

LIMITATIONS OF STOICISM IN MATTHEW ARNOLD'S POETRY

THESIS

Presented to the Graduate Council of  
Southwest Texas State University  
in Partial Fulfillment of  
the Requirements

For the Degree of  
MASTER OF ARTS

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San Marcos, Texas

December, 1975

## A C K N O W L E D G M E N T S

Sincere and grateful acknowledgment is expressed to Dr. David R. Stevens and Dr. Vernon E. Lynch of the English and Philosophy department, and to Dr. Elmer Anthony DeShazo of the Political Science Department for their guidance, and for their expressions of encouragement in the preparation of this thesis. Acknowledgement is expressed especially to Dr. Stevens, Chairman of the Committee, for his patience and forbearance in the inspiration for and the direction of this thesis.

Sincere and grateful acknowledgment is also expressed to my wife for her encouragement and tireless efforts in typing and proofreading much of this material.

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December 1975

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION,

Matthew Arnold, English poet and critic of England's Victorian age, has been dead for almost ninety years; but the writings about him have been and continue to be prodigious. The interpreters and critics of Arnold have been numerous, and there are still conflicting interpretations of his poetry and its meanings. Among those who have written about Arnold and his poetry, some maintain that he tended to adhere to Stoicism. Evelyn A. Hanley, for one, takes this position in her Stoicism in Major English Poets of the Nineteenth Century. Similarly, John Hicks in "The Stoicism of Matthew Arnold"<sup>1</sup> and William Robbins in his The Ethical Idealism of Matthew Arnold<sup>2</sup> both maintain that there are strong bonds between Arnold and Stoicism. For example, Hanley says that Arnold "was

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<sup>1</sup>Published in Critical Studies in Arnold, Emerson and Newman in University of Iowa Humanistic Studies (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1942), vol. 4, no. 1.

<sup>2</sup>David J. DeLaura, ed., Victorian Prose: A Guide to Research (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 1973), pp. 263, 264, 270.

himself the most Stoic figure in the nineteenth century"<sup>3</sup> and that his concern with ethics "took a distinctly Stoic turn . . . attributable to . . . the prevailing Stoic temper of his own character, . . . that impelled him to search always for some abiding force upon which he might anchor his beliefs."<sup>4</sup>

In his belief that Victorian England tended to make Stoics of its serious thinkers, John Hicks, probably the most formidable exponent of Arnold's Stoicism, says, "Matthew Arnold, more truly than any other prominent writer of his generation, was such a [Middle-Roman] Stoic."<sup>5</sup> Hicks goes on to state that he is concerned with the results of Arnold's beliefs, which are clearly Stoical and that evidence of this Stoicism "shows forth throughout" all Arnold's writings.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Evelyn A. Hanley, Stoicism in the Major English Poets of the Nineteenth Century (New York: Haskell House, 1964), p. 97.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 98.

<sup>5</sup>Hicks, p. 11.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 12.

Hicks continues by saying that two events occurred between 1849 and 1852 which "affected him [Arnold] emotionally, and thereby helped to fix him in the Stoical bent of his thought."<sup>7</sup> The first of these was the episode with Marguerite, a French girl, about whom Arnold might have had some serious thoughts except that there seemed to be some fault in her past causing him to feel that she was not quite on his own social and moral plane. Arnold seemed to be relieved when their brief affair was at an end, and "the outcome of this experience was to send him irrevocably to the life of the spirit within as the only possible one."<sup>8</sup> In choosing to withdraw from the situation rather than to pursue it further, Arnold relied on logical reasoning rather than let heartfelt emotions dominate the situation.

The other event Hicks refers to is Arnold's marriage to Frances Lucy Wightman in 1851, the same year he was appointed an inspector of schools. It seems that both the marriage and the job evoked a profound sense of duty and responsibility in Arnold, whose attention was "directed to what can do good, toward what is positive instead

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 23.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., pp. 24-25.

of puzzling."<sup>9</sup> Here Arnold chose to be guided by that which was clear and reasonable in accepting his new responsibilities.

While not as formidable an exponent of Arnold's Stoicism as Hicks, William Robbins, nevertheless, holds that Stoicism did have an effect on Arnold. Robbins says that "the impact of . . . the Stoics upon Arnold was . . . in terms of moral and spiritual guidance" and that "the titles of . . . the poems--'Consolation,' 'Resignation,' 'Self-Dependence'--are themselves indicative of the bleakly stoical basis from which Arnold started." Robbins also says that "Nowhere is the need and desire for adequate self-knowledge more poignantly expressed than in 'The Buried Life.'"<sup>10</sup>

Though it may be shown that some writers have established that there are strains of Stoicism in Arnold's poetry, it will be the argument of this thesis that counter-Stoic tendencies of Arnold's poetry are more fundamental. To develop this argument several kinds of evidence from Arnold's works will be adduced. An examination of some

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 26.

<sup>10</sup>William Robbins, The Ethical Idealism of Matthew Arnold (London: University of Toronto Press, 1959), pp. 61, 120, 121.

of Arnold's notebooks, sayings, and essays provides some evidence of counter-Stoicism, and considered together these are especially good indicators of important ideas developed through the years. They tend to show, as stated by Hanley, that Arnold was seeking something upon which to anchor his beliefs. Finally, in addition to Arnold's other writings, his poetry will be examined to identify counter-Stoic characteristics limiting his Stoicism.

## C H A P T E R     I I

### SOCIAL BACKGROUNDS AS SOURCES OF CONFLICT IN ARNOLD

The Cambridge History of English Literature informs the reader that Matthew Arnold was born in Laleham, England, in 1822, and that when he was fifteen years old he entered Rugby, winning a prize in 1840 with his poem "Alaric at Rome."<sup>1</sup> He studied at Balliol College, Oxford, and at the age of twenty-three he taught classics at Rugby. In 1851 he was appointed as private secretary to Lord Landsdowne and in that same year he was appointed to an inspectorship of schools. Randall Keenan records that "between 1868 and 1872, he endured with great strength the loss of three sons, one an infant, the others approaching manhood."<sup>2</sup> David DeLaura points out that due, perhaps, to Arnold's own desire that he not be the subject of a biography, "materials for an account of Matthew Arnold's first thirty years remain frustratingly scanty" and

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<sup>1</sup>Sir A. W. Ward, and A. W. Waller, eds., The Cambridge History of English Literature (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1917), vol. 13, pp. 97-98.

<sup>2</sup>Randall Keenan, The Poetry of Matthew Arnold (New York: Monarch Press, 1965), p. 12.

"attempts to locate the 'secret' of Arnold's early life and poetry have not usually been successful."<sup>3</sup>

John Hicks' comments about Arnold's life at Oxford show that, at least in this early stage, Arnold's temperament was hardly Stoic. For example, Hicks says that while Arnold was at Oxford "he lived as anything but a calm unworldly soul" and "there seems to have entered into his bearing and his life everything that would proclaim him to be not just Dr. Arnold's son from Rugby." Hicks continues, saying that in one of Arnold's letters to his close Oxford friend, Arthur Hugh Clough, his style indicates "a distressing lack of inner solidity and a susceptibility to external and tangential attractions." Hicks also finds testimony that at Oxford Arnold was "a dandy, Olympian in manner and mannerism, careless of his studies," and that "Clough was deeply concerned with his welfare, restraining his extravagances and neglect of study."<sup>4</sup>

In a similar vein, Richard Keenan states that Arnold "entered into University life with such gusto and bright spirits that he earned the affectionate name of

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<sup>3</sup>DeLaura, A Guide to Research, pp. 255-256.

<sup>4</sup>Hicks, pp. 14-15, 17.

'Merry Matt,' " causing Clough to remark on "Arnold's lax and social habits and his evident 'Parisianism.'" Keenan also states that the young Arnold "scandalized a fellow Master (as the instructors were called) and the very proper parents of a young student by raising topics such as horses and racing--certainly indecent subjects to be entertained by a Rugby Master in Early Victorian England."<sup>5</sup> Arnold definitely did not seem to have the dignity and reserve expected of Dr. Arnold's son, nor did he always act the part. However, says Keenan, "despite his sharp zest for social life and his duties as Lord Landsdowne's secretary, poetry never seemed to have escaped his attention or his affection."<sup>6</sup>

Another writer, William A. Madden, identifies a conflict in Arnold's life-style when he observed that Arnold's continuing debate with his friend Clough was "a continuation of his earlier revolt against certain values which his father represented."<sup>7</sup> Also, Madden points out

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<sup>5</sup>Keenan, p. 6.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., pp. 6-7.

<sup>7</sup>William A. Madden, Matthew Arnold: A Study of the Aesthetic Temperament in Victorian England (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1967), pp. 21-23.

that the motif of conflict between father and son, reflecting a temperamental incompatibility, appears in several of Arnold's poems, notably "Balder Dead," Merope, "Fragment of an 'Antigone,'" "A Picture of Newstead," and especially in Sohrab and Rustum where the conflict between father and son occupies the center of interest.<sup>8</sup>

Lionel Trilling enlarges on the topics both of Arnold's gayety and of his conflict with attempts to remain indifferent to events, and tries to show that the latter is a result of the former. Trilling says that Arnold was "intent upon making himself a Disraelian dandy--gay, careless, cocky." In attempting to explain Arnold's behavior, Trilling finds it impossible to believe that Arnold's cockiness is "merely the high spirit of youth-- . . .--or simply the rebellion of a young man against his father's 'line.'"<sup>9</sup> Trilling, however, does not mention what it might indicate; he merely warns against attempting to explore the complexity of interpretive biography, intimating that a solution will not be a simple one.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 28.

<sup>9</sup>Lionel Trilling, Matthew Arnold (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1939), p. 22.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

Another writer, R. H. Super, identifies Arnold as a devotee of gayety and observes that "the love of fun remained with him throughout life."<sup>11</sup>

Henry C. Duffin's comments on Arnold's affair with Marguerite and his later marriage to Lucy Wightman may prove helpful in showing Stoic as well as perhaps counter-Stoic concepts in Arnold's philosophy. Duffin, in speaking of Arnold's meeting with Marguerite at Thun, observes that Arnold "is about to propose marriage, but thinks again--'Better not, perhaps.'" Then, at twenty-nine, he "married . . . Frances Lucy . . . and had six children (accepting the early deaths of three of them with an admirable degree of Stoicism)."<sup>12</sup> Both affairs involved Arnold emotionally with women. In the first instance, with Marguerite, it seemed that reason held supreme, and he rejected the idea of marriage. In the second instance, with Frances Lucy Wightman, his emotional involvement overrode any reasonable consideration and resulted in their marriage and raising a family. While this may not seem to

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<sup>11</sup>R. H. Super, The Time-Spirit of Matthew Arnold (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1970), p. 5.

<sup>12</sup>Henry C. Duffin, Arnold the Poet (New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc., 1963), pp. 14, 33.

be intolerable per se (for Marcus Aurelius and other Stoics seem to have accepted marriage as part of life), it would seem to indicate the reasonable calmness of Stoicism was inadequate to provide an acceptable solution, other than marriage, to Arnold. It is possible that a sense of duty on Arnold's part played an important role in his decision. Arnold seemed to realize that, perhaps, emotions do have an important place in a man's life, and this realization is shown by Duffin when he quotes from Arnold's poem "Youth and Calm" the phrase: "'Calm's not life's crown.'"<sup>13</sup>

While it is possible that Arnold's vacillation between academics and gayety, the Stoic and counter-Stoic concepts in his philosophy, and the father-son conflict all contributed to building up internal, personal conflicts, the historical period in which Arnold lived could also have produced external pressures or at least have added to those he already felt. Several important events greatly affected England at this time, among them the continuing impact of the Industrial Revolution (1750-1850); domestic pressures for change following the French Revolution (1789-1799) with its cry of liberty, equality, and

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 29.

fraternity; and Charles Darwin's evolutionary theory (1859) --to name a few. The problem areas of these times were complicated by changing family and social values; changes in economics, education, and business; historical and industrial developments; advances in the arts and sciences; tensions in religion and politics; and acceptance, rejection, and doubt of new ideas, values, and achievements.

