THE HERO IN THE POETRY
OF MATTHEW ARNOLD

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THE HERO IN THE POETRY
OF MATTHEW ARNOLD

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CHAPTER I

FROM SCEPTICISM TO THE HEROIC CONCEPT:

THE QUEST FOR INTELLECTUAL SECURITY

The nineteenth century constitutes, in the history of Western ideas, a period during which old beliefs and methods of thinking were questioned and criticized, and new intellectual and emotional responses to life were not yet firmly established. "Old institutions were undermined, new scientific discoveries appeared to be destroying the foundations of the Christian faith, as it was then conceived, and doubt like a grey mist spread over the whole field of thought."¹ Evolutionary theories and Marxian Socialism shook the faith of the educated, and the Oxford Movement vainly attempted to create a new religious sentiment which could withstand the stress of these revolutionary ideas.²

In the wake of the destruction of old beliefs and ideas, violent and varying reactions occurred, primarily among the intelligentsia of the day. Some embraced the thought then in

vogue, while others, unable to bear the loss of their old beliefs, found solace in religion. In addition to these two groups, there was a third composed of those who had been brought up in a deeply religious atmosphere, but who, as a result of their formal education, were drawn toward the new scientific and philosophical thought which was sceptical of traditional religious beliefs. Men of this persuasion, one of whom was Matthew Arnold, found it impossible, intellectually, to remain loyal to the old way; the new ideas and attitudes to which they were attracted, however, often caused them a great deal of emotional anguish because of the psychological difficulties involved in synthesizing the spiritual convictions of their childhood with their newly-acquired beliefs.³

Thus many of these intellectuals were torn by the inner conflict between their emotional need for something certain and safe in which to believe and their awareness that the existence of absolute safety and certainty could not be proved. No longer able to believe in those absolute values which had provided human security and consolation for so many centuries and intensely aware of what had been lost, such men were driven to create a new Weltanschauung which could at once satisfy their emotional longings and intellectual standards.

³Ibid.
Out of the struggle for a new value system which could comfort man during the transitional "interval between the death of old ideas and the birth of new convictions" emerged the concept of the hero peculiar to the nineteenth-century. The most outstanding feature of this concept is that in much of the literature of the period the hero took the place of God, who had been dethroned by scepticism. The hero was depicted by several authors as capable of saving the individual as well as society from the emotional and intellectual confusion of the time. Of the nineteenth-century figures who propagated the myth of the hero, two of the most representative were Thomas Carlyle and Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche.

Like Matthew Arnold, Carlyle and Nietzsche were reared under the influence of the traditional religion of the time but were exposed, as young men, to ideas which led them to question this theological value system. The doubt resulting from this questioning seemed to cause both to become dissatisfied with their world and its beliefs. This dissatisfaction and their great personal need to believe in something—anything—led each to delineate in his prose works a concept of heroism which served as a substitute for the lost beliefs of childhood. Both men suggested that individuals, by recognizing

and following their heroes, could save themselves and society from the chaos of the time. Both, too, had visions of grandeur regarding the great men which appear in their literature. They imagined themselves, at various times in their lives, to be like the heroes they had created.

The concept of the hero prevalent in the nineteenth century is a logical outgrowth of the psychological and intellectual conflict which afflicted the intelligentsia of the period. This concept served to satisfy man's emotional need for an all-powerful father figure capable of protecting him from his fears by providing him with a feeling of security and a means of salvation. Equally as important, this concept could embody a synthesis of the new philosophies of Positivism, Materialism, and Empiricism and serve as a focal point for an intellectually satisfying value system.

Heroism, in one form or another, pervaded much of nineteenth-century literature and clearly influenced the poetic thought of Matthew Arnold, with which this study is primarily concerned. Arnold, faced like Carlyle and Nietzsche with the loss of traditional beliefs, reacted to that loss in a similar manner; he attempted to formulate some system of values by which modern man could find some measure of peace and satisfaction in life. In his poetry, as in the prose of
Carlyle and Nietzsche, these values are most often manifested in a heroic male protagonist.

Although Arnold was stimulated by the same forces which affected the thinking of both Carlyle and Nietzsche, he was intellectually and temperamentally quite different from them. As a result, the type of hero appearing in his poetry conforms in only a few respects to the nineteenth-century heroic concepts best represented in the works of Carlyle and Nietzsche. In many more significant ways, his heroes do not fit into the heroic pattern of his time.

This study is an attempt to determine the extent to which Arnold's poetic heroes conform to the type prevalent during the nineteenth-century and to describe how they deviate from the norm. It will investigate, too, some of the factors which appear to account for his particular kind of hero.

To better understand the extent to which Arnold used and modified the heroic concepts of his time, one should consider the history of these concepts, emphasizing their development in the nineteenth-century by such representative figures as Carlyle and Nietzsche.
CHAPTER II

THE GENESIS OF A NEW SYNTHESIS

The heroic image of man evolved from the classical epic image of the Gods which depicts them as beings larger than life—infinitely competent, infinitely virile, and, to some extent, able to impose their wills on the ever-changing cosmos. They embody all that the human psyche aspires to, yet escape all the snares which prevent man from completely fulfilling his aspirations in his own finite life. The Gods make love, wage war, and command the elements on a grand scale, escaping the responsibilities which burden and thwart man when he engages in such pursuits.¹

Almost without exception mythographers agree that the epic image of the Gods which man creates evolves from his overpowering psychic desire to escape what he knows is inevitable—the certain annihilation which awaits him. Man, as a creature capable of conceptualizing, must live out his life bearing the awesome burden of the knowledge that he is doomed to die. He escapes from this dark and horrible

¹W. P. Ker, Epic and Romance (New York, 1957), passim.
dilemma of reality by creating the idea of a nature which is capable of ultimately transcending death. When man emerged into literacy, this notion was already fully developed, and thus the earliest literatures of all peoples, almost without exception, is mythic.  

In tracing the heroic image of man from the advent of literacy, one finds Heraclitus of Ephesus (c. 544-484 B.C.) to be of significant interest in that he worked out a discursive rather than a literary or symbolic basis for heroism. The qualities of greatness, courage, and virility which the Gods possess in mythologies, he applied, in his philosophical fragments, to man. Although only a small volume of his ideas is extant, they are of great interest and significance in the study of the development of heroism in modern times.

The majority of these fragments of Heraclitus can be reduced to a few general principles. He believed that there can be no harmony without strife and that all things come into being through strife. God he defines as war and peace and adds that war and the noble deeds which are part of war delight the divine being. In fragment 44 of his writings,

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3 Frederick Mayer, A History of Ancient and Medieval Philosophy (New York, 1950), p. 34.
he states that "War is the father of all and the king of all; some he has marked out to be gods and some to be men, some he has made slaves and some free."\(^4\) Great deeds he believed praiseworthy in themselves, serving as the primary justification of man's existence. Following from this principle is the idea that the moral issue is irrelevant. The greatness of a deed, not the moral intent of the man who performs that deed, justifies it. War is thus more than an inevitable social necessity; it provides the opportunity for the best of men to win great destinies.

Heraclitus felt that there are two and only two classes of men--the many and the few. They are distinguished neither by birth nor by morality. Distinction results from a highly developed intellect and the performance of great deeds. Keenly intelligent men who are capable of great actions are the heroes. The difference in men, for Heraclitus, is thus qualitative; they are divided into the weak and the strong, the cowardly and the brave.\(^5\)

In these fragments of Heraclitus can be seen general principles which have been incorporated into several of the major philosophies of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

\(^5\)Ibid., p. 491.
One cannot read the fragments left by Heraclitus without thinking of the theories advanced by Carlyle and Hegel or of the diabolism of Nietzsche.

Between the Golden Age of Greece, however, and the development of nineteenth- and twentieth-century philosophies designed to enable man to live in a world without a God, and therefore without absolute values, came the rise of Christianity. The Christianization of Europe resulted in the union of classical heroism and Christian moralism, which led directly to the development of chivalry. In romance literature can be seen what is virtually a mythological hero; the chivalric code of behavior provides the rationale for his actions. In older epics the gods had been infinitely virile and competent, but the romance hero, as an outgrowth of Christian ideology, is mortal. He is superior to the common man, but his powers are nonetheless of finite scope. Thus in romance, the psychic wish fulfillment can be seen to point more toward realism than it had previously done.

The great deeds of the chivalric hero are emphasized in the romantic tradition as the great deeds of the epic hero were emphasized in earlier ages. The crucial point of departure is that the deeds of the chivalric hero must be good as judged by Christian ethical standards. War is a necessity and is good in the chivalric tradition only in the sense that
it advances the Holy Cause. The actions of the romantic hero in war are directed toward advancing Christian ideals. Just as in earlier epic mythologies, two classes of men exist in the chivalric tradition, the many and the few; the world is divided into the good and the bad, the pure in heart and the demonic.

The romantic hero, like the epic hero, is capable of producing order in his society, but with a difference. Through his own powers the romantic hero must produce not only order but also good, which for the medieval man are the same thing. The modern romanticist, however, finding himself in a world in which the church has collapsed and in which all that is left is human, has no way of determining what is good. When he must choose between a force that can create order from the chaos that he sees around him and a force that appears to be good, he tends to choose the force for order. The result is the diabolism evident in the modern propensity to arbitrarily choose evil if it is powerful and will enforce order on society.

The man probably more responsible than anyone else for the creation of the nineteenth-century concept of the hero is the German philosopher Hegel. To trace his total impact upon the thought of the past two centuries, one must virtually reconstruct all the major political systems of the modern
world. The Nazis trace many of their political beliefs back to him, finding in him a spiritual father; yet the bolsheviks receive their basis of authority from him also. Hegel called himself, however, the philosopher of freedom, and in one sense or another, he and all who were inspired by his writings are right. 6

In discussing that part of Hegel's philosophy which led to the development of the modern hero, one must begin with some comments upon his conception of the function of the state, for he saw man first and foremost in his relation to the state. Hegel believed that reality could be defined only in terms of history and viewed the state as the prerequisite to history. All history, he felt, develops out of the "rational, necessary course of the World-Spirit. . . ." 7 If history is the struggle of the World-Spirit to realize itself, then that struggle necessarily embraces not only that which men have called good, such as religion and philosophy, but also that which men have historically called bad, such as tyranny and savagery. It is not necessary, therefore, to try to justify physical and moral evil; evil simply follows in the

6 Walter Kaufmann, Hegel (Garden City, 1965), p. 255.
course of things from the very nature and definition of reality.

The state, then, as the most perfect reality, "is the self-certain absolute mind which acknowledges no abstract rules of good and bad, shameful and mean, craft and deception." In the ideal state the general purpose is combined with the private interests of individuals. The state is the means through which the individual "has and enjoys freedom." Individual morality results simply by fulfilling one's duties in accordance with his station, for all that man has and all that he is he owes to the state.

The question of the hero, in Hegel's system of ideas, is not one of qualitative differences. His hero can be understood only ex post facto; he is the man who has been involved in the creation of a state or who has produced great thought, great art, or great deeds within the framework of that state. He is judged by what he has produced and not by the morality of the actions necessary to effect these productions.

Perhaps the most crucial aspect of Hegel's philosophy and of the philosophies which he was to influence in the

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9 Kaufmann, p. 268.
nineteenth and twentieth centuries is their lack of "built-in" moral guides. Before the decline in the power of the church, the word of the Christian God furnished man with a complete and absolute system of values. The loss of a strong belief in God and therefore in his word left man adrift in a world of human and natural forces. He was forced to somehow devise and justify new systems of morality which would work in the world. The morality expounded in Hegel's philosophy and in the philosophies of those men who were influenced by him can be seen in one way or another to espouse the belief that power and not the traditional "good" must be the basis of morality, the only justification of action.  

Of the nineteenth-century figures who were influenced by Hegel, one of the most prominent is Thomas Carlyle, born in 1795, when Hegel was twenty-five years old. In developing his ideology Carlyle, like many of the intellectuals of his time, was forced to formulate a new view of the individual, a new concept of good and evil. Closely following both Heraclitus and Hegel in his belief that history is the only source of wisdom, Carlyle added to their tenets his theory that history is made up of the biographies of all great men. The philosophy which he developed had as its primary basis

10 Ibid., p. 290.
the worship of great and powerful men, and he fervently hoped that his own time would serve to produce a heroic age of these great men.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the study of Carlyle is that part of his personal background which seems to have directly influenced his entire system of ideas. Born the son of a Calvinist minister, Carlyle was brought up among rude Scotch peasants and received strict religious training during his early life. Reacting against the sternness of his father, he developed an intense love for his mother which appears to have damaged him psychologically, for it is thought that he was sexually impotent throughout most of his life. That his egotism also had its roots in his early life is indicated by his writing, at the age of nineteen, that his supreme wish was to become known.

After studying at Edinburgh and becoming familiar with the new thought of his time, Carlyle realized intellectually that he could no longer hold his traditional religious beliefs and that he must break with much else that he had believed in during his youth. Emotionally, however, he was never able to give up his attachment for Christianity or to quench his longing for the old way of life. His dilemma was that "he

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turned from the old yet he hated the new."\textsuperscript{12} His entire view of history reflects a fusion of the romantic feeling toward the heroic past with the new evolutionism, and several of his works reveal his escapist wishes for the dead past.\textsuperscript{13}

Another romantic aspect of Carlyle's work can be seen in his belief that nature is the crucial factor in the justification of the hero. Nature he found to be full of symbols of an underlying spiritual truth.\textsuperscript{14} Although he rejected the dogma of Christianity as no longer tenable, he appropriated its mythic structure in his discussion of the role of the hero. Man in nature, according to Carlyle, is innocent. The great change in his condition comes when he breaks with nature, when he sees himself as different from nature. His self-consciousness at being isolated from nature produces in him a feeling which is equivalent in Christian dogma to guilt. Redemption comes only through a restoration of man's perfect union with nature, but civilization makes this reunion difficult. In Carlyle's view of things, the hero is an incarnation of God on earth and is a testimony to the possibility of man's reunion with nature. The individual can be brought

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., pp. 17-20.

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., pp. 58-59.

back to a state resembling his original union with nature by his response to the hero, especially to the hero who is a poet. In these terms the hero is, in Carlyle's philosophy, equivalent to Christ.

Carlyle thus attempted to reconcile the pull of his old faith with the newly-gained intellectualism of his early manhood through his philosophy of hero-worship. In this philosophy, history becomes the new theology, the hero becomes the new God. Although fleshly and human, the hero is yet to be worshipped, for in the constant flux of history, he is the one, the only, fixed point. Man's only hope of justification is in his highest examples, the heroes.\textsuperscript{15}

The most complete and clear statement of Carlyle's doctrine of hero-worship appears in his book-length work \textit{On Heroes and Hero-Worship}. In this study Carlyle depicts the hero as a being clothed in lightning, fire and thunder who comes to oppose the darkness of the world. He speaks with rude, wild stammerings because his thoughts are greater than his words. It is significant to remember here Carlyle's own wild ragings and his rude, halting manner of speech. Above all, the hero created by Carlyle is sincere and should be willing to go to battle for his beliefs. He acts according to intuition rather

\textsuperscript{15}Bentley, pp. 63-64.
than according to reason. He opposes sham, which sometimes means opposing the status quo. This opposition to the accepted order of things leads in some instances to rebellion or revolution, which Carlyle saw as a possible good. Out of the revolution comes the hero who is capable of rebuilding the world through his own power and according to his own values. If the hero is faithfully followed, he will create an orderly society. The major dilemma of mankind is that he cannot discern the hero through empirical means; he can be recognized only through his faith, his sincerity, and his actions.

