute for the reality of discipline some art of going through the motions. Every great doctrine is thus in constant peril of passing over into some hollow semblance or even, it may be, into some mere caricature of itself. When one wishes therefore to determine the nature of decorum one should think of a Milton, let us say, and not of a Talleyrand or even of a Chesterfield.

Milton imitated the models, like any other neo-classicist, but his imitation was not, in Joubert's phrase, that of one book by another book, but of one soul by another soul. His decorum is therefore imaginative; and it is the privilege of the imagination to give the sense of spaciousness and infinitude. On the other hand, the unimaginative way in which many of the neo-classicists held their main tenets – nature, imitation, probability, decorum – narrowed unduly the scope of the human spirit and appeared to close the gates of the future. "Art and diligence have now done their best," says Dr. Johnson of the versification of Pope, "and what shall be added will be the effort of tedious toil and needless curiosity." Nothing is more perilous than thus to seem to confine man in some pinfold; there is something in him that refuses to acquiesce in any position as final; he is in Nietzsche's phrase the being who must always surpass himself. The attempt to oppose external and mechanical barriers to the freedom of the spirit will create in the long run an atmosphere of stuffiness and smugness, and nothing is more intolerable than smugness. Men

were guillotined in the French Revolution, as Bagehot suggests, simply because either they or their ancestors had been smug. Inert acceptance of tradition and routine will be met sooner or later by the cry of Faust: *Hinaus ins Freie!*

Before considering the value of the method chosen by Rousseau and the romanticists for breaking up the "tiresome old heavens" and escaping from smugness and stuffiness, one should note that the lack of originality and genius which they lamented in the eighteenth century – especially in that part of it known as the Enlightenment – was not due entirely to pseudo-classic formalism. At least two other main currents entered into the Enlightenment: first the empirical and utilitarian current that goes back to Francis Bacon, and some would say to Roger Bacon; and secondly the rationalistic current that goes back to Descartes. English empiricism gained international vogue in the philosophy of Locke, and Locke denies any supersensuous element in human nature to which one may have access with the aid of the imagination or in any other way. Locke's method of precise naturalistic observation is in itself legitimate; for man is plainly subject to the natural law. What is not truly empirical is to bring the whole of human nature under this law. One can do this only by piecing out precise observation and experiment with dogmatic rationalism. One side of Locke may therefore be properly associated with the father of modern rationalists, Descartes. The attempt of the rationalist to lock up life in some set of formulæ produces in the imaginative man

a feeling of oppression. He gasps for light and air. The very tracing of cause and effect and in general the use of the analytical faculties – and this is to fly to the opposite extreme – came to be condemned by the romanticists as inimical to the imagination. Not only do they make endless attacks on Locke, but at times they assail even Newton for having mechanized life, though Newton's comparison of himself to a child picking up pebbles on the seashore would seem to show that he had experienced "the feeling infinite."

The elaboration of science into a closed system with the aid of logic and pure mathematics is as a matter of fact to be associated with Descartes rather than with Newton. Neither Newton nor Descartes, one scarcely needs add, wished to subject man entirely to the natural law and the nexus of physical causes; they were not in short determinists. Yet the superficial rationalism of the Enlightenment was in the main of Cartesian origin. This Cartesian influence ramifies in so many directions and is related at so many points to the literary movement, and there has been so much confusion about this relationship, that we need to pause here to make a few distinctions.

Perhaps what most strikes one in the philosophy of Descartes is its faith in logic and abstract reasoning and the closely allied processes of mathematical demonstration. Anything that is not susceptible of clear proof in this logical and almost mathematical sense is to be rejected. Now this Cartesian notion of clearness is fatal to a true classicism. The higher reality, the true classicist

maintains, cannot be thus demonstrated; it can only be grasped, and then never completely, through a veil of imaginative illusion. Boileau is reported to have said that Descartes had cut the throat of poetry; and this charge is justified in so far as the Cartesian requires from poetry a merely logical clearness. This conception of clearness was also a menace to the classicism of the seventeenth century which rested in the final analysis not on logic but on tradition. This appeared very clearly in the early phases of the quarrel between ancients and moderns when literary Cartesians like Perrault and Fontenelle attacked classical dogma in the name of reason. In fact one may ask if any doctrine has ever appeared so fatal to every form of tradition – not merely literary but also religious and political – as Cartesianism. The rationalist of the eighteenth century was for dismissing as "prejudice" everything that could not give a clear account of itself in the Cartesian sense. This riot of abstract reasoning (*la raison raisonnante*) that prepared the way for the Revolution has been identified by Taine and others with the classic spirit. A more vicious confusion has seldom gained currency in criticism. It is true that the French have mixed a great deal of logic with their conception of the classic spirit, but that is because they have mixed a great deal of logic with everything. I have already mentioned their tendency to substitute a logical for an imaginative verisimilitude; and strenuously logical classicists may be found in France from Chapelain to Brunetière. Yet the distinction that should keep us from confusing mere logic with

the classic spirit was made by a Frenchman who was himself violently logical and also a great geometrician – Pascal. One should keep distinct, says Pascal, the *esprit de géométrie* and the *esprit de finesse*. The *esprit de finesse* is not, like the *esprit de géométrie*, abstract, but very concrete.[32] So far as a man possesses the *esprit de finesse* he is enabled to judge correctly of the ordinary facts of life and of the relationships between man and man. But these judgments rest upon such a multitude of delicate perceptions that he is frequently unable to account for them logically. It is to intuitive good sense and not to the *esprit de géométrie* that the gentleman (*honnête homme*) of the neo-classical period owed his fine tact. Pascal himself finally took a stand against reason as understood both by the Cartesian and by the man of the world. Unaided reason he held is unable to prevail against the deceits of the imagination; it needs the support of intuition – an intuition that he identifies with grace, thus making it inseparable from the most austere form of Christianity. The "heart," he says, and this is the name he gives to intuition, "has reasons of which the reason knows nothing." A Plato or an Aristotle would not have understood this divorce between reason and intuition.[33]

Pascal seems to get his insight only by flouting ordinary good sense. He identifies this insight with a type of theological dogma

[32] For a similar distinction in Aristotle see *Eth. Nic.*, 1143 b.

[33] The Platonic and Aristotelian reason or mind (νοῦς) contains an element of intuition.

of which good sense was determined to be rid; and so it tended to get rid of the insight along with the dogma. Classical dogma also seemed at times to be in opposition to the intuitive good sense of the man of the world. The man of the world therefore often inclined to assail both the classical and the Christian tradition in the name of good sense, just as the Cartesian inclined to assail these traditions in the name of abstract reason. Perhaps the best exponent of anti-traditional good sense in the seventeenth century was Molière. He vindicated nature, and by nature he still meant in the main normal human nature, from arbitrary constraints of every kind whether imposed by an ascetic Christianity or by a narrow and pedantic classicism. Unfortunately Molière is too much on the side of the opposition. He does not seem to put his good sense into the service of some positive insight of his own. Good sense may be of many degrees according to the order of facts of which it has a correct perception. The order of facts in human nature that Molière's good sense perceived is not the highest and so this good sense appears at times too ready to justify the bourgeois against the man who has less timid and conventional views. So at least Rousseau thought when he made his famous attack on Molière.[34] Rousseau assailed Molière in the name of instinct as Pascal would have assailed him in the name of insight, and fought sense with sensibility. The hostility of Rousseau to Molière, according to M. Faguet, is that of a romantic Bohemian to a philistine of

[34] In his *Lettre à d'Alembert sur les spectacles*.

genius.[35] One hesitates to call Molière a philistine, but one may at least grant M. Faguet that Molière's good sense is not always sufficiently inspired.

I have been trying to build up a background that will make clear why the reason of the eighteenth century (whether we understand by reason logic or good sense) had come to be superficial and therefore oppressive to the imagination. It is only with reference to this "reason" that one can understand the romantic revolt. But neo-classical reason itself can be understood only with reference to its background – as a recoil namely from a previous romantic excess. This excess was manifested not only in the intellectual romanticism of which I have already spoken, but in the cult of the romantic deed that had flourished in the Middle Ages. This cult and the literature that reflected it continued to appeal, even to the cultivated, well on into the neo-classical period. It was therefore felt necessary to frame a definition of reason that should be a rebuke to the extravagance and improbability of the mediæval romances. When men became conscious in the eighteenth century of the neo-classical meagerness on the imaginative side they began to look back with a certain envy to the free efflorescence of fiction in the Middle Ages. They began to ask themselves with Hurd whether the reason and correctness they had won were worth the sacrifice of a "world of fine fabling."[36] We must not, however,

[35] *Rousseau contre Molière*, 238.

[36] *Letters on Chivalry and Romance.*

like Heine and many others, look on the romantic movement as merely a return to the Middle Ages. We have seen that the men of the Middle Ages themselves understood by romance not simply their own kind of speech and writing in contrast with what was written in Latin, but a kind of writing in which the pursuit of strangeness and adventure predominated. This pursuit of strangeness and adventure will be found to predominate in all types of romanticism. The type of romanticism, however, which came in towards the end of the eighteenth century did not, even when professedly mediæval, simply revert to the older types. It was primarily not a romanticism of thought or of action, the types we have encountered thus far, but a romanticism of feeling. The beginnings of this emotional romanticism antedate considerably the application of the word romantic to a particular literary school. Before considering how the word came to be thus applied we shall need to take a glance at eighteenth-century sentimentalism, especially at the plea for genius and originality that, from about the middle of the century on, were opposed to the tameness and servile imitation of the neo-classicists.

CHAPTER II
ROMANTIC GENIUS

Romanticism, it has been remarked, is all that is not Voltaire. The clash between Rousseau and Voltaire is indeed not merely the clash between two men, it is the clash between two incompatible views of life. Voltaire is the end of the old world, as Goethe has put it, Rousseau the beginning of the new.

One is not to suppose, however, that Voltaire was a consistent champion of the past. He is indeed with all his superficial clearness one of the most incoherent of writers. At the same time that he defended classical tradition he attacked Christian tradition, spreading abroad a spirit of mockery and irreverence that tended to make every traditional belief impossible. The "reason" to which he appeals has all the shallowness that I have noticed in the "reason" of the eighteenth century. Though he does not fall into the Cartesian excess of abstract reasoning, and though the good sense that he most often understands by reason is admirably shrewd within certain bounds, he nevertheless falls very far short of the standards of a true classicism. He delights in the philosophy of Locke and has little sense for Greek philosophy or for the higher aspects of Greek literature. He is quite lacking in the quality of imagination that is needful if one is to communicate with what is above the ordinary rational level. So

far from being capable of high seriousness, he is scarcely capable of ordinary seriousness. And so the nobility, elegance, imitation, and decorum that he is constantly preaching have about them a taint of formalism. Perhaps this taint appears most conspicuously in his conception of decorum. A man may be willing to impose restrictions on his ordinary self – and every type of decorum is restrictive – if he is asked to do so for some adequate end. The end of the decorum that an Aristotle, for example, would impose is that one may become more human and therefore, as he endeavors to show in a highly positive fashion, happier. The only art and literature that will please a man who has thus become human through the observance of true decorum is an art and literature that are themselves human and decorous. Voltaire for his part wishes to subject art and literature to an elaborate set of restrictions in the name of decorum, but these restrictions are not joined to any adequate end. The only reward he holds out to those who observe all these restrictions is "the merit of difficulty overcome." At bottom, like so many of the Jesuits from whom he received his education, he looks upon art as a game – a very ingenious and complicated game. The French muse he compares to a person executing a difficult clog dance on a tight rope, and he argues from this comparison, not that the French muse should assume a less constrained posture, but that she should on the contrary be exemplary to the nations. No wonder the romanticists and even Dr. Johnson demurred at Voltaire's condemnation of Shakespeare in the name of this type of decorum.

Voltaire is therefore, in spite of all his dazzling gifts, one of the most compromising advocates of classicism. Pope also had eminent merits, but from the truly classical point of view he is about as inadequate as Voltaire; and this is important to remember because English romanticism tends to be all that is not Pope. The English romanticists revolted especially from the poetic diction of which Pope was one of the chief sources, and poetic diction, with its failure to distinguish between nobility of language and the language of the nobility, is only an aspect of artificial decorum. However, the revolt from poetic diction and decorum in general is not the central aspect of the great movement that resulted in the eclipse of the wit and man of the world and in the emergence of the original genius. What the genius wanted was spontaneity, and spontaneity, as he understood it, involves a denial, not merely of decorum, but of something that, as I have said, goes deeper than decorum – namely the doctrine of imitation. According to Voltaire genius is only judicious imitation. According to Rousseau the prime mark of genius is refusal to imitate. The movement away from imitation, however, had already got well started before it thus came to a picturesque head in the clash between Rousseau and Voltaire, and if we wish to understand this movement we need to take a glance at its beginnings – especially in England.