Writing about this age, Walter E. Houghton says that "the one distinguishing fact about the time was (quoting Sir Henry Holland) 'that we are living in an age of transition.'"<sup>14</sup> Houghton continues by pointing out that such an age has a dual aspect of destruction and reconstruction; that there was a spread of education coupled with the enormous expansion of knowledge; and that there were religious doubts and questions as to great points in moral and intellectual matters. He points out that "Victorians reacted to their age with hope and dismay, optimism and anxiety."<sup>15</sup> If a salient characteristic of the Victorian age were to be proposed, it could probably be found in what

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<sup>14</sup>Walter E. Houghton, "Character of the Age," Backgrounds to Victorian Literature, ed. Richard A. Levine (San Francisco, Calif.: Chandler Publishing Co., 1967), p. 15.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., pp. 18, 23-24, 40.

Jerome Buckley says, that "the inconsistency of the generalizations about the age itself testifies to the bewildering complexity of the era. It is almost impossible to reduce a culture so various to a common denominator; and conflict, indeed, may emerge as the only unity in a great diversity."<sup>16</sup>

Asa Briggs shows that at this time scientists were beginning to emphasize the social, moral, intellectual, and utilitarian role of science and that there were bound to be difficulties in reconciling scientific conclusions with those of revealed religion. He states, further, that the works of Sir Charles Lyell and Charles Darwin both raised difficulties for those people who placed a simple trust in the infallibility of the Biblical record.<sup>17</sup> Noel Annan writes in a similar vein when he asks, "How could the findings of science be reconciled with the history, the morality, the ideals, and the faith of Christian England?" Annan also observed that the churches had become

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<sup>16</sup>Jerome H. Buckley, "Victorianism," Backgrounds to Victorian Literature, ed. Richard A. Levine (San Francisco, Calif.: Chandler Publishing Co., 1967), p. 50.

<sup>17</sup>Asa Briggs, "Religion and Science," Backgrounds to Victorian Literature, ed. Richard A. Levine (San Francisco, Calif.: Chandler Publishing Co., 1967), pp. 84-85.

more sharply opposed to science than they had been a century before.<sup>18</sup>

From these comments on the background to the Victorian age, it is evident that the turmoil of the period did little if anything to provide a stable foundation upon which Arnold could resolve his conflicting values. This age represented the kind of situation which has apparently been conducive to Stoicism, for, according to Hanley, the "profound changes in the social and intellectual milieu" produced "a feeling of disillusionment with the age and a desire to seek compensation in . . . independence of externals and reliance on the life of the mind." In other words, the Stoic would avoid the external disturbances by withdrawing within himself.<sup>19</sup>

Against this background Arnold supposedly was a Stoic; but, although he contributed much to the literature of the period with his poetry and prose, and even though some writers consider him to have leaned strongly toward this Stoic philosophy, he does not seem to have made a

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<sup>18</sup>Noel Annan, "Science, Religion, and the Critical Mind," Backgrounds to Victorian Literature, ed. Richard A. Levine (San Francisco, Calif.: Chandler Publishing Co., 1967), pp. 96-97, 102.

<sup>19</sup>Hanley, pp. 1-2, 18.

mark as a philosopher. Will Durant, writing about the lives and opinions of the greater philosophers from Plato to John Dewey, refers to Arnold only as the author of Empedocles on Etna.<sup>20</sup>

Arnold, even the young Arnold, was, of course, aware of the troubles of his time and was also concerned about them, and, as Stopford Brooke has pointed out, these were times when men tended to seek some kind of spiritual or philosophical anchor to hold on to. Arnold was one of those seeking such an anchor, but Stoicism did not seem to provide such a hold. Brooke, for one, believes that Arnold had some difficulty in ever finding a solution to the problem. He writes:

It is plain . . . that the racking trouble of man's disobedience to law, his necessary restlessness and the confused noise that attended it--in contrast with Nature's obedience, tranquillity, and steady toil--were heavily pressed on Arnold by the circumstances of his time. He found no solution of the

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<sup>20</sup>Will Durant, The Story of Philosophy: The Lives and Opinions of the Greater Philosophers (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1926), p. 74. Nor is Arnold mentioned as a Stoic in any of the following publications: Henry Alpern, The March of Philosophy, 1933; Frederick Copleston, A History of Philosophy, 1946; Cyril E. M. Joad, Guide to Philosophy, 1936; Rupert Lodge, The Great Thinkers, 1949; Francis H. Parker, The Story of Western Philosophy, 1967; Sheldon P. Peterfreund and Theodore C. Denise, Contemporary Philosophy and Its Origins, 1967; and Dagobert D. Runes, ed., Treasury of Philosophy, 1955.

problem now, none in reasoning, none in warring religions and philosophies.<sup>21</sup>

These are some of the events and conditions that various writers have identified as having had some impact upon Arnold's thought. That the sum total of these events and conditions created puzzles and problems seems reasonable; and puzzles and problems in themselves suggest that one is necessarily perplexed and searching for answers. Interestingly enough, Robbins makes a pertinent observation about Arnold's apparently troubled world. In referring to a thesis by E. K. Brown (Matthew Arnold: A Study in Conflict, 1948),<sup>22</sup> Robbins says that "conflict amounting to a psychological fracture runs through Arnold's character and achievement." He says that Brown's thesis discloses a "heavily damaging psychological fracture" that "produced irritations and contradictions" and "crippled" Arnold in his efforts to be "disinterested and objective."<sup>23</sup> Brown, it seems, at an early date did identify an attitude

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<sup>21</sup>Stopford A. Brooke, Four Poets: Clough, Arnold, Rossetti, Morris (London: Duckworth and Co., 1908), p. 73.

<sup>22</sup>DeLaura, A Guide to Research, p. 251.

<sup>23</sup>Robbins, pp. vii, 159.

in Arnold's poetry which tended to be incoherent and in-artistic. That Brown did see a flaw in Arnold's character would tend to indicate that a counter-Stoic current was running through Arnold long before anyone else became aware of it.

DeLaura mentions that the "flaw" that Brown discerned seems to have been "a failure in the deepest places of [Arnold's] art and character." DeLaura refers to the "flaw" as an ominous theme of Arnold's "divided mind and spirit " and states that this theme is never fully developed. Brown believed that "Arnold's . . . career was strewn with 'incoherences' and 'artistic disasters.'"<sup>24</sup> While there does not seem to be definitive evidence as to exactly when this "flaw" developed in Arnold to the point that Brown identified it, an educated guess would be to place its development sometime prior to 1850.

Stopford Brooke, in viewing Arnold's Stoic position, says that "it often isolated him too much from the mass of men, very few of whom are stoics either in philosophy or practice. A certain touch of contempt for ordinary humanity entered into his work."<sup>25</sup> Brooke's view of

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<sup>24</sup>DeLaura, A Guide to Research, p. 292.

<sup>25</sup>Brooke, p. 62.

Arnold's position could be an indication that Arnold, if he was a Stoic, was a weak one, because Brooke considered isolation to be a weakness possibly resulting in the "certain touch of contempt" he refers to. That Arnold should have looked upon humanity with contempt does not speak well for either him or his Stoic philosophy since being contemptuous is difficult to rationalize with either. Judging from the context of what Brooke writes, Arnold's contempt for humanity was not an infrequent attitude. Brooke states that this attitude of Arnold's entered into his work, tending to appeal to the few rather than the many; to a class, not to the whole; to the self-centered, not to those who lose their selves in love. This attitude, resulting in too much self-involvement, tended to keep him from being compassionate.<sup>26</sup>

That the restlessness and conflict of the times were reflected in Arnold's unsettled nature may be inferred from some of the entries found in the notebooks which he kept over the years. Since notebooks are kept by writers to jot down those ideas which are or may be important to them, it may be assumed that Arnold's notebooks, therefore,

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<sup>26</sup>Ibid.

contain ideas which he considered to be worthwhile. Thus, by examining several entries over a period of years, it is possible in a sense to read his mind and determine to a limited extent at least that he kept seeking something that would help provide a firm foundation for his thinking. Arnold's reflections on the ideas he expressed showed that Stoicism did not have all the answers to all his problems. Howard Foster Lowry and his associates, Karl Young and W. H. Dunn, have carefully edited Arnold's notebooks, and it is from their work that several entries have been selected. Arnold seemed to hold to certain favorite sources for his entries; notable among them are the writings of the Anglican Bishop Thomas Wilson and the Bible, especially the books of Psalms and Proverbs.

In 1867 Arnold entered several maxims from Bishop Wilson, a fact which possibly indicates that he was exploring ideas that associate meaning in life with "the name of God" (an association he praised Spinoza for retaining in philosophy) and with traditional moral authorities. His notebooks attribute to Bishop Wilson the following maxims:

. . . the great aim--to have reason and the will of God prevail . . . . When I am in heaviness, I will think upon God . . . . You will never be truly happy until you can say: I am glad God sees all my actions,

. . . and the very motives upon which I do every-thing. . . . The only sure way to peace is to give oneself entirely to God.<sup>27</sup>

In this same year (1867) Arnold recorded from the book of Proverbs the following verses:

. . . Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding . . . . He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool; but whoso walketh wisely, he shall be delivered . . . . Man's goings are of the Lord; how can a man then understand his own way?<sup>28</sup>

Some notations from the book of Psalms are as follows:

. . . My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him . . . . Lead me to the rock that is higher than I . . . . Cause me to know the way wherein I should walk . . . . Though I walk in the midst of trouble, thou wilt revive me.<sup>29</sup>

In 1868 Arnold noted from Bishop Wilson's discourses these ideas:

. . . In short, to serve God is perfect freedom; all else is mere slavery, let the world call it what

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<sup>27</sup>Howard Foster Lowry, Karl Young, and Waldo Hilary Dunn, eds., The Note-Books of Matthew Arnold (London: Oxford University Press, 1952), pp. 48, 53, 59-60.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., pp. 45, 47, 50.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., pp. 54-55, 64.

they please . . . . Look up to God at all times, and he will, as in a glass, discover what is fit to be done.<sup>30</sup>

Certain entries in 1869, quoted from Bishop Wilson, read as follows:

Whoever aspires after perfection, must resolve to do all things with this sole virtue--to please God . . . . This is the true reason why the love of God is made our first and great duty, because God only can make us happy. God has appointed us to be holy as the only way to be happy.<sup>31</sup>

Entries in 1876 from the book of Proverbs were noted by Arnold as follows:

Man's goings are of the Eternal; how can a man then understand his own way? . . . He that separateth himself seeketh after his own desire, and quarrelleth with all wisdom . . . . There is no wisdom nor counsel nor understanding against the Eternal.<sup>32</sup>

While Bishop Wilson and the Bible provide wide sources of material for Arnold's notebooks, he gathered ideas from other sources, not confining himself to merely one or two. In the years 1880 and 1881 he noted quotations

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<sup>30</sup>Ibid., pp. 69, 79.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., pp. 101, 119.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 261.

from F. Leighton, a lecturer for the Royal Academy, and from Cardinal Newman as follows:

Primarily, the source of all Art is the consciousness of emotion in the presence of the phenomena of Life and Nature--F. Leighton.

Instance and patterns, not logical reasonings, are the living conclusions which alone have a hold over the affections or can form the character--Cardinal Newman.<sup>33</sup>

Henry C. Duffin has supplied an observation both appropriate and timely with respect to Arnold's notebooks when he says that "if one can judge from his notebooks (after 1860), Arnold was, next to Coleridge, the most religious-minded poet of the century."<sup>34</sup> Just exactly what Duffin meant by "religious-minded" is open to discussion. We do know that Arnold's father was a deeply spiritual man--not that that in itself would make Arnold "religious-minded." It does show, however, that Duffin had a basis for his statement as far as Arnold's spiritual legacy goes. If several of Arnold's essays are noted, it can be seen that they were of a definite religious nature: for example, St. Paul and Protestantism (aimed at the disengagement of

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<sup>33</sup>Ibid., pp. 340, 350.

<sup>34</sup>Henry C. Duffin, Arnold the Poet (New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc., 1963), p. 25.

the religion of England from unscriptural Protestantism, politics, and jealousy); Literature and Dogma (wherein Arnold defines God as a "stream of tendency, not ourselves, which makes for Righteousness," or good conduct, and wherein he defines Religion as "morality touched by Emotion"); God and the Bible; and Last Essays on Church and Religion. That Arnold was really concerned with religion can be further observed from the many notations of religious origin in his notebooks; for example, quotations from Bishop Wilson, Cardinal Newman, the Bible, and his personal observations about religion and God. He seems to have had a religious thirst that could never quite be quenched.