Probably as a result of his Calvinistic upbringing, Carlyle saw man as full of crude energy and bestial unless restrained by authority. As Carlyle explains in Heroes and Hero-Worship, if chaos is to be avoided, those at the top must be respected, often beyond their personal worth, and hierarchy and obedience must always be strongly preached. The leaders of men, the heroes, must be blindly followed, without question, in order to preserve the social order. The struggle for existence described by Hobbes and later enforced by Darwin had a great impact upon Carlyle's thought, and he was understandably dubious about the pragmatic value of Christian ethics in a world such as these two men described.

Ibid., p. 72.
Garlyle was evidently disturbed that Christ had preached against war and had advised against resisting violence. He seemed to feel that one had to choose between Jesus and evolutionists such as Darwin and Hobbes, that there was no middle ground.  \(^{17}\) Although he was able to reconcile the two views at times and at some points, his mixed feelings toward both traditional religion and modern evolutionism result in several contradictions in his writing.  \(^{18}\) Nietzsche was probably not too far from the truth when he branded Garlyle as a man whose writings reflect a need for an absolute affirmative which sprang from conflict and who could admit neither publicly nor to himself his religious scepticism.  \(^{19}\)

Garlyle's tendency to call that which he approved "Christian" or an example of "Christianity" possibly leads many to think that he did believe when he perhaps actually did not. At eighty he spoke of Christianity and of the Christian in Germany, and it is known that at this time in his life he believed Jesus to be no more than human, had no belief in personal immortality, did not believe in the idea of hell, and believed in the doctrine of power rather than that of turning the other cheek.  \(^{20}\)

\(^{17}\text{Ibid.}, \ p. \ 61.\)
\(^{18}\text{Ibid.}, \ p. \ 66.\)
\(^{19}\text{Ibid.}, \ pp. \ 59-60.\)
\(^{20}\text{Ibid.}, \ pp. \ 66-67.\)
In a sense what Carlyle preached for most of his life can be seen as a form of revenge upon the liberal teachers and philosophers who influenced him in his impressionable years of early maturity, and whom he probably unconsciously blamed for his loss of faith in Christianity, a faith which is the basis of perhaps the only certainty which man can have in this life. As a result of this loss, he developed the dangerous belief "that all power is 'moral' and that tyranny is wholesome." 21 Although Carlyle's hero supposedly benefits man, he holds absolute power over all and is not accountable to anyone or to anything. The pragmatic view which Carlyle developed can thus be seen to have become tinged with Machiavellianism and the abasement before tyrants which he advocated to have replaced healthy respect for the individual. 22

All his life, Carlyle, as he had indicated when he was only nineteen, desired to be famous and to be a man of great deeds, a man of action like the heroes of whom he wrote. Many of the aspects of his philosophy of heroism and much of the rage and bitterness reflected in his writing and in his behavior probably resulted from his failure, both in private life and in public life, to be such a man. 23 The ultimately irresolvable conflict he experienced between the doctrines of

21Ibid., p. 77.
22Ibid., p. 159.
23Ibid., p. 36.
Christianity and the secularly-oriented view of the successful and spectacular hero resulted in the tortuous and ambiguous workings of his mind, for he was never able to satisfactorily resolve the dichotomy.\(^{24}\)

As was true of Carlyle, the life and writings of the German philosopher Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche were tremendously influenced by the conflict between the secular and worldly forces of his time and by his early family life. In the Germany of the nineteenth century, as in all Europe, Christian virtue and idealism were much talked about, but materialistic values actually prevailed. The Christian view was based essentially upon morals, while the materialism of the time reflected more than anything else a struggle for power. Nietzsche, seeing deeply into his age, brutally and frankly analyzed its problems and pointed out the conflicting duality of thought which existed.\(^{25}\) He scorned and rejected much of what he saw around him and developed a new concept of morality which he felt could save Western culture.

Although Nietzsche was influenced by the concept of the hero as developed by Heraclitus, the most pervasive influence

\(^{24}\)Ibid., p. 61.

upon his philosophy of heroism was his countryman Schopenhauer. After reading Schopenhauer's *The World as Will and Idea*, Nietzsche said that in it he had seen "a mirror in which... (he) espied the whole world, life and (his)... own mind depicted in frightful grandeur."\(^{26}\) For Schopenhauer there was no God; there was only the instinctual will within man forcing him to act. Of man Schopenhauer stated that "where possible, he will enjoy everything and hold everything. But when this is impossible, he will at least control everything. 'Everything for myself and nothing for others' is his motto. Egoism is colossal. It towers over the world."\(^{27}\) Nietzsche incorporated this idea of will-to-power into his own philosophy, changing it from sheer egoism to an all-pervading cosmic force which drives man to strive toward becoming a higher species.\(^{28}\) Much of Nietzsche's philosophy rings of Darwin's evolutionary theories; he emphasized in his philosophy the struggle for existence and made much of biological and naturalistic factors.\(^{29}\) The most important thing, to

\(^{26}\)Bentley, p. 87.
\(^{27}\)Ibid., p. 89.
\(^{28}\)Ibid., pp. 89-90.
Nietzsche, was the will to live. He believed that man must follow his instincts rather than the traditional morality.\(^{30}\)

In Nietzsche's upbringing can be discerned some of the forces which led him to develop his idea of the superman. He was born into a bourgeois clerical family that contributed to his developing such traits as contempt for the common man, an admiration for discipline and leadership, and an old-fashioned sense of honor; "religious fervor, social snobbery, and cheap Prussianism" were common to his social class. In view of the familial influence upon him, it is not surprising that Nietzsche, like Carlyle, claimed aristocratic ancestry upon very thin evidence,\(^{31}\) and that, like Schopenhauer, he aspired toward human excellence and felt superior to the masses.\(^{32}\)

Nietzsche was quite young when his father died, and he was brought up in a household lacking an adult male figure.\(^{33}\) His studies of early maturity resulted in the loss of his heavenly father, also. He was thus spurred on to find a new faith and some kind of satisfying father substitute. Conjoined with this never-ending search for a father was his abnormally

\(^{30}\)Ibid., p. 512.

\(^{31}\)Bentley, pp. 82-83.

\(^{32}\)Ibid., p. 89.

\(^{33}\)Mayer, A History of Modern Philosophy, p. 503.
intense and troublesome love for the women in his family. Irresistibly he was drawn toward two basically conflicting ideals--the heroic and paternal, which rings of modern intellectualism, and the loving and maternal, which is suggestive of the spirit of traditional Christianity.\textsuperscript{34}

In Nietzsche's philosophy of heroism, the harsh confrontation with reality and the striving for power is masculine in nature; the never-ceasing desire for repose, for "immersion in eternity, mystical communion with nature," is feminine.\textsuperscript{35} Thus \textit{Zarathustra} is one of his most significant books because of his attempt in it to unite the two opposing sides of his being--the masculine and the feminine, the soul and the intellect, the private struggle for happiness and the public desire for fulfillment.\textsuperscript{36} The hero is substituted symbolically for the father; the mother is symbolized by eternity, by the belief in the infinite. Despite his pretensions of self-reliance, Nietzsche had a secret mistress in mysticism. In \textit{The Seven Seals} he writes: "O how should I not lust after Eternity and after the wedding ring of rings--the ring of the Return? I have never yet found the woman by

\textsuperscript{34}Bentley, pp. 86-87.
\textsuperscript{35}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 125.
\textsuperscript{36}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 127.
whom I should like to have children unless it be this woman whom I love: for I love you, O Eternity. For I love you, O Eternity!" 37

Nietzsche responded to the same kind of romanticism that can be found in Carlyle's writings. He was profoundly influenced by the dark, Satanic side of Byron; he identified with Manfred and, like Carlyle, felt that there were horrible, gloomy chasms in his own soul. 38 The feminine element in his being found perhaps "its most ecstatic satisfaction in communion with nature." 39 Like Carlyle, too, he passionately admired strength and beauty in men. 40 Nietzsche leaned toward the romantic also in his anti-intellectualism and in his belief that the emotions are valuable as a means of attaining insight. Despite these propensities in his own character, however, he considered nineteenth-century romanticism, on the whole, to be decadent. 41

Nietzsche never gave a clear picture of the hero who developed from his struggle to resolve the masculine-feminine conflict which raged within his soul throughout his entire

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37 Ibid., p. 122.
38 Ibid., p. 85.
39 Ibid., p. 99.
40 Ibid., p. 146.
life. He seemed to be more concerned with delineating what the hero had to do and what his attitudes ought to be toward good, evil, and mankind.\textsuperscript{42} One thing about Nietzsche's superman is certain, though, which helps to explain the philosopher's vagueness in depicting his personal characteristics. The superman replaces God, who can be respected only while he remains mysterious and incomprehensible.\textsuperscript{43}

Of those characteristics of the superior man which can be comprehended clearly, the most essential are nobility and courage. The hero must be involved in a direct confrontation with the evil, the terrible. Because of his belief that human nature is basically innocent, Nietzsche felt that the great man could be immersed in evil and not be defiled, that in fact he must be so immersed in order to encounter life, to struggle, to become.\textsuperscript{44} Man's innate will-to-power Nietzsche defined as "the ceaseless process of Becoming which...has no stopping points and no final goals." The superior man uses people and the forces in the world for his own purposes.\textsuperscript{45} He rejects and destroys conventional standards and creates a

\textsuperscript{42}\textsuperscript{42}Bentley, p. 135.
\textsuperscript{43}\textsuperscript{43}Ibid., p. 138.
\textsuperscript{44}\textsuperscript{44}Ibid., pp. 111-114.
\textsuperscript{45}\textsuperscript{45}Ibid., pp. 139-140.
new way of looking at life. He lives creatively and passionately and is a manifestation of the struggle for power. Yet he is never oppressive nor does he harm the weak. Through him a new and better world comes into being. The common people should follow the example of the hero by fulfilling their roles to the height of their abilities and by being rigid and firm with themselves in order to become more heroic.

The major flaw in Nietzsche’s philosophy of the superman is the selfsame flaw inherent in the hero-worship of Carlyle: neither system of ideas contains a principle of absolute morality. Both men confused right with might and ultimately established power as the only basis of morality. Carlyle flatly stated his belief that all power is moral. Nietzsche, too, clearly voiced his opinion that power establishes the only right. All rights, he believed, are based on usurpation; the state itself is actually an “objectification of the predatory instinct.” To Nietzsche, the man who “establishes values and controls the wills of epochs in that he controls the highest natures is the highest man.”

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47 Ibid., p. 510.
48 Bentley, pp. 136-137.
49 Ibid., p. 145.
One of the most interesting and revealing periods of Nietzsche's life centers around the only man he ever knew who seemed to exemplify the will-to-power and the coming race of supermen which Nietzsche predicted. This man was Richard Wagner. Nietzsche was profoundly impressed with Wagner's strength of will and his power of command, and was deeply devoted to him for several years. He had hopes that Wagner's music, which was criticized at first as emotional and radical, would generate a German cultural renaissance. When the composer seemed to become more conventional in his music and more favorable toward Christianity, Nietzsche broke with him in disgust and bitterly denounced and attacked Wagner in his later writings.

Nietzsche's final separation with Wagner came after the composer had written the opera Parsifal, which Nietzsche believed to be a conversion to a feminine kind of purity and compassion similar to that found in Christianity. Nietzsche objected strongly to Christian virtues and values, for he felt that they hinder man's complete fulfillment. The

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50 Ibid., p. 91.
52 Bentley, p. 102.
entire system of Christian ethics he saw as a kind of slave morality and believed the other-worldliness in Christianity ridiculous.\textsuperscript{54} Man's greatest hope for fulfillment Nietzsche believed to be in this world. In \textit{Thus Spake Zarathustra} he urges man to "remain true to the earth..." and to "believe not those who speak...of superearthly hopes!" \textsuperscript{55}

Nietzsche's break with Wagner after the composition of \textit{Parsifal} was a violent one, but his passionate outbursts against Wagner in later life attest to his earlier love and devotion toward him.\textsuperscript{56} The break with Wagner certainly resulted from more than the composition of a single opera; it came about largely because Nietzsche's attachment to Wagner was so intensely personal and because no human being could measure up to the ideal which he had formed of Wagner.\textsuperscript{57} The philosopher obviously was trying to find in Wagner both his lost earthly father and his lost heavenly father.

Another reason for Nietzsche's consternation over \textit{Parsifal} and for his final break with Wagner can be seen to lie at least partially in the conflict between the masculine

\textsuperscript{54}Ibid., p. 512.
\textsuperscript{55}Ibid., p. 515.
\textsuperscript{56}Bentley, p. 93.
\textsuperscript{57}Ibid., p. 98.
and feminine sides of his nature. By temperament, Nietzsche was a great deal like the anti-hero who disgusted him. Like Parsifal, he was basically an innocent, a mild, and a loving person. The more he strove to be courageous and ruthless like the heroes he admired, the more he often seemed to himself to resemble Parsifal. He could not escape the basic intellectualism of his own nature and sensed his tendency to think rather than to act, to prefer doing the right thing to making a decision, and to refrain from doing a good because he was unable to do something better. His mind was not practical, which is significant for a self-professed pragmatist and lover of action. His sex-life can be viewed as a study in suppression and gaucheries. He tended always to fail with women, but all his days he dreamed of a grand manliness.

Nietzsche's history of personal failure with women was perhaps another cause for his break with Wagner. It seems very likely that he fell in love with Wagner's strong and electrifying mistress, Cosima, but he never showed or voluntarily revealed his feelings. In his fantasies, however, particularly those of his insanity, he was Siegfried, Cosima was Brunhilde, and Wagner was Wotan. Or he was Dionysus who delivered Ariadne-Cosima from Theseus-Wagner. Although

58 Ibid., p. 86.
59 Ibid., p. 95.
60 Ibid., p. 98.
Cosima seemed sinister to Nietzsche because she had influenced Wagner to turn to religion in *Parsifal*, she was yet simultaneously the eternal, mysterious female. After his mental breakdown Nietzsche addressed a note to Cosima, whom he had not seen in years, which read: "Ariadne, ich liebe dich!—Dionysus." On another occasion, after he had become insane, he was taken to a clinic at Jena, claiming that his wife, Cosima Wagner, had brought him there.  

The last significant failure in Nietzsche's love life concerned the young intellectual Lou Salome, whom he met and fell obsessively in love with in 1882. She was already attached to one of Nietzsche's friends, but he continued to dream of wedding their intellects and of making her his disciple as well as his wife. After Nietzsche finally admitted to himself and to his friends that she could never be his, he referred to the entire experience as the greatest disappointment of his life. This affair is significant because it was Nietzsche's last attempt to join in an intimate relationship with another human being.  