There are reasons why this supposed opposition between imitation and genius should have been felt in England more keenly than elsewhere. The doctrine of imitation in its neo-

classical form did not get established there until about the time of Dryden. In the meanwhile England had had a great creative literature in which the freedom and spontaneity of the imagination had not been cramped by a too strict imitation of models. Dryden himself, though he was doing more than any one else to promote the new correctness that was coming in from France, felt that this correctness was no equivalent for the Elizabethan inspiration. The structure that he and his contemporaries were erecting might be more regular, but lacked the boldness and originality of that reared by the "giant race before the flood":

> Our age was cultivated thus at length;
> But what we gained in skill we lost in strength.
> Our builders were with want of genius cursed;
> The second temple was not like the first.[37]

This contrast between the imitator and the inspired original was developed by Addison in a paper ("Spectator," 160) that was destined to be used against the very school to which he himself belonged. For Addison was in his general outlook a somewhat tame Augustan. Nevertheless he exalts the "natural geniuses" who have something "nobly wild and extravagant" in them above the geniuses who have been "refined by conversation, reflection and the reading of the most polite authors"; who have "formed

[37] See verses prefixed to Congreve's *Double-Dealer*.

themselves by rules and submitted the greatness of their natural talents to the corrections and restraints of art." "The great danger in these latter kind of geniuses, is lest they cramp their own abilities too much by imitation, and form themselves altogether upon models, without giving full play to their own natural parts. An imitation of the best authors is not to compare with a good original; and I believe we may observe that very few writers make an extraordinary figure in the world, who have not something in their way of thinking or expressing themselves that is peculiar to them, and entirely their own."

Another main influence that was making against the doctrine of imitation was also largely of English origin. This was the idea of progress through scientific observation and experiment. As a result of this type of positivism, discovery was being added to discovery. Science was kindling man's imagination and opening up before him what he really craves, the vista of an endless advance. Why should not literature likewise do something new and original instead of sticking forever in the same rut of imitation? In its Greek form the doctrine of imitation was, as I have tried to show, not only flexible and progressive, but in its own way, positive and experimental. But in modern times the two main forms of imitation, the classical and the Christian, have worked within the limits imposed by tradition and traditional models. The imitation of models, the Christian imitation of Christ, let us say, or the classical imitation of Horace, may indeed be a very vital thing, the imitation of one soul by another soul;

but when carried out in this vital way, the two main forms of imitation tend to clash, and the compromise between them, as I have already said, resulted in a good deal of formalism. By its positive and critical method science was undermining every traditional belief. Both the Christian and the classical formalists would have been the first to deny that the truths of imitation for which they stood could be divorced from tradition and likewise put on a positive and critical basis. The fact is indubitable in any case that the discrediting of tradition has resulted in a progressive lapse from the religious and the humanistic to the naturalistic level. An equally indubitable fact is that scientific or rationalistic naturalism tended from the early eighteenth century to produce emotional naturalism, and that both forms of naturalism were hostile to the doctrine of imitation.

The trend away from the doctrine of imitation towards emotional naturalism finds revolutionary expression in the literary field in such a work as Young's "Conjectures on Original Composition" (1759). Addison had asserted, as we have seen, the superiority of what is original in a man, of what comes to him spontaneously, over what he acquires by conscious effort and culture. Young, a personal friend of Addison's, develops this contrast between the "natural" and the "artificial" to its extreme consequences. "Modern writers," he says, "have a choice to make. … They may soar in the regions of liberty, or move in the soft fetters of easy imitation." "An original may be said to be of a vegetable nature; it rises spontaneously from the vital

root of genius; it grows, it is not made; imitations are often a sort of manufacture, wrought up by those mechanics, art and labor, out of preëxistent materials not their own." "We may as well grow good by another's virtue, or fat by another's food, as famous by another's thought." One evidence that we are still living in the movement of which Young is one of the initiators is that his treatise will not only seem to most of us a very spirited piece of writing – that it certainly is – but doctrinally sound. And yet it is only one of those documents very frequent in literary history which lack intrinsic soundness, but which can be explained if not justified as a recoil from an opposite extreme. The unsoundness of Young's work comes out clearly if one compares it with the treatise on the "Sublime" attributed to Longinus which is not a mere protest against a previous excess, but a permanently acceptable treatment of the same problem of genius and inspiration. Longinus exalts genius, but is at the same time regardful of culture and tradition, and even emphasizes the relation between inspiration and the imitation of models. Young insinuates, on the contrary, that one is aided in becoming a genius by being brainless and ignorant. "Some are pupils of nature only, nor go further to school." "Many a genius probably there has been which could neither write nor read." It follows almost inevitably from these premises that genius flourishes most in the primitive ages of society before originality has been crushed beneath the superincumbent weight of culture and critics have begun their pernicious activities. Young did not take this step

himself, but it was promptly taken by others on the publication of the Ossianic poems (1762). Ossian is at once added to the list of great originals already enumerated by Addison – Homer, Pindar, the patriarchs of the Old Testament and Shakespeare (whom Young like the later romanticists opposes to Pope). "Poetry," says Diderot, summing up a whole movement, "calls for something enormous, barbaric and savage."

This exaltation of the virtues of the primitive ages is simply the projection into a mythical past of a need that the man of the eighteenth century feels in the present – the need to let himself go. This is what he understands by his "return to nature." A whole revolution is implied in this reinterpretation of the word nature. To follow nature in the classical sense is to imitate what is normal and representative in man and so to become decorous. To be natural in the new sense one must begin by getting rid of imitation and decorum. Moreover, for the classicist, nature and reason are synonymous. The primitivist, on the other hand, means by nature the spontaneous play of impulse and temperament, and inasmuch as this liberty is hindered rather than helped by reason, he inclines to look on reason, not as the equivalent but as the opposite of nature.

If one is to understand this development, one should note carefully how certain uses of the word reason, not merely by the neo-classicists but by the anti-traditionalists, especially in religion, tended to produce this denial of reason. It is a curious fact that some of those who were attacking the Christian religion

in the name of reason, were themselves aware that mere reason, whether one understood by the word abstract reasoning or uninspired good sense, does not satisfy, that in the long run man is driven either to rise higher or to sink lower than reason. St. Evremond, for example, prays nature to deliver man from the doubtful middle state in which she has placed him – either to "lift him up to angelic radiance," or else to "sink him to the instinct of simple animals."[38] Since the ascending path, the path that led to angelic radiance, seemed to involve the acceptance of a mass of obsolete dogma, man gradually inclined to sink below the rational level and to seek to recover the "instinct of simple animals." Another and still more fundamental fact that some of the rationalists perceived and that militated against their own position, is that the dominant element in man is not reason, but imagination, or if one prefers, the element of illusion. "Illusion," said Voltaire himself, "is the queen of the human heart." The great achievement of tradition at its best was to be at once a limit and a support to both reason and imagination and so to unite them in a common allegiance. In the new movement, at the same time that reason was being encouraged by scientific method to rise up in revolt against tradition, imagination was being fascinated and drawn to the naturalistic level by scientific discovery and the vista of an endless advance that it opened up. A main problem, therefore, for the student of this movement

[38] Change l'état douteux dans lequel tu nous ranges,Nature élève-nous à la clarté des anges,Ou nous abaisse au sens des simples animaux. Sonnet (1657?).

is to determine what forms of imaginative activity are possible on the naturalistic level. A sort of understanding was reached on this point by different types of naturalists in the course of the eighteenth century. One form of imagination, it was agreed, should be displayed in science, another form in art and literature.[39] The scientific imagination should be controlled by judgment and work in strict subordination to the facts. In art and literature, on the other hand, the imagination should be free. Genius and originality are indeed in strict ratio to this freedom. "In the fairy land of fancy," says Young, "genius may wander wild; there it has a creative power, and may reign arbitrarily over its own empire of chimeras." (The empire of chimeras was later to become the tower of ivory.) This sheer indiscipline of the literary imagination might seem in contrast with the discipline of the scientific imagination an inferiority; but such was not the view of the partisans of original genius. Kant, indeed, who was strongly influenced in his "Critique of Æsthetic Judgment" by these English theorists,[40] inclined to deny genius to the man of science for the very reason that his imagination is so strictly controlled. The fact would seem to be that a great scientist, a Newton let us say, has as much right to be accounted a genius as Shakespeare. The inferiority of the genius of a Newton

[39] See, for example, A. Gerard's *Essay on Genius* (1774), *passim*.

[40] The English translation of this part of the *Critique of Judgment*, edited by J. C. Meredith, is useful for its numerous illustrative passages from these theorists (Young, Gerard, Duff, etc.).

compared with that of a Shakespeare lies in a certain coldness. Scientific genius is thus cold because it operates in a region less relevant to man than poetic genius; it is, in Bagehot's phrase, more remote from the "hearth of the soul."

The scientific and the literary imagination are indeed not quite so sharply contrasted by most of the theorists as might be inferred from what I have said; most of them do not admit that the literary imagination should be entirely free to wander in its own "empire of chimeras." Even literary imagination, they maintain, should in some measure be under the surveillance of judgment or taste. One should observe, however, that the judgment or taste that is supposed to control or restrict genius is not associated with the imagination. On the contrary, imagination is associated entirely with the element of novelty in things, which means, in the literary domain, with the expansive eagerness of a man to get his own uniqueness uttered. The genius for the Greek, let us remind ourselves, was not the man who was in this sense unique, but the man who perceived the universal; and as the universal can be perceived only with the aid of the imagination, it follows that genius may be defined as imaginative perception of the universal. The universal thus conceived not only gives a centre and purpose to the activity of the imagination, but sets bounds to the free expansion of temperament and impulse, to what came to be known in the eighteenth century as nature.

Kant, who denies genius to the man of science on grounds I have already mentioned, is unable to associate genius in art

or literature with this strict discipline of the imagination to a purpose. The imagination must be free and must, he holds, show this freedom not by working but by playing. At the same time Kant had the cool temper of a man of the Enlightenment, and looked with the utmost disapproval on the aberrations that had marked in Germany the age of original genius (*die Geniezeit*). He was not in the new sense of the word nor indeed in any sense, an enthusiast. And so he wished the reason, or judgment, to keep control over the imagination without disturbing its free play; art is to have a purpose which is at the same time not a purpose. The distinctions by which he works out the supposed relationship between judgment and imagination are at once difficult and unreal. One can indeed put one's finger here more readily perhaps than elsewhere on the central impotence of the whole Kantian system. Once discredit tradition and outer authority and then set up as a substitute a reason that is divorced from the imagination and so lacks the support of supersensuous insight, and reason will prove unable to maintain its hegemony. When the imagination has ceased to pull in accord with the reason in the service of a reality that is set above them both, it is sure to become the accomplice of expansive impulse, and mere reason is not strong enough to prevail over this union of imagination and desire. Reason needs some driving power behind it, a driving power that, when working in alliance with the imagination, it gets from insight. To suppose that man will long rest content with mere naked reason as his guide is to forget that "illusion

is the queen of the human heart"; it is to revive the stoical error. Schiller, himself a Kantian, felt this rationalistic rigor and coldness of his master, and so sought, while retaining the play theory of art, to put behind the cold reason of Kant the driving power it lacked; for this driving power he looked not to a supersensuous reality, not to insight in short, but to emotion. He takes appropriately the motto for his "Æsthetic Letters" from Rousseau: *Si c'est la raison qui fait l'homme, c'est le sentiment qui le conduit.* He retains Kant's play theory of art without even so much offset to this play as is implied in Kant's "purposiveness without purpose." The nobility of Schiller's intentions is beyond question. At the same time, by encouraging the notion that it is possible to escape from neo-classical didacticism only by eliminating masculine purpose from art, he opens the way for the worst perversions of the æsthete, above all for the divorce of art from ethical reality. In art, according to Schiller, both imagination and feeling should be free and spontaneous, and the result of all this freedom, as he sees it, will be perfectly "ideal." His suspicion of a purpose is invincible. As soon as anything has a purpose it ceases to be æsthetic and in the same measure suffers a loss of dignity. Thus the æsthetic moment of the lion, he says, is when he roars not with any definite design, but out of sheer lustiness, and for the pure pleasure of roaring.