Stuart Sherman shows that many of Arnold's notebook entries were oriented on a religious basis. Sherman states that "if one dips anywhere into the published portion of the Notebooks, one finds one's self near the center of his intellectual and spiritual life."<sup>35</sup> Sherman continues, quoting from Arnold's notebooks to indicate a strong religious undercurrent. In summation, the ideas that Arnold reflected upon at some length showed that he believed that man's human spirit was constantly seeking to

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<sup>35</sup>Stuart P. Sherman, Matthew Arnold: How to Know Him (Indianapolis, Ind.: The Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1917), p. 19.

rise to an infinite Being; that man's soul is instinctively religious; that truth, reason, and God are inextricably associated, the one with the others; and that man should seek to serve God.<sup>36</sup>

While Duffin believes that Arnold had definite religious leanings in his writing, he believes that there was another side of Arnold which was not given to hope. Duffin seems to see a despairing, morbid side to the poet in addition to one that apparently defies understanding. Duffin, who "had to begin by expressing great personal distaste for the morbid outlook of some of Arnold's poetry," continues by saying, "if despair was the medium of Arnold's contact with life, it might only have been intensified by a wider experience in these early middle decades"<sup>37</sup> of his life. Duffin believed that Arnold's poetry is difficult, if not impossible, to understand because he says that "Arnold is worthy to be read and admired, but his peculiar quality, his special flavor, defies analysis, and has been, . . . impossible to 'get across.'"<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup>Ibid., pp. 20-21.

<sup>37</sup>Duffin, p. 10.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., p. 18.

It seems that Arnold did not unquestionably embrace the Stoic's traditional acceptance of the universe recognizing "reason" as the sufficient guiding principle. He frequently looked to the "will of God" to provide something that was traditionally religious in nature. That Arnold's bipolarity concerning Stoicism and religion (or the will of God) has been commented on extensively lends credibility to the belief that Arnold may have turned to Stoicism when the occasion called for it and, on other occasions, to religion, poetry, or to other spiritual resources.

## C H A P T E R     I I I

### ARNOLD AND DIFFICULTIES WITH STOICISM

Zeno of Citium, about 200 B.C., founded a school of philosophy known as Stoicism. The Stoics believed that all reality is material and that a universal force (God) pervades everything. They sought, through the faculty of reason, "to live with nature" and stressed putting aside passion, unjust thoughts, and self-indulgence in order to perform duty and gain true freedom. While many modern writers have discussed Stoicism, Evelyn Hanley's recapitulation of some of the chief tenets under several headings and subheadings provides a convenient summary. They are as follows:

. . . LOGIC--Knowledge: Sense impressions provided the only basis of knowledge, both of the self and natural laws. . . . METAPHYSICS--Reason: From the Stoic viewpoint the laws of the universe were rational. . . . ETHICS--Virtue: To bring one's life into harmony with nature was to live not only rationally but morally. . . . The will: The individual could not alter external conditions, but he could so control his will as to bring himself into full accord with the Divine Will evident in the course of events. . . . Indifference to externals: When the individual succeeded in bringing his will into harmony with the world, he would become indifferent to external disturbances. . . . Resignation: When the Stoic really

achieved an attitude of indifference toward externals, he would feel genuinely resigned to the world's course. . . . Peace through subjective withdrawal: The reward of self-conquest was the achievement of tranquillity through an independence of the outside world and a reliance on the things of the mind.<sup>1</sup>

Hanley, though, has omitted two elements of Stoicism which ought to be mentioned. One is Duty about which Marcus Aurelius has this to say from his Meditations; he writes: "Let it make no difference to thee whether thou art cold or warm, if thou art doing thy duty; . . . it is sufficient then in this act also to do well what we have in hand" (Meditations Bk. VI, Sec. 2). He also believes that a person has the responsibility to discharge his duty even though he may be dying (Meditations Bk. X, Sec. 22).<sup>2</sup>

The other element not mentioned by Hanley is Apathy, about which Benjamin A. G. Fuller says, among other things, that "apathy" is a passive acceptance on our part of whatever befalls us. Fuller also adds that it is a state maintained only by constant effort and tension.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Hanley, pp. 36-39.

<sup>2</sup>Whitney J. Oates, ed., The Stoic and Epicurean Philosophers: The Complete Extant Writings of Epicurus, Epictetus, Lucretius, Marcus Aurelius (New York: Random House, 1940), pp. 526, 566.

<sup>3</sup>Benjamin A. G. Fuller, A History of Philosophy (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1955), p. 250.

Robert Wenley says that more than anything else Stoicism is "a protest . . . , an outgrowth of emotional stress rather than of intellectual curiosity," and he observes that "Stoicism was destined to rank among the formative ethico-political movements characteristic of the western world." Wenley further observes that Stoicism "embodied a theory of the universe dependent upon brave, rational acceptance of things as they are, in the conviction that, somehow, reason can come to terms with the world-order."<sup>4</sup> Hanley perceives that to the Stoic "the laws of the universe were rational"; therefore, there should be no doubt that the "reason" of Stoicism "can come to terms with the world-order."

Gilbert Murray says that Stoicism begins

. . . with every intention of facing the problem of the world by hard thought and observation, resolutely excluding all appeal to tradition and mere mythology . . . and ends by making the tremendous assumption, that there is a beneficent purpose in the world and that the force which moves nature is akin to ourselves. . . . In the end, said the Stoic-- . . . perfection should be reached, and then there

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<sup>4</sup>George D. Hadzsits and David M. Robinson, eds., Our Debt to Greece and Rome, 53 vols. (New York: Cooper Square Publishers, Inc., 1963), vol. 21: Stoicism and Its Influence, by Robert M. Wenley, pp. vi, 107, 108.

will be no falling back. . . . It will be ecstasy and triumph, the soul reaching its fiery union with God.<sup>5</sup>

The possibility of varying interpretations presents semantic difficulties here. The exclusion of the appeal to tradition and mythology would mean that there would be a parallel appeal to reason and logic. The beneficent purpose would be the doing of good by the Stoic. Also, whether "should" means "would" or "ought" can be important since the one meaning guarantees the achieving of the goal, and the other means only that there is a possibility that it might be achieved. Additionally, if there is to be no falling back from this perfection, there is going to have to be some effort put forth by the Stoic to maintain this position, thereby denying the achieving of perfect calm which is the Stoic's goal. For, according to Brooke, "the power of Stoicism lies in the appeal it makes to the moral endurance of the soul in resolute, un-violent resistance to the tyranny of outward and inward evil."<sup>6</sup> Thus, if the Stoic has to work to retain his

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<sup>5</sup>Gilbert Murray, Stoic, Christian and Humanist (London: Unwin Bros. Ltd., 1940), p. 114.

<sup>6</sup>Brooke, p. 60.

position of apathy, then apathy is not a state of calm but a condition of effort and tension.

Epictetus, commenting on withdrawal says, "This withdrawal of the individual within himself, however it may be modified and supplemented, is an essential element in the Stoic's conception of life." Epictetus also says that the Stoic "does not marry, he has no children, he accepts no office, that nothing may interfere with the work which God has given him to do."<sup>7</sup> While Arnold may have believed that withdrawal from the world was essential to the Stoic, he, nevertheless, took exception to literally withdrawing and to the concept of indifference, because he did marry, he did raise a family, and he did accept the office of inspectorship of schools. Perhaps the conflicting positions represented by what he believed and what he did either reflected or caused an inner tension based on the mutual incompatibility of these positions.

This apparent mutual incompatibility is seemingly at odds with the emphasis Marcus Aurelius places on reason, for he writes:

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<sup>7</sup>George Long, trans., Discourses of Epictetus [and] Meditations of Marcus Aurelius (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1900), pp. v, xi.

. . . What soul then has skill and knowledge? That which knows beginning and end, and knows the reason which pervades all substance and through all time by fixed periods (revolutions) administers the universe. (Meditations, Bk. V, Sec. 32)<sup>8</sup>

Marcus Aurelius also writes that:

. . . The substance of the universe is obedient and compliant; and the reason which governs it has in itself no cause for doing evil. . . . But all things are made and perfected according to this reason. (Meditations, Bk. VI, Sec. 1)<sup>9</sup>

While reason and world-order may not necessarily be synonymous, the implication is that they are very similar; for world-order most certainly implies reason. Gilbert Murray says that there are two Stoic types: one that defies the world and one that works with the world.<sup>10</sup> If, according to Wenley, reason can somehow come to terms with the world-order, then accepting the one would mean accepting the other. It appears, however, that Arnold did not reason systematically. On the one hand, the situation with Marguerite seemed to have been solved very logically by his rejection of her. On the other hand, his acceptance

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<sup>8</sup>Oates, p. 524.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 526.

<sup>10</sup>Murray, p. 106.

of Frances Wightman to be his wife not only provided a basis for emotional outlet but also provided an outlet for his sense of duty; or, in other words, he accepted the world-order of things such as marriage--that is, working with the world-order. Reason, therefore, provided totally different solutions to two problems which were perhaps philosophically similar.

In another instance, while world-order should have dictated that Arnold accept Christianity as it is, instead he reread the Bible with the idea of remaking Christianity to suit his own ideas. Certainly, this seems to be a way of working against one part of the world-order. It is possible that his sense of duty in attempting to change Christianity may have been in conflict with his attitude of resignation and indifference to externals so much that he became involved in spite of himself in an attempt to change that which could not be changed. Hicks believed that Christianity was contrary to all that Arnold believed and that its postulation of a divinity in human form, its literal Bible interpretations, and its materialized conception of the death and resurrection of Christ were, for Arnold, worthy of ridicule. Hicks states that Arnold's

resulting interpretation was received with "frequent and hearty censure."<sup>11</sup>

Even though Epictetus believed in the celibacy of the Stoic, E. Vernon Arnold shows that Zeno believed just the opposite. E. V. Arnold says:

. . . Accordingly the Stoics (. . .) assert that love (. . .) is an essential, both for the maintenance of the State and for the character of the good man. Zeno had laid it down that "the wise man will love." . . . Upon this impulse, which is natural in the widest sense, is based friendship in the young, and more lasting ties between husband and wife. . . . Under such conditions marriage is no longer a matter of free choice; it is a civic duty incumbent on the young Stoic.<sup>12</sup>

So it seems that while Stoicism held, on one hand, that one should be withdrawn from the world and that one should not marry, it held, on the other, that becoming involved with the world and worldly things was accepted or tolerated as an accommodation to the individual. One might conjecture at this point what Miss Wightman's reaction to Arnold's proposal of marriage would have been had he posited it as incumbent upon him as a Stoic duty.

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<sup>11</sup>Hicks, p. 48.

<sup>12</sup>E. Vernon Arnold, Roman Stoicism (New York: The Humanities Press, 1958), pp. 317, 318.

Francis Bacon has several observations about Stoicism that are worth considering. He says that "both Stoicism and Epicureanism--the apathetic acceptance of defeat, and the effort to forget defeat in the arms of pleasure--were theories as to how one might yet be happy though subjugated or enslaved." Bacon further comments on Epicurus' statement that "Nature leads every organism to prefer its own good to every other good" by saying:

. . . even the Stoic finds a subtle pleasure in renunciation. . . . In the end he proposes to seek not pleasure in its usual sense, but ataraxia--tranquility, equanimity, repose of mind; all of which trembles on the verge of Zeno's "apathy."

One last critical observation by Bacon asserts that:

. . . Nothing could be so injurious to health as the Stoic repression of desire; what is the use of prolonging a life which apathy has turned into premature death? And besides, it is an impossible philosophy; for instinct will out.<sup>13</sup>

These observations lead one to believe that apathy and the acceptance of defeat, which is another way of

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<sup>13</sup>Will Durant, "From Aristotle to the Renaissance," in chapter entitled "Francis Bacon," from The Story of Philosophy: The Lives and Opinions of the Greater Philosophers (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1926), pp. 108, 112, 125.

saying being resigned to whatever transpires and surrendering one's will to events, will lead the Stoic to a premature death. On the other hand, instinct seemed to be able to survive and was able to override the Stoic's "impossible philosophy" so that apathy and withdrawal became meaningless. This seemed to be the case with Arnold who, in spite of his Stoic tendencies, chose to override the restrictions of his Stoicism and become involved with the world as a poet, critic, and reformer. That this situation could lead to conflict can be seen from the Stoic's belief that he should withdraw from externals, but at the same time his duty would require that he become involved with a particular situation. That Arnold became involved in the national situation is verified by his Literature and Dogma and St. Paul and Protestantism, both previously mentioned. It would surely seem that the involvement stemming from one's duty would be difficult to reconcile with the noninvolvement of withdrawal.