After the loss of Lou Salome, Nietzsche became more and more preoccupied with the idea of the superman. Concurrent with this preoccupation was his increasing conviction that he was a failure both in his personal life and in his profession.  

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at the University of Basel and had found fault with the academic routine, with the students, and with his own colleagues. As a result of frequent illnesses, he was absent a great deal of the time from his classes, and was finally retired and given a pension in 1879. With the failure of his relationship with Lou Salome, Nietzsche can be seen to have gradually withdrawn from the world and to have become increasingly obsessed with a plan which he felt could save mankind, a plan based on his idea of the superman.

Nietzsche's fullest delineation of his superman appears in his most significant work, *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, published sometime between 1882 and 1885. Zarathustra, a prophet, had withdrawn from the world as Nietzsche had done, and had for years contemplated upon the meaning of life. Upon returning to the world to preach to the people his gospel of the superman, he finds that they are too busy with other things to give him much serious consideration; they find him and what he says amusing. Nietzsche's ironic point here is that although the masses are incapable of understanding the philosopher, he nevertheless continues to reveal to them his insights into life.

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64 Ibid., p. 506.
65 Ibid., pp. 514-516.
Zarathustra, of course, is little more than a personification of Nietzsche. The German philosopher saw himself as an isolated and intellectually superior individual capable of showing man a means of attaining a higher culture and a higher humanity. This egotistical self-image seems to have resulted from over-compensation, for Nietzsche was painfully aware of his inability to gain power over others either personally or professionally. But like Zarathustra, too, Nietzsche believed the world and not himself to be at fault because it could not understand his message and would not recognize him as a great savior of mankind.

As early as 1882, Nietzsche began to identify himself with the message which he advanced in Thus Spake Zarathustra. He claimed that he knew the Christian era was passing and that another was rising to take its place. He saw himself enacting in his own head and heart the coming tragedy of the world which he had predicted, and he claimed that he was prepared to sacrifice himself as a new Dionysus who would be destroyed to prepare the way for a new and better life. In 1883, filled with a sense of destiny, Nietzsche made marked efforts to isolate himself from others, claiming that the world would be redeemed after a terrible Armageddon. In 1887, he preached that a catastrophe was being planned within

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him. In 1888, his illness became so acute that he was taken to an asylum where he told of his plans to summon a council of the rulers of the world to Rome.

During the entire period of his insanity, which death alone ended, Nietzsche asked for women and sometimes thought himself to be Christ, sometimes Dionysus. Even in madness, the conflict which had troubled him so much throughout his life continued to rage and the choice still had not been made between the masculine and the feminine. 67

Nietzsche's madness is tragic evidence of the severe psychological conflict which opposing currents of thought often created within many of the educated men of the nineteenth-century. Matthew Arnold, like Carlyle and Nietzsche, was attracted to certain aspects of the new thought, yet was unable to give up entirely his early beliefs and emotional convictions. Like them, too, he developed a hero that reflected his search for an approach toward life through which man could find some measure of peace and certainty. Primarily because of his background and because of his particular turn of mind, Arnold created in his poetry a hero which differed in many important respects from the concept of the hero promulgated by Carlyle and Nietzsche. Arnold's strength

67 Ibid., pp. 104-106.
of character enabled him to cope more successfully with the conflict of his world than either Carlyle or Nietzsche, and his view of life can be seen to be more realistic and realizable than that of either the English historian or the German philosopher.

Arnold's hero, unlike those of Nietzsche and Carlyle, was not a chosen man, a product of nature. Arnold believed that any individual willing to place certain controls upon his life could be an admirable person. Such an individual acts primarily upon reason rather than upon intuition. The rise of realism, for Arnold, made the kind of heroism advocated by Nietzsche and Carlyle impossible. He seemed to sense the futility of the belief in a hero who was larger than life, but at the same time he was not willing to subscribe to a completely non-heroic view of man.

In his poetry he presents men who, by disciplining themselves and attempting to live a stoical kind of life, come closest, in his estimation, to the only heroic ideal which he felt possible for modern man.
CHAPTER III

MATTHEW ARNOLD: THE EVOLUTION OF A STOIC

Matthew Arnold understandably fell victim to the same kind of dilemma which tortured both Nietzsche and Carlyle; then he found himself thrust into a world in which he had to formulate his own value system, religion, and concept of God. He was born into an iconoclastic age which questioned and criticized earlier beliefs, but could not find absolute answers to replace those it discredited. Arnold and men like him were thus driven to formulate new ideologies which could synthesize their emotional needs for security with realistic intellectual views.

For Arnold the synthesis was particularly difficult and painful, but nonetheless important because most of his poetry reflects his early struggles to unify the diffuse, often conflicting elements of his nature. His religious and intellectual training were of the eighteenth century rather than of the nineteenth. His father, Dr. Thomas Arnold, great man though he was, tended in many ways toward old traditions. Much of Arnold's suffering resulted from being trained in this manner and then finding himself thrust into a nineteenth-
century world of new ideas for which his training had not prepared him. By sentiment he was religious, but the ideas of his childhood were changed by the new intellectual currents. By education he was classic, yet he found himself involved in the Romantic Movement. Thus he always remained "half Greek and half Hebrew, half poet and half prophet." He was at war within himself and the battle often had tragic overtones.

Arnold's normal adolescent instability was intensified by his father's being a major figure in the controversies of the time. Thomas Arnold was almost militantly Christian and battled the secular and atheistic forces of his age. He was a liberal Protestant of the Broad Church and believed that morality consisted of conducting one's life in accordance with the highest standards of virtue and in working long and strenuously for the betterment of society. These attitudes made a deep impression upon his son Matthew.

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1 Hearn, pp. 301-302.
The young Arnold was also strongly influenced by his father's idea of a gigantic moral state which provides for both the spiritual and temporal life of its citizens, acting always on its best reason. Both he and his father believed intelligence to be the basis of the most exalted kinds of religious and moral experience. With the power of the church in decline, Thomas Arnold turned to a modified concept of the state as the hope for mankind. He voiced the opinion that the state should be "sovereign over human life...controlling everything and itself subject to no earthly control." This concept of the state became for Thomas and Matthew Arnold what the concept of the hero was for Nietzsche and Carlyle.

Largely because of his father's involvement in the ideological controversies of the early nineteenth century, Matthew Arnold became intensely aware during his early years of the pervading atmosphere of doubt concerning the old religious, social, and political beliefs. He knew that they were "no longer accepted without question" but were being examined and criticized by many admirable people.

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^7 Connell, p. 19.
In addition to the conflict between the old and the new philosophical ideas which Arnold experienced as a young man, he felt an internal conflict of mind created primarily as a result of the tremendous influence which his father had upon his thinking. In one part of his being Arnold was influenced by his father "to promote culture, education, democracy, liberalism. . .," to perform his duty, and deal strictly with himself, in short, to be a public servant. He felt that he should lead a life of analytical and critical intellectuality, that he should work under discipline and moral control and achieve something socially or politically. But he longed, in another part of his being, to have sensuous, passionate experiences and to lead a life of artistic contemplation. Like both Nietzsche and Carlyle, he was torn between two conflicting sides of his nature, the intellectual-masculine and the emotional-feminine. This dichotomy of his thought is reflected, to some extent or another, in most of Arnold's poetry and is most strongly apparent in his early work.

8 Houghton and Strange, p. 391.
10 Houghton and Strange, p. 391.
As were Nietzsche and Carlyle, Arnold was driven by the internal conflict of his youth to find some way in which he could reach a harmony within himself. He strongly desired a means to reach calm in the unrest of his times; certainly the way did not come easily or immediately to him, but he found early in life that his nature responded favorably to Stoical ways of thinking. Because he was intuitively and by temperament Stoical rather than consciously and systematically so, he was not concerned with developing a specific philosophy in his work. Therefore, there is not always a logical consistency in what he writes. He was concerned not with developing a consistent philosophy but with discovering a means by which man could live in the world with some measure of peace.

Arnold seemed to feel that discovering one's true self and living with that self was a crucial task for the individual desiring to free himself from the pain and conflict inherent in human existence. In a letter of 1849 to his friend Arthur Hugh Clough, Arnold makes a comment which

12 Hicks, p. 16.
13 Connell, p. 82.
reveals his concern about this matter: "(my) one natural craving is not for profound thoughts, mighty spiritual workings etc. etc. but a distinct seeing of my way as far as my own nature is concerned. . . ." 14

Although Arnold was interested in truths of an eternal and cosmic nature, he was primarily interested in discovering some central guiding force which he could apply to unify his diffuse nature. He was obviously fearful of the conflict in himself and of the conflict which he saw in the world about him. 15 This fear is reflected in another letter of 1849 to Clough in which Arnold writes:

My dearest Clough these are damned times—everything is against one—the height to which knowledge has come, the spread of luxury, our physical enervation, the absence of great natures, the unavoidable contact with millions of small ones... our own selves, and the sickening consciousness of our difficulties, but for God's sake let us neither be fanatics nor yet chaff blown by the wind but let us be as the prudent man would define, and not as any one else would define. 16

In this expression of his dissatisfaction with the times, Arnold's comment upon the absence of great natures echoes the kind of heroism found in Nietzsche and Carlyle. But the powerful influence which his father's religious and political

15 Ibid.
16 Ibid., pp. 111-112.
ideas had upon Arnold and his strong attraction toward Stoic thought prevented him from developing a hero concept tinged with amorality and totalitarianism.

At the time Arnold wrote to Clough concerning his troubled view of the world and his hope for a source of strength in the face of confusion and fear, he was already well-read and deeply interested in various Stoic doctrines, particularly those of the Roman Stoic Epictetus. In 1847 Arnold's personal writings show a serious concern with the concepts of Epictetus, and in a letter of 1848, Epictetus is described by Arnold as "he, whose friendship I not long since won." In his desire to see his own nature and to live by it, Arnold was understandably drawn to Epictetus. In his Discourses the Roman philosopher stated that "being instructed consists in this very point to learn what things are our own, and what belongs to others."

Arnold's attraction toward Epictetus, too, is undoubtedly related to his feelings toward his father. Like Thomas Arnold, the Roman Stoic was very much concerned with moral strength and conduct. His doctrines centered around faith

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18 Connell, p. 29.
in God, whose spirit he believed to be within each of us; man must thus live in a manner which will "uphold the dignity of the divine force." Arnold undoubtedly retained throughout his life a deep sense of his father's Christian spirit and strong moral discipline. His soul remained Christian, even after he outgrew traditional Christian dogmas; the moral influence of his Christian teaching stayed with him ever.

In several other important ways, stoicism in general parallels Christianity. The Stoic doctrines which propound the discipline of the will and the subjugation of that which is base in man to that which is elevated are closely related to certain basic Christian concepts. Thus Arnold, faced intellectually with the loss of the traditional belief in God, was understandably able to find in stoicism a solace and a satisfying plan by which man could live in order to find peace in his earthly life.

Several basic Stoic concepts run through much of Arnold's poetry and heavily influenced his concept of what the ideal man should be. Faced with the loss of traditional answers to life, he had felt compelled, as were Nietzsche and Carlyle, to devise some alternative which could fill the void. In his

19 Frederick Mayer, A History of Ancient and Medieval Philosophy, p. 254.

efforts to find some way out of his own intellectual and
spiritual dilemma, he ended by formulating in his poetry a
suggested plan of life which, when strictly followed, promises
to bring man tranquility of soul and clarity of vision.

The basic tenet of the stoicism which influenced much of
Arnold's thinking and from which most other major Stoic con-
cepts evolve is that the universe is operated by a power act-
ing upon man and nature. The operation of this power in both
constitutes the law of their being, but is superior in man
because of its moral aspects. When man follows the law of
his being, that principle within him which is his true self,
his life is in harmony with the universal power. Being
harmonious with the universal power brings the individual
not only inner harmony but also a harmony with mankind
because the same essence permeates all.

Man's discontent comes about because he fails to see
clearly the law of the universe operating within man and
nature. This failure to see his own soul clearly causes man
to desire what is wrong for him and to strive towards ends
contrary to the good of the soul. Unhappiness and disil-
lusionment come to man because of his efforts to alter what
is not to be changed in the universal scheme of things and

\[^{21}\text{Hicks, p. 29.}\]
because he tries to change or escape what fate, in the form of the universal power, has preordained for him. Human frustration and discontent can be avoided only by accepting what one cannot change, by lowering or giving up many aspirations contrary to the peace of the soul. By recognizing the law operating in man and in nature, the stoical individual sees the world and the conditions of man's life for what they are. Once the true law of things is recognized and acknowledged, man is freed from the influence of external, changing fortune. He sees all that happens in the world as part of the universal plan and all his discontent as evolving from wrong desires; he is therefore able to reconcile himself to relinquishing those ambitions which conflict with the universal power operating within him.

Arnold seems to have recognized fully the importance of the Stoic view by the time he had reached his late twenties. In a letter written to his friend Clough he commented that we can acquire "solidity of shape and power of acting by narrowing...our sphere, and diminishing the number of affections and interests which continually distract us while

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22 Hanley, p. 144.
23 Anderson, p. 133.
24 Hanley, p. 144.
young, and hold us unfixed and without energy to mark our place in the world." In this remark can be seen the same kind of impulse toward strict self-discipline evident in the efforts of Carlyle and Nietzsche to suppress the sensitive, romantic elements of their natures in order to be men of action and great deeds.

The Stoic attitude toward nature is important in a consideration of the attitudes expressed in Arnold's poetry because of its close relation, in some aspects, to the strong romantic feeling about nature. Born into the romantic era, Arnold always retained to some extent the romantic spirit. His romanticism was qualified and controlled, however, by his intellectual and stoical view of life. Several of the poems in his first published volume reveal that during this early period of his life, he was giving some serious thought to both the stoical and the romantic answers to life.

In stoical terms, following nature meant little more than acknowledging the true scheme of things and realizing that discontent resulting from the excesses of joy or grief could be avoided by submitting to the law operative in man and in nature. The romantics believed, too, that some

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25 Stuart Pratt Sherman, Matthew Arnold (Indianapolis, 1917), p. 3.

26 Anderson, p. 132.
measure of spiritual peace could be attained through an inner experiencing of the true essence of nature. To the romantics, however, a recognition of the essence of nature did not always necessarily imply that there was any power above and beyond nature; for some, this spirit of nature simply emanated from the natural creation itself.