One may assume safely the æsthetic attitude, or what amounts to the same thing, allow one's self to be guided by feeling, only on the assumption that feeling is worthy of trust. As appears

in the very motto he took for his "Æsthetic Letters" Schiller was helped to this faith in man's native goodness by Rousseau. We need to pause for a moment at this point and consider the background of this belief which finds not only in Schiller but in Rousseau himself, with whom it is usually associated, a rather late expression. The movement that took its rise in the eighteenth century involves, we should recollect, a break not with one but with two traditions – the classical and the Christian. If the plea for genius and originality is to be largely explained as a protest against the mechanical imitation and artificial decorum of a certain type of classicist, the assertion of man's natural goodness is to be understood rather as a rebound from the doctrine of total depravity that was held by the more austere type of Christian. This doctrine had even in the early centuries of the faith awakened certain protests like that of Pelagius, but for an understanding of the Rousseauistic protest one does not need to go behind the great deistic movement of the early eighteenth century. God, instead of being opposed to nature, is conceived by the deist as a power that expresses his goodness and loveliness through nature. The oppressive weight of fear that the older theology had laid upon the human spirit is thus gradually lifted. Man begins to discover harmonies instead of discords in himself and outer nature. He not only sees virtue in instinct but inclines to turn virtue itself into a "sense," or instinct. And this means in practice to put emotional expansion in the place of spiritual concentration at the basis

of life and morals. In studying this drift towards an æsthetic or sentimental morality one may most conveniently take one's point of departure in certain English writers of deistic tendency, especially in Shaftesbury and his disciple Hutcheson. Considered purely as an initiator, Shaftesbury is probably more important than Rousseau. His influence ramifies out in every direction, notably into Germany.

The central achievement of Shaftesbury from a purely psychological point of view may be said to be his transformation of conscience from an inner check into an expansive emotion. He is thus enabled to set up an æsthetic substitute not merely for traditional religion but for traditional humanism. He undermines insidiously decorum, the central doctrine of the classicist, at the very time that he seems to be defending it. For decorum also implies a control upon the expansive instincts of human nature, and Shaftesbury is actually engaged in rehabilitating "nature," and insinuating that it does not need any control. He attains this expansiveness by putting æsthetic in the place of spiritual perception, and so merging more or less completely the good and the true with the beautiful. He thus points the way very directly to Rousseau's rejection of both inner and outer control in the name of man's natural goodness. Once accept Shaftesbury's transformation of conscience and one is led almost inevitably to look on everything that is expansive as natural or vital and on everything that restricts expansion as conventional or artificial. Villers wrote to Madame de Staël (4 May, 1803):

"The fundamental and creative idea of all your work has been to show primitive, incorruptible, naïve, passionate nature in conflict with the barriers and shackles of conventional life. … Note that this is also the guiding idea of the author of 'Werther.'" This contrast between nature and convention is indeed almost the whole of Rousseauism. In permitting his expansive impulses to be disciplined by either humanism or religion man has fallen away from nature much as in the old theology he has fallen away from God, and the famous "return to nature" means in practice the emancipation of the ordinary or temperamental self that had been thus artificially controlled. This throwing off of the yoke of both Christian and classical discipline in the name of temperament is the essential aspect of the movement in favor of original genius. The genius does not look to any pattern that is set above his ordinary spontaneous ego and imitate it. On the contrary, he attains to the self-expression that other men, intimidated by convention, weakly forego.

In thus taking a stand for self-expression, the original genius is in a sense on firm ground – at least so far as the mere rationalist or the late and degenerate classicist is concerned. No conventions are final, no rules can set arbitrary limits to creation. Reality cannot be locked up in any set of formulæ. The element of change and novelty in things, as the romanticists are never tired of repeating, is at once vital and inexhaustible. Wherever we turn, we encounter, as a romantic authority, Jacob Boehme, declares, "abysmal, unsearchable and infinite multiplicity." Perhaps not

since the beginning of the world have two men or indeed two leaves or two blades of grass been exactly alike. Out of a thousand men shaving, as Dr. Johnson himself remarked, no two will shave in just the same way. A person carries his uniqueness even into his thumbprint – as a certain class in the community has learned to its cost. But though all things are ineffably different they are at the same time ineffably alike. And this oneness in things is, no less than the otherwiseness, a matter of immediate perception. This universal implication of the one in the many is found even more marked than elsewhere in the heart of the individual. Each man has his idiosyncrasy (literally his "private mixture"). But in addition to his complexion, his temperamental or private self, every man has a self that he possesses in common with other men. Even the man who is most filled with his own uniqueness, or "genius," a Rousseau, for example, assumes this universal self in every word he utters. "Jove nods to Jove behind us as we talk." The word character, one may note, is ambiguous, inasmuch as it may refer either to the idiosyncratic or to the universal human element in a man's dual nature. For example, an original genius like William Blake not only uses the word character in a different sense from Aristotle – he cannot even understand the Aristotelian usage. "Aristotle," he complains, "says characters are either good or bad; now Goodness or Badness has nothing to do with Character. An apple tree, a pear tree, a horse, a lion are Characters; but a good apple tree or a bad is an apple tree still, etc." But character as Aristotle

uses the word implies something that man possesses and that a horse or tree does not possess – the power namely to deliberate and choose. A man has a good or bad character, he is ethical or unethical, as one may say from the Greek word for character in this sense (ἦθος), according to the quality of his choice as it appears in what he actually does. This distinction between a man's private, peculiar character (χαρακτήρ) and the character he possesses when judged with reference to something more general than his own complexion is very similar to the French distinction between the *sens propre* and the *sens commun*.

The general sense or norm that is opposed to mere temperament and impulse may rest upon the ethos of a particular time and country – the traditional habits and customs that the Rousseauist is wont to dismiss as "artificial" – or it may rest in varying degrees upon immediate perception. For example, the Ismene and Antigone of Sophocles are both ethical; but Ismene would abide by the law of the state, whereas Antigone opposes to this law something still more universal – the "unwritten laws of heaven." This insight of Antigone into a moral order that is set not only above her ordinary self but above the convention of her time and country is something very immediate, something achieved, as I shall try to show more fully later, with the aid of the imagination.

It is scarcely necessary to add that such a perfect example of the ethical imagination as one finds in Antigone – the imagination that works concentric with the human law – is rare.

In actual life for one Antigone who obeys the "unwritten laws of heaven" there will be a thousand Ismenes who will be guided in their moral choices by the law of the community. This law, the convention of a particular place and time, is always but a very imperfect image, a mere shadow indeed of the unwritten law which being above the ordinary rational level is, in a sense to be explained later, infinite and incapable of final formulation. And yet men are forced if only on practical grounds to work out some approximation to this law as a barrier to the unchained appetites of the individual. The elements that enter into any particular attempt to circumscribe the individual in the interests of the community are very mixed and in no small measure relative. Yet the things that any group of men have come together about – their conventions in the literal meaning of the word – even the tabus of a savage tribe, are sure to reflect, however inadequately, the element of oneness in man, the element which is opposed to expansive impulse, and which is no less real, no less a matter of immediate experience, than the element of irreducible difference. The general sense therefore should never be sacrificed lightly to the sense of the individual. Tabu, however inferior it may be to insight, deserves to rank higher after all than mere temperament.[41]

The original genius proceeds upon the opposite assumption. Everything that limits temperamental expansion is dismissed as

[41] Mrs. Katharine Fullerton Gerould has dealt interestingly with this point in an article in the *Unpopular Review* (October, 1914) entitled *Tabu and Temperament*.

either artificial or mechanical; everything on the contrary that makes for the emancipation of temperament, and so for variety and difference, he welcomes as vital, dynamic, creative. Now, speaking not metaphysically but practically and experimentally, man may, as I have said, follow two main paths: he may develop his ethical self – the self that lays hold of unity – or he may put his main emphasis on the element within him and without him that is associated with novelty and change. In direct proportion as he turns his attention to the infinite manifoldness of things he experiences wonder; if on the other hand he attends to the unity that underlies the manifoldness and that likewise transcends him, he experiences awe. As a man grows religious, awe comes more and more to take the place in him of wonder. The humanist is less averse from the natural order and its perpetual gushing forth of novelties than the man who is religious, yet even the humanist refuses to put his final emphasis on wonder (his motto is rather *nil admirari*). To illustrate concretely, Dr. Johnson can scarcely conceal his disdain for the wonderful, but being a genuinely religious spirit, is very capable of awe. Commenting on Yalden's line

> Awhile th' Almighty wondering stood,

Dr. Johnson remarks: "He ought to have remembered that Infinite Knowledge can never wonder. All wonder is the effect of novelty upon Ignorance." Granted the justness of the remark, Johnson seems inclined at times to forget how wide is the gap in this respect between us and the Almighty and therefore to be

unduly hostile to the element of wonder. To take the opposite case, it is not easy to discover in either the personality or writings of Poe an atom of awe or reverence. On the other hand he both experiences wonder and seeks in his art to be a pure wondersmith. It is especially important to determine a man's attitude towards himself in this matter of awe and wonder, in other words to determine whether he is taken up first of all with that element in his own nature which makes him incomprehensibly like other men or with that element which makes him incomprehensibly different from them. A man, the wise have always insisted, should look with reverence but not with wonder on himself. Rousseau boasts that if not better than other men, he is at least different. By this gloating sense of his own otherwiseness he may be said to have set the tone for a whole epoch. Chateaubriand, for instance, is quite overcome by his own uniqueness and wonderfulness. At the most ordinary happenings he exclaims, as Sainte-Beuve points out, that such things happen only to him. Hugo again is positively stupefied at the immensity of his own genius. The theatricality that one feels in so much of the art of this period arises from the eagerness of the genius to communicate to others something of the amazement that he feels at himself. René's first concern is to inspire wonder even in the women who love him. "Céluta felt that she was going to fall upon the bosom of this man as one falls into an abyss."

In thus putting such an exclusive emphasis on wonder the Rousseauistic movement takes on a regressive character. For if

life begins in wonder it culminates in awe. To put "the budding rose above the rose full-blown" may do very well for a mood, but as an habitual attitude it implies that one is more interested in origins than in ends; and this means in practice to look backward and downward instead of forward and up. The conscious analysis that is needed if one is to establish orderly sequences and relationships and so work out a kingdom of ends is repudiated by the Rousseauist because it diminishes wonder, because it interferes with the creative impulse of genius as it gushes up spontaneously from the depths of the unconscious. The whole movement is filled with the praise of ignorance and of those who still enjoy its inappreciable advantages – the savage, the peasant and above all the child. The Rousseauist may indeed be said to have discovered the poetry of childhood of which only traces can be found in the past, but at what would seem at times a rather heavy sacrifice of rationality. Rather than consent to have the bloom taken off things by analysis one should, as Coleridge tells us, *sink back* to the devout state of childlike wonder. However, to grow ethically is not to sink back but to struggle painfully forward. To affirm the contrary is to set up the things that are below the ordinary rational level as a substitute for the things that are above it, and at the same time to proclaim one's inability to mature. The romanticist, it is true, is wont to oppose to the demand for maturity Christ's praise of the child. But Christ evidently praises the child not because of his capacity for wonder but because of his freedom from sin, and it is of the essence

of Rousseauism to deny the very existence of sin – at least in the Christian sense of the word. One may also read in the New Testament that when one has ceased to be a child one should give up childish things, and this is a saying that no primitivist, so far as I am aware, has ever quoted. On the contrary, he is ready to assert that what comes to the child spontaneously is superior to the deliberate moral effort of the mature man. The speeches of all the sages are, according to Maeterlinck, outweighed by the unconscious wisdom of the passing child. Wordsworth hails a child of six as "Mighty Prophet! Seer blest!" (It is only fair to Coleridge to say that he refused to follow Wordsworth into this final abyss of absurdity.[42]) In much the same way Hugo pushes his adoration of the child to the verge of what has been termed "solemn silliness" (*niaiserie solennelle*).

To set up the spontaneity of the child as a substitute for insight, to identify wonder with awe, romance with religion, is to confuse the very planes of being. There would appear to be a confusion of this kind in what Carlyle takes to be his own chief discovery, in his "natural supernaturalism."[43] The natural order we must grant Carlyle is unfathomable, but it is not therefore awful, only wonderful. A movement of charity belongs as Pascal says to an entirely different order.[44]

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[42] See *Biographia literaria*, ch. XXII.

[43] This message came to him in any case straight from German romanticism. See Walzel, *Deutsche Romantik*, 22, 151.

[44] "De tous les corps et esprits, on n'en saurait tirer un mouvement de vraie charité;

The spiritual order to which Pascal refers lifts a man so far as he perceives it out of his ordinary self and draws him to an ethical centre. But the Rousseauist tends, as I have said, to repudiate the very idea of an ethical centre along with the special forms in which it had got itself embedded. Every attempt, whether humanistic or religious, to set up some such centre, to oppose a unifying and centralizing principle to expansive impulse, seems to him arbitrary and artificial. He does not discriminate between the ethical norm or centre that a Sophocles grasps intuitively and the centrality that the pseudo-classicist hopes to achieve by mechanical imitation. He argues from his underlying assumption that the principle of variation is alone vital, that one's genius and originality are in pretty direct ratio to one's eccentricity in the literal meaning of the word; and he is therefore ready to affirm his singularity or difference in the face of whatever happens to be established. This attitude, it is worth noting, is quite unlike that of the humorist in the old English sense of the word, who indulges his bent and is at the same time quite unconcerned with any central model that he should imitate and with reference to which he should discipline his oddities. The idiosyncrasy of the Rousseauist is not, like that of the humorist, genial, but defiant. He is strangely self-conscious in his return to the unconscious. In everything, from his vocabulary to the details

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cela est impossible, et d'un autre ordre, surnaturel." *Penseés*, Article XVII. "Charité," one should recollect, here has its traditional meaning – the love, not of man, but of God.

of his dress, he is eager to emphasize his departure from the norm. Hence the persistent pose and theatricality in so many of the leaders of this movement, in Rousseau himself, for instance, or in Chateaubriand and Byron. As for the lesser figures in the movement their "genius" is often chiefly displayed in their devices for calling attention to themselves as the latest and most marvellous births of time; it is only one aspect in short of an art in which the past century, whatever its achievement in the other arts, has easily surpassed all its predecessors – the art of advertising.