Benjamin A. G. Fuller traces the origin and development of Stoicism and mentions several of its ethical concepts, among them being apathy and austerity. About apathy, Fuller says:

This "apathy" . . . is fostered for its own sake and is its own reward. It is an end, not a means, to anything beyond it. . . . it is the end--the supreme goal towards which all human activity, if rightly disciplined, is directed. Happy, then, he who possesses it, since happiness also is that which is desired in and for itself, and is the target at which moral conduct is aimed. . . . to be virtuous is to be happy and vice versa. Happiness and virtue are one and the same thing.

. . . . .  
 Again, though "apathy" is a passive acceptance on our part of whatever befalls us, it is a state maintained only by constant effort and tension.<sup>14</sup>

Then, about Stoic austerity, Fuller says:

The teaching that virtue lies in insensibility or "apathy," that it is desired for its own sake, and that it is identical with happiness and the good, led the Stoics . . . to austere conclusions, in theory at least. Cleanthes . . . found himself obliged to include in his denunciation of all pleasures as contrary to nature even the pleasure of being good. All emotions were equally taboo, since they were all irrational, and therefore ran counter to the ruling principle, whose right estimate of good and evil they tended to confuse with false images of pleasure and desire, and anxiety and fear. This theoretical suppression of all feeling, including as it did generous emotions like sympathy and pity, aroused immediate criticism, and invited the charge that Stoicism was hard-hearted.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Fuller, pp. 249, 250.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 250.

If there is a correlation between apathy and austerity it would seem to follow that one cannot have apathy without austerity; for, if happiness is possessing apathy, and happiness and virtue are one and the same thing, and, if this led the Stoics to their austere conclusions that all pleasure and desire had to be denounced, it would also follow that austerity is an inevitable development from apathy; one cannot have one without the other. If this is so, then they are mutually exclusive because austerity does not allow for happiness since this is pleasure. Furthermore, if apathy is a state that must be maintained by constant effort and tension, then apathy itself is a self-contained paradox and impossible of attainment. Constant effort and tension both require the development and application of energy, and thus one must necessarily become involved in some kind of action even to the extent of remaining withdrawn from and indifferent to a situation. Consequently, Stoicism does not seem to provide a solid enough basis for the solution of moral problems, especially in a time of general upheaval such as the Victorian period was. The conflict which could result from this kind of situation almost certainly would be heightened by the Stoic's acceptance of duty resulting

in a commitment to some kind of social action. At the same time such commitment would be at odds with the Stoic concept of apathy. It would appear that one conflict tends to compound the other. Frank Lucas expresses an awareness of a conflict in Arnold when he says that "Arnold is poignantly conscious of the conflict in himself," for he "was indeed at war with himself." Lucas also observes that "this conflict in Arnold" was not "a mere storm in an inkpot, an agony in an armchair; it was fought out also in Arnold's real life."<sup>16</sup>

The concept of apathy, withdrawal, or self-sufficiency has brought some comment from Stopford Brooke who says:

. . . This self-involvement and this isolation from the universal hope of man are the great weakness inherent in stoicism, and when they belong to an artist, they enfeeble his art. . . . Arnold was too human to be the finished stoic.<sup>17</sup>

Fuller, in tracing the development and history of Stoicism, shows that the Stoics were themselves not

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<sup>16</sup>Frank L. Lucas, Eight Victorian Poets (Cambridge, England: The University Press, 1930), pp. 43, 44.

<sup>17</sup>Brooke, p. 63.

really satisfied with their own philosophy since there was an early, a middle, and a late Stoicism which finally disappeared or became extinct with the followers ultimately being largely absorbed by Christianity.<sup>18</sup>

That Stoicism tended to be subject to change and, perhaps, was not sufficient to meet the needs of man is indicated by Bertrand Russell when he says that Stoicism "has a longer history and less constancy in doctrine than Epicureanism" and that Stoicism "is emotionally narrow, and in a certain sense fanatical."<sup>19</sup> William T. Jones likewise contributes to this line of thinking when he says that Stoicism "never quite succeeded in working up a thoroughly consistent moral philosophy, but this deficiency did not matter to the Stoics themselves. . . ." <sup>20</sup> This would seem to indicate that a Stoic could operate only within a limited frame of reference with respect to his immediate situation.

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<sup>18</sup>Fuller, p. 271.

<sup>19</sup>Bertrand Russell, A History of Western Philosophy (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1945), p. 252.

<sup>20</sup>William T. Jones, A History of Western Philosophy (New York: Harcourt Brace and Co., 1952), p. 272.

On the other hand, self-sufficiency seemed to be an essential aim of Stoicism; both Russell and Jones in their comments seem to make this idea central to Stoic doctrine. Russell says:

In the life of an individual man, virtue is the sole good; such things as health, happiness, possessions are of no account. Since virtue resides in the will, everything really good or bad in a man's life depends only upon himself.

Then, later on, Russell says, "Athens is beautiful. Yes, but happiness is far more beautiful--freedom from passion and disturbance, the sense that your affairs depend on no one."<sup>21</sup>

Jones adds to this concept when he says:

Nothing is important which does not lie within our power. Perfect freedom consists in restriction of our desires to things dependent on our own will and, ultimately, in the acceptance of what god wills--making his will ours. Because everything else, even death is inconsequential, our correct attitude is one of indifference.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>Russell, A History of Western Philosophy, pp. 254, 255, 264.

<sup>22</sup>Jones, p. 278.

Jones discusses the Stoic ethics with respect to the highest good and its relation to happiness when he says:

. . .The highest good for any creature, they [the Stoics] thought, consists, in acting in accordance with its nature. Happiness, they said, following a familiar line of thought, is the name for this kind of activity.

. . . . .  
Happiness for the Stoics was a state of apathy--a kind of peace of mind which comes through acceptance of the universe as it is, and a corresponding indifference to the cause of events.<sup>23</sup>

Russell and Jones seem to be in agreement regarding virtue and happiness in the Stoic philosophy, but Russell comments that Stoicism is emotionally narrow. He verifies this when he observes that "as a principle, the Stoics preached universal love,"<sup>24</sup> and associates virtue and love, thus:

. . .The Stoic is not virtuous in order to do good, but does good in order to be virtuous. It has not occurred to him to love his neighbor as himself; love, except in a superficial sense, is absent from his conception of virtue.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid., pp. 268, 270.

<sup>24</sup>Russell, A History of Western Philosophy, p. 256.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid.

Russell adds another comment to this concept when he says, "all things are part of one single system, which is called Nature; the individual life is good when it is in harmony with Nature."<sup>26</sup> If being in harmony with Nature is being good and virtuous, then it is entirely possible that, since Nature is universal and man can be good simply by being in harmony with Nature, then man does not have to be concerned with other men. Evidently, virtue can exist on a universal basis purely as an accomplishment, and a person need not consider the feelings or emotional needs of another.

An observation by Hanley seems pertinent at this point, for she says:

. . .Emphasis is on the ethical in Stoicism as it appears in the poetry of Arnold. In moments of personal crisis, in periods when the world is changing and men's fundamental conceptions of religion and morality are undergoing rapid alteration, it is natural that those whose ideals are most shaken should take refuge in a personally evolved system of ethics, especially a Stoic ethics, which provides not only a reasoned philosophy but also a strength of will and purpose to support it.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 254.

<sup>27</sup>Hanley, p. 197.

While it may be conceded that this is true, Arnold evidently did not completely accept Stoicism as a "reasoned philosophy" and perhaps was not even able to muster the "strength of will and purpose to support it." It must be remembered that it has been shown several times that conflicts--and even inconsistencies--were a part of Arnold's life. Leon Gottfried says that "in his feelings there was as deep a split between 'truth' and 'poetry' as there was between . . . 'reason' and 'imagination.'" He says that Arnold's "'sense for philosophy' is far from satisfying." Gottfried continues by saying:

. . . Although he had learned much from such systematic thinkers as Aristotle and Coleridge, he had never acquired their passion for careful definition and for the rigors of logic; . . . he frequently asserted his radical mistrust of . . . systematic thought.<sup>28</sup>

Arnold's alleged Stoic philosophy does not seem to be as solidly founded as Hanley, Hicks, and others intimate it is. In fact, it might have been largely semantical. Nathaniel Hawthorne, the American nineteenth

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<sup>28</sup>Leon Gottfried, "Between Two Worlds: Matthew Arnold and Romanticism," in British Victorian Literature, ed. Shiv K. Kumar (New York: New York University Press, 1969), p. 445.

century novelist, wrote that "all philosophy that would abstract man from the present is no more than words,"<sup>29</sup> and eventually, it can be found that Arnold modified his apparent Stoic outlook as he became more involved in changes occurring in current social, political, and religious affairs.

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<sup>29</sup>"Transcendentalism," in American Literature (Pleasantville, N.Y.: Educational Audio-visual Inc., 1967) part 4 of the 6-part recording.

## C H A P T E R     I V

### ARNOLD'S BAFFLING PHILOSOPHY AND HIS CRITICS

Inasmuch as Arnold came from a religiously oriented family, his father especially was an intensely religious individual with a severe and lofty estimate of duty,<sup>1</sup> there may have been a strong tendency in Arnold toward exhibiting Christian principles along with his apparent Stoic characteristics. That Stoicism and Christianity are not completely compatible has been shown by A. R. Fausset where he says:

. . . egotism and pride are at the root [of Stoicism] whereas humility is at the foundation of Christianity. Individual autonomy is their [the Stoics'] aim, faith in the unseen God is the Christian's principle. The Stoic bows to fate, the Christian rests on personal providence of the loving Father. The Stoics had no notion of bodily resurrection, it is the Christian's hope. . . . Epictetus (A.D. 115), as a Stoic, gives their purest specimens of heathen morality; and the Emperor Marcus Aurelius tried to realize them in his public conduct.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Encyclopedia Britannica, 1957 ed., s.v. "Arnold, Matthew."

<sup>2</sup>Andrew R. Fausset, Bible Encyclopaedia and Dictionary (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, n.d.), p. 665.

In spite of the apparent religious orientation in his family, Matthew Arnold's own concept of God does not come through with clarity. G. W. E. Russell writes that Arnold's faith "seems to have been, by a curious paradox, far stronger on the Christian than on the Theistic side" and quotes Arnold's definition of God as "'a stream of tendency, not ourselves, which makes for Righteousness,' or good conduct."<sup>3</sup> Russell continues and shows that Arnold's religion tended to be self-styled, for Russell writes:

Mr. Gladstone wrote in 1895--"it is very difficult to keep one's temper in dealing with M. Arnold when he touches on religious matters. His patronage of a Christianity fashioned by himself is to me more offensive and trying than rank unbelief."<sup>4</sup>

That Arnold fashioned Christianity by himself is correlative with his own definition of religion, for he defines religion as "morality touched by emotion."<sup>5</sup> Hicks feels that in defining religion thus, "Arnold made an

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<sup>3</sup>G. W. E. Russell, Matthew Arnold (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1904), pp. 257, 231.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 250.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 231.

apparent move away from Stoicism."<sup>6</sup> In establishing a mutual relationship between morality and religion it is very likely that Stoicism could be excluded from both. This is apparent in examining another moral concept wherein Arnold seems to contradict himself in dealing with self-interest and benevolence. Hicks writes that "if self-interest and benevolence are harmonious activities of a single moral principle" (and he then shows that this is what Arnold believed), these two qualities are mutually exclusive.<sup>7</sup> Acting from self-interest is patently being selfish, being primarily concerned with self. Benevolence, on the other hand, carries with it the concept of unselfishly desiring to do good to others; that is, it is akin to an expression of kindly feelings. Stoic virtue, achieved by doing good, is essentially an end in itself and is done for its own sake--basically it has nothing to do with emotion or feeling. It is not exactly clear how both of these qualities--self-interest and benevolence--could reside compatibly in a single moral principle; admission that they cannot would almost certainly create

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<sup>6</sup>Hicks, p. 52, citing Arnold's Essays in Criticism.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 57.

frustration and conflict within an individual who aspires to achieving social and moral reforms through his critical analysis, especially if at the same time he aspires to being indifferent by exhibiting an apathetic attitude to external events.