Many of Arnold's friends and probably his entire family were surprised by the appearance of his first volume of poetry, The Strayed Reveller, and Other Poems, which was published in 1849 when Arnold was twenty-seven. Arnold's sister, after reading the work, said that her brother seemed to have

come face to face with life and asked it, in real earnest, what it means. (She)...felt there was so much more of this practical questioning in... his book than...she was at all prepared for; in fact that it showed a knowledge of life and conflict which was strongly like experience if it was not the thing itself.27

The poetry of this first volume reflected a depth and seriousness which many of those who knew Arnold had not suspected, primarily because of the gay, dandyish pose that he had assumed in his teens and retained to some extent even after his graduation from Oxford. This pose was probably assumed to hide his inner distress which he did not wish to

27Houghton and Strange, p. 390.
discuss. The new geology, the theories of evolution, humanistic religion, rationalism, all these new currents drew Arnold away from old ways of thinking but left him confused and perplexed without any substitute which was a clear guide. \(^{28}\) His affectation seems to have been a pretense behind which he could strive to search for and preserve his essential self while protecting that self from others. He was thus freed somewhat from the high moralism and intellectualism of Rugby and Oxford. \(^{29}\)

There is good reason, too, for the belief that he might have feared to expose his confusion and his poetic tendencies to the "onslaught of his father's earnestness." \(^{30}\) Arnold apparently saw in himself disturbing qualities which were absent in his father's nature. Dr. Arnold was a firm, sure, controlled individual, while his son saw himself as vacillating and somewhat fearful of the confusion which he saw about him and felt within. His fears led him to desire contemplative solitude in order to discover and to guard the law of his being, whereas his father was an active political and

\(^{28}\) Ibid.


religious reformer of his day. The realization that he was not like his father and his conflicting desire to find his own way and yet, too, to become more like his father, set up tensions in both Arnold the man and Arnold the poet. He tended to try to resolve these tensions by imposing upon his nature a pattern based upon what he thought he ought to be. This pattern can be seen to be basically a stoical one. But despite Arnold's efforts to impose upon himself rigid controls by which to live, what he sometimes actually felt and what he felt needful were not always the same, and the conflict between the two is often reflected in his poetry.

In "The Strayed Reveller," the title poem of Arnold's first volume, the author seems to contrast the poet, who gains knowledge from a poetically-inspired view of life, with the kind of man who gains knowledge as a result of vigorous activity and experience in the world. In the poem a young shepherd-poet on his way to attend the rites of Dionysus drinks from a winebowl which he finds after having wandered into the courtyard of the enchantress Circe. Unlike the legend in Homer, he does not become a swine but is

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31 Houghton and Strange, p. 390.
enabled by the wine to have a clear vision of life and of human experience. There is a suggested similarity here "between the intoxication of the Bacchic revellers in their ecstasy and the experience of poets in the act of creation." The gods normally demand human suffering as the price for insight into life, yet the young poet escapes this penalty because of his ability to see the spectacle of life in moments of poetic inspiration.

Contrasted to the poet is Ulysses, a man of strong will and courage who has experienced life and its pain. The poet, although capable of ecstatic visions, is nevertheless a slave, in a sense, to powerful emotion. Ulysses must suffer the pain involved in gaining knowledge through actual experience, but unlike the poet, he is free from the bondage of excessive passion. Although "The Strayed Reveller" celebrates the painful glories of bondage to strong emotion, Ulysses appears as representative of the Stoic control which is possible when man recognizes and follows the law of his being.

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35 Trilling, p. 97.
36 Tinker and Lowry, p. 67.
Arnold can be seen in the title poem of his first volume of poetry to be considering both the impassioned romantic approach to life and the more disciplined Stoic manner of dealing with internal and external conflict. Intellectually he seemed to believe what he himself once said, that it is necessary to "begin with an Idea of the world in order not to be prevailed over by the world's multitudinousness. . . ."\(^{37}\)

The Stoic submission to the guiding principle in man and in nature seemed to him to be one way in which man could save himself from the destructive conflicts created by the demands of one's passions and by the demands of the world.

Emotionally, however, he experienced severe anguish in his struggles to give up the youthful, joyful dreams of romanticism which he knew to be inadequate as an answer to life. The result of this dichotomy in his nature is that much of his poetry is tinged with a nostalgic longing for the past which is essentially romantic. Even though the Stoic influence is dominant throughout his poetic career, the melancholy note pervading much of his verse reveals the sadness with which he followed what he felt to be intellectually correct.

Arnold's most explicit dealing with the attractions and inherent failings of romanticism appears in "The New Sirens," published in his first volume of poetry. The male protagonist and narrator of the poem, referred to simply as "I," is undoubtedly Arnold. In a letter to Arthur Hugh Clough concerning the poem, Arnold explained that the speaker is a poet who, having just awakened from a sleep, comes upon the New Sirens in their garden, dejected. He had dreamed that they were the fierce, sensual Sirens of the myth, but realizes that they are new because of their gentleness and lawfulness.\textsuperscript{39}

\begin{quote}
...The uncouthness 
Of that primal age is gone: 
And the skin of dazzling smoothness 
Screens not now a heart of stone. 
Love has flushed those cruel faces; 
And...their slacken'd arms forego 
The delight of fierce embraces: 
And those whitening bone mounds do not grow.\textsuperscript{40}
\end{quote}

These New Sirens represent romantic love and the romantic outlook, and in their own way are equally as dangerous as the Sirens of antiquity. \textsuperscript{41} They tell the poet that wisdom

\begin{footnotes}
\item[38] Tinker and Lowry, p. 47.
\item[41] Trilling, p. 101.
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gained through the spirit and through the intellect is not the answer to life, and therefore man's strivings and labors are in vain. They urge him to give himself up to their charms, claiming that "Only, what we feel, we know." \textsuperscript{42}

But the charms of the New Sirens are ephemeral, and they can give man no lasting peace, for the passion they arouse must inevitably end in boredom and satiety. \textsuperscript{43} Intense emotion can be sustained only momentarily, and because man is not really himself when abandoned to passion, he can never reap any permanent benefits from it. \textsuperscript{44} Even if one is able to continually revive his passion, the cycle of boredom and excitement must eventually meet destruction at the hands of time; the elasticity of the spirit will fail with age, leaving only weariness. \textsuperscript{45}

In his letter to Clough concerning "The New Sirens," Arnold states that the poet asks himself whether the romantic alternation of ennui and excitement is worth much? whether it is in truth a very desirable life? \textsuperscript{46} The poet's answer,

\textsuperscript{42}Arnold, The Poems of Matthew Arnold, p. 68.

\textsuperscript{43}Trilling, p. 101.

\textsuperscript{44}J. Hillis Miller, The Disappearance of God (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1963), p. 254.

\textsuperscript{45}Trilling, p. 101.

\textsuperscript{46}Tinker and Lowry, p. 49.
and Arnold's, is that the romantic approach to life is false and unsatisfying. Romanticism seems to be a means of self-assertion, of dealing successfully with life, but actually results in only a dulling of the true self. And for Arnold, the true self, above all else, must be preserved. Like the poet in his poem who tells the New Sirens that he finds "assurance...of one joy" which they have not. Arnold realizes that peace is attainable only by living according to the law of one's being.

In "The New Sirens" Arnold rejects the romantic attitude as inadequate and turns toward stoicism for some of the answers to his own intellectual and spiritual problems and to the problems he saw about him in the world. Several minor poems in his 1949 volume reflect his frank admiration for the kind of man who appeared in "The New Sirens"--the man who is stoical in that he sees the law of his own being and the law of nature and conducts his life accordingly.

One of these poems, "To A Friend," praises three men who have comforted Arnold in what he calls "these bad days." The three are Homer, Epictetus, and Sophocles, all of whom Arnold felt to be aware of the universal power acting in man

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47 Trilling, pp. 101-102.
48 Arnold, The Poems of Matthew Arnold, p. 70.
and in nature. Homer, "clearest soul'd of men,/Saw The Wide Prospect.../...though blind." Epictetus, the Roman Stoic, receives Arnold's praise for introducing him to this wide prospect. Sophocles, in particular, is given Arnold's "special thanks" for the comfort of his noble poetry. The Athenian poet was to Arnold a man

...whose even-balanc'd soul,
From first youth tested up to extreme old age,
Business could not make dull, nor Passion wild:
Who saw life steadily and saw it whole:
The mellow glory of the Attic stage;
Singer of Sweet Colonus, and its child.  

In "To the Duke of Wellington," Arnold defends a political figure of his time who had "made himself unpopular by his unwavering policy of sacrificing political and class loyalties to what seemed to him...the practical interests of his Queen and country." The influence of his father can be seen in Arnold's admiration for the Duke expressed in this poem. Dr. Arnold believed that personal inclinations, if necessary, should be subordinated to the larger interests of the state and that the individual is duty bound to work strenuously, to the best of his ability, for the betterment

\[49\text{Ibid.}, \text{p. } 40.\]
\[50\text{Ibid.}\]
\[51\text{Tinker and Lowry, pp. } 29-30.\]
\[52\text{G. F. Bradby, The Brontes and Other Essays (London, 1932), p. } 58.\]
of society. This poem exemplifies Arnold's fusion of a stoical belief and a belief which his father held. The stoical attitude is not concomitant with turning away from the world. The Stoic, by following his true nature, can perform the function in society which best fits his particular temperament and abilities. He can be active in the world without succumbing to desires contrary to the good of his soul. The Duke of Wellington, a man of action, will retain a place in history touched with splendor, Arnold says in this poem, for he "saw one clue to life and follow'd it."

Arnold, in his earliest volume of poems, presents a fairly clear picture of the kind of man he admires. This ideal man, through cognizance of his true nature, refuses to allow himself to be guided by wrong desires or to be fretful about changes of fortune. He knows that he must follow the law of his being and acknowledge the same kind of law operating in the world to avoid pain and unhappiness. The crucial difference is that the operation of the law in man is superior, because of its moral aspects, to the operation of the law in nature.

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53 Houghton and Strange, p. 390.
54 Ibid., p. 391.
56 Hicks, p. 29.
In two short poems of his 1849 edition, Arnold is concerned with pointing out the difference between the guiding principle in man and the guiding principle in nature. "In Harmony With Nature" contains Arnold's objection to a preacher's statement that man should be in harmony with nature. Man, Arnold says, "hath all which Nature hath, but more, / And in that more lie all his hopes of good." The "more" which Arnold emphasizes is man's conscience and moral sense. In "Religious Isolation" Arnold explains that nature's secret is not the same as man's and that man should live by his, for the earth "will live by hers."

In his concern with the moral element in stoicism, Arnold reflects the influence of his upbringing. These two early poems point toward a tendency more and more evident in Arnold's later life and works, his tendency to fuse the Christian and the Stoic views of life. Although he felt compelled to modify certain Christian concepts to satisfy his rationality, he could not completely turn away from Christianity in the way that Nietzsche and Carlyle did. These

57 Arnold, The Poems of Matthew Arnold, p. 60.
two men developed approaches toward life which had no built-in system of morality. They advocated that humanity could save itself by blindly adoring and following its great men. Such great men, acting by intuition, are not subject to moral considerations. Their actions, no matter what they might be, Nietzsche and Carlyle believed necessary to save mankind, and what they do is therefore not to be judged by any absolute system of good or bad, right or wrong. Thus, for the belief in some clearly defined system of morality, Nietzsche and Carlyle substituted the worship of a romanticized hero.

Arnold, more rational and clear-headed than many of his contemporaries, could not go to such extremes of hero-worship in formulating a plan by which man could best live. To him the man to emulate, the man whom he believed it was possible for the majority of a people to be like, was the stoically-inclined man who possessed certain Christian virtues. Arnold seemed to believe that the individual, by setting his own soul in order and helping those about him to do the same, could save both himself and his society from chaos. The altruism of Arnold's Stoic view of life becomes more and more evident in his later poetry and particularly in his prose, which he turned to after the bulk of his poetry had been written. In his early poetry, however, he seems to
have been primarily concerned with delineating the stoical figure which he so admired and with explaining his vision of what one must do to be such a man.

Arnold's early Stoic concepts are perhaps best summed up in "Resignation," the last and probably the finest poem in the volume of 1849. The narrator of the poem explains to his friend Fausta, as the two walk together along a familiar path through an idyllic countryside, the means by which man can gain freedom from unrest and ambition. Man becomes the slave of his own ambitions and of external chance because he imposes upon himself the wrong kinds of goals. He can resign himself to giving up many of his ambitions and to accepting the conditions of the world about him by seeing his own nature clearly and by looking upon the whims of fortune as part of the great plan of the universe.60 Those men are

\[ \text{freed from passions, and the state} \\
\text{Of struggle these necessitate;} \\
\text{Whom schooling of the stubborn mind} \\
\text{Hath made, or birth hath found, resigned.} \]

The poem celebrates the poet's ability to see and to reveal to others a vision of the universal plan. The poet sees not only "his own course, but that of Man."

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60 Anderson, p. 143.

61 Arnold, The Poems of Matthew Arnold, p. 86.
Before him he sees Life unroll,
A placid and continuous whole;
That general Life, which does not cease,
Whose secret is not joy, but peace... 62

Man can gain peace only by renouncing those ambitions which are detrimental to the good of his soul, thereby assenting to the cosmic plan operating in himself and in the world about him. Resigning himself in a stoical manner to what cannot be changed Arnold felt to be man's only consolation. 63

The individual who feels that he has a right to joy and to material gain is subject to suffering and to disillusion when chance destroys his joy and his gain. The best that man can hope for is the peace resulting from his ability to resign himself to his lot in life and to the course of the world.

In this poem also appears Arnold's feeling that there is an analogy between the course of the universe and the life of the individual. 64 Just as the universe follows unchanging laws, so must each man follow the law of his being in order to gain peace. Nature is an example to man of renunciation and endurance and of the resultant reward of calm and peace

62 Ibid., p. 91.
63 Hanley, p. 117.
64 Trilling, p. 91.
which comes from living in this manner.  

In this sentiment toward nature Arnold echoes the awe which the early Stoics felt toward the calmness of the heavens and the regularity of the movements of heavenly bodies. Only in its ability to outlive man is nature superior. Fausta's friend comments that "This World in which we draw our breath / In some sense . . . outlasts death." But man is superior to and outlasts nature because of his reasoning power and the greatness of his soul.

Unlike many of the Romantics, Arnold found no God or wisdom inherent in nature through which man could find an inspiration for a fuller life. He saw in nature merely an example of the resignation and endurance essential for man to gain peace. This largely intellectual view of things was often little comfort to a spirit which was, in many ways, romantic. Like Nietzsche and Carlyle, Arnold was heavily influenced by the romantics, and he longed to believe that man might find some spiritual solace in nature or in giving

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67 Hanley, p. 127.
69 Hanley, p. 127.
up to passion; but his reason would not allow him to cling to such beliefs. His romantic longing is evident, however, in the sad, melancholy tone of his poetry and in his looking to the past for many of his poetic subjects.
The Strayed Reveller, and Other Poems, published in 1849, when Arnold was twenty-seven, reveals a great deal about the conflicts with which he was struggling during his early manhood. As was true of Nietzsche and Carlyle, Arnold had been torn by his intellectualism from beliefs which could provide absolute answers and thereby spiritual comfort and security. The loss drove him, as it did Nietzsche and Carlyle, to search for some positive stance toward life, some view of things which could save him from fearful, aimless drifting and from becoming a victim of the confusion within him.