One needs always to return, however, if one is to understand the romantic notion of genius, to a consideration of the pseudo-classic decorum against which it is a protest. The gentleman or man of the world (*honnête homme*) was not, like the original genius, anxious to advertise himself, to call attention to his own special note of originality, since his primary concern was with an entirely different problem, with the problem, namely, not of expressing but of humanizing himself; and he could humanize himself, he felt, only by constant reference to the accepted standard of what the normal man should be. He refused to "pride himself on anything"; he was fearful of over-emphasis, because the first of virtues in his eyes was a sense of proportion. The total symmetry of life to which the best type of classicist refers back his every impulse, he apprehends intuitively with the aid of his imagination. The symmetry to which the pseudo-classicist refers back his impulses has ceased to be imaginative and has become a

mere conformity to an outer code or even to the rules of etiquette; and so, instead of a deep imaginative insight, he gets mere elegance or polish. The unity that a purely external decorum of this kind imposes on life degenerates into a tiresome sameness. It seems an unwarranted denial of the element of wonder and surprise. "Boredom was born one day of uniformity," said La Motte Houdard, who was himself a pseudo-classicist; whereas variety as everybody knows is the spice of life. The romanticist would break up the smooth and tiresome surface of artificial decorum by the pursuit of strangeness. If he can only get his thrill he cares little whether it is probable, whether it bears any relation, that is, to normal human experience. This sacrifice of the probable to the surprising appears, as I said at the outset, in all types of romanticism – whether of action or thought or feeling. The genuine classicist always puts his main stress on design or structure; whereas the main quest of every type of romanticist is rather for the intense and vivid and arresting detail. Take, for instance, the intellectual romanticism that prevailed especially in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. In the "witty and conceited" poets of this period the intellect is engaged in a more or less irresponsible vagabondage with the imagination as its free accomplice. The conceits by which a poet of this type displays his "ingenuity" (genius) are not structural, are not, that is, referred back to any centre. They stand forth each separately and sharply from the surface of the style (hence known to the French as "points"), and so arrest the reader

by their novelty. Their rareness and preciousness, however, are intended to startle the intellect alone. They do not have and are not intended to have any power of sensuous suggestion. The Rousseauistic romanticist, on the other hand, so far from being "metaphysical," strives to be concrete even at the risk of a certain materialism of style, of turning his metaphors into mere images. Like the intellectual romanticist, though in a different way, he wishes to break up the smooth and monotonous surface of life and style, and so he sets up the cult of the picturesque. To understand this cult one needs to remember the opposite extreme of artificial symmetry. One needs to recall, for example, the neo-classicist who complained of the stars in heaven because they were not arranged in symmetrical patterns, or various other neo-classicists who attacked mountains because of their rough and irregular shapes, because of their refusal to submit to the rule and compass. When beauty is conceived in so mechanical a fashion some one is almost certain to wish to "add strangeness" to it.

The cult of the picturesque is closely associated with the cult of local color. Here as elsewhere romantic genius is, in contradistinction to classical genius which aims at the "grandeur of generality," the genius of wonder and surprise. According to Buffon, who offers the rare spectacle of a man of science who is at the same time a theorist of the grand manner, genius is shown in the architectonic gift – in the power so to unify a subject as to keep its every detail in proper subordination to the whole. Any mere wantoning of the imagination in the

pursuit of either the precious or the picturesque is to be severely repressed if one is to attain to the grandeur of generality. Buffon is truly classic in relating genius to design. Unfortunately he verges towards the pseudo-classic in his distrust of color, of the precise word and the vivid descriptive epithet. The growing verbal squeamishness that so strikes one towards the end of the neo-classic period is one outcome of artificial decorum, of confusing nobility of language with the language of the nobility. There was an increasing fear of the trivial word that might destroy the illusion of the grand manner, and also of the technical term that should be too suggestive of specialization. All terms were to be avoided that were not readily intelligible to a lady or gentleman in the drawing-room. And so it came to pass that by the end of the eighteenth century the grand manner, or elevated style, had come to be largely an art of ingenious circumlocution, and Buffon gives some countenance to this conception of classic dignity and representativeness when he declares that one should describe objects "only by the most general terms." At all events the reply of the romantic genius to this doctrine is the demand for local color, for the concrete and picturesque phrase. The general truth at which the classicist aims the Rousseauist dismisses as identical with the gray and the academic, and bends all his efforts to the rendering of the vivid and unique detail. Of the readiness of the romantic genius to show (or one is tempted to say) to advertise his originality by trampling verbal decorum under foot along with every other kind of decorum, I shall have more to say

later. He is ready to employ not only the homely and familiar word that the pseudo-classicist had eschewed as "low," but words so local and technical as to be unintelligible to ordinary readers. Chateaubriand deals so specifically with the North American Indian and his environment that the result, according to Sainte-Beuve, is a sort of "tattooing" of his style. Hugo bestows a whole dictionary of architectural terms upon the reader in his "Nôtre Dame," and of nautical terms in his "Toilers of the Sea." In order to follow some of the passages in Balzac's "César Birotteau," one needs to be a lawyer or a professional accountant, and it has been said that in order to do justice to a certain description in Zola one would need to be a pork-butcher. In this movement towards a highly specialized vocabulary one should note a coöperation, as so often elsewhere, between the two wings of the naturalistic movement – the scientific and the emotional. The Rousseauist is, like the scientist, a specialist – he specializes in his own sensations. He goes in quest of emotional thrills for their own sake, just as Napoleon's generals, according to Sainte-Beuve, waged war without any ulterior aim but for the sheer lust of conquest. The vivid images and picturesque details are therefore not sufficiently structural; each one tends to thrust itself forward without reference to the whole and to demand attention for its own sake.

The pursuit of the unrelated thrill without reference to its motivation or probability leads in the romantic movement to a sort of descent – often, it is true, a rapturous and lyrical descent

– from the dramatic to the melodramatic. It is possible to trace this one-sided emphasis on wonder not merely in vocabulary but in the increasing resort to the principle of contrast. One suspects, for example, that Rousseau exaggerates the grotesqueness of his youthful failure as a musical composer at Lausanne in order that his success in the same rôle before the king and all the ladies of the court at Versailles may "stick more fiery off." The contrast that Chateaubriand establishes between the two banks of the Mississippi at the beginning of his "Atala" is so complete as to put some strain on verisimilitude. One may note in this same description, as a somewhat different way of sacrificing the probable to the picturesque, the bears drunk on wild grapes and reeling on the branches of the elms. To prove that it was possible on some particular occasion to look down the vista of a forest glade on the lower Mississippi and see it closed by a drunken bear does not meet the difficulty at all. For art has to do, as was remarked long ago, not with the possible but the probable; and a bear in this posture is a possible but scarcely a probable bear.

To return to the principle of contrast: Hugo dilates upon his puniness as an infant ("abandoned by everybody, even by his mother") in order to make his later achievement seem still more stupendous.[45] The use of the antithesis as the auxiliary of surprise, the abrupt and thrilling passage from light to shade or the contrary, finds perhaps its culminating expression in Hugo. A study of this one figure as it appears in his words

[45] See poem, *Ce siècle avait deux ans* in the *Feuilles d'Automne*.

and ideas, in his characters and situations and subjects, would show that he is the most melodramatic genius for whom high rank has ever been claimed in literature. The suddenness of Jean Valjean's transformation from a convict into a saint may serve as a single instance of Hugo's readiness to sacrifice verisimilitude to surprise in his treatment of character.

Closely allied to the desire to break up the monotonous surface of "good form" by the pointed and picturesque style in writing is the rise of the pointed and picturesque style in dress. A man may advertise his genius and originality (in the romantic sense of these terms) by departing from the accepted modes of costume as well as from the accepted modes of speech. Gautier's scarlet waistcoat at the first performance of Hernani is of the same order as his flamboyant epithets, his riot of local color, and was at least as effective in achieving the main end of his life – to be, in his own phrase, the "terror of the sleek, baldheaded bourgeois." In assuming the Armenian garb to the astonishment of the rustics of Motiers-Travers, Rousseau anticipates not merely Gautier but innumerable other violators of conventional correctness: here as elsewhere he deserves to rank as the classic instance, one is tempted to say, of romantic eccentricity. La Bruyère, an exponent of the traditional good-breeding against which Rousseauism is a protest, says that the gentleman allows himself to be dressed by his tailor. He wishes to be neither ahead of the mode nor behind it, being reluctant as he is in all things to oppose his private sense to the general sense.

His point of view in the matter of dress is not so very remote from that of a genuine classicism, whereas the enthusiast who recently went about the streets of New York (until taken in by the police) garbed as a contemporary of Pericles is no less plainly a product of Rousseauistic revolt.

Chateaubriand's relation to Rousseauism in this matter calls for special comment. He encouraged, and to some extent held, the belief that to show genius and originality one must be irregular and tempestuous in all things, even in the arrangement of one's hair. At the same time he preached reason. His heart, in short, was romantic, his head classical. Both as a classicist and a romanticist he was ready to repudiate on the one hand his master Rousseau, and on the other his own disciples. As a romantic genius he wished to regard himself as unique and so unrelated to Rousseau. At the same time he also looked upon it as a sort of insolence for any of his own followers to aspire to such a lonely preëminence in grief as René. As a classicist he saw that great art aims at the normal and the representative, and that it is therefore absurd for people to pattern themselves on such morbid and exceptional characters as René and Childe Harold. Most of the romanticists indeed showed themselves very imitative even in their attempts at uniqueness, and the result was a second or third hand, or as one is tempted to say, a stale eccentricity. In their mere following of the mode many of the French romanticists of 1830 were ready to impose a painful discipline upon themselves[46]

[46] For amusing details, see L. Maigron, *Le Romantisme et la mode* (1911), ch. V.

in order to appear abnormal, in order, for instance, to acquire a livid Byronic complexion. Some of those who wished to seem elegiac like Lamartine rather than to emulate the violent and histrionic revolt of the Conrads and Laras actually succeeded, we are told, in giving themselves consumption (hence the epithet *école poitrinaire*).

In outer and visible freakishness the French romanticists of 1830 probably bore away the palm, though in inner and spiritual remoteness from normal human experience they can scarcely vie with the early German romanticists. And this is doubtless due to the fact that in France there was a more definite outer standard from which to advertise their departure, and also to the fact that the revolt against this standard was so largely participated in by the painters and by writers like Gautier who were also interested in painting. Chateaubriand writes of the romantic painters (and the passage will also serve to illustrate his attitude towards his own disciples): "[These artists] rig themselves up as comic sketches, as grotesques, as caricatures. Some of them wear frightful mustaches, one would suppose that they are going forth to conquer the world – their brushes are halberds, their paint-scratchers sabres; others have enormous beards and hair that puffs out or hangs down their shoulders; they smoke a cigar volcanically. These cousins of the rainbow, to use a phrase of our old Régnier, have their heads filled with deluges, seas, rivers, forests, cataracts, tempests, or it may be with slaughters, tortures and scaffolds. One finds among them human skulls,

foils, mandolins, helmets and dolmans. … They aim to form a separate species between the ape and the satyr; they give you to understand that the secrecy of the studio has its dangers and that there is no safety for the models."