The toleration of two mutually incompatible or exclusive ideas seems to have been a tendency with Arnold; he was reluctant to accept the "either-or" and would rather display both. Lionel Trilling shows Arnold's dualism relative to Stoicism and Christianity with respect to the contemptible flesh and the potentially perfect spirit, the negativism and positivism of morality, and the externalization and internalization of God.<sup>8</sup> Trilling also states that Arnold believed that man rebels at natural order.<sup>9</sup> Since natural order, for the Stoic, implies reason and logic, then it may be assumed that man (Arnold) rebels similarly against reason and logic as found in Stoicism. Furthermore, Trilling states that Arnold believed that reason justifies the use of force and is powerless without it.<sup>10</sup> With the Stoic, as a result of his reasoning process,

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<sup>8</sup>Trilling, pp. 341-347.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 88.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 260.

Arnold arrives at a point where he withdraws from the world and into himself into a state of inaction and apathy, both of which carry with them the concept of no force, negative force, or the absence of force. Here we can see that Arnold may want to accept a philosophical equation whose ends are not equal to each other. Robbins has also made a reference to a dualism in Arnold's make-up when he says that Arnold, in trying to have the best of two worlds, "imposes upon his humanist and naturalist creed a kind of imaginative and emotional dualism."<sup>11</sup>

To illustrate Arnold's wanting to hold two conflicting concepts at the same time, an examination of his definition of "imaginative reason" will serve. Dwight Culler says that

. . . imaginative reason is that synthesis of intellect and feeling which is characteristic of the modern spirit. It does not deny the evidence of the senses and understanding, but neither does it deny that of the heart and imagination. . . . As such, it combines the best elements of science and religion and yet transcends these by remaining poetry.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>Robbins, p. 169.

<sup>12</sup>A. Dwight Culler, Imaginative Reason: The Poetry of Matthew Arnold (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1966), pp. 282, 283.

This definition of "imaginative reason" requires some comment. Since a synthesis is a combination of parts to form a whole, if imaginative reason is composed of senses and heart, and understanding and imagination, then the resulting whole is going to be incapable of being divided into definite components, since there is no way of separating the one from the others. So, then, if Arnold ultimately withdraws and resorts to reason, he must necessarily include "heart and imagination" as well. Robbins states that Arnold's imaginative reason best suggests the fusion of qualities which he thinks are imperative for fruitful critical insight and interpretation. Robbins also says "life needs both" and quotes Arnold as saying that "human nature is neither all senses and understanding, nor all heart and imagination." Then, referring to Arnold's concept, he observes that "'imaginative reason' is not really clear."<sup>13</sup> That Arnold includes imagination as well as reason in his definition would indicate that Arnold appeared to be not truly Stoic.

When the definition of "imaginative reason" is examined further, one recognizes that it actually is vague

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<sup>13</sup>Robbins, pp. 45, 161, 165.

because it can mean various things to various individuals. The standard against which it is projected is the individual; and since each individual would tend to mix the component parts of imagination and reason in varying proportions, there could be as many different meanings of the term as there are people. Arnold seems remarkably like one of Lewis Carroll's characters, Humpty-Dumpty, who told Alice that when he used a word it meant whatever he wanted it to mean. Some little satisfaction is gained, though, when one such as William Robbins declares that "imaginative reason" has a meaning that is not really clear.

While Arnold seemed to hold to "imaginative reason," Marcus Aurelius tended to have very little use for the imaginative component, for he writes: "What then art thou doing here, O imagination? Go away, I entreat thee by the gods, as thou didst come, for I want thee not" (Meditations, Bk. VII, Sec. 17).<sup>14</sup> Then, a little later, Marcus Aurelius writes: "Wipe out the imagination" (Meditations, Bk. VII, Sec. 29).<sup>15</sup> If Arnold's reliance on imagination seems inconsistent with the Stoic emphasis on

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<sup>14</sup>Oates, p. 537.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 538. See also, Meditations, Bk. IX, Sec. 7; p. 554.

reason and logic, Marcus Aurelius must accept much of the blame for he, too, was inconsistent in his reasoning at times. For example, in one place he writes, "If thou art able, correct by teaching those who do wrong" (Meditations, Bk. IX, Sec. 11);<sup>16</sup> in other words, get involved; don't be indifferent. Then, later, he says: "It is thy duty to leave another's wrongful act there where it is" (Meditations, Bk. IX, Sec. 20);<sup>17</sup> in other words, don't get involved; be indifferent. In one more instance, Marcus Aurelius seems to contradict the Stoic philosophy of achieving virtue through apathy, because he says: "Not in passivity, but in activity lie the evil and the good of the rational social animal, just as his virtue and his vice lie not in passivity, but in activity" (Meditations, Bk. IX, Sec. 16).<sup>18</sup> It is hardly unreasonable, then, that Gottfried should have mentioned Arnold's mistrust of systematic thought and that his sense of philosophy is far from satisfying.

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 555.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 556.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

Another writer, C. T. Winchester, discusses the vagueness in Arnold's definition of "poetic truth and beauty." Winchester says:

. . . Matthew Arnold's famous definition [of literature as], "The criticism of life under the conditions fixed for such a criticism by the laws of poetic truth and poetic beauty," is nothing more than a description half vague and half tautological; for the phrase, "a criticism of life," is certainly not very clear, and what "the laws of poetic truth and poetic beauty" are, we evidently cannot know till we first know what poetry is."<sup>19</sup>

For whatever reason, Arnold avoids defining these terms more specifically than he has and leaves interpretations pretty much up to the individual.

On examination, Arnold's "definitions" of imaginative reason and poetry do not seem to be definitions so much as merely generalities, ideas, or perceptions of meanings set forth from a personal point of view. Consequently, an individual may apply the terms to suit his own purpose and situation as Arnold apparently intended. Gottfried points to "Arnold's studied vagueness" and states, for example, that when Arnold "speaks of 'truth,' . . . he is likely to mean one of three things: certitude as

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<sup>19</sup>C. T. Winchester, Some Principles of Literary Criticism (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1916), p. 230.

'scientific truth'; the utility or adequacy to meet man's needs; or, aesthetic or 'poetic' truth."<sup>20</sup>

Fuller provides a comment on Stoicism that provides room for discussion when he says:

. . . Again, logically speaking, there could be no such thing as a number of different virtues. . . . You were either ruled by reason and therefore virtuous in all respects, or you were not ruled by reason and therefore vicious through and through.<sup>21</sup>

Consequently, if one were required to place Marcus Aurelius into either a virtuous or vicious category as a Stoic, it would be extremely difficult to define persecuting Christians in such a way that he would not be "vicious through and through," especially when Arnold admits, "I cannot doubt that the Lyons persecutions took place, and that the punishment of Christians for being Christians was sanctioned by Marcus Aurelius."<sup>22</sup> It is extremely difficult, therefore, to rationalize the virtue in persecution and to acknowledge that according to Stoic logic and reason Marcus

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<sup>20</sup>Gottfried, pp. 445, 446.

<sup>21</sup>Fuller, p. 250.

<sup>22</sup>Matthew Arnold, The Complete Prose Works of Matthew Arnold, ed. Robert H. Super, vol. 3: Lectures and Essays in Criticism (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1962), p. 143.

Aurelius had attained the happiness through that virtue which is the "target at which moral conduct is aimed."<sup>23</sup>

Perhaps to judge Arnold too harshly for his persuasive (evasive?) use of words may not be exactly fair, since Jones points out that individualism tended to be a highly important part of the Stoic philosophy. He says, "Whereas Aristotle had made a careful and systematic analysis of reason as a mode of cognition, the Stoics tended to use this word loosely to describe any state of affairs which they approved."<sup>24</sup> Here the concept of self-sufficiency is made the focal point of whatever the Stoic wants to do. As the statistician probably can prove anything with figures, so Arnold, the Stoic rhetorician or semanticist, can prove almost anything with words or emotions--or the lack of them.

Robbins comments on this dualistic concept when he speaks of Bradley's criticism of Arnold's feeling of the Ideal and the Absolute:

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid., pp. 145, 146, 156. Arnold says that Marcus Aurelius is not a persecutor; then, shortly thereafter he says that he is.

<sup>24</sup>Jones, p. 272.

The criticism is just. Arnold is trying to have the best of two worlds. . . . Arnold imposes upon his humanist and naturalistic creed a kind of imaginative and emotional dualism for which there is no intellectual basis in his religion or historical and psychological experience.<sup>25</sup>

Where Arnold says that in poetry "the idea is everything," he is merely restating his own term of "imaginative reason." After having said that "the idea is everything," he proceeds to say that "the idea is the fact."<sup>26</sup> What he has done is to equate ideas and imagination with facts and reasons. Both these terms seem to have built-in contradictions, since he implies that abstraction and reality are the same. Perhaps if the terms are recognized as having broad meanings which must have a narrow application, i.e., to poetry, they may be better understood than if they are examined in isolation. Anyone may have "imaginative reason"--but it must be applied within a particular frame of reference. Referring to Gottfried's comment that, as far as Arnold's feelings are concerned, "there was as deep a split between 'truth' and 'poetry' as there was

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<sup>25</sup>Robbins, p. 169.

<sup>26</sup>Matthew Arnold, "The Study of Poetry," in Poetry and Criticism of Matthew Arnold, A. Dwight Culler, ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., Riverside Edition, 1961), p. 306.

between . . . 'reason' and 'imagination,'" there may be an indication that Arnold may not have been sure of the meaning of "imaginative reason" or of his association with it.<sup>27</sup>

When Arnold says that poetry deals with ideas, he is dealing with an artistic truth--one of the meanings of "truth" that Gottfried says that Arnold uses; for in literature, poetry especially creates its own truth. Poetry may be based on an historical event, but such poetry does not have to be historically correct in every detail ("Paul Revere's Ride," by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, for example). The effect achieved by poetry hinges to a great extent not only upon the traditional uses and meanings of the poet's words, but also upon what meanings the poet himself has given them. Such liberties with words taken by the poet through poetic license may lead the reader into a world of illusion between fact and imagination, nonfiction and fiction, and into Arnold's own world of "imaginative reason."

G. Robert Stange writes that he finds the chief ideas in Arnold's poetry to be "the ideas of poetry, the ideas of nature, the ideas of self, and the idea of

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<sup>27</sup>Gottfried, p. 445.

love."<sup>28</sup> While this reference to self does not establish that Arnold was a complete humanist, it does tend to indicate that he may have had some tendencies to emphasize man and his faculties, affairs, temporal aspirations, and well-being. According to Fuller, humanism in current philosophy "indicates especially naturalistic or nontheistic philosophy with positive emphasis on human values."<sup>29</sup> Another writer, David Daiches, has also identified humanistic tendencies in Arnold when he says that "Arnold was a humanist who devoted a large part of life in demonstrating the central part that an adequate literary culture could and should play in society."<sup>30</sup>

Randall Keenan seems to think that Arnold's life may have had more than its share of sorrows and that these sorrows tended to become a trademark in Arnold's poetry. Keenan writes that Arnold

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<sup>28</sup>G. Robert Stange, Matthew Arnold: The Poet as Humanist (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1967), p. 8.

<sup>29</sup>Fuller, p. xxxix.

<sup>30</sup>David Daiches, A Critical History of English Literature (New York: Ronald Press Co., 1960), vol. 2, p. 972.

. . . endured with great strength the loss of three sons, one an infant, the others approaching manhood. An image of splendid stoic grief and the picture of Arnold erect and bearing life as he found it come to mind whenever we hear that strange and muted melancholy that sounds from deep within his poetry from its beginning to the very end.<sup>31</sup>

Thus, in addition to Stoicism, Arnold has demonstrated evidences of hedonism and humanism tending to show that Stoicism did not have an exclusive claim to his personality or philosophy. In fact, when the term "stoic grief" is considered, it runs counter to Hicks' explanation of Stoicism and calls Hicks' evaluation of Arnold's Stoicism into doubt. Hicks says that Stoicism "at its best . . . was a happy philosophy, a happy religion. Instead of trying to thwart man's emotions, it directed them to high ends and fortified them with assurances of the reason."<sup>32</sup> On the one hand grief seems to be a part of Stoicism; but on the other, happiness seems equally to be a part of it. Arnold seemed to be the kind of person who could straddle both sides of this Stoic fence depending upon the situation. Henry C. Duffin identifies a sense of

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<sup>31</sup>Keenan, p. 12.