The clear-cut, strictly disciplined Stoic approach to life seemed to the young Arnold rationally satisfying, and it is this view which appears dominant in his first volume of poetry. This work reflects its author's realization that human life, at its best, can be inadequate and disappointing and that perhaps man can find his only comfort in stoically resigning himself to its incompleteness and limitation.¹

¹Russell, p. 5.
Despite the fact that, intellectually, Arnold realized the efficacy and wisdom of the Stoic view of life, he seemed never to lose his awareness of the great difficulty of actually disciplining the emotions in order to attain such an attitude.

The Stoic outlook, involving a recognition of the disappointments and inadequacies of life, allows little room for the fanciful dreams and aspirations of youth. In the early 1850's, as Arnold approached the age of thirty, he often voiced comments which reflect his increasing and painful awareness of the irrevocable loss of youth, an awareness which is, of course, romantic in nature. In a letter of 1852 to his friend Clough, Arnold commented: "--How life rushes away, and youth. One has dawdled and scrupled and fiddle faddled--and it is all over."\(^3\)

It is clear that although Arnold realized that the best answer to life lay in giving up the dreams of youth for a more mature and disciplined approach to life, the realization did little to alleviate the sense of loss he felt at contemplating growing older and taking on adult responsibility.

\(^2\)Allott, p. 17.

\(^3\)Arnold, *The Letters of Matthew Arnold to Arthur Hugh Clough*, p. 120.
He was torn between his desire to accept maturity and his father's mission and his regret for the loss of youth and what he feared was concomitant with that loss—the passing of the poetic sentiment and of light-hearted irresponsibility. His mixed feelings about growing older are evident in a letter of 1851 to his sister: "The aimless and unsettled, but also open and liberal state of our youth, we must perhaps all leave and take refuge in our morality and character; but with most of us it is a melancholy passage."\(^4\)

Arnold, then, as a young man, resembled Nietzsche and Carlyle in that he experienced difficulty in dealing with and accepting the disappointment and disillusion that is part of a realistic confrontation of life. Nietzsche and Carlyle sought refuge in somewhat irrational, unrealistic schemes centered around a romanticized hero, who could save the world. Arnold, as a result of his nature and of his particular view of man, could not go to these ideological extremes. Yet during his early maturity he was drawn emotionally toward what he had rejected in "The New Sirens" as an irrational and unrealistic approach to life; he felt a great temptation to lose himself in passionate, romantic involvement with a

\(^4\)Allott, p. 17.

\(^5\)Houghton and Strange, p. 391.
woman. His intellectual and moral bent saved him from such an involvement but obviously did not prevent him from suffering the pain accompanying the relinquishment of one of the beautiful dreams of youth.

Arnold's early romantic experience and his reaction to that experience are recorded in his second volume of poems published in 1852, *Empedocles on Etna, and Other Poems*. Several poems in this volume and certain personal letters written during the period in which these poems were composed indicated that Arnold became involved during this time in an unhappy love affair with a woman whom he met in Switzerland. This woman is the Marguerite who appears by name in a total of eight of Arnold's poems released between 1849 and 1867. Her actual identity is, and will probably always be, a mystery. Her influence is quite relevant, however, in any study of the development of the hero in Matthew Arnold's poetry. Several of the poems inspired by her are indicative of Arnold's attempt to resolve the conflict between his all too human emotions and his desire to conduct his life in accordance with the rigid stoical standards by which he believed man ought to live.

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The poems in the 1852 volume that mention Marguerite by name are "The Lake," "Parting," "Absence," and "To Marguerite." All four evidence Arnold's reluctant but for him inevitable renunciation of romantic passion as a satisfying answer to life's problems. In "Absence" the poet-narrator struggles toward the light, which in this poem as in many of Arnold's poems, symbolizes the truth of life. Love is to be rejected, according to the narrator, if it cannot be with the light. Yet he begs for Marguerite to stay with him "While yet the night is chill. . . ."9

In "Parting" the male speaker longs to clasp Marguerite to him, yet is prevented from doing so because of moral reservations. This poem is significant because it reveals Arnold's concern about the morality of Marguerite's past life. The speaker in the poem states of Marguerite:

To the lips, ah! of others,  
Those lips have been prest,  
And others, ere I was,  
Were clasp'd to that breast. . . . 10

In this poem, too, is seen the romantic element, even in the moment of the rejection of the beloved object. After

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8 Hanley, p. 123.


10 Ibid., p. 133.
stating that he and Marguerite must separate forever because
of their different pasts, the male narrator in "Parting"
flees to the mountains for comfort.

In the concern with morality evident in "Parting" can
be seen both the influence of the Stoics whom Arnold admired
and the influence of his upbringing. He seemed to realize
that we cannot always do as we wish. There is a Stoic re-
cognition on his part of the law governing each of us which
we cannot escape. If we love someone who is not suited to
us because of any of various possible reasons--financial,
moral, intellectual, emotional--we must separate from that
person. Painful as the separation may be, there is no other
way. To continue to pursue a course contrary to the law of
our being can bring only misery. We must sadly leave behind
what, according to the law of fitness, we cannot or ought
not to have. 11

Arnold, aware of the crucial importance of following
the law of his being, is able to force himself to follow
the counsel of the God whose voice is heard in "The Lake."
This counsel advises the poet-narrator against following his
impulse to choose romantic passion.

11Hearn, p. 308.
Yet just as Arnold's refusal of the new sirens was sad and agonizing, so is his refusal of Marguerite. The poem "To Marguerite" evokes a sense of loneliness and melancholy, despite the fact that it ends on a note of Stoic acceptance and resignation. "We mortal millions live alone..." and sometimes feel "a longing like despair..." to join with another human being. But "a God" has ruled that we remain separate. He has "bade betwixt...(our) shores to be / The unplumb'd, salt, estranging sea." 

A man of Arnold's nature could have chosen no other course of action than the one he took regarding Marguerite. Arnold knew, much as the realization sometimes saddened him and filled him with regretful longing, that giving up to passion could not provide the needed clue to life. He even seemed to fear, and in this aspect of his nature he borders on the puritanical, that giving up to passion implies a moral laxity. This attitude can be seen to be a part of Arnold's moral heritage; the strict, disciplined ideas of morality which Arnold absorbed from his father made him unable to accept Marguerite because of her past with other men, a past which made a life together impossible for them.

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12 Lucas, p. 44
14 Miller, p. 252.
Arnold was able to turn from Marguerite as, in his early poem about romanticism, he was able to turn from the new sirens. Like Margaret in "The Forsaken Merman" of his 1853 edition of poems, Arnold refuses to join himself to another in an unconsecrated love; but both Arnold, in a sense, and the Merman of his poem, are left forsaken and alone.¹⁵

The parting with Marguerite became for Arnold more than the incident actually was in reality. It came to represent a more or less final parting with the world of passionate romance.¹⁶ Although Arnold depicted the parting as a tragedy and was at first overwhelmed with a sense of bitter isolation, he seemed to find a Stoic comfort in the knowledge that the stern life must be his, that he must reject giving up to passion.¹⁷

The poems inspired by Arnold's experience with Marguerite thus reflect much more than loneliness and isolation; they contain notes of renunciation and self-dedication. After his break with Marguerite, Arnold made what appears to have been a conscious effort to return to the hard, stern

¹⁵Lucas, pp. 44-45.
¹⁶Chambers, A Sheaf of Studies, p. 27.
¹⁷Ibid., pp. 21-22.
course he had laid down for himself as a young man. He took up the work, that of school inspection, which was to occupy him for the rest of his life, and married a decent, respectable girl from a good family. Unlike Nietzsche and Carlyle, he was able to enter into a healthy, fulfilling relationship with a woman and to create with her an unusually strong and satisfying marriage.

But even though Arnold was able to reject Marguerite and all that she stood for, this experience of his late youth seemed to make him more and more strongly aware of the disillusionment involved in growing older and of the great difference between the psychological state of mind in youth and in later age. Although his ideal of himself involved attaining a Stoic resignation, it was extremely difficult for him during this period of his life to accept what he called the "less imaginative, though steadier, period of middle life. . . ."

As was true of Nietzsche and Carlyle, the difficulties which Arnold had in accepting the realities of life and in giving up his youthful, romantic dreams resulted in a rather severe reaction. The more Arnold saw how difficult it was

\[\text{\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., p. 27.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{19} Hanley, p. 121.}\]
to attain stoicism in real life, the more sternly stoical became his poetry and the heroes which appear in this poetry. Arnold's experience with Marguerite was obviously a somewhat frightening and disturbing one for him. In his doubt of his own strength to withstand the demands of his passions and in his fear of losing sight of the law of his being as a result of having to live in the world, Arnold turned more and more strongly toward stoicism in his poetry.

Two of the major poems of this period, both published in the 1852 volume, are "Empedocles on Etna" and "Stanzas in Memory of the Author of 'Obermann.'" Both contain heroes who are strongly stoical in character; both also reflect Arnold's desire to flee the world in order to save himself from its detrimental influences. This impulse reminds one of Nietzsche's *Thus Spake Zarathustra* and of its author's withdrawal from the world after his unfortunate love affair with Lou Salome. It is reminiscent, too, of Carlyle, whose fantastic schemes based upon the great man were perhaps an over-compensation for his own failures and frustrations.

Even though Arnold expresses in "Empedocles" and in "Obermann" his impulse to flee the world, it is essential to keep in mind that he never went to the extremes of Nietzsche and Carlyle in attempting to cope with those things of the world which were frightening or perplexing to him. He was
far too rational to consider either isolation or hero-worship as a possible solution to the ills of life. His father had instilled in him a sense of responsibility to perform to the height of his abilities, and after his marriage he consistently fulfilled his duties as a school inspector and as a loving, affectionate husband and father. Yet like both Nietzsche and Carlyle, he was aware of and disturbed by the dangers which the modern world held for the soul, and he voices his concern about these dangers in his poetry and in his more intimate personal correspondence.

In a letter of 1852 to Clough, Arnold compares his time to the days of the declining Empire in Rome and himself to "a gifted Roman falling on the uninvigorating atmosphere..." of this decline. Yet, Arnold adds, we are duty bound to do "all we can to keep alive our courage and activity."22

In his late twenties and early thirties, when he sometimes seemed to be almost overwhelmed with the realization that youth is fleeting and that life is not as one dreams it to be when young, Arnold had his moments of being strongly attracted to the lonely, isolated, but proud and magnificent

21 Anderson, p. 158.
hero appearing in the works of many of the romantics. Out of those moments came poems having heroes such as Empedocles and Obermann.

The historical Empedocles who provided the inspiration for Arnold's poem was born c. 495 B.C. in Agrigentum, Sicily, a city which was embroiled during the philosopher's lifetime in a bitter struggle between the aristocracy and the middle class. Empedocles was a leader of the democracy and the hero of the majority of the population; he did everything in his power to block the encroachments of the aristocracy, his own class. His democratic feelings were so strong that he refused the kingship which his people offered him. According to legend, he eventually became a political outcast when the tide of favor turned against him and is presented as very bitter in Arnold's poem. In the preface to the first edition of Poems, Arnold explains that he presents in his poem one of the last of the Greek religious philosophers who, surviving many of his contemporaries, has lived on into a Sophistic age when Greek thought and

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23 Mayer, A History of Ancient and Medieval Philosophy, pp. 55-56.

24 Trilling, p. 110.
character had begun to decline and had in many ways become comparatively corrupted.

"Empedocles on Etna" is concerned with a modern problem, that of the doubt and uncertainty caused by the conflict of science and faith. Empedocles is symbolic of the nineteenth-century intellectual and is possibly even Arnold himself. Science, in Arnold's time, had either done away with or seriously shaken all that man had believed in for centuries. The world of faith man could no longer go to for comfort, and the world of men and the self were found to be unsatisfying.

The Empedocles of Arnold's poem, weary of an age which he calls envious and miserable, has become accustomed to roaming by night upon the slopes of Mount Etna. As the first act of the poem opens, it is revealed by the young harp-player Callicles, who has been following Empedocles and his friend Pausanius in hopes of comforting the great philosopher with his music, that the two men are making their way toward the top of Mount Etna. Pausanias, alone, encounters the young man and urges him to stay out of Empedocles' sight, for the philosopher is in one of his strange,

melancholy moods. The musician expresses his desire to do what he can for Empedocles and adds that he feels it is not the times or the Sophists which vex Empedocles, but that there is "some root of suffering in himself...Which makes the time look black and sad to him."  

Empedocles, representative of modern man, turns from the world inward, and much of his emotional anguish and melancholy is the result of his preoccupation with self and intellectual matters. Callicles, more unconscious of the self and representative of the classical Greek spirit, sings of the beauty, the sensuousness, the harmony of life, and tends to think that Empedocles' trouble comes from viewing things in a distorted manner.

When Pausanias reveals that Empedocles has agreed to tell him some of the secrets of his miraculous powers, Callicles advises him not to talk to Empedocles of miracles but to lead him through the beauties of nature and to talk to him of common things in order to "keep his mind from

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27 Arnold, The Poems of Matthew Arnold, p. 98.
28 Anderson, p. 38.
29 Goldmark, p. 92.
30 Arnold, The Poems of Matthew Arnold, p. 98.
preying on itself.\footnote{Arnold, The Poems of Matthew Arnold, p. 98.} But beauty and a simple sensuousness do not comfort the mind burdened by modern doubts and questioning.\footnote{Goldmark, p. 92.}

Empedocles is no longer able to believe in the beauty and mysteries of the ancient world and of nature; his imagination has been killed by knowledge. The rationalism and materialism of his time have taken the mystery out of the world and have done away with the old gods. "Nature is no longer animate and sentient but mechanical and necessary."\footnote{Trilling, p. 83.} Man is faced and must cope with his deep sense of alienation from nature and from the gods, a sense of alienation so pervasive that it often cuts him off from communication with other human beings.

Empedocles, in former days, was able to balance man, nature, and the gods\footnote{Miller, p. 218.} and could work miracles with his music. But he has "laid the use of music by. . . ."\footnote{Arnold, The Poems of Matthew Arnold, p. 96.} In anguish he recalls the power he once had and is filled with.
a nostalgia for what is lost. He recalls the days when he and his friend Parmenides were young, the days before they had lost their balance and grown "Thought's slaves, and dead to every natural joy!" Yet Empedocles still sees things as they are and retains his vision of the truth; his tragedy is that his youthful strength to live by this truth has gradually failed him and that his friends who believed as he does are gone, leaving him lonely and depressed. Even though his own strength has dwindled, he wishes to instruct Pausanias in stoicism in the hope that he can find and can help others to find the comfort which this course of life can bring to man. Empedocles seems to feel that living in the Stoic manner is the only way by which the man who faces life realistically can endure what he sees there. But he realizes that, because his own character and the world have become what they have as he has grown older, he is unable to take his own advice.

The advice Empedocles gives to Pausanias comes in answer to the latter's inquiry concerning the magic and the secrets which can enable man to "live free from terror."