These purely personal eccentricities that so marked the early stages in the warfare between the Bohemian and the philistine have as a matter of fact diminished in our own time. Nowadays a man of the distinction of Disraeli or even of Bulwer-Lytton[47] would scarcely affect, as they did, the flamboyant style in dress. But the underlying failure to discriminate between the odd and the original has persisted and has worked out into even extremer consequences. One may note, as I have said, even in the early figures in the movement a tendency to play to the gallery, a something that suggests the approach of the era of the lime-light and the big headline. Rousseau himself has been called the father of yellow journalists. There is an unbroken development from the early exponents of original genius down to cubists, futurists and post-impressionists and the corresponding schools

[47] For Disraeli see Wilfrid Ward, *Men and Matters*, 54 ff. Of Bulwer-Lytton at Nice about 1850 Princess von Racowitza writes as follows in her *Autobiography* (p. 46): "His fame was at its zenith. He seemed to me antediluvian, with his long dyed curls and his old-fashioned dress … with long coats reaching to the ankles, knee-breeches, and long colored waistcoats. Also, he appeared always with a young lady who adored him, and who was followed by a man servant carrying a harp. She sat at his feet and appeared as he did in the costume of 1830, with long flowing curls called *Anglaises*. … In society, however, people ran after him tremendously, and spoilt him in every possible way. He read aloud from his own works, and, in especially poetic passages, his 'Alice' accompanied him with arpeggios on the harp."

in literature. The partisans of expression as opposed to form in the eighteenth century led to the fanatics of expression in the nineteenth and these have led to the maniacs of expression of the twentieth. The extremists in painting have got so far beyond Cézanne, who was regarded not long ago as one of the wildest of innovators, that Cézanne is, we are told, "in a fair way to achieve the unhappy fate of becoming a classic." Poe was fond of quoting a saying of Bacon's that "there is no excellent beauty that hath not some strangeness in the proportion." This saying became known in France through Baudelaire's rendering of Poe and was often ascribed to Poe himself. It was taken to mean that the stranger one became the nearer one was getting to perfect beauty. And if we grant this view of beauty we must admit that some of the decadents succeeded in becoming very beautiful indeed. But the more the element of proportion in beauty is sacrificed to strangeness the more the result will seem to the normal man to be, not beauty at all, but rather an esoteric cult of ugliness. The romantic genius therefore denounces the normal man as a philistine and at the same time, since he cannot please him, seeks at least to shock him and so capture his attention by the very violence of eccentricity.

The saying I have quoted from Bacon is perhaps an early example of the inner alliance between things that superficially often seem remote – the scientific spirit and the spirit of romance. Scientific discovery has given a tremendous stimulus to wonder and curiosity, has encouraged a purely exploratory

attitude towards life and raised an overwhelming prepossession in favor of the new as compared with the old. Baconian and Rousseauist evidently come together by their primary emphasis on novelty. The movement towards a more and more eccentric conception of art and literature has been closely allied in practice with the doctrine of progress – and that from the very dawn of the so-called Quarrel of Ancients and Moderns. It is scarcely possible to exaggerate the havoc that has been wrought by the transfer of the belief that the latest thing is the best – a belief that is approximately true of automobiles – from the material order to an entirely different realm.[48] The very heart of the classical message, one cannot repeat too often, is that one should aim first of all not to be original, but to be human, and that to be human one needs to look up to a sound model and imitate it. The imposition of form and proportion upon one's expansive impulses which results from this process of imitation is, in the true sense of that much abused word, culture. Genuine culture is difficult and disciplinary. The mediation that it involves between the conflicting claims of form and expression requires the utmost contention of spirit. We have here a clue to the boundless success of the Rousseauistic doctrine of spontaneity, of the assertion that genius resides in the region of the primitive and unconscious and is hindered rather than helped by culture. It is easier to be a genius on Rousseauistic lines than to be a man on the terms imposed by the classicist. There is a fatal facility about creation when its

[48] See essay by Kenyon Cox on *The Illusion of Progress*, in his *Artist and Public*.

quality is not tested by some standard set above the creator's temperament; and the same fatal facility appears in criticism when the critic does not test creation by some standard set above both his own temperament and that of the creator. The romantic critic as a matter of fact confines his ambition to receiving so keen an impression from genius, conceived as something purely temperamental, that when this creative expression is passed through his temperament it will issue forth as a fresh expression. Taste, he holds, will thus tend to become one with genius, and criticism, instead of being cold and negative like that of the neo-classicist, will itself grow creative.[49] But the critic who does not get beyond this stage will have gusto, zest, relish, what you will, he will not have taste. For taste involves a difficult mediation between the element of uniqueness in both critic and creator and that which is representative and human. Once eliminate this human standard that is set above the temperament of the creator and make of the critic in turn a mere pander to "genius" and it is hard to see what measure of a man's excellence is left save his intoxication with himself; and this measure would scarcely seem to be trustworthy. "Every ass that's romantic," says Wolseley in his Preface to "Valentinian" (1686) "believes he's inspired."

An important aspect of the romantic theory of genius remains to be considered. This theory is closely associated in its rise and growth with the theory of the master faculty or ruling passion. A

[49] See *Creative Criticism* by J. E. Spingarn, and my article on *Genius and Taste*, reviewing this book, in the *Nation* (New York), 7 Feb., 1918.

man can do that for which he has a genius without effort, whereas no amount of effort can avail to give a man that for which he has no native aptitude.[50] Buffon affirmed in opposition to this view that genius is only a capacity for taking pains or, as an American recently put it, is ten per cent inspiration and ninety per cent perspiration. This notion of genius not only risks running counter to the observed facts as to the importance of the native gift but it does not bring out as clearly as it might the real point at issue. Even though genius were shown to be ninety per cent inspiration a man should still, the classicist would insist, fix his attention on the fraction that is within his power. Thus Boileau says in substance at the outset of his "Art of Poetry" that a poet needs to be born under a propitious star. Genius is indispensable, and not merely genius in general but genius for the special kind of poetry in which he is to excel. Yet granting all this, he says to the poetical aspirant, bestir yourself! The mystery of grace will always be recognized in any view of life that gets at all beneath the surface. Yet it is still the better part to turn to the feasibility of works. The view of genius as merely a temperamental overflow is as a matter of fact only a caricature of the doctrine of grace. It suits the spiritual indolence of the creator who seeks to evade the more

[50] One should note here as elsewhere points of contact between scientific and emotional naturalism. Take, for example, the educational theory that has led to the setting up of the elective system. The general human discipline embodied in the fixed curriculum is to be discarded in order that the individual may be free to work along the lines of his bent or "genius." In a somewhat similar way scientific naturalism encourages the individual to sacrifice the general human discipline to a specialty.

difficult half of his problem – which is not merely to create but to humanize his creation. Hawthorne, for example, is according to Mr. Brownell, too prone (except in the "Scarlet Letter") to get away from the clear sunlight of normal human experience into a region of somewhat crepuscular symbolism, and this is because he yielded too complacently and fatalistically to what he conceived to be his genius. The theory of genius is perhaps the chief inheritance of the New England transcendentalists from romanticism. Hawthorne was more on his guard against the extreme implications of the theory than most other members of this group. It remains to be seen how much the exaltation of genius and depreciation of culture that marks one whole side of Emerson will in the long run tell against his reputation. The lesser New England men showed a rare incapacity to distinguish between originality and mere freakishness either in themselves or in others.

It is fair to say that in lieu of the discipline of culture the romantic genius has often insisted on the discipline of technique; and this has been especially true in a country like France with its persistent tradition of careful workmanship. Gautier, for example, would have one's "floating dream sealed"[51] in the hardest and most resisting material, that can only be mastered by the perfect craftsman; and he himself, falling into a confusion of the arts, tries to display such a craftsmanship by painting and carving with words. Flaubert, again, refines upon the technique

[51] See his poem *L'Art* in *Emaux et Camées*.

of writing to a point where it becomes not merely a discipline but a torture. But if a man is to be a romantic genius in the fullest sense he must, it should seem, repudiate even the discipline of technique as well as the discipline of culture in favor of an artless spontaneity. For after all the genius is only the man who retains the virtues of the child, and technical proficiency is scarcely to be numbered among these virtues. The German romanticists already prefer the early Italian painters because of their naïveté and divine awkwardness to the later artiste who had a more conscious mastery of their material. The whole Pre-Raphaelite movement is therefore only one aspect of Rousseau's return to nature. To later primitivists the early Italians themselves seem far too deliberate. They would recover the spontaneity displayed in the markings on Alaskan totem poles or in the scratchings of the caveman on the flint. A prerequisite to pure genius, if we are to judge by their own productions, is an inability to draw. The futurists in their endeavor to convey symbolically their own "soul" or "vision" – a vision be it noted of pure flux and motion – deny the very conditions of time and space that determine the special technique of painting; and inasmuch as to express one's "soul" means for these moderns, as it did for the "genius" of the eighteenth century, to express the ineffable difference between themselves and others, the symbolizing of this soul to which they have sacrificed both culture and technique remains a dark mystery.

An eccentricity so extreme as to be almost or quite

indistinguishable from madness is then the final outcome of the revolt of the original genius from the regularity of the eighteenth century. The eighteenth century had, one must confess, become too much like the Happy Valley from which Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia, sought an egress. It was fair to the eye and satisfied all man's ordinary needs, but it seemed at the same time to hem him in oppressively, and limit unduly his horizons. For the modern man, as for the prince in Johnson's tale, a regular round of assured felicities has counted for nought as compared with the passion for the open; though now that he has tasted strange adventures, the modern man will scarcely decide at the end, like the prince, to "return to Abyssinia." I have already spoken of the rationalistic and pseudo-classic elements in the eighteenth century that the romantic rebels found so intolerable. It is impossible to follow "reason," they said in substance, and also to slake one's thirst for the "infinite"; it is impossible to conform and imitate and at the same time to be free and original and spontaneous. Above all it is impossible to submit to the yoke of either reason or imitation and at the same time to be imaginative. This last assertion will always be the main point at issue in any genuine debate between classicist and romanticist. The supreme thing in life, the romanticist declares, is the creative imagination, and it can be restored to its rights only by repudiating imitation. The imagination is supreme the classicist grants but adds that to imitate rightly is to make the highest use of the imagination. To understand all that is implied in this central divergence between

classicist and romanticist we shall need to study in more detail the kind of imaginative activity that has been encouraged in the whole movement extending from the rise of the original genius in the eighteenth century to the present day.

CHAPTER III
ROMANTIC IMAGINATION

I have already spoken of the contrast established by the theorists of original genius in the eighteenth century between the different types of imagination – especially between the literary and the scientific imagination. According to these theorists, it will be remembered, the scientific imagination should be strictly subordinated to judgment, whereas the literary imagination, freed from the shackles of imitation, should be at liberty to wander wild in its own empire of chimeras, or, at all events, should be far less sharply checked by judgment. It is easy to follow the extension of these English views of genius and imagination into the France of Rousseau and Diderot, and then the elaboration of these same views, under the combined influence of both France and England, in Germany. I have tried to show that Kant, especially in his "Critique of Judgment," and Schiller in his "Æsthetic Letters" (1795) prepare the way for the conception of the creative imagination that is at the very heart of the romantic movement. According to this romantic conception, as we have seen, the imagination is to be free, not merely from outer formalistic constraint, but from all constraint whatever. This extreme romantic emancipation of the imagination was accompanied by an equally extreme

emancipation of the emotions. Both kinds of emancipation are, as I have tried to show, a recoil partly from neo-classical judgment – a type of judgment which seemed to oppress all that is creative and spontaneous in man under a weight of outer convention; partly, from the reason of the Enlightenment, a type of reason that was so logical and abstract that it seemed to mechanize the human spirit, and to be a denial of all that is immediate and intuitive. The neo-classical judgment, with its undue unfriendliness to the imagination, is itself a recoil, let us remember, from the imaginative extravagance of the "metaphysicals," the intellectual romanticists of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and also, if we take a sufficiently wide view, from the Quixotic type of romanticism, the romanticism of action, that we associate with the Middle Ages.

Now not only are men governed by their imaginations (the imagination, as Pascal says, disposes of everything), but the type of imagination by which most men are governed may be defined in the widest sense of the word as romantic. Nearly every man cherishes his dream, his conceit of himself as he would like to be, a sort of "ideal" projection of his own desires, in comparison with which his actual life seems a hard and cramping routine. "Man must conceive himself what he is not," as Dr. Johnson says, "for who is pleased with what he is?" The ample habitation that a man rears for his fictitious or "ideal" self often has some slight foundation in fact, but the higher he rears it the more insecure it becomes, until finally, like Perrette in the fable,

he brings the whole structure down about his ears by the very gesture of his dream. "We all of us," La Fontaine concludes in perhaps the most delightful account of the romantic imagination in literature, "wise as well as foolish, indulge in daydreams. There is nothing sweeter. A flattering illusion carries away our spirits. All the wealth in the world is ours, all honors and all women,"[52] etc. When Johnson descants on the "dangerous prevalence of imagination,"[53] and warns us to stick to "sober probability," what he means is the dangerous prevalence of day-dreaming. The retreat of the Rousseauist into some "land of chimeras" or tower of ivory assumes forms almost incredibly complex and subtle, but at bottom the ivory tower is only one form of man's ineradicable longing to escape from the oppression of the actual into some land of heart's desire, some golden age of fancy. As a matter of fact, Rousseau's imaginative activity often approaches very closely to the delights of day-dreaming as described by La Fontaine. He was never more imaginative, he tells us, than when on a walking-trip – especially when the trip had no definite goal, or at least when he could take his time in reaching it. The

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[52] Quel esprit ne bat la campagne?Qui ne fait châteaux en Espagne?Picrochole, Pyrrhus, la laitière, enfin tous,Autant les sages que les fousChacun songe en veillant; il n'est rien de plus doux.Une flatteuse erreur emporte alors nos âmes;Tout le bien du monde est à nous,Tous les honneurs, toutes les femmes.Quand je suis seul, je fais au plus brave un défi,Je m'écarte, je vais détrôner le sophi;On m'élit roi, mon peuple m'aime;Les diadèmes vont sur ma tête pleuvant:Quelque accident fait-il que je rentre en moi-même,Je suis gros Jean comme devant.