<sup>32</sup>Hicks, p. 11.

humor in Arnold which may or may not be a Stoic characteristic--depending upon which branch of the Stoic characteristics one chooses to follow. Duffin says:

. . . His rich sense of humor (never seen in his poetry) once lost sight of decency (as humor may), when he speculated lightly on the possibility of his brother Tom having been drowned in a storm on the way to New Zealand-- . . . <sup>33</sup>

G. W. E. Russell perhaps pursues this seemingly lighter side of Arnold's philosophy a bit further when he says that Arnold had "joy in fresh air and bodily exercise; love of children; merry interest in his friends' concerns; admiration of beauty; a worship of nature."<sup>34</sup>

These writers have pointed out that a Stoic's emotions may run the gamut from grief to joy and happiness and may even be mixed with a "rich sense of humor." There are some, though, who feel that emotions as such are alien to a Stoic's feelings. For example, Robert C. Pooley and others, in referring to Brutus' Stoic philosophy in Shakespeare's Julius Caesar, state that "his [Zeno's] teachings advocated freedom from great emotion and a lack of

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<sup>33</sup>Henry C. Duffin, Arnold The Poet (New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc., 1963), p. 15.

<sup>34</sup>Russell, Matthew Arnold, p. 263.

involvement with the temporal world."<sup>35</sup> Referring again to Brutus' Stoic philosophy, Pooley says, "Believers in this philosophy thought that people should rise above emotional upsets and be unmoved by any of life's happenings."<sup>36</sup>

One writer, Stuart Sherman, seems to believe that Stoicism provided little if any consolation for Arnold in his grief over the loss of his three sons, for Sherman says in commenting on Arnold's activities on the morning after the death of the eldest son:

. . . A surer solace than Stoic philosophy he had in the fulness of a mind too closely occupied from day to day with unavoidable labors and self-appointed tasks to give to the departed more than a soldier's farewell . . . .<sup>37</sup>

In this time of crisis when some kind of spiritual or emotional anchor was needed, Stoicism, according to Sherman, did not provide Arnold with the answer; rather the answer

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<sup>35</sup>Robert C. Pooley et al., ed., Teacher's Resource Book to accompany Exploring Life through Literature (Dallas: Scott, Foresman and Co., 1968), p. 56.

<sup>36</sup>Robert C. Pooley et al., ed., Exploring Life through Literature (Dallas: Scott, Foresman and Co., 1968), p. 359, n. 17.

<sup>37</sup>Sherman, p. 38.

was found in Arnold's being actively concerned with working at the jobs at hand to provide some kind of outlet for grief. It was a catharsis provided through activity rather than through apathy or passivity. Indeed, it appears at least possible that, since "that strange and muted melancholy . . . deep within his poetry" and "the 'note of sadness' that seems even to have been a part of his life"<sup>38</sup> seem to have continued through both his life and poetry, Arnold's undemonstrative resignation to his losses was not necessarily a result of the deep discipline of Stoicism as some critics have claimed.

Evidences of Arnold's reflecting characteristics of several schools of thought, the apparent variances within Stoicism, and Arnold's not adhering to common Stoic concepts in times of emotional stress--all lead to considering the possibility that Arnold himself did not have a clear concept of his own beliefs. Hanley seems to think Arnold had unresolved conflicts, when she says that, though "Dover Beach" was written by Arnold in 1850, "the fact that he published the poem as late as 1867, when his prose work

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<sup>38</sup>Keenan, p. 12.

had begun, is significant . . . in that it indicates his continuing disturbance of mind."<sup>39</sup> It is, perhaps, suggestive that Hanley used the word "continuing" to describe the "disturbance" in Arnold's mind since its use suggests that this was a problem of some substance rather than a passing situation or temporary condition.

That Arnold was indecisive about his philosophy may be indicated by writers whose interpretations of Arnold's works fall into two extremes. C. T. Winchester terms Arnold as a classicist because he feels that Arnold leaned to clearness of image, sharply defined ideas, and precision of epithet.<sup>40</sup> This is at variance not only with Hanley's thinking but also with that of David DeLaura, who says that Arnold's literary achievement "remains extremely difficult to describe with objectivity" and that the value and meaning of his terms or doctrines remain controversial. DeLaura also states that Louis Bonnerot recognized difficulties in interpreting Arnold, because Bonnerot, in his psychological biography of Arnold, states that he "finds the key to Arnold's psychology in a pathological state of

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<sup>39</sup>Hanley, p. 153.

<sup>40</sup>Winchester, pp. 223, 224.

doubt, manifested in inquietude, obsession, and above all oscillation."<sup>41</sup>

Two observations by William Robbins tend to indicate that Arnold was not completely satisfied with what Stoicism offered. In the first observation Robbins says that "Arnold found no sanction for conduct in joy or hope from Stoics."<sup>42</sup> This restriction seemed to put a damper on Arnold's humor and joi de vivre, as well as his search for "an abiding force upon which to anchor his beliefs." Secondly, Robbins says, "Arnold's own comments on his stoical teachers make clear their (comparative) inadequacy as it appears to his maturer experience."<sup>43</sup> The inference here seems to be that as Arnold matured and added to his experience he found Stoicism to be unnecessary or inadequate in providing relief from his problems.

Lafcadio Hearn, a writer who believes that Arnold's short poems are his best works, bluntly considers Arnold to be a pessimist. In a chapter entitled "Pessimists and Their Kindred," Hearn states that these short

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<sup>41</sup>DeLaura, A Guide to Research, pp. 293, 261.

<sup>42</sup>Robbins, p. 120.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 130.

poems represent doubt and sorrow and that "perhaps this is why his poetry, or at least some of it, will long continue to appeal to the old rather than to the young--to the men who are disillusioned, who have known the same doubts, the same sorrows and the same unfilled aspirations."<sup>44</sup> This statement, if properly viewed in the context of the historical period, reflects the outlook of that generation, and this idea finds support from D. C. Somervell, the historian, who observes that Arnold in his poetry "expresses the bewilderment and the despondency which smote upon him as, in early manhood, he came to realize the immense spiritual confusion of modern society, the false scale of values dominating the modern mind."<sup>45</sup>

From these varied interpretations of Arnold's philosophy and outlook on life, it is reasonably clear that Arnold was not exactly sure what he thought. Hanley refers to "his uncertainty in regard to what ought to constitute the basic values in life, his bewildered search for a central aim in an age of serious intellectual

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<sup>44</sup>Lafcadio Hearn, Interpretations of Literature (New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1920), vol. 1, p. 345.

<sup>45</sup>D. C. Somervell, English Thought in the Nineteenth Century (New York: David McKay Co., Inc., 1929), p. 156.

problems."<sup>46</sup> This uncertainty seems to be borne out by words in Arnold's introduction to Ward's English Poets:

. . . "Our religion has materialised itself in the fact, in the supposed fact; it has attached its emotions to the fact, and now the fact is failing it. But for poetry the idea is everything; the rest is a world of illusion, of divine illusion. Poetry attaches its emotions to the idea; the idea is the fact. The strongest part of our religion today is its unconscious poetry."<sup>47</sup>

Perhaps it is Arnold's semantics at work here, but just what he meant by "fact" may be open to discussion. If "fact" equals "truth," then it is not clear how a "fact," i.e., "truth," can fail. Either something is truth or it is not; if it is, then it is a standard against which something else is judged. If "something" fails, it is not the truth but that which is being judged against it. If there is an apparent inconsistency between fact and emotion one must decide between fact on one hand and Arnold's emphasis on emotion on the other as being an integral part of poetry. Supposedly, however, Stoicism is free from great emotions and emotional upsets. One of two conclusions may

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<sup>46</sup>Hanley, p. 146.

<sup>47</sup>Cited by David Daiches, A Critical History of English Literature, vol. 2, p. 972.

be possible: either that poetry is exempt from Stoicism, or that Arnold is not truly a Stoic in the traditional sense. Arnold also wrote, "the best poetry . . . will be found to have a power of forming, sustaining, and enlightening us, as nothing else can."<sup>48</sup> This seems to violate the Stoic concept of apathy and of reliance on reason rather than emotions. For, if the best poetry has the power of sustaining us as nothing else can, then Stoicism is automatically excluded from providing such a power.

David Daiches continues discussing Arnold's idea of "culture" which could not be achieved by rampant individualism. Daiches, quoting Arnold (Culture and Anarchy) writes, "Perfection, as culture conceives it, is not possible while the individual remains isolated."<sup>49</sup> But if Stoicism emphasizes individualism by advocating that one withdraw from the world and seek answers to problems in oneself, then perfection is impossible of attainment. Therefore, the Stoic cannot achieve perfection because he isolates himself from the world. If he relates to the world through a sense of "duty," the relationship is an

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<sup>48</sup>Ibid., p. 973.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., p. 974.

unemotional one rather than the emotional type of association that Arnold displays in some of his poetry. Daiches also records Arnold's idea of a proper poetic subject when he says that suffering which "finds no vent in action" is not a proper poetic subject.<sup>50</sup> Assumedly, a poetic subject to be a proper one must be one that is capable of being released or expressed by means of an emotional outburst or action which would break down the Stoic's wall of indifference to externals. Hicks tends to state this idea more positively when he quotes Arnold as saying that "the aim of poetry--and all of art--when it is most noble, is to embody 'sweetness and light' and to embody 'the idea of beauty and of human nature perfect on all sides' which culture seeks to achieve."<sup>51</sup> Arnold, though, equates "sweetness and light" with perfection as the goal of virtue (Culture and Anarchy), but this cannot be achieved while the individual is isolated or withdrawn from the world.

Although it is not spelled out exactly, it seems that Stoic philosophy advocates eschewing art and that which is esthetic. Bertrand Russell supports this

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<sup>50</sup>Ibid., p. 978.

<sup>51</sup>Hicks, p. 55, citing Arnold's Culture and Anarchy.

contention by saying that "in general, in common with other Stoics, he [Marcus Aurelius] despises pleasure."<sup>52</sup> Hicks says "the Stoic had developed no body of esthetic principles," and "Arnold's treatment of art is an interesting extension of Stoic doctrine into a new field. Thus has Arnold created for Stoicism the esthetic which it neglected."<sup>53</sup> Lafcadio Hearn believes that Arnold "loved truth and beauty for their own sake,"<sup>54</sup> not because of Stoic principles. Robbins has already shown that "Arnold found no sanction for conduct in joy . . . from Stoics."<sup>55</sup> Since the sources of pleasure and joy are not identified, it may be inferred that if art and esthetics produce such pleasure and joy, then the Stoic had no room in his philosophy for them.

The Stoic, by his philosophy of withdrawing from the externals and eventually turning to a solitary contemplation, e.g., inactivity, seems to be at variance with the emphasis the Stoics place on duty. As a result, this

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<sup>52</sup>Bertrand Russell, A History of Western Philosophy (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1945), p. 264.

<sup>53</sup>Hicks, pp. 54, 55, 57.

<sup>54</sup>Hearn, p. 342.

<sup>55</sup>Robbins, p. 120.

apparent duality in philosophy might have caused Arnold to be more emotionally upset than he showed. He seemed to be possessed of a restlessness in his trying to find some one "thing" that he could hold on to as solid intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually; he seemed always to be searching for the "touchstone" (Arnold's own word for a passage in poetry that could serve as a standard for evaluating other poetic passages) that would be the key to opening the way to the solving of his problems, for Hanley says "his continual search for a stabilizing philosophy of life . . . is made more difficult by the need of finding a solution for certain disturbing personal problems."<sup>56</sup> In fact, Hanley says, later on in his life "he is to develop an attitude whose optimism . . . contrasts sharply with the melancholy displayed in these poems"<sup>57</sup>--i.e., in "Growing Old" and "Youth's Agitations." Hanley continues by saying that Arnold "is beginning to recognize specifically what the problems (of his generation) are and to think of formulating--as a person of Stoic character would be likely

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<sup>56</sup>Hanley, p. 121.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., p. 127.

to--a spiritual remedy."<sup>58</sup> Here, the term "spiritual" must be defined, because if by "spiritual" is meant an application of Christian principles, then Stoicism would have to be forsaken, since the Stoics, who could not accept contemporary orthodox theology literally, had no use for temples, rituals, atoning sacrifices, and prayers. Prayer was only a type of meditation, or at best an expression of the desire to attain virtue. To the Stoic, true worship consisted of leading a life of reason conforming to the rational constitution of the world.<sup>59</sup> Arnold's interpretation of Christian principles was such that Arnold believed that Christ's secret "lay in His rediscovery of the way of peace through His advocacy of an ideal of inwardness, patience, and self-renouncement."<sup>60</sup> Hicks believes that "'Stoicism' passes generally as the name for a philosophy characterized by melancholy resignation; true Stoicism is little known."<sup>61</sup> True Stoicism, as Hicks understands it,

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<sup>58</sup>Ibid., p. 133.