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36 Miller, p. 217.
37 Arnold, The Poems of Matthew Arnold, p. 120.
38 Tinker and Lowry, p. 291.
Empedocles counsels mistrust of magic, saying that man has within him the only means of helping himself. "Once read thy own breast right," he tells Pausanias, "And thou hast done with fears!"

That man's only true possessions lie within is one of the most essential doctrines of stoicism. The heavy stoical element pervading Empedocles' discussion with Pausanias is not derived from any one major source but reflects most strongly the influence which the Stoics Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius had upon Arnold. Both these Roman philosophers held the idea that man's true possessions are within himself. Epictetus often referred in his writings to the inner life. Marcus Aurelius, one of the most virtuous of the Roman emperors but yet one who found it difficult to be as good as he wished in a corrupt age, wrote in his Meditations that "The secret of happiness and the power of virtue...are within."

Empedocles, echoing one of the major tenets of Epictetus, explains that true freedom is possible only

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40 Ibid., p. 103.
41 Anderson, p. 39.
42 Hearn, p. 326.
43 Ibid., p. 328.
things not in man's power to attain and that education involves learning to distinguish those things within man's power from those things which are not within his reach.\textsuperscript{44}

No mortal can have any control over the course of nature or have any power to direct what other men do; all that he truly does have power over is himself. He can, through reason, control his desires and his reactions to what comes to him in life. Man errs, says Empedocles, and thus subjects himself to frustration and pain not because he deems "His welfare his true aim" but "because he dreams / The world does but exist that welfare to bestow."\textsuperscript{45}

Man's ability to resign himself to his limitations and to external circumstance is the only way in which he can gain freedom from frustration. A stoical acceptance of himself and of his lot in life enables man to look upon whims of fortune as a part of the great plan of the universe. For both Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius, resignation to what one cannot change was one of the highest ethical attainments.\textsuperscript{46}

Like Arnold, and undeniably, too, like Carlyle and Nietzsche, Empedocles is unable to believe in the accepted

\textsuperscript{44} Tinker and Lowry, p. 297.

\textsuperscript{45} Arnold, \textit{The Poems of Matthew Arnold}, p. 104.

\textsuperscript{46} Anderson, pp. 142-143.
religion of his time largely because of his highly developed intellect. He believes that mortals have created the gods from their imaginations in order to have something to blame for "The ills. . .(they) ought to bear."\textsuperscript{47} By the same token, he feels that man has been equally mistaken in inventing "kind Gods who perfect what man vainly tries."\textsuperscript{48} It is foolish to think, says Empedocles, that simply because man cannot attain perfection "That there are Gods who do! / Nor does being weary prove that he has where to rest!"\textsuperscript{49}

Empedocles counsels salvation from despair through following the Stoic way of life. Man should give up his vain dreams of the gods and look within himself to find peace in life. His hope lies not in fantastic imaginings of joy in some kind of afterlife but in learning to moderate his desires and to control his reactions to his fate. It is tragically ironic that Empedocles has not the power himself to live by this advice which he gives to Pausanias.

Empedocles is a victim of the modern dilemma which caused so much torment in the souls of Arnold, Carlyle, and

\begin{footnotes}
\item[48] Ibid., p. 108.
\item[49] Ibid., p. 120.
\end{footnotes}
Nietzsche—the dilemma of reconciling the demands of the intellect with the human needs and desires that all men feel. Arnold, who appears to have been quite happily married and fairly well-adjusted throughout his life, was obviously more successful in dealing with this conflict than either Nietzsche or Carlyle. Nietzsche was ultimately driven insane by his irresolvable conflicts, and Carlyle's life-long impotency is evidence of unsolved and serious psychic difficulties.

The Empedocles of Arnold's poem, like Nietzsche and Carlyle, could come to no satisfactory solution to his dilemma. Perhaps the best statement of the conflict which he could not resolve is to be found in his own words in the poem. He states that he is weary of the solitude which keeping the truth in view involves, and he longs for the human companionship which can end his loneliness. Yet he knows that to turn to others will mean losing his view of his true self; this loss he realizes he would find unbearable. He is therefore caught and "miserably bandied to and fro / Like a sea-wave." Death along "Shall cut his oscillations short, and so/ Bring him to poise. There is no other way." 50

50 Ibid., p. 120.
Unable to endure his situation longer, Empedocles chooses the last means of the Stoic—suicide.\textsuperscript{51} He yearns for a perfection, an absolute which is not possible in life; he is incapable of moderating his desires, of compromising, in order to reach a balance and thus find peace.\textsuperscript{52} Suicide provides the only means for him to attain the perfection he cannot find on earth; through suicide, Empedocles hopes to regain a final union with the natural elements,\textsuperscript{53} "to merge again with the great principle of earth. . . ."\textsuperscript{54} This idea of an ultimate union with nature reflects the Greek pantheism of his time.\textsuperscript{55}

Empedocles realizes that he has lost his balanced view of life through becoming a "slave of thought."\textsuperscript{56} His only comfort is that he has maintained a view of the truth, even though he cannot live in the world in which he finds himself; he has "Nursed no delusion / Allow'd no fear!"\textsuperscript{57} With this

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{51}Hanley, p. 142.
\item \textsuperscript{52}Trilling, p. 88.
\item \textsuperscript{53}Goldmark, p. 91.
\item \textsuperscript{54}Hanley, p. 139.
\item \textsuperscript{55}Goldmark, p. 91.
\item \textsuperscript{56}Arnold, \textit{The Poems of Matthew Arnold}, p. 124.
\item \textsuperscript{57}Ibid.
\end{itemize}
thought comforting him, he plunges into the crater of Mount Etna.

In "Empedocles on Etna" Arnold presents a hero who would live stoically and who suggests the Stoic way as the best answer for man; this hero fears, however, that he will lose himself in becoming part of the world yet cannot bear the intolerable loneliness which he must endure in order to keep the truth in view. In "Stanzas in Memory of the Author of 'Obermann,'" Arnold also presents a hero who is weary of the world and who has fled from it in order to keep his soul in view. The crucial difference between the two poems is that Arnold appears as poet-narrator in the latter, and although he praises Senancour, the author of "Obermann" in the poem, he also states his realization that his own way lies not in solitude but in living in the world.

Arnold admired Senancour for the same reasons that he admired Empedocles; the French author, like the Greek philosopher, had a desire "to see his way, a determination not to enjoy the illusion of clarity in place of the reality." Like Empedocles, Senancour was torn by his desire for the world and his desire for solitude.

Arnold felt that many of Senancour's ideas were similar to his own; the thinking of both men was influenced by such

58 Tinker and Lowry, pp. 255-256.
writers as Marcus Aurelius, Goethe, and Montaigne. Senancour, too, had reacted to what Arnold called "the hopeless tangle of our age" with a Stoic kind of renunciation and rejection similar to that which Arnold had himself felt. 59

Senancour's feeling for nature was in many ways similar to Arnold's. In "Stanzas in Memory of the Author of 'Obermann'" there is a great deal of luxuriant nature description which strongly resembles some of Senancour's poetic descriptions of nature. 61 Arnold's feeling for nature can be seen not only in this poem but throughout his poetic career. Sometimes nature in his poems is merely the subject of beautiful, vivid description; in other instances, nature is more. It is depicted as an example to man of the calm, resigned Stoic way of life.

The Obermann in Senancour's work, after renouncing the world in a Stoic manner, becomes aware of nature as a moral exemplar; in developing his own tranquil, ethical philosophy he is profoundly influenced by the endurance and resignation which can be seen in the workings of nature. Obermann's philosophy is basically a Stoic one; he realizes that fate guides external circumstances and that the only way to

59 Hanley, p. 139.
60 Tinker and Lowry, p. 253.
61 Ibid., p. 258.
successfully face the reality of life is to train the will to rigid acceptance of what cannot be changed. This attitude alone can make man free of the pain and frustration which external circumstances often create in the undisciplined soul. 62

Although Arnold's admiration for Obermann, who isolates himself from the world in order to achieve that stoical communion with the soul which clarifies the vision, is evident, he also expresses in the same poem his feeling that solitude is not a realistic way of dealing with life. He believed that man must live in the world to maintain a balance and that the fully developed soul could not come into being apart from society. Society and its bonds, too, help keep man safe and prevent him from falling victim to the despair of loneliness. 64

Yet living in the world has the inherent danger of preventing man from truly seeing his own being; man, as a social creature, sometimes loses his awareness of his own true, deep-buried self. 65 This idea is expressed in Arnold's poem "The Buried Life," which was published with "Empedocles

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62 Hanley, p. 141.
63 Ibid., p. 140.
64 Ibid., p. 140.
65 Ibid.
Man has difficulty keeping his true self in view because it is hidden so deeply within him.

Fate, which foresaw
How frivolous a baby man would be,
By what distractions he would be possess'd,
How he would pour himself in every strife,
And well-nigh change his own identity;
That it might keep from his capricious play
His genuine self, and force him to obey,
Even in his own despite, his being's law,
Bade through the deep recesses of our breast
The unregarded River of our Life
Pursue with indiscernible flow its way;
And that we should not see
The buried stream, and seem to be
Eddying about in blind uncertainty,
Though driving on with it eternally.

In "The Buried Life" momentary glimpses of the self come to the individual in rare moments of communication with a loved one. "When...(the) world-deafen'd ear / Is by the tones of a lov'd voice caress'd," then "A man becomes aware of his life's flow" and "thinks he knows / The Hills where his life rose, / And the Sea where it goes." This particular poem is a good example of the simultaneous appearance of Stoic values and romantic feeling seen in many of Arnold's poems.

In "Stanzas in Memory of the Author of 'Obermann,'" Arnold expresses his awareness of the dangers to the soul

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67 Ibid., p. 171.
which are inherent in living in the world, but despite these dangers, he realizes that he must face them to become a fully developed human being. Even though he must live in the world, he hopes to remain, like Obermann, "Unspotted by the world." 68

After the heavily stoical period during which "Empedocles on Etna" and "Stanzas in Memory of the Author of 'Obermann'" were produced, Arnold made a conscious effort in several of his poems to turn from subjectivism and personal involvement toward objectivity. In doing so, however, he yet continued to find most of the answers to life in stoicism.

Arnold's preface to his Poems of 1853 contains a delineation of his objective stance toward poetry and of his reasons for holding this attitude. In this preface Arnold praises action and deprecates the kind of excessive, inward, meditative contemplation seen in "Empedocles on Etna." This long dramatic poem was omitted from the 1853 volume because it did not meet the standards of poetry which Arnold discusses in his preface. It hero, in his feelings, Arnold felt to be in many ways modern. During Empedocles' time "the calm, the cheerfulness, the disinterested objectivity..." of earlier Greek days was gone, and "the dialogue of the

68 Ibid., p. 178.
69 Anderson, p. 47.
mind with itself. . ." had begun. In Empedocles' musings can be heard the doubts, "the discouragement, of Hamlet and Faust." 70

"Empedocles on Etna" fails as a poem because it does nothing to inspirit and give joy to the reader. According to Arnold, a poem should be not only interesting and add to the reader's knowledge, but should also give him joy. A tragedy can give joy, but fails to do so if it is one in which "the suffering finds no vent in action; in which a continuous state of mental distress is prolonged, unrelieved by incident, hope, or resistance; in which there is everything to be endured, nothing to be done." In such a tragedy did Empedocles find himself, and for this reason Arnold withdrew the poem from publication in 1853. 71

The "eternal objects of Poetry. . ." Arnold states in his preface, are actions. An excellent action, i.e., one which appeals to the primary human emotions, is the best subject for poetry. Such an action is to be treated in an interesting manner by the poet. With the Greeks action was primary; with the moderns attention is placed primarily on the thoughts and images occurring incidentally in the treatment of an action. The Greeks concentrated upon the whole,

71 Ibid., pp. 2-3.
the moderns upon the parts. The ancients should be the modern poet's models; he should aim at achieving, by following their examples, their "unity and profoundness of moral impression. . . ."  

The greatest actions, Arnold felt, are to be found in past historic times; few are discernible in modern times. "An age (Arnold's own time) wanting in moral grandeur can with difficulty supply such (great actions), and an age of spiritual discomfort with difficulty be powerfully and delightfully affected by them."  

Arnold's comments upon the times in his 1853 preface reveal the same kind of dissatisfaction with and condemnation of his age as is contained in the work of Nietzsche and Carlyle. The difference with Arnold is that his Stoic attitude shines through in his feelings about his time. He adds to the above comment that the poet should not be hostile "towards the false pretentions of his age. . . ." but should "content himself with not being overwhelmed by them." This statement reveals an outlook containing elements of Stoic courage and endurance.

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72 Ibid., pp. 3-5.
73 Ibid., p. 13.
74 Ibid., p. 14.
75 Ibid., p. 15.
In "Sohrab and Rustum" the major poem of the 1853 volume, Arnold attempts to put his theories of poetical art into practice. The poem centers around an action which supposedly occurred in the distant past; its characters are the great men involved in the action. This dealing with heroic deeds and with the men capable of performing them is suggestive of the actions and heroes found in the works of Nietzsche and Carlyle. The important difference with Arnold is that in "Sohrab and Rustum" can be seen sentiments and principles basic to stoical thinking. Arnold's treatment of the action in the poem is in many ways classical, and the prevailing message of the poem is undeniably a stoical one.

For most of his life, Sohrab, a young Tartar champion, has been seeking his father, whom he has never seen. His people are warring with the Persians, and Sohrab asks the leader of his army to allow him to engage in single combat with a champion from the Persian army. If he wins the contest, he hopes that his fame may spread to his father and that the two might be reunited. If he loses the contest, then no matter, for "the dead need no one, claim no kin."\(^{76}\) Unknown to the Tartars, Rustum, Sohrab's father, has joined the Persian camp during the night. When the challenge from

\(^{76}\)Ibid., p. 199.
the Tartar forces is delivered, the leader of the Persian army implores Rustum to accept it, for he is the best hope that the Persians have of winning the contest. The mighty warrior agrees, but demands that his true identity be concealed.

When Sohrab and Rustum advance toward each other across the battle field, both feel unconscious stirrings of recognition, but fate draws them into single combat with one another. Upon seeing the young and handsome Sohrab, "a deep pity... (enters) Rustum's soul" and he begs the young man to lay down his arms and become as his son. Sohrab clasps Rustum's knees, asking if he be not Rustum. The older warrior fears that if Sohrab learns his identity, he will find some excuse to make peace, only to brag about his experience later to the shame of Iran. He therefore keeps his identity secret, and in the combat which ensues, Sohrab is fatally wounded.

When the dying young man declares that his father, Rustum, shall one day avenge him, Rustum says that such a man never had a son. He is unaware that his wife sent him the false news that she had borne a girl because of her fear that he would take the son she had borne into battle when he

\[77\] Ibid., p. 205.
reached maturity. Rustum becomes convinced that he has fatally wounded his own son only after Sohrab shows him the mark which his mother had pricked upon his arm at birth with a ring which Rustum had given her for that purpose.