[53] *Rasselas*, ch. XLIV.

Wanderlust of body and spirit could then be satisfied together. Actual vagabondage seemed to be an aid to the imagination in its escape from verisimilitude. One should note especially Rousseau's account of his early wandering from Lyons to Paris and the airy structures that he raised on his anticipations of what he might find there. Inasmuch as he was to be attached at Paris to the Swiss Colonel Godard, he already traced for himself in fancy, in spite of his short-sightedness, a career of military glory. "I had read that Marshal Schomberg was short-sighted, why shouldn't Marshal Rousseau be so too?" In the meanwhile, touched by the sight of the groves and brooks, "I felt in the midst of my glory that my heart was not made for so much turmoil, and soon without knowing how, I found myself once more among my beloved pastorals, renouncing forever the toils of Mars."

Thus alongside the real world and in more or less sharp opposition to it, Rousseau builds up a fictitious world, that *pays des chimères*, which is alone, as he tells us, worthy of habitation. To study his imaginative activity is simply to study the new forms that he gives to what I have called man's ineradicable longing for some Arcadia, some land of heart's desire. Goethe compares the illusions that man nourishes in his breast to the population of statues in ancient Rome which were almost as numerous as the population of living men. The important thing from the point of view of sanity is that a man should not blur the boundaries between the two populations, that he should not cease to discriminate between his fact and his fiction. If he

confuses what he dreams himself to be with what he actually is, he has already entered upon the pathway of madness. It was, for example, natural for a youth like Rousseau who was at once romantic and musical, to dream that he was a great composer; but actually to set up as a great composer and to give the concert at Lausanne, shows an unwillingness to discriminate between his fictitious and his real world that is plainly pathological. If not already a megalomaniac, he was even then on the way to megalomania.

To wander through the world as though it were an Arcadia or enchanted vision contrived for one's especial benefit is an attitude of childhood – especially of imaginative childhood. "Wherever children are," says Novalis, "there is the golden age." As the child grows and matures there is a more or less painful process of adjustment between his "vision" and the particular reality in which he is placed. A little sense gets knocked into his head, and often, it must be confessed, a good deal of the imagination gets knocked out. As Wordsworth complains, the vision fades into the light of common day. The striking fact about Rousseau is that, far more than Wordsworth, he held fast to his vision. He refused to adjust it to an unpalatable reality. During the very years when the ordinary youth is forced to subordinate his luxurious imaginings to some definite discipline he fell under the influence of Madame de Warens who encouraged rather than thwarted his Arcadian bent. Later, when almost incurably confirmed in his penchant for revery, he came into contact with the refined society of Paris, an

environment requiring so difficult an adjustment that no one we are told could accomplish the feat unless he had been disciplined into the appropriate habits from the age of six. He is indeed the supreme example of the unadjusted man, of the original genius whose imagination has never suffered either inner or outer constraint, who is more of an Arcadian dreamer at sixty perhaps than he was at sixteen. He writes to the Bailli de Mirabeau (31 January, 1767):

> "The fatigue of thinking becomes every day more painful to me. I love to dream, but freely, allowing my mind to wander without enslaving myself to any subject. … This idle and contemplative life which you do not approve and which I do not excuse, becomes to me daily more delicious; to wander alone endlessly and ceaselessly among the trees and rocks about my dwelling, to muse or rather to be as irresponsible as I please, and as you say, to go wool-gathering; … finally to give myself up unconstrainedly to my fantasies which, thank heaven, are all within my power: that, sir, is for me the supreme enjoyment, than which I can imagine nothing superior in this world for a man at my age and in my condition."

Rousseau, then, owes his significance not only to the fact that he was supremely imaginative in an age that was disposed to deny the supremacy of the imagination, but to the fact that he was imaginative in a particular way. A great multitude since his time must be reckoned among his followers, not because they have held certain ideas but because they have exhibited a

similar quality of imagination. In seeking to define this quality of imagination we are therefore at the very heart of our subject.

It is clear from what has already been said that Rousseau's imagination was in a general way Arcadian, and this, if not the highest, is perhaps the most prevalent type of imagination. In surveying the literature of the world one is struck not only by the universality of the pastoral or idyllic element, but by the number of forms it has assumed – forms ranging from the extreme of artificiality and conventionalism to the purest poetry. The very society against the artificiality of which Rousseau's whole work is a protest is itself in no small degree a pastoral creation. Various elements indeed entered into the life of the drawing-room as it came to be conceived towards the beginning of the seventeenth century. The Marquise de Rambouillet and others who set out at this time to live in the grand manner were in so far governed either by genuine or by artificial decorum. But at the same time that the creators of *le grand monde* were aiming to be more "decent" than the men and women of the sixteenth century, they were patterning themselves upon the shepherds and shepherdesses of D'Urfé's interminable pastoral "l'Astrée." They were seeking to create a sort of enchanted world from which the harsh cares of ordinary life were banished and where they might be free, like true Arcadians, to discourse of love. This discourse of love was associated with what I have defined as intellectual romanticism. In spite of the attacks by the exponents of humanistic good sense (Molière, Boileau, etc.) on

this drawing-room affectation, it lingered on and still led in the eighteenth century, as Rousseau complained, to "inconceivable refinements."[54] At the same time we should recollect that there is a secret bond between all forms of Arcadian dreaming. Not only was Rousseau fascinated, like the early *précieux* and *précieuses*, by D'Urfé's pastoral, but he himself appealed by his renewal of the main pastoral theme of love to the descendants of these former Arcadians in the polite society of his time. The love of Rousseau is associated not like that of the *précieux*, with the intellect, but with the emotions, and so he substitutes for a "wire-drawn and super-subtilized gallantry," the ground-swell of elemental passion.[55] Moreover, the definitely primitivistic coloring that he gave to his imaginative renewal of the pastoral dream appealed to an age that was reaching the last stages of over-refinement. Primitivism is, strictly speaking, nothing new in the world. It always tends to appear in periods of complex civilization. The charms of the simple life and of a return to nature were celebrated especially during the Alexandrian period of Greek literature for the special delectation no doubt of the most sophisticated members of this very sophisticated society. "Nothing," as Dr. Santayana says, "is farther from the common people than the corrupt desire to be primitive." Primitivistic dreaming was also popular in ancient Rome at its most artificial moment. The great ancients, however, though enjoying the

[54] *Nouvelle Héloïse*, Pt. II, Lettre XVII.

[55] Rostand has hit off this change in the Balcony Scene of his *Cyrano de Bergerac*.

poetry of the primitivistic dream, were not the dupes of this dream. Horace, for example, lived at the most artificial moment of Rome when primitivistic dreaming was popular as it had been at Alexandria. He descants on the joys of the simple life in a well-known ode. One should not therefore hail him, like Schiller, as the founder of the sentimental school "of which he has remained the unsurpassed model."[56] For the person who plans to return to nature in Horace's poem is the old usurer Alfius, who changes his mind at the last moment and puts out his mortgages again. In short, the final attitude of the urbane Horace towards the primitivistic dream – it could hardly be otherwise – is ironical.

Rousseau seems destined to remain the supreme example, at least in the Occident, of the man who takes the primitivistic dream seriously, who attempts to set up primitivism as a philosophy and even as a religion. Rousseau's account of his sudden illumination on the road from Paris to Vincennes is famous: the scales, he tells us, fell from his eyes even as they had from the eyes of Paul on the road to Damascus, and he saw how man had fallen from the felicity of his primitive estate; how the blissful ignorance in which he had lived at one with himself and harmless to his fellows had been broken by the rise of intellectual self-consciousness and the resulting progress in the sciences and arts. Modern students of Rousseau have, under the influence of James, taken this experience on the road to

[56] Essay on *Simple and Sentimental Poetry*.

Vincennes to be an authentic case of conversion,[57] but this is merely one instance of our modern tendency to confound the subrational with the superrational. What one finds in this alleged conversion when one looks into it, is a sort of "subliminal uprush" of the Arcadian memories of his youth, especially of his life at Annecy and Les Charmettes, and at the same time the contrast between these Arcadian memories and the hateful constraints he had suffered at Paris in his attempts to adjust himself to an uncongenial environment.

We can trace even more clearly perhaps the process by which the Arcadian dreamer comes to set up as a seer, in Rousseau's relation of the circumstances under which he came to compose his "Discourse on the Origins of Inequality." He goes off on a sort of picnic with Thérèse into the forest of St. Germain and gives himself up to imagining the state of primitive man. "Plunged in the forest," he says, "I sought and found there the image of primitive times of which I proudly drew the history; I swooped down on the little falsehoods of men; I ventured to lay bare their nature, to follow the progress of time and of circumstances which have disfigured it, and comparing artificial man (*l'homme de l'homme*) with natural man, to show in his alleged improvement the true source of his miseries. My soul, exalted by these sublime contemplations, rose into the presence of the Divinity. Seeing from this vantage point that the blind pathway of prejudices followed by my fellows was also that of their errors, misfortunes

[57] The life of Rousseau by Gerhard Gran is written from this point of view.

and crimes, I cried out to them in a feeble voice that they could not hear: Madmen, who are always complaining of nature, know that all your evils come from yourselves alone."

The golden age for which the human heart has an ineradicable longing is here presented not as poetical, which it certainly is, but as a "state of nature" from which man has actually fallen. The more or less innocent Arcadian dreamer is being transformed into the dangerous Utopist. He puts the blame of the conflict and division of which he is conscious in himself upon the social conventions that set bounds to his temperament and impulses; once get rid of these purely artificial restrictions and he feels that he will again be at one with himself and "nature." With such a vision of nature as this it is not surprising that every constraint is unendurable to Rousseau, that he likes, as Berlioz was to say of himself later, to "make all barriers crack." He is ready to shatter all the forms of civilized life in favor of something that never existed, of a state of nature that is only the projection of his own temperament and its dominant desires upon the void. His programme amounts in practice to the indulgence of infinite indeterminate desire, to an endless and aimless vagabondage of the emotions with the imagination as their free accomplice.

This longing of the highly sophisticated person to get back to the primitive and naïve and unconscious, or what amounts to the same thing, to shake off the trammels of tradition and reason in favor of free and passionate self-expression, underlies, as I have pointed out, the conception of original genius which

itself underlies the whole modern movement. A book reflecting the primitivistic trend of the eighteenth century, and at the same time pointing the way, as we shall see presently, to the working out of the fundamental primitivistic contrast between the natural and the artificial in the romanticism of the early nineteenth century, is Schiller's "Essay on Simple and Sentimental Poetry." The poetry that does not "look before or after," that is free from self-questioning and self-consciousness, and has a childlike spontaneity, Schiller calls simple or naïve. The poet, on the other hand, who is conscious of his fall from nature and who, from the midst of his sophistication, longs to be back once more at his mother's bosom, is sentimental. Homer and his heroes, for example, are naïve; Werther, who yearns in a drawing-room for the Homeric simplicity, is sentimental. The longing of the modern man for nature, says Schiller, is that of the sick man for health. It is hard to see in Schiller's "nature" anything more than a development of Rousseau's primitivistic Arcadia. To be sure, Schiller warns us that, in order to recover the childlike and primitive virtues still visible in the man of genius, we must not renounce culture. We must not seek to revert lazily to an Arcadia, but must struggle forward to an Elysium. Unfortunately Schiller's Elysium has a strange likeness to Rousseau's Arcadia; and that is because Schiller's own conception of life is, in the last analysis, overwhelmingly sentimental. His most Elysian conception, that of a purely æsthetic Greece, a wonderland of unalloyed beauty, is also a bit of Arcadian sentimentalizing. Inasmuch as Rousseau's

state of nature never existed outside of dreamland, the Greek who is simple or naïve in this sense is likewise a myth. He has no real counterpart either in the Homeric age or any other age of Greece. It is hard to say which is more absurd, to make the Greeks naïve, or to turn Horace into a sentimentalist. One should note how this romantic perversion of the Greeks for which Schiller is largely responsible is related to his general view of the imagination. We have seen that in the "Æsthetic Letters" he maintains that if the imagination is to conceive the ideal it must be free; and that to be free it must be emancipated from purpose and engage in a sort of play. If the imagination has to subordinate itself to a real object it ceases in so far to be free. Hence the more ideal the imagination the farther it gets away from a real object. By his theory of the imagination, Schiller thus encourages that opposition between the ideal and the real which figures so largely in romantic psychology. A man may consent to adjust a mere dream to the requirements of the real, but when his dream is promoted to the dignity of an ideal it is plain that he will be less ready to make the sacrifice. Schiller's Greece is very ideal in the sense I have just defined. It hovers before the imagination as a sort of Golden Age of pure beauty, a land of chimeras that is alone worthy of the æsthete's habitation. As an extreme type of the romantic Hellenist, one may take Hölderlin, who was a disciple at once of Schiller and of Rousseau. He begins by urging emancipation from every form of outer and traditional control in the name of spontaneity. "Boldly forget," he cries in

the very accents of Rousseau, "what you have inherited and won – all laws and customs – and like new-born babes lift up your eyes to godlike nature." Hölderlin has been called a "Hellenizing Werther," and Werther, one should recollect, is only a German Saint-Preux, who is in turn, according to Rousseau's own avowal, only an idealized image of Rousseau. The nature that Hölderlin worships and which is, like the nature of Rousseau, only an Arcadian intoxication of the imagination, he associates with a Greece which is, like the Greece of Schiller, a dreamland of pure beauty. He longs to escape into this dreamland from an actual world that seems to him intolerably artificial. The contrast between his "ideal" Greece and reality is so acute as to make all attempt at adjustment out of the question. As a result of this maladjustment his whole being finally gave way and he lingered on for many years in madness.