<sup>59</sup>Fuller, p. 254.

<sup>60</sup>Hanley, p. 154.

<sup>61</sup>Hicks, p. 62. Hicks also finds Arnold becoming the complete Stoic, as Arnold's later work is joyful.

is joyful.<sup>62</sup> If this is true and if Arnold's poetry did reflect this melancholy tone, he actually exhibited melancholia rather than Stoicism. Stopford Brooke seems to believe similarly when he says that "the Stoic demand of indifference to pain and trouble, of the independence of the soul of all the fates of man—Arnold could not fulfill. His Stoicism broke down into sadness for himself and for the world."<sup>63</sup>

There is further comment about Arnold's apparent confusion which seem to be reflected in his philosophy, and this is found in Stuart P. Sherman's Matthew Arnold: How to Know Him (1917). According to DeLaura, this is the first study to find a clear pattern in Arnold's poetry. Sherman describes the pattern as a "gradual spiritual pilgrimage through disillusion to ennui and despair, thence to resignation and stoical endurance, and ultimately to a new kind of courage and hope, denoting a pretty complete moral recovery."<sup>64</sup> From this it could be concluded

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<sup>62</sup>Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>63</sup>Brooke, p. 64.

<sup>64</sup>DeLaura, A Guide to Research, p. 258.

that Stoicism is something that one recovers from much in the same manner as one recovers from an illness.

The uncertainty or divisiveness that appeared to be a part of Arnold's make-up is mentioned by Lafcadio Hearn, who observed that "even Matthew Arnold, in spite of classical training, yielded to romantic tendencies." Arnold's mind, Hearn further observes, "had been perturbed at an early day by the Oxford movement; he had drifted toward agnosticism without ever daring to take the full plunge, and he was never able during his life to take a really definite position on ultimate subjects."<sup>65</sup> Culler has stated that "Arnold has had two ways of meeting the world's evil--one by mockery, by assuming the mask of indifference, and the other by defiance, by raging against the gods." In "A Summer Night" there are "two alternatives, either to be a Madman, defying one's destiny, or to be a Slave, knuckling under and submitting." Then, in "The Divided Soul," he "cannot decide what he should be and alternates helplessly between them," i.e., between Madman and Slave.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>65</sup>Hearn, vol. 1, pp. 23, 341.

<sup>66</sup>A. Dwight Culler, "Arnold <sup>ON</sup> and Etna," in Victorian Essays: A Symposium, eds., Warren D. Anderson and Thos. D. Clareson (Wooster, Ohio: The Kent State University Press, 1967), p. 46.

At times Arnold seemed to try to change things to suit himself; for example, he reread the Bible and wanted to change Christianity according to his concepts. At times he seemed to refuse to accept something or else he ignored it if it did not fit his ideas. Hicks shows this by arguing that, while Stoicism accepts man's persistent ideas of "a being perfect and eternal, and since such ideas cannot be derived from oneself, God must exist." Arnold chose to believe, instead, that we get these ideas from experience,<sup>67</sup> thereby discounting God's existence. Continuing, Hicks shows that Arnold similarly chose to disregard another acceptable Stoic principle. Stoicism traditionally accepts proof of God from the design of the world; but Arnold held that while human design implies a human designer, the design of the world does not imply the existence of an all-powerful designer.<sup>68</sup> Additionally, Hicks says that Arnold "set out to re-read the Bible, to find anew the message which it contained, and to reconstruct Christianity accordingly."<sup>69</sup> Perhaps in another age

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<sup>67</sup>Hicks, p. 34.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid., p. 48.

Arnold's idea of reconstructing Christianity according to his own concepts might have been considered amazingly audacious and impertinent. Possibly the milieu of the Victorian age tends to soften any criticism of Arnold's boldness. The fact that Arnold refused to remain indifferent to conditions and became involved to the extent of trying to change them and that he did not remain resigned to accepting the status-quo of the times show that perhaps Arnold did not accept fully all of the principles of Stoicism. Such nonacceptance may also provide an insight to his thinking and personality to the extent that he did what he wanted to do and accepted what he wanted to accept as it applied to his situation.

Jerome H. Buckley provides another example of Arnold's rejection of a Stoic principle by stating that "Arnold indeed insisted that poetry must treat of great actions, those which most powerfully appeal to the great primary human affections: to those elementary feelings which subsist permanently in the race."<sup>70</sup> If Arnold is considered to be a Stoic, there is an apparent conflict

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<sup>70</sup>Jerome H. Buckley, "Symbols of Eternity: The Victorian Escape from Time," in Victorian Essays: A Symposium, eds. Warren D. Anderson and Thos. D. Clareson (Wooster, Ohio: The Kent State University Press, 1967), p. 2.

here, because Stoicism holds to indifference to pleasure, contains no sanction for conduct in joy, has developed no body of esthetic principles, and advocates indifference to externals by the bringing of one's will into harmony with the world.

William Madden dwells at some length on the conflicts that seemed to beset Arnold as a poet, indicating that the effects were enough to cause Arnold to turn from writing poetry to writing criticism. Although Madden mentions some of the causes for Arnold's conflicts, he does not explain all of them. Madden refers to the "alien influence of his immediate environment," especially that created by his father, "whose influence was both powerful and ambiguous." Madden states that Arnold's concept of his poetic office was "at odds with the kind of poetry he could best write."<sup>71</sup> Here, Madden appears to refer to what Arnold says in his Preface to the first edition of Poems (1853), that "a poetical work is not justified when it has been shown to be an accurate, and therefore interesting representation; it has to be shown also that it is a

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<sup>71</sup>Madden, pp. 6, 7.

representation from which men can derive enjoyment."<sup>72</sup> Madden, referring to what Arnold wrote in one of his letters to Clough, says that the idea of harmonizing and ennobling human experience through poetry had an enormous appeal to Arnold. This affected not only Arnold's idea of poetry in general, but also his judgment of his own poems, his response to his environment, and inevitably, therefore, his eventual decision to turn to criticism.<sup>73</sup> Arnold felt as Schiller did that "all Art is dedicated to Joy," concluding that there is no more serious problem than to make men happy and that art is that alone which creates the highest enjoyment.<sup>74</sup> It seems apparent that although Arnold believed that he could present a great action in and through poetry, he did not believe that he had done so in such a way as to bring joy to men. In the critical analysis of his own poetry Arnold may have been too severe; but the fact remains that in his preface to Poems (1853),

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<sup>72</sup>Matthew Arnold, "Preface to First Edition of Poems (1853)," in Poetry and Criticism of Matthew Arnold, ed. A. Dwight Culler (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., Riverside edition, 1961), p. 204.

<sup>73</sup>Madden, pp. 13, 14.

<sup>74</sup>Arnold, "Preface to Poems (1853)," p. 204.

Arnold justifies the excluding of his poem Empedocles on Etna from further publication on grounds which Madden has pointed out as the basis for Arnold's reasoning.

In sum, then, it may be said that there is much that is not definitive about Matthew Arnold and his philosophy as expressed in his poetry. One finds that there are as many different ideas about the meanings of Arnold's poetry as there are critics. Hearn, in his Interpretations of Literature, writes about Arnold in a chapter entitled "Pessimists"; E. K. Chambers, in his Matthew Arnold: A Study, seemingly does not give any solid evidence in his chapter entitled "The Philosopher" that Arnold espoused Stoicism in the manner of Stoics such as Marcus Aurelius, Epictetus, and others.<sup>75</sup> Anderson and Buckler state that Arnold often apologized because he was not a philosopher, asserting that he should not be expected to provide philosophical completeness; rather, he adhered to his own simple unsystematic way which best suited his taste and powers.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>75</sup>E. K. Chambers, Matthew Arnold: A Study (New York: Russell & Russell, 1964), pp. 80-104.

<sup>76</sup>George K. Anderson and William E. Buckler, eds., The Literature of England (Dallas: Scott Foresman and Co., 1966), vol. 2, p. 833.

Trilling, also commenting on Arnold's philosophical uncertainty, says, "Arnold never set great store by philosophic consistency in his poetry; conflicting views of Nature appear in each of the two early volumes and seem to have been held simultaneously."<sup>77</sup> Arnold's own "imaginative reason" may also indicate that there was an indecisiveness in his philosophical makeup, since Basil Willey points out that Arnold said "without poetry, our science will appear incomplete."<sup>78</sup> Similarly, Trilling points out that Spinoza (whom Arnold read extensively) also did not share Arnold's concept of the "imaginative reason." "Spinoza's conception is simple but daring," writes Trilling. "He set religion apart from philosophy and science and forbade either to interfere with the other. For one is the product of the imagination, the other of the intellect, and the two are not interdependent."<sup>79</sup> Later, Trilling refers to Spinoza's statement about the "sharp dichotomy between two spheres of human knowledge, the speculative and the moral,"

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<sup>77</sup>Trilling, p. 94.

<sup>78</sup>Basil Willey, "Coleridge to Matthew Arnold," Nineteenth Century Studies (New York: Columbia University Press, 1949), p. 278.

<sup>79</sup>Trilling, p. 214.

and states that the distinction between them that Spinoza makes "is that the speculative may be tested by its mathematical certainty, but moral knowledge can be subjected to no such test; between philosophy, or science, and faith, or theology, there can be no valid relationship . . . because the former is the product of the intellect, the latter of the imagination."<sup>80</sup> Douglas Bush writes that "throughout his life, as poet and as literary, social, and religious critic, Arnold was a nonconformist, at odds with the orthodoxies of his age."<sup>81</sup> On the other hand there is Hicks, who points out that Arnold believes that someday, conceivably, "we shall have achieved the perfect end of culture, which is salvation or the Kingdom of God; a society of individuals all moving together in joyful conformity with the divine universal order." This will occur when the state, religion, and art are perfected, furthering the life of the higher self, and will be based on a science possessing depth and human insight.<sup>82</sup> There is no date put on this

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<sup>80</sup>Ibid., p. 324.

<sup>81</sup>Douglas Bush, Matthew Arnold: A Survey of His Poetry and Prose (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1971), p. xv.

<sup>82</sup>Hicks, pp. 61, 62.

merger, but apparently it is to be at some point in the distant future. These, then, are opposing concepts wherein Arnold appears to conform to what the Bible calls righteousness and what people call goodness, though Douglas Bush believes Arnold is a nonconformist. Perhaps Douglas Bush provides the best explanation of this apparent divergence of ideas when he says that the problems that afflicted Arnold "are familiar enough: . . . pressure of loneliness and uncertainty of direction."<sup>83</sup>

It seems, therefore, that while no positive conclusions may be drawn about Arnold's philosophy, it is believed that sufficient material has been presented to show that Arnold's philosophy was far from being as deeply rooted in Stoicism as many seem to believe and that his philosophy was subject to change with the years, as it evidently did change.

An observation by Trilling may provide some insight into this change in Arnold. Trilling says that in Arnold's view "intellect was not enough," that "it could not be the guide to a multitude of matters for the

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<sup>83</sup>Bush, p. xvi.

multitude of mankind--that religion still had its important place."<sup>84</sup>

Stopford Brooke seems to confirm this change in Arnold's philosophy when he says, referring to Arnold's poems after 1867: "Afterwards, in poems which we may call poems of transition, his self-isolation was modified."<sup>85</sup> Brooke makes an additional comment on Arnold's apparent modified outlook which seems to have manifested itself about 1867 when he says:

. . . In 1867, when after an interval of fifteen years, he republished Empedocles on Etna, he had grown into a wiser but sorrowful calm. It was not the calm of the stoic, but of one who, realizing with passion the sorrow of humanity yet looked forward with hope, even at times with chastened joy, to its redemption. Life at least was worth the living; the battle was to be without despair.<sup>86</sup>

An appropriate recapitulation of Arnold's tendency to be skeptical of systematic philosophy may be expressed by Gottfried's statements that Arnold had never acquired a passion for careful definition and rigors of logic; he frequently asserted a radical mistrust of abstract

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<sup>84</sup>Trilling, p. 193.