Overcome with grief, Rustum draws his sword to take his own life, only to be stopped by Sohrab. He tells Rustum that fate had determined that his life should end in the manner that it did and that his father is merely "Heaven's unconscious hand." "It was writ in Heaven. . . ." says Sohrab, "that this should be." 78

Sohrab's attitude toward the chances of fate is one of Stoic acceptance and resignation. "Some are born to do great deeds, and live," he tells his father, "As some are born to be obscur'd, and die." 79 Rustum, too, although his grief is not lessened for it, evinces a Stoic bearing in voicing his hope that he will be able to endure whatever fate has in store for him during the remainder of his life.

Although fate can sometimes control man's actions and determine the events that occur in his life, it can never, according to Stoic philosophy, control man's will. 80 He

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78 Ibid., p. 215.
79 Ibid., p. 216.
80 Hanley, p. 133.
alone is in command of his emotional responses toward what he does and toward what happens to him in life.

The beautiful description of the Oxus river at the closing of "Sohrab and Rustum" is an integral part of the message of Stoicism contained in the poem. The Oxus, calm and majestic, its surface reflecting the stars in their ordered, tranquil movements across the heavens, is contrasted with man's fevered, turbulent, often futile existence. The river is also a symbol of the inner life of the individual who chooses the Stoic way. Rising out of low land, the river at first moves along rejoicing,

Brimming, and bright, and large: then sands begin To hem his watery march, and dam his streams, And split his currents; that for many a league The shorn and parcelld Oxus strains along Through beds of sand and matted rushy isles-- Oxus, forgetting the bright speed he had In his high mountain cradle in Pamere, A foil'd circuitous wanderer:--till at last The long'd-for dash of waves is heard, and wide His luminous home of waters opens, bright And tranquil, from whose floor the new-bath'd stars Emerge, and shine upon the Aral sea.81

Man's true self is sometimes forgotten and is frequently difficult to keep in view, but the person who disciplines himself in the Stoic manner, despite his difficulties throughout life, can ultimately find peace and tranquility of soul.

Arnold's heroes, like those of Nietzsche and Carlyle, tend to be projections of his own personality and reveal his personal longings and conflicts. In his concern with the kind of action upon which he theorized the best poetry to be based, Arnold was necessarily compelled to create, in his poems based on excellent actions, heroes capable of performing such deeds. That these heroes appear in some of his poorest poetry is explicable in view of what seems to be evident about Arnold's character.

Like Nietzsche and Carlyle, Arnold was never what could be termed a man of action; he was sensitive, meditative, and tended to be hesitant to commit himself. He could not escape the fact that he did feel romantic melancholy and pain, and his best poems are records of his emotions and of his deepest thoughts. In his most honest and sincere poetry, there is often a mood of disillusion and melancholy. This poetry, in which Arnold is at his best, reflects his own religious disquiet and doubts, as well as those of his time. "It is here that the deepest breathings of his heart are heard. He is a spirit loosed upon the sunless seas of doubt,

\[82\] Parrott, p. 36.

\[83\] Ford, p. 75.
and ever wearily scanning the gray horizon for a desired but undiscovered haven."  

Arnold's interest in the personalities of the characters which appear in his poems is usually directed primarily at the intellect. The main character in most of his poems is usually himself in thought. Because he portrays not the entire life of a human being in his poems but only the life of thought, the few characters that appear in his poems are often marked by unreality, and the human condition in his poems tends to be represented not lyrically or tragically, but philosophically. For this reason his poetry, for the most part, is marked by an air of distance and repose.  

Thus because of his nature, Arnold was not very objective in his poetry. Despite his poetic theories, he was more attracted to themes centering around personal ideas and emotions than those centering around action. His best poems therefore fall short of the critical standards he formulated in the preface to the Poems of 1853, while those poems that satisfy his poetic standards, among which are 

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85 Parrott, p. 37.
86 Woodberry, p. 13.
87 Parrott, p. 37.
"Sohrab and Rustum," "Merope," and "Balder Dead," tend to fall flat and are in many ways poor poetry. Arnold, then, in his effort to see life in a more balanced manner after his period of severe stoicism reflected in poems such as "Empedocles on Etna" and "Stanzas in Memory of the Author of 'Obermann'" turned at first toward classicism and away from meditative introspection. He eventually came to realize, however, that he tended to be a man of introspection rather than a man of action and that he was most deeply touched by personal and not by dramatic situations. Arnold gives vent to this realization in several of the poems he wrote following "Sohrab and Rustum." These poems combine both stoical and romantic elements and express Arnold's most personal thoughts and feelings. Their heroes are often seen in moments of weakness, full of sad and melancholy longing for love or for their lost faith. They nevertheless remain somewhat stoical in attitude or are seen actively striving after the Stoic way of life, hard though this way may be.

"The Scholar Gipsy," published in the same volume with "Sohrab and Rustum," is one of the poems of Arnold's late poetic career which is full of romantic feeling for nature.

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88 Ford, p. 75.
89 Ibid., p. 76.
The narrator, obviously Arnold himself, relates the legend of the Scholar Gipsy, who symbolizes the way of life Arnold believed to be best, a life dedicated to the search for truth. The truth which the Scholar Gipsy seeks is basically stoical in nature, but the traditionally Christian elements of benevolence and charity are present in it also.

The Scholar Gipsy, formerly an Oxford scholar, has forsaken the haven of intellectualism and the friends he knew there and has joined a band of Gipsies in order to learn their lore. Many years later two of his old friends from Oxford encounter him and ask him of his life. He tells them that the Gipsies have arts to rule "The workings of men's brains" and that he plans to give to the world the "secret of their art" when he fully learns it. This secret seems to refer to the Stoic's ability to control his thoughts and his emotions in regard to external circumstances.

The quest of the Scholar Gipsy, like that of Arnold, is both social and personal. Once the Scholar finds the truth, the secret, he feels obligated to carry that message to the world. He must first find out what the truth is, and, secondly, make it prevail in the world. The Scholar, like

91 Arnold, The Poems of Matthew Arnold, p. 231.
Arnold, strives to learn and to propagate "the best that is known and thought in the world." 92

Mankind is desperately in need of the Gipsy secret. The individual, ignorant of his own truth and of that of the universe, is worn out by alternating between pleasure and pain, joy and happiness. The repeated changes and repeated shocks of life to which man is subject "Exhaust the energy of strongest souls, / And numb the elastic powers." 93 The individual who does not see his own soul clearly is at the mercy of his emotional reactions to external circumstances beyond his control; not in control of his own emotions, he ends by being a slave to them.

The Scholar Gipsy has not lived as other men have lived. He has not been bandied to and fro by life but has had "one aim, one business, one desire." 94 Having seen a glimmer of the Stoic truth, he has abandoned all other worldly interests to pursue it. He left the world with powers

Fresh, undiverted to the world without,
Firm to their mark, not spent on other things;
Free from the sick fatigue, the languid doubt,
Which much to have tried, in much been baffled, brings. 95

The Scholar Gipsy waits for the "spark from Heaven," symbolic

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92 Perrine, Item 33.
93 Arnold, The Poems of Matthew Arnold, p. 234.
94 Ibid., p. 234.
95 Ibid.
of the Stoic truth, as does the rest of mankind, but he has a greater hope than others and is free from their doubt that the truth will come.

The narrator feels that the Scholar Gipsy's optimistic and hopeful attitude results partly from the fact that he was born

Before this strange disease of modern life,
With its sick hurry, its divided aims,
Its heads o'ertax'd, its palsied hearts, was rife. 96

He warns the ever-youthful Gipsy to fly from the modern world "Which, though it gives no bliss, yet spoils for rest."

Contact with the world would distract him, confuse him, make him lose his clear aims, and he would "Fade, and grow old at last, and die. . . ." 97

There is expressed in the warning to the Gipsy the desire to flee the world in order to be rid of its destructive influence upon the soul, yet the poem as a whole expresses the idea that man can find no ultimate peace for himself unless he is willing to help guide others to this peace.

Like the Scholar Gipsy, Arnold wanted to attain the peace and the clear vision of the world which comes through a stoical self-knowledge and self-control. Once a man learns

96 Ibid., p. 236.
97 Ibid.
the truth of his own soul, he is enabled, according to the stoical outlook, to come to an understanding of the secret of the universe, for the same essence permeates both man and nature. The lives of both Arnold and the Scholar Gipsy exemplify the "spiritual quest of the thoughtful soul."\(^{98}\) For Arnold, of course, the quest was basically a Stoic one.

Much of Arnold's best poetry reflects his efforts to live the Stoic life in spite of what he knew to be true about the realities of human existence. He realized that men are subject to conflicting human desires and to weaknesses which they must somehow deal with and resolve. Arnold never tried to deny that he did sometimes desire what he knew to be irrational or that he was sometimes less strong than he would have liked to have been. What he did do was to make a conscious effort to control his emotions and deal with his human frailties through reason and through Stoic self-discipline.

More psychologically well-balanced and perceptive about man's actual dilemma than either Nietzsche or Carlyle, Arnold did not make the tragic error of attempting to force himself into an admirable though false mold which did not fit him and in which he could not healthfully work and live. He saw man in a more realistic, reasonable manner than did Nietzsche

\(^{98}\) Tinker and Lowry, p. 209.
or Carlyle and suggested a more feasible means for modern man to deal with his dilemma than did either of them. Arnold could admit to the weaknesses in human nature but believed that by trying to live in the most stoical manner possible, man could save himself from being controlled and destroyed by these weaknesses.

In "Stanzas From the Grand Chartreuse" and "Dover Beach" a meditative Arnold appears as the hero and is seen in a moment of quite human weakness experiencing a romantic, melancholy longing for the dead faith of the past. "Stanzas From the Grand Chartreuse" is a lament for a faith that is gone, for a belief no longer possible in the modern world where it is not intellectually defensible.\(^99\) The narrator, standing in the Carthusian monastery among the monks, remembers the teachers of his youth who destroyed his faith in traditional Christianity.\(^100\) These

\[ ... \text{rigorous teachers seized my youth,} \]
\[ \text{And purged its faith, and trimm'd its fire,} \]
\[ \text{Show'd me the high white star of Truth,} \]
\[ \text{There bade me gaze, and there aspire.} \]

Through these teachers he has come to see the inefficacy and weakness of the past and has been shown the wonders of

\(^99\) Ibid., p. 268.

\(^100\) Trilling, p. 107.

the modern world. Although he himself is in many ways modern, he nevertheless feels a deep regret and melancholy for the dead past and its faith. He realizes that the new age contains much that is disgusting and has come no closer to solving the age-old problems of man than did the past. It is difficult for him to fully reconcile himself to the new world and to quench his yearning for the old. Even though modern ideologies may be more intellectually defensible than the old faith, they do little to provide man with the spiritual comfort for which his soul cries out.

The hero of "Stanzas From the Grand Chartreuse" was born too late to keep the old faith, but too soon to be fully part of the modern world. One of the "Last of the race of them who grieve," he finds himself

Wandering between two worlds, one dead,
The other powerless to be born,
With nowhere yet to rest...his head.

Between the two worlds is a wasteland in which "a nature un-divine...no longer gives laws or directions."

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102 Parrott, pp. 31-32.
103 Trilling, p. 107.
105 Ibid., p. 272.
106 Trilling, p. 109.
The scientific and philosophical currents of the nineteenth-century made it difficult, if not impossible, for the intellectual individual such as the hero in "Stanzas From the Grand Chartreuse" to continue to believe in and receive comfort from traditional religion. The loss of God created in many thoughtful young men of the period a severe sense of loneliness. Without God and "fundamentally separated from nature, there is nothing to bind man to the universe, scarcely anything to bind him to life...little even to bind him to his fellow man." 107 The loneliness of Arnold and of other men of his time who had been affected by the various intellectual currents is seen in the agonized and unanswerable question of the French poet Baudelaire, a contemporary of Arnold's. "I desire with all my heart," he said, "to believe that an exterior and invisible being is interested in my fate; but what shall I do to believe?" 108

The nineteenth-century intellectual, unable to bear his horrible loneliness, was sometimes driven to the arms of a loved one in order to assuage the horror of living in a world without God. Such a figure is seen in "Dover Beach," first published in Arnold's New Poems of 1867. The poem was

107 Ibid.
probably written much earlier than its publishing date, however, for the first twenty-eight lines of the work were found on a piece of paper containing notes about Empedocles.

The hero of the poem, who is undoubtedly Arnold, is reminded of the loss of the traditional faith as he listens to the sounds of the sea at Dover. This faith, like the sea, was once "at the full, and round earth's shore / Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furled." But now this comfort to man is gone, and the hero in "Dover Beach" hears only

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

Modern man, divested of the emotional support supplied by the traditional religion, cannot escape being overcome at times by a feeling of fear and uncertainty. The world oftentimes seems to him to be a place of confusion and sorrow. The hero of "Dover Beach" compares it to a "darkling plain / Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight, /
Where ignorant armies clash by night."

109 Tinker and Lowry, p. 173.
111 Ibid.
112 Trilling, p. 128.
Strangely isolated in the midst of his "natural" environment, the intellectual of the nineteenth-century, in his fear and loneliness, sometimes feels that his only hope for comfort is in a loved one. He is compelled to make an agonizing plea somewhat like that of the speaker in "Dover Beach," who says to the woman with him

Ah, love, let us be true
To one another! for the world, which seems
To lie before us like a land of dreams,
So various, so beautiful, so new,
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help from pain.

Even though Arnold's volume published in 1867 contains poems expressing sentiments similar to those seen in "Stanzas From the Grand Chartreuse" and "Dover Beach," Arnold reasserts in the work the stoical message which appeared in his 1849 volume of poetry—that peace is ultimately attainable through the will and through self-dependence. Many of the poems in this last volume are about men whom Arnold felt possessed Stoic qualities.

According to the Stoic view of life, only what man has within are his true possessions. He can control and be sure of no one and nothing outside himself. This control Arnold

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{114} Tinker and Lowry, p. 30.
\item \textsuperscript{115} Arnold, The Poems of Matthew Arnold, p. 402.
\item \textsuperscript{116} Hanley, p. 99.
\end{itemize}
believed to be possible for the individual willing to impose upon himself Stoic discipline and willing to try to live as closely as possible the Stoic life. Arnold knew that man could not turn to romanticism or to action for the answers to life. Because he is able to control only that which is within, which is his own, man must cultivate an attitude of stoical resignation toward what is not is his power to change if he is to be free of much of the pain and discontent of life.

The difficulty of living the Stoic life, however, is one of the most predominant themes in the poetry of the 1867 volume. In several of his last poems, Arnold expresses despair and longing for the lost faith and the old communication with God, with man, and with nature. But along with this longing for what has been lost appear Arnold's efforts to deal stoically with that loss.

Four of Arnold's short, minor poems published in 1867 express, in a rather romantic vein, sadness at the loss of youth. In "Youth and Calm," "Growing Old," and "The Progress of Poesy," Arnold dwells upon the tragedy of the loss of intense emotion and youthful dreams which comes with age. In "The Last Word," however, which is also upon the subject of growing old, there is expressed the hope that a Stoic courage and endurance can be maintained to the end of life.
Several of the most important poems in Arnold's last volume concern death and the many sorrows which man must undergo. Life seen in the light of its end is basically a stoical view. This verse, despite its subject, has a hopeful note in that it attests to man's ability to resist sorrow and to gain strength anew from tragic occurrences. This note is seen in the eulogies commemorating Arthur Hugh Clough and Heinrich Heine, "Thyrsis" and "Heine's Grave."