The acuteness of the opposition between the ideal and the real in Hölderlin recalls Shelley, who was also a romantic Hellenist, and at the same time perhaps the most purely Rousseauistic of the English romantic poets. But Shelley was also a political dreamer, and here one should note two distinct phases in his dream: a first phase that is filled with the hope of transforming the real world into an Arcadia[58] through revolutionary reform; and then a phase of elegiac disillusion when the gap between

[58] The world's great age begins anew,The golden years return, etc. Hellas, vv. 1060 ff.

reality and his ideal refuses to be bridged.[59] Something of the same radiant political hope and the same disillusion is found in Wordsworth. In the first flush of his revolutionary enthusiasm, France seemed to him to be "standing on the top of golden hours" and pointing the way to a new birth of human nature:

> Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,
> But to be young was very heaven! O times,
> In which the meagre stale forbidding ways
> Of custom, law and statute, took at once
> The attraction of a country in romance!

When it became evident that the actual world and Utopia did not coincide after all, when the hard sequences of cause and effect that bind the present inexorably to the past refused to yield to the creations of the romantic imagination, what ensued in Wordsworth was not so much an awakening to true wisdom as a transformation of the pastoral dream. The English Lake Country became for him in some measure as it was later to be for Ruskin, the ivory tower into which he retreated from the oppression of the real. He still continued to see, if not the general order of society, at least the denizens of his chosen retreat through the Arcadian mist, and contrasted their pastoral felicity with the misery of men "barricadoed in the walls of cities." I do not mean to disparage the poetry of humble life or to deny that many passages may be

[59] For an excellent analysis of Shelley's idealism see Leslie Stephen's *Godwin and Shelley* in his *Hours in a Library*.

cited from Wordsworth that justify his reputation as an inspired teacher: I wish merely to point out here and elsewhere what is specifically romantic in the quality of his imagination.

After all it is to Rousseau himself even more than to his German or English followers that one needs to turn for the best examples of the all-pervasive conflict between the ideal and the actual. The psychology of this conflict is revealed with special clearness in the four letters that he wrote to M. de Malesherbes, and into which he has perhaps put more of himself than into any other similar amount of his writing. His natural indolence and impatience at the obligations and constraints of life were, he avows to M. de Malesherbes, increased by his early reading. At the age of eight he already knew Plutarch by heart and had read "all novels" and shed tears over them, he adds "by the pailful." Hence was formed his "heroic and romantic taste" which filled him with aversion for everything that did not resemble his dreams. He had hoped at first to find the equivalent of these dreams among actual men, but after painful disillusions he had come to look with disdain on his age and his contemporaries. "I withdrew more and more from human society and created for myself a society in my imagination, a society that charmed me all the more in that I could cultivate it without peril or effort and that it was always at my call and such as I required it." He associated this dream society with the forms of outer nature. The long walks in particular that he took during his stay at the Hermitage were, he tells us, filled with a "continual delirium" of

this kind. “I peopled nature with beings according to my heart. … I created for myself a golden age to suit my fancy.” It is not unusual for a man thus to console himself for his poverty in the real relations of life by accumulating a huge hoard of fairy gold. Where the Rousseauist goes beyond the ordinary dreamer is in his proneness to regard his retirement into some land of chimeras as a proof of his nobility and distinction. Poetry and life he feels are irreconcilably opposed to each other, and he for his part is on the side of poetry and the “ideal.” Goethe symbolized the hopelessness of this conflict in the suicide of the young Werther. But though Werther died, his creator continued to live, and more perhaps than any other figure in the whole Rousseauistic movement perceived the peril of this conception of poetry and the ideal. He saw phantasts all about him who refused to be reconciled to the gap between the infinitude of their longing and the platitude of their actual lot. Perhaps no country and time ever produced more such phantasts than Germany of the Storm and Stress and romantic periods – partly no doubt because it did not offer any proper outlet for the activity of generous youths. Goethe himself had been a phantast, and so it was natural in works like his “Tasso” that he should show himself specially preoccupied with the problem of the poet and his adjustment to life. About the time that he wrote this play, he was, as he tells us, very much taken up with thoughts of “Rousseau and his hypochondriac misery.” Rousseau for his part felt a kinship between himself and Tasso, and Goethe’s Tasso

certainly reminds us very strongly of Rousseau. Carried away by his Arcadian imaginings, Tasso violates the decorum that separates him from the princess with whom he has fallen in love. As a result of the rebuffs that follow, his dream changes into a nightmare, until he finally falls like Rousseau into wild and random suspicion and looks on himself as the victim of a conspiracy. In opposition to Tasso is the figure of Antonio, the man of the world, whose imagination does not run away with his sense of fact, and who is therefore equal to the "demands of the day." The final reconciliation between Tasso and Antonio, if not very convincing dramatically, symbolizes at least what Goethe achieved in some measure in his own life. There were moments, he declares, when he might properly look upon himself as mad, like Rousseau. He escaped from this world of morbid brooding, this giddy downward gazing into the bottomless pit of the romantic heart against which he utters a warning in Tasso, by his activity at the court of Weimar, by classical culture, by scientific research. Goethe carries the same problem of reconciling the ideal to the real a stage further in his "Wilhelm Meister." The more or less irresponsible and Bohemian youth that we see at the beginning learns by renunciation and self-limitation to fit into a life of wholesome activity. Goethe saw that the remedy for romantic dreaming is work, though he is open to grave criticism, as I shall try to show elsewhere, for his unduly naturalistic conception of work. But the romanticists as a rule did not wish work in any sense and so, attracted as they were

by the free artistic life of Meister at the beginning, they looked upon his final adjustment to the real as a base capitulation to philistinism. Novalis described the book as a "Candide directed against poetry," and set out to write a counterblast in "Heinrich von Ofterdingen." This apotheosis of pure poetry, as he meant it to be, is above all an apotheosis of the wildest vagabondage of the imagination. Novalis did not, however, as a result of the conflict between the ideal and the real, show any signs of going mad like Hölderlin, or of simply fading from life like his friend Wackenroder. Like E. T. A. Hoffmann and a certain number of other phantasts he had a distinct gift for leading a dual life – for dividing himself into a prosaic self which went one way, and a poetical self which went another.

This necessary and fatal opposition between poetry and prose the romanticist saw typified in "Don Quixote," and of course he sided with the idealism of the knight against the philistine good sense of Sancho Panza; and so for the early romanticists as well as for those who were of their spiritual posterity, – Heine, for example, and Flaubert, – "Don Quixote" was a book to evoke not laughter but tears.

To the romantic conception of the ideal can be traced the increasing lack of understanding between the poet, or in general the creator, and the public during the past century. Many neo-classical writers may, like Boileau, have shown an undue reverence for what they conceived to be the general sense of their time, but to measure one's inspiration by one's remoteness from

this general sense is surely a far more dangerous error; and yet one was encouraged to do this very thing by the views of original genius that were held in the eighteenth century. Certain late neo-classicists lacked imagination and were at the same time always harping on good sense. It was therefore assumed that to insist on good sense was necessarily proof of a lack of imagination. Because the attempt to achieve the universal had led to a stale and lifeless imitation it was assumed that a man's genius consists in his uniqueness, in his unlikeness to other men. Now nothing is more private and distinctive in a man than his feelings, so that to be unique meant practically for Rousseau and his followers to be unique in feeling. Feeling alone they held was vital and immediate. As a matter of fact the element in a man's nature that he possesses in common with other men is also something that he *senses*, something that is in short intuitive and immediate. But good sense the genius identifies with lifeless convention and so measures his originality by the distance of his emotional and imaginative recoil from it. Of this warfare between sense and sensibility that begins in the eighteenth century, the romantic war between the poet and the philistine is only the continuation. This war has been bad for both artist and public. If the artist has become more and more eccentric, it must be confessed that the good sense of the public against which he has protested has been too flatly utilitarian. The poet who reduces poetry to the imaginative quest of strange emotional adventure, and the plain citizen who does not aspire beyond a reality that is too literal and

prosaic, both suffer; but the æsthete suffers the more severely – so much so that I shall need to revert to this conception of poetry in my treatment of romantic melancholy. It leads at last to a contrast between the ideal and the real such as is described by Anatole France in his account of Villiers de l'Isle Adam. "For thirty years," says M. France, "Villiers wandered around in cafés at night, fading away like a shadow at the first glimmer of dawn. … His poverty, the frightful poverty of cities, had so put its stamp on him and fashioned him so thoroughly that he resembled those vagabonds, who, dressed in black, sleep on park benches. He had the livid complexion with red blotches, the glassy eye, the bowed back of the poor; and yet I am not sure we should call him unhappy, for he lived in a perpetual dream and that dream was radiantly golden. … His dull eyes contemplated within himself dazzling spectacles. He passed through the world like a somnambulist seeing nothing of what we see and seeing things that it is not given us to behold. Out of the commonplace spectacle of life he succeeded in creating an ever fresh ecstasy. On those ignoble café tables in the midst of the odor of beer and tobacco, he poured forth floods of purple and gold."

This notion that literal failure is ideal success, and conversely, has been developed in a somewhat different form by Rostand in his "Cyrano de Bergerac." By his refusal to compromise or adjust himself to things as they are, Cyrano's real life has become a series of defeats. He is finally forced from life by a league of all the mediocrities whom his idealism affronts. His discomfiture is

taken to show, not that he is a Quixotic extremist, but that he is the superior of the successful Guise, the man who has stooped to compromise, the French equivalent of the Antonio whom Goethe finally came to prefer to Tasso. Rostand's "Chanticleer" is also an interesting study of romantic idealism and of the two main stages through which it passes – the first stage when one relates one's ideal to the real; the second, when one discovers that the ideal and the real are more or less hopelessly dissevered. Chanticleer still maintains his idealistic pose even after he has discovered that the sun is not actually made to rise by his crowing. In this hugging of his illusion in defiance of reality Chanticleer is at the opposite pole from Johnson's astronomer in "Rasselas" who thinks that he has control of the weather, but when disillusioned is humbly thankful at having escaped from this "dangerous prevalence of imagination," and entered once more into the domain of "sober probability."