<sup>85</sup>Brooke, p. 103.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid., p. 83.

speculation and of systematic thought; and he acknowledged that his own sense for philosophy was far from satisfying.<sup>87</sup>

Hicks' comment may be added to the foregoing where Hicks states that,

. . . Not having cultivated an analytical and systematic mind, and not being much concerned with correlating all his thought, Arnold doubtless reached many of his firmly held beliefs by no system at all, but by intuition, prejudice, or unconscious adoption.<sup>88</sup>

It must also be remembered that Arnold, by his own admission, said that he was not a philosopher, that he was not expected to provide philosophical completeness, and that he employed "the simple unsystematic way" which best suited his taste and powers.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>87</sup>Gottfried, p. 445

<sup>88</sup>Hicks, p. 11.

<sup>89</sup>Anderson and Buckler, p. 833.

## C H A P T E R     V

### ARNOLD'S POETRY AND THE PHILOSOPHICAL ESSAYS

#### Knowledge and Virtue

While the exact reason or reasons for Matthew Arnold's having written a sonnet entitled "Shakespeare" may not be entirely clear, admiration and envy, and the mystery of Shakespeare himself are possible motives that need to be examined. The "mystery" of Shakespeare has been referred to by several writers, among them Douglas Bush and Lionel Trilling. Trilling, apparently referring to Shakespeare's ability to understand people, writes that Arnold, "baffled by that life in Shakespeare, never truly learned the nature of tragedy,"<sup>1</sup> and perhaps this is why Shakespeare appeared to be a mystery to Arnold.

Arnold also seems to be paying tribute to Shakespeare's accomplishments as a self-made man when he writes, "Self-school'd, self-scann'd, self-honour'd, self-secure" (l. 10).<sup>2</sup> While this characterization may have been an

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<sup>1</sup>Trilling, p. 398.

<sup>2</sup>All direct quotations of Arnold's poetry are from Arnold: Poetical Works, ed. Chauncey B. Tinker and Howard F. Lowry (London: Oxford University Press, published in 1950 and reprinted in 1969).

attempt to make out Shakespeare to have been a Stoic, there is nothing in Shakespeare's biography to indicate his philosophy. While he may not have been overly religious, upon his death he was buried in the chancel of the parish church.

It may be assumed that Shakespeare acquired a large amount of experience from both his writing and his acting, but it is at the same time true that he attended school until he was fourteen years old. Circumstances then required that he leave school and become apprenticed to a trade. Any "self-schooling" would necessarily have taken place after this time. Arnold's own education, however, in a formal sense, far overshadowed that which Shakespeare had. Why Arnold would pay tribute to Shakespeare's self-schooling is not clear, but, perhaps, Arnold felt that Shakespeare had achieved more proportionately than Arnold himself had. The Discourses of Epictetus state that a man "who is discontented with what he has and with what is given him by fortune is an ignoramus in life."<sup>3</sup> Similarly, Marcus Aurelius, in commenting on Equanimity, says that it "is the voluntary acceptance of the things which are assigned to thee by the common nature" (Meditations,

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<sup>3</sup>Oates, p. 458, "Fragments" (from Arrian).

Bk. X, Sec. 8).<sup>4</sup> According to the Stoics, knowledge was empirical, and, so, Arnold's envy of Shakespeare's knowledge (if that's what it was) was at odds with the Stoics' philosophy.

Shakespeare may have entertained some thought about his own ability as a playwright and actor, and rightly so, because the group with which he was associated was successful. It must also be acknowledged that he was in favor not only with his peers and brother actors and writers, but also with royalty and the nobility, since his acting company was highly favored by both of these classes. Additionally, he was popular with the common people, because his plays were written so that they, too, could understand and enjoy them. Thus, the honors that came to Shakespeare were well-deserved and well-earned and were the results of his having been acclaimed by others than himself.

Arnold's reference to Shakespeare's being "self-secure" is, in all probability, a well-deserved tribute. Shakespeare was secure in the knowledge that he was a success and that his plays were popular with all the people--high and low, rich and poor. This judgment is evidently deserved, because Ben Jonson in his essay on Shakespeare

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 564.

relates a famous popular tale about him. It was said that "Shakespeare was so sure of himself that he had never gone over his work to blot out a single line."<sup>5</sup> Evidently, Shakespeare knew the limits of his ability and rested on his laurels accordingly. If Arnold was expressing a wish to be like Shakespeare, he was straying from Stoic precepts, for Marcus Aurelius counsels the Stoic to "no longer talk at all about the kind of man that a good man ought to be, but be such" (Meditations, Bk. X, Sec. 16).<sup>6</sup> Wishful thinking was alien to Stoic philosophy, and the acquisition of knowledge was the result of personal experience.

Perhaps, after all, Arnold was merely following one of Marcus Aurelius' teachings which states that one should "examine men's ruling principles, even those of the wise, what kind of things they avoid, and what kind they pursue" (Meditations, Bk. IV, Sec. 38).<sup>7</sup> If Arnold decided that Shakespeare was "self-scann'd," perhaps what he meant was that Shakespeare's self-knowledge,

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<sup>5</sup>"The Essay, Biography, and Other Non-fiction," Forms of Literary Expression (New York: Universal Education and Visual Arts, 1969), pt. 6.

<sup>6</sup>Oates, p. 566.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 514.

as well as his knowledge in general, was profound. In the sonnet Arnold writes, "Thou smilest and art still, / Out-topping knowledge" (ll. 2&3). The idea seems to be that Shakespeare could rise above what he knew but at the same time he was not boastful of his accomplishments.

The last three lines of this sonnet seem to be particularly specialized in that they merely emphasize one side of the human make-up, for Arnold writes,

All pains the immortal spirit must endure,  
All weakness which impairs, all griefs which bow,  
Find their sole speech in that victorious brow.  
(ll. 12-14)

Evidently, Arnold was taking his cue from Marcus Aurelius who writes that "the voice ought to be plainly written on the forehead" (Meditations, Bk. XI, Sec. 15).<sup>8</sup> What is meant here is that the eyes reflect the inner character of an individual. While it is true that Shakespeare portrayed grief, sorrow, and tragedy in some of his plays, it is also true that he portrayed humor, joy, happiness, and love in others. It seems, though, that Arnold preferred to comment on pains, weakness, and griefs.

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<sup>8</sup>Oates, p. 574.

Several writers have been attracted to Arnold's disposition to writing about this sad or somber side of Arnold's poetry. One of these writers, Leon Gottfried, says that Arnold's poetry is totally lacking in the quality of joy; and quoting W. C. Brownell, Gottfried says that "Arnold's poetry; . . . 'is never joyous; joyousness is the one quality above all others which it never has.'"<sup>9</sup> Douglas Bush believes that Arnold's idea of laughter was strange because Arnold considered laughter a bar to seriousness.<sup>10</sup> Lionel Trilling contributes his opinion when he says that Arnold's idea of poetry in the "grand style" was its essence of grimness, sadness, melancholy, or resignation.<sup>11</sup> Finally, John Eells makes this observation about the sorrowful quality of Arnold's poetry:

And what a one-sided picture of Shakespeare Arnold paints! He listens, in the poet's speech, to the pains, the weakness which impairs, the griefs which bow. He listens, it would seem to the voice of Hamlet. But what of Falstaff? What of Juliet's Nurse? Their 'sole speech,' too, is in the

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<sup>9</sup>Gottfried, Matthew Arnold and the Romantics, p. 22.

<sup>10</sup>Bush, p. 117.

<sup>11</sup>Trilling, p. 375.

'victorious brow'; yet Arnold does not hear it. He does not hear it because he chooses not to . . . .<sup>12</sup>

Possibly Arnold did not choose joy, happiness, humor, and love because he actually exhibited melancholia in his poems rather than Stoicism.

To review, then, Arnold's sonnet to Shakespeare: there is an awareness that the "self-school'd, self-scann'd, self-honour'd, self-secure" qualities identified in Shakespeare are probably not Stoic characteristics after all. They were instead qualities of Shakespeare's lifestyle. So, if Arnold was praising Shakespeare for his Stoic accomplishments, or if Arnold was envious of Shakespeare for being Stoic, he was in error on both counts.

According to Hanley, the Stoic ethic held that to achieve virtue was to bring one's life into harmony with nature, thereby living not only rationally but also morally. Arnold's sonnet "In Harmony with Nature" seems to say that it is impossible for man to be human and in harmony with nature. Arnold admits that nature is cruel, fickle, and can never be fast friends with man (ll. 7,

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<sup>12</sup>John Shepard Eells, Jr., The Touchstones of Matthew Arnold (New York: Bookman Associates, Inc., 1955), p. 144.

9, 13). Since nature is fickle, therefore not reasonable, the Stoic, who espouses reason, cannot be in harmony with nature.<sup>13</sup> Thus man and nature are not compatible.

That nature itself is not always cool, calm, and friendly to man was shown by Charles Darwin in his Origin of Species where he observed:

We behold the face of nature bright with gladness, we often see superabundance of food; we do not see, or we forget, that the birds which are idly singing round us mostly live on insects or seeds, and are thus constantly destroying life; or we forget how largely these songsters, or their eggs, or their nestlings, are destroyed by birds and beasts of prey; we do not always bear in mind, that, though now food may be superabundant, it is not so at all seasons of each recurring year.<sup>14</sup>

Arnold writes, in "In Harmony with Nature":

Know, man hath all which Nature hath, but more,  
And in that more lie all his hopes of good  
(ll. 5-6)

"Hope" is not the same as "the only sure data of knowledge furnished [by] sense impressions."<sup>15</sup> If man's ultimate

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<sup>13</sup>W. Stacy Johnson, The Voices of Matthew Arnold (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961), p. 14.

<sup>14</sup>Robert B. Downs, Books that Changed the World (New York: The New American Library, 1956), p. 168.

<sup>15</sup>Hanley, p. 8.

good rests on "hope," then, this is not the philosophy of the Stoic--for if man hopes for good he admits that he does not have it and that he is dissatisfied with what he has. One may conclude that Stoicism has not provided man with "good." If "man hath all which Nature hath, but more" (l. 5), then, man should be able to resolve his problems without recourse to a philosophy.

The last line of the sonnet reads, "Fool, if thou canst not pass her [Nature], rest her slave!" (l. 14). There seem to be two implications here. One is that man, in all probability, cannot be in phase with Nature, i.e., be in harmony with Nature. The other is that, unless he transcends Nature, man must accept the fact that he will "continue to be," i.e., "rest," Nature's slave, and a slave's life is one which is hardly free from trouble, toil, cruelty, problems, and other elements inherent in the life of a slave.

To summarize what Arnold seems to have said in this sonnet, one may state briefly that man can never be in harmony with Nature, and so, according to the Stoic philosophy he can never achieve virtue.

In his sonnet "Quiet Work" Arnold seems to be looking at only the tranquil side of nature and assumes that Nature works only quietly. Man, on the other hand,

labours and toils noisily, and his vain turmoil seems to be nothing more than unreasoned noise and activity. Work, toil, and labour certainly cannot be equated with the Stoic's apathy and withdrawal.<sup>16</sup> Arnold views only the seemingly quiet and tranquil side of Nature, but it is obvious that Nature does not always work peacefully and quietly. In his Origin of Species Darwin states that: "Thus from the war of Nature, from famine and death, the most exalted object which we are capable of conceiving, namely the production of the higher animals, directly follows."<sup>17</sup>

On our own Earth, Nature demonstrates that not all is quiet all the time; this is especially noticeable during earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, tornadoes, tidal waves, and storms. Even the process of birth is accompanied with both labor and pain. Even in the outer reaches of the cosmos, Nature exhibits tremendous outbursts of turbulence and energy, as illustrated by the so-called "black holes" in space, thought to be the end product of

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<sup>16</sup>Johnson, p. 14.

<sup>17</sup>Downs, p. 169.

the collapse of a large star.<sup>18</sup> Stuart Sherman pays tribute to the awesome power of Nature when he says: "But most probably the grandest works of Nature--icebergs, mountains, valleys, gorges, and others--caves, islands, continents--were not created in silence but in cataclysmic displays of Nature's working techniques."<sup>19</sup> Thus, Nature, while it may appear to be quietly working, actually is continually destroying and creating life. Nature is far from the apathetic and withdrawn working force that Arnold depicts it as being. Arnold seems to have again taken a one-sided look at something--this time Nature--and while it may be good for man to work quietly at times, as Nature does, there are times when work as an involvement with something may be just the opposite and emulate Nature's noisy and turbulent side.

Culler points