The most important of Arnold's elegies which appear in his 1867 volume is "Rugby Chapel," written in memory of his father. Having rejected the fatherhood of God elsewhere, Arnold seems to restore this truth of Christianity to his system in this poem. He is seen here on the wings of faith and trust. For this reason, "Rugby Chapel" appears to be inconsistent with many of Arnold's other poems. It is somewhat surprising to read about heaven and life after death in the work of the author who wrote "Dover Beach" and "Stanzas From the Grand Chartreusse."

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118 Trilling, p. 296.
119 Hanley, p. 147.
121 Ibid., p. 159.
Although Arnold was sympathetic toward his father's moral fervor, he did not have the religious conviction himself which inspired his father. It would have been almost impossible, however, for him to have written about his father without referring to the Christian faith, and in the poem Arnold naturally fell into the language of traditional Christianity.

It is evident that at the time he wrote "Rugby Chapel," Arnold did not believe in the traditional faith, but his agnosticism had weakened from what it had been in his youth. In his prose of the 1860's he was formulating the essentials for a modified Christianity suitable to his time. His religious system was in many ways a continuation of his father's theological liberalism. Dr. Arnold thought of religion as an instrument for ethical and social betterment, and his son wanted to "save" religion because he, too, was aware of its social importance.

"Rugby Chapel" should thus be taken more seriously as a vehicle praising Dr. Arnold than as one accurately expressing

122 Tinker and Lowry, pp. 240-241.
124 Allott, p. 29.
his son's own religious convictions. Even though he became more conventional in his religious views as he grew older, Arnold recorded, in his personal notebook for 1878, the following quote from Goethe: "While highly esteeming the Christian religion, it was not in the way our theologians conceive it."

Goethe's conception of the Christian religion was far from orthodox, and Arnold seems never to have been able to break the spell which Goethe held over him. Whether Arnold believed in a new life of the soul after death is uncertain. It does seem that being born again meant to both Arnold and Goethe the increasing attainment of perfection in this life. This is more a Greek than a Christian concept.

Arnold regarded religion essentially as morality and was concerned with the power of virtue "to remove those living in this life from the state of misery... to the state of felicity;" he seemed little concerned with its relation to the soul after death. Virtue was seen by him rationally

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125 Dixon, p. 8.
126 Ibid.
127 Ibid., p. 12.
as a means of attaining a personal purity and a moral victory through psychological discipline. Mystically, it served as a means of achieving an inner strength somewhat like the grace of God. \(^{129}\)

Arnold, always aware of the great difficulty of maintaining the Stoic life, tended in his later years to look upon stoicism as almost beyond man's abilities. He felt that it needed religion to give it hope and inspiration to man. Christianity could provide the inspiration for living a disciplined, virtuous life. \(^{130}\)

The God of Arnold's own personal form of Christianity, with its strong Stoic element, was not like the God of traditional religion. Arnold defined his God as "a stream of things not ourselves, a stream of Tendency making for Righteousness." \(^{131}\) To obey God, in Arnoldian terms, meant simply to follow one's conscience, one's true self. This attitude is obviously more stoical than Christian. \(^{132}\) Arnold's attempt in his religious prose to convert Church of England adherents from a belief in the traditional personal God to an impersonal tendency causing righteousness

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\(^{129}\) Eels, p. 98.

\(^{130}\) Houghton and Stange, p. 391.

\(^{131}\) Lucas, p. 51.

\(^{132}\) Houghton and Stange, p. 392.
was futile. Even though this tendency may make for righteousness, it does not make for worship.\textsuperscript{133}

The most distinctive mood of Arnold's poetry, as has been seen particularly in his 1867 volume, is elegiac. "It mourns a loss, celebrates the lost thing, and tries to come to terms with the deprivation."\textsuperscript{134} The loss which Arnold felt most deeply was that of the traditional religious faith. The religion of the intellectual of his day had to do with morality or with thought, but not with the imagination. Some wonder, some mystery went out of the universe with the advent of nineteenth-century scientism and mechanism. With the loss of the traditional faith, "a certain body of assumptions, a certain way of looking at the world and of responding to it, a certain quality of temperament..." seemed to have disappeared from life.\textsuperscript{135}

Although one of the most dominant notes in Arnold's elegiac poetry is melancholy and despair, he moves beyond the grief expressed in many of his poems toward the reconciliation characteristic of the elegy. Much as his poems in general dwell on the reasons for despair in the modern world,

\textsuperscript{133} Lucas, p. 52.


\textsuperscript{135} \textit{Ibid.}
in several of them can be seen a healthful and hopeful optimism pointing toward the affirmative qualities seen later in his prose.  

"Obermann Once More," the last poem in the 1867 volume, reflects Arnold's optimism in the face of the losses incurred by modern man as a result of the weakening of the traditional faith. Arnold, in a vision, receives from the Alpine recluse a message of hope. The world, Obermann says, is "in her hour of birth, / Of hopes and hearts in bloom." He advises Arnold not to despair as he did during his life; viewing the world apart, he sees that "Forward the gracious hours have fared" since his death, and "the sun is risen."

Obermann helps Arnold to see that despite the fact that there is much to disparage in the new age, there is also much to be hopeful about. The science and reason of the day appear to him to hold out to man an assurance of a new and better age of the future made up of unselfish, sensible men. The good seems to be possible. He rebukes Arnold for his

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136 Ibid., p. 589.
137 Trilling, p. 299.
139 Ibid., p. 441.
140 Trilling, pp. 299-300.
despair, tells him that a new day is dawning, and bids him to set his energies to help bring "Hope to a world new-made." 

The vision ends and Arnold, still hearing in his soul the voice of Obermann, sees the morning break "Across the glimmering lake."  

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141 Arnold, The Poems of Matthew Arnold, p. 441.
142 Ibid., p. 442.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Arnold, like the Greek poet Sophocles, who appears in his poem "To a Friend," ultimately managed to attain a vision of life that was steady and whole. His unique and clear insight into life is commendable in view of his being a child of the nineteenth century. The intellectual tumult and confusion of the early Victorian era created in many educated men such as Arnold an intense consciousness of the loss of God, and thereby, the loss of any absolute values to which man could cling in order to save himself from wandering, lost and alone, in a spiritual void.

Some men of the time, the most notable of whom are Nietzsche and Carlyle, attempted to assuage the pain and emptiness resulting from the loss of God by developing and fervently believing in heroes larger than life. These heroes were almost certainly substitutes for the heavenly father whom they had lost. In the case of Nietzsche and Carlyle, the hero substituted symbolically, too, for the earthly fathers from whom each of them had been separated.
Like Nietzsche and Carlyle, Arnold suffered an intense spiritual crisis as a result of the intellectual currents of his time. He did not arrive at what he felt to be the best solution to the modern dilemma either easily or immediately, but he emerged from the crisis of his late youth and early maturity with a vision of life which has been seen to be basically stoical, a vision which had its inception in Arnold's propensity toward a Stoic outlook and which was strengthened and clarified under the influence of a classical education.

Although Arnold went through a period in his twenties and early thirties of affecting a rather dandyish behavior and of being, in many other ways, as unlike his father as possible, he did not experience the psychological difficulties stemming from his relation with his parents which Nietzsche and Carlyle did. Arnold's affectations during this period of his life were probably at least partially the result of his efforts to establish his own identity and to discover what his own outlook on life was to be. He loved and respected both of his parents very deeply, and this attitude seems to have contributed greatly to his balanced and sane view of life. He was able to allow his normal emotions toward others to develop healthfully, as evidenced by his happy and satisfying marriage and family life. Most important, he was free from the fear of excessive feminization which simultaneously
repelled and attracted Nietzsche and Carlyle and which drove them to over-compensate by developing an idealized and powerful hero.

Arnold's feelings toward his parents are evident in the numerous letters which he wrote to his mother throughout the course of his life; they are clearly from an affectionate and devoted son. In several of his letters Arnold mentions his father with reverence. He particularly liked to write to his mother about him on the anniversaries of his birth and death and prided himself on the fact that his handling of religious subjects in his later life was in many ways a continuation of his father's religious reform.¹

The famous Dr. Arnold of Rugby inspired an awe in his sone which was very likely magnified by his death in Arnold's nineteenth year. Arnold never seemed to be aware of any human frailties in his father, and as he grew older, developed what approaches on idolization of him. His father suspected Arnold of being somewhat lazy and irresponsible as a young man, and Arnold's wish in his later life to be "papa's continuator" could be traced to the fact that his father's death occurred before Arnold had a chance to prove himself to him.²

¹Chambers, Matthew Arnold, pp. 126-127.
²Allott, p. 16.
During his life Thomas Arnold seemed to his son to be always rational, balanced, controlled, to be a living example of the Greek intellectual spirit. Yet he held traditional, though liberal, religious beliefs which, to some extent, colored Arnold's entire philosophy of life. The youthful memories that Arnold retained of his father help to explain his unique fusion of Christian and Stoic principles. It seems almost inevitable, considering the circumstances of his upbringing, that Arnold would conceive of the ideal figure as one who possesses certain Christian virtues yet who is strongly stoical in character.

Even though Arnold was able to incorporate certain aspects of the traditional belief into his philosophy, his intellectuality, like that of Nietzsche and Carlyle, caused him to experience a great deal of religious doubt and conflict. Emotionally he remained Christian in the sense that he believed in the efficacy of Christian virtues such as love and righteousness and admired the example of conduct set for man by Christ. Intellectually, however, he was unable to believe what a strict interpretation of Christian dogma would have him believe. He once wrote to his friend Clough: "The world in general has always stood towards religions and their doctors in the attitude of a half-astonished clown acquiescingly ducking at their grand words and thinking
it must be very fine, but for its soul not being able to make out what it is all about."

Arnold struggled for many years with his feelings toward Christianity, and in much of his later prose work set down suggestions for a modified interpretation of the traditional dogma. He feared that Christianity would continue to lose ground in his time if the clergy persisted in presenting it in the old way. He sincerely believed that a rational interpretation of the Bible would not bring about the loss of anything intrinsically essential to the Christian faith. He felt that what is "really best and most valuable in the Bible is independent of miracles...," and that the existence of God could be proved by the experiences of those who follow him.

Arnold's modifications of traditional dogma reflect the influence of both his Stoic turn of mind and of his upbringing. He modified basic Christian teachings so that they would fit into a more rational scheme of things, and he gave a new definition of morality which was more intellectual than the traditional one. Despite the fact that he could

4 Chambers, Matthew Arnold, p. 99.
5 Sherman, p. 289.
not accept the traditional Christian dogma as it stood, he was nevertheless unable to turn away from the moral ethics of Christianity in the manner of Nietzsche and Carlyle, both of whom formulated a mythology having a morality based upon power and which virtually made a religion of hero-worship. Arnold stopped short of formulating a way of life which has no built-in system of morality that applies equally to all. Morality, as he interpreted it, was not to be contingent upon the power of select individuals but was to be based largely upon traditional Christian ethics.

Although Arnold never advanced a philosophy of hero-worship as the solution to the ills of the world, there can clearly be seen in his writing both his belief that there is a best way for man to live and his admiration for the individual who succeeds in living in this manner. Many of his poems are concerned with the struggles of a male protagonist to know and to live by this "truth" of life as Arnold saw it to be. He believed that the individual who combined the "light" of the Greek intellectual spirit with the "sweetness" of Christian love and righteousness could attain both an inner harmony and peace and a harmony with the world in which he must live.

This potential ideal balance, when achieved by the majority of a people and available to them all, will be reflected, Arnold believed, in their society. Thus the ideal
state, in order to avoid chaos, must aid its people to know and to live by the truth. In assigning to the state such a role of power and importance, Arnold echoes the sentiments of his father. But in his unique fusing of Greek, particularly stoical, intellectual characteristics with traditional but redefined Christian virtues, Arnold developed an ideal of man and of conduct which was peculiarly his own.

Unlike Nietzsche and Carlyle, who deprecated the multitudes and saw superiority only in the few, Arnold saw great potential in the common man. He had faith in democracy as an element of expansion in human nature, and saw it as an aid to man's discovering himself. Yet he felt, too, that democracy, in order to be effective and to be a force for good, had to fulfill certain qualifications and come under several special considerations.

Arnold's primary fear about democracy was that it might diminish man's spirit and lessen the individual's chances of achieving great stature. Democracy could be a dangerous force, he felt, unless controlled by a strong state which could infuse "the grand style into a nation's spirit."  

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8 Trilling, p. 174.
9 Ibid., p. 179.
Democracy should not be thought of as an end in itself, as some people of his time tended to consider it, but rather as the means, through the state, of achieving true liberty and humanity.

Thus, Arnold retained some suspicions of democracy, even though he welcomed it. He felt it to be a possible detrimental force unless the middle classes who espoused the cause of democracy were guided by the intellect. He once referred to reason as "the instrument of the democratic masses." Despite his reservations about democracy, however, the sympathy which he did feel for democratic ideals tended to cause him to place emphasis on the common element in mankind and saved him from hero-worship.

Arnold's healthy, sane view of things led him to try to carefully reason out and formulate some means by which modern man could live with some measure of calm and personal satisfaction in a world seemingly devoid of absolute values. His rationality kept him from carrying his ideology to the often irrational extremes of men like Nietzsche and Carlyle.

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10 Ibid., p. 186.
11 Ibid., p. 232.
12 Ibid., p. 163.
13 Lippincott, p. 111.
life and much of his poetry reflect the concentrated efforts of a man who determined early to follow the Stoic way of dealing with the disappointments and inadequacies of life. He cultivated the courage and strength necessary to accept and resign himself to what he could not change, and never ceased to search for the answers to be found within himself, to strive to satisfy his buried self.

Throughout his life, Arnold was steadfast in refusing to follow an easier but less true way than his own of dealing with the human dilemma. It is not surprising that he felt more at ease with the Stoic Marcus Aurelius than with any other philosopher. Much of his verse is in the spirit of Marcus Aurelius, having the same kind of "stoicism, dignity, patience, and gentleness and no little of the same pensive and ineffectual resignation under insoluble problems." Arnold believed man to be a moral being who by discipline can progress toward perfecting his essence. Through unceasing efforts, man can make of himself a more perfect individual and help to create a more perfect society and a more perfect world. Arnold eventually realized that peace

14 Frederic Harrison, Tennyson, Ruskin, Mill and Other Literary Estimates, New York, 1900.

15 Sherman, p. 211.

16 Parrott, p. 53.
is attainable through the will, through self-dependence, through a Stoic resolution of doubt. Although during part of his life he was torn between two worlds, he eventually came to reject both and develop his own philosophy.  

\[17\] Hanley, p. 99.
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**Articles**