The problem, then, of the genius or the artist versus the philistine has persisted without essential modification from the eighteenth century to the present day – from the suicide of Chatterton, let us say, to the suicide of John Davidson. The man of imagination spurns in the name of his "ideal" the limits imposed upon it by a dull respectability, and then his ideal turns out only too often to lack positive content and to amount in practice to the expansion of infinite indeterminate desire. What the idealist opposes to the real is not only something that does not exist, but something that never can exist. The Arcadian revery

which should be allowed at most as an occasional solace from the serious business of living is set up as a substitute for living. The imaginative and emotional dalliance of the Rousseauistic romanticist may assume a bewildering variety of forms. We have already seen in the case of Hölderlin how easily Rousseau's dream of a state of nature passes over – and that in spite of Rousseau's attacks on the arts – into the dream of a paradise of pure beauty. The momentous matter is not that a man's imagination and emotions go out towards this or that particular haven of refuge in the future or in the past, in the East or in the West, but that his primary demand on life is for some haven of refuge; that he longs to be away from the here and now and their positive demands on his character and will. Poe may sing of "the glory that was Greece and the grandeur that was Rome," but he is not therefore a classicist. With the same wistfulness innumerable romanticists have looked towards the Middle Ages. So C. E. Norton says that Ruskin was a white-winged anachronism,[60] that he should have been born in the thirteenth century. But one may surmise that a man with Ruskin's special quality of imagination would have failed to adjust himself to the actual life of the thirteenth or any other century. Those who put their Arcadia in the Middle Ages or some other period of the past have at least this advantage over those who put it in the present, they are better protected against disillusion. The man whose Arcadia is distant from him merely in space may decide to

[60] *Letters*, II, 292.

go and see for himself, and the results of this overtaking of one's dream are somewhat uncertain. The Austrian poet Lenau, for example, actually took a trip to his primitive paradise that he had imagined somewhere in the neighborhood of Pittsburgh. Perhaps it is not surprising that he finally died mad. The disenchantment of Chateaubriand in his quest for a Rousseauistic Arcadia in America and for Arcadian savages I describe later. In his journey into the wilderness Chateaubriand reveals himself as a spiritual lotos-eater no less surely than the man who takes flight into what is superficially most remote from the virgin forest – into some palace of art. His attitude towards America does not differ psychically from that of many early romanticists towards Italy. Italy was their land of heart's desire, the land that filled them with ineffable longing (*Sehnsucht nach Italien*), a palace of art that, like the Latin Quarter of later Bohemians, had some points of contact with Mohammed's paradise. A man may even develop a romantic longing for the very period against which romanticism was originally a protest and be ready to "fling his cap for polish and for Pope." One should add that the romantic Eldorado is not necessarily rural. Lamb's attitude towards London is almost as romantic as that of Wordsworth towards the country. Dr. Johnson cherished urban life because of its centrality. Lamb's imaginative dalliance, on the other hand, is stimulated by the sheer variety and wonder of the London streets as another's might be by the mountains or the sea.[61] Lamb could also find an

[61] See his letter to Wordsworth, 30 January, 1801.

Elysium of unmixed æsthetic solace in the literature of the past – especially in Restoration Comedy.

The essence of the mood is always the straining of the imagination away from the here and now, from an actuality that seems paltry and faded compared to the radiant hues of one's dream. The classicist, according to A. W. Schlegel,[62] is for making the most of the present, whereas the romanticist hovers between recollection and hope. In Shelleyan phrase he "looks before and after and pines for what is not." He inclines like the Byronic dandy, Barbey d'Aurevilly, to take for his mottoes the words "Too late" and "Nevermore."

Nostalgia, the term that has come to be applied to the infinite indeterminate longing of the romanticist – his never-ending quest after the ever-fleeting object of desire – is not, from the point of view of strict etymology, well-chosen. Romantic nostalgia is not "homesickness," accurately speaking, but desire to get away from home. Odysseus in Homer suffers from true nostalgia. The Ulysses of Tennyson, on the other hand, is nostalgic in the romantic sense when he leaves home "to sail beyond the sunset." Ovid, as Goethe points out, is highly classical even in his melancholy. The longing from which he suffers in his exile is very determinate: he longs to get back to Rome, the centre of the world. Ovid indeed sums up the classic point of view when he says that one cannot desire the unknown (*ignoti nulla*

[62] *Dramatic Art and Literature*, ch. I.

cupido).[63] The essence of nostalgia is the desire for the unknown. "I was burning with desire," says Rousseau, "without any definite object." One is filled with a desire to fly one knows not whither, to be off on a journey into the blue distance.[64] Music is exalted by the romanticists above all other arts because it is the most nostalgic, the art that is most suggestive of the hopeless gap between the "ideal" and the "real." "Music," in Emerson's phrase, "pours on mortals its beautiful disdain." "Away! away!" cries Jean Paul to Music. "Thou speakest of things which throughout my endless life I have found not, and shall not find." In musical and other nostalgia, the feelings receive a sort of infinitude from the coöperation of the imagination; and this infinitude, this quest of something that must ever elude one, is at the same time taken to be the measure of one's idealism. The symmetry and form that the classicist gains from working within bounds are no doubt excellent, but then the willingness to work within bounds betokens a lack of aspiration. If the primitivist is ready, as some one has complained, to turn his back on the bright forms of

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[63] Cf. Voltaire: On ne peut désirer ce qu'on ne connaît pas. (*Zaïre.*)

[64] Cf. Sainte-Beuve, *Causeries du lundi*. XV, 371: "Le romantique a la nostalgie, comme Hamlet; il cherche ce qu'il n'a pas, et jusque par delà les nuages; il rêve, il vit dans les songes. Au dix-neuvième siècle, il adore le moyen âge; au dix-huitième, il est déjà révolutionnaire avec Rousseau," etc. Cf. also T. Gautier as quoted in the *Journal des Goncourt*, II, 51: "Nous ne sommes pas Français, nous autres, nous tenons à d'autres races. Nous sommes pleins de nostalgies. Et puis quand à la nostalgie d'un pays se joint la nostalgie d'un temps … comme vous par exemple du dix-huitième siècle … comme moi de la Venise de Casanova, avec embranchement sur Chypre, oh! alors, c'est complet."

Olympus and return to the ancient gods of chaos and of night, the explanation is to be sought in this idea of the infinite. It finally becomes a sort of Moloch to which he is prepared to sacrifice most of the values of civilized life. The chief fear of the classicist is to be thought monstrous. The primitivist on the contrary is inclined to see a proof of superior amplitude of spirit in mere grotesqueness and disproportion. The creation of monsters is, as Hugo says, a "satisfaction due to the infinite."[65]

The breaking down by the emotional romanticist of the barriers that separate not merely the different literary genres but the different arts is only another aspect of his readiness to follow the lure of the infinite. The title of a recent bit of French decadent verse – "Nostalgia in Blue Minor" – would already have been perfectly intelligible to a Tieck or a Novalis. The Rousseauist – and that from a very early stage in the movement – does not hesitate to pursue his ever receding dream across all frontiers, not merely those that separate art from art, but those that divide flesh from spirit and even good from evil, until finally he arrives like Blake at a sort of "Marriage of Heaven and Hell." When he is not breaking down barriers in the name of the freedom of the imagination he is doing so in the name of what he is pleased to term love.

> "The ancient art and poetry," says A. W. Schlegel, "rigorously separate things which are dissimilar; the romantic delights in indissoluble mixtures. All contrarieties:

[65] See article *Goût* in *Postscriptum de ma vie*.

nature and art, poetry and prose, seriousness and mirth, recollection and anticipation, spirituality and sensuality, terrestrial and celestial, life and death, are by it blended together in the most intimate combination. As the oldest lawgivers delivered their mandatory instructions and prescriptions in measured melodies; as this is fabulously ascribed to Orpheus, the first softener of the yet untamed race of mortals; in like manner the whole of the ancient poetry and art is, as it were a *rhythmical nomos* (law), an harmonious promulgation of the permanently established legislation of a world submitted to a beautiful order, and reflecting in itself the eternal images of things. Romantic poetry, on the other hand, is the expression of the secret attraction to a chaos which lies concealed in the very bosom of the ordered universe, and is perpetually striving after new and marvellous births; the life-giving spirit of primal love broods here anew on the face of the waters. The former is more simple, clear, and like to nature in the self-existent perfection of her separate works; the latter, notwithstanding its fragmentary appearance, approaches more to the secret of the universe. For Conception can only comprise each object separately, but nothing in truth can ever exist separately and by itself; Feeling perceives all in all at one and the same time."[66]

Note the assumption here that the clear-cut distinctions of classicism are merely abstract and intellectual, and that the only true unity is the unity of feeling.

[66] Schlegel's *Dramatic Art and Literature*, Lecture XXII.

In passages of this kind A. W. Schlegel is little more than the popularizer of the ideas of his brother Friedrich. Perhaps no one in the whole romantic movement showed a greater genius for confusion than Friedrich Schlegel; no one, in Nietzsche's phrase, had a more intimate knowledge of all the bypaths to chaos. Now it is from the German group of which Friedrich Schlegel was the chief theorist that romanticism as a distinct and separate movement takes its rise. We may therefore pause appropriately at this point to consider briefly how the epithet romantic of which I have already sketched the early history came to be applied to a distinct school. In the latter part of the eighteenth century, it will be remembered, romantic had become a fairly frequent word in English and also (under English influence) a less frequent, though not rare word, in French and German; it was often used favorably in all these countries as applied to nature, and usually indeed in this sense in France and Germany; but in England, when applied to human nature and as the equivalent of the French *romanesque*, it had ordinarily an unfavorable connotation; it signified the "dangerous prevalence of imagination" over "sober probability," as may be seen in Foster's essay "On the Epithet Romantic." One may best preface a discussion of the next step – the transference of the word to a distinct movement – by a quotation from Goethe's Conversations with Eckermann (21 March, 1830):

> "This division of poetry into classic and romantic," says Goethe, "which is to-day diffused throughout the whole

> world and has caused so much argument and discord, comes originally from Schiller and me. It was my principle in poetry always to work objectively. Schiller on the contrary wrote nothing that was not subjective; he thought his manner good, and to defend it he wrote his article on naïve and sentimental poetry. … The Schlegels got hold of this idea, developed it and little by little it has spread throughout the whole world. Everybody is talking of romanticism and classicism. Fifty years ago nobody gave the matter a thought."

One statement in this passage of Goethe's is perhaps open to question – that concerning the obligation of the Schlegels, or rather Friedrich Schlegel, to Schiller's treatise. A comparison of the date of publication of the treatise on "Naïve and Sentimental Poetry" with the date of composition of Schlegel's early writings would seem to show that some of Schlegel's distinctions, though closely related to those of Schiller, do not derive from them so immediately as Goethe seems to imply.[67] Both sets of views grow rather inevitably out of a primitivistic or Rousseauistic conception of "nature" that had been epidemic in Germany ever since the Age of Genius. We need also to keep in mind certain personal traits of Schlegel if we are to understand the development of his theories about literature and art. He was romantic, not only by his genius for confusion, but also one should add, by his tendency to oscillate violently between

[67] For a discussion of this point see I. Rouge: *F. Schlegel et la Genèse du romantisme allemand*, 48 ff.

extremes. For him as for Rousseau there was "no intermediary term between everything and nothing." One should note here another meaning that certain romanticists give to the word "ideal" – Hazlitt, for example, when he says that the "ideal is always to be found in extremes." Every imaginable extreme, the extreme of reaction as well as the extreme of radicalism, goes with romanticism; every genuine mediation between extremes is just as surely unromantic. Schlegel then was very idealistic in the sense I have just defined. Having begun as an extreme partisan of the Greeks, conceived in Schiller's fashion as a people that was at once harmonious and instinctive, he passes over abruptly to the extreme of revolt against every form of classicism, and then after having posed in works like his "Lucinde" as a heaven-storming Titan who does not shrink at the wildest excess of emotional unrestraint, he passes over no less abruptly to Catholicism and its rigid outer discipline. This last phase of Schlegel has at least this much in common with his phase of revolt, that it carried with it a cult of the Middle Ages. The delicate point to determine about Friedrich Schlegel and many other romanticists is why they finally came to place their land of heart's desire in the Middle Ages rather than in Greece. In treating this question one needs to take at least a glance at the modification that Herder (whose influence on German romanticism is very great) gave to the primitivism of Rousseau. Cultivate your genius, Rousseau said in substance, your ineffable difference from other men, and look back with longing to the ideal moment of this genius – the age of

childhood, when your spontaneous self was not as yet cramped by conventions or "sicklied o'er by the pale cast of thought." Cultivate your national genius, Herder said in substance, and look back wistfully at the golden beginnings of your nationality when it was still naïve and "natural," when poetry instead of being concocted painfully by individuals was still the unconscious emanation of the folk. Herder indeed expands primitivism along these lines into a whole philosophy of history. The romantic notion of the origin of the epic springs out of this soil, a notion that is probably at least as remote from the facts as the neo-classical notion – and that is saying a great deal. Any German who followed Herder in the extension that he gave to Rousseau's views about genius and spontaneity could not only see the folk soul mirrored at least as naïvely in the "Nibelungenlied" as in the "Iliad," but by becoming a mediæval enthusiast he could have the superadded pleasure of indulging not merely personal but racial and national idiosyncrasy. Primitivistic mediævalism is therefore an important ingredient, especially in the case of Germany, in romantic nationalism – the type that has flourished beyond all measure during the past century. Again, though one might, like Hölderlin, cherish an infinite longing for the Greeks, the Greeks themselves, at least the Greeks of Schiller, did not experience longing; but this fact came to be felt more and more by F. Schlegel and other romanticists as an inferiority, showing as it did that they were content with the finite. As for the neo-classicists who were supposed to be the followers of the Greeks, their case

was even worse; they not only lacked aspiration and infinitude, but were sunk in artificiality, and had moreover become so analytical that they must perforce see things in "disconnection dead and spiritless." The men of the Middle Ages, on the other hand, as F. Schlegel saw them, were superior to the neo-classicists in being naïve; their spontaneity and unity of feeling had not yet suffered from artificiality, or been disintegrated by analysis.[68]

[68] For a development of this point of view see the essay of Novalis: *Christianity or Europe*.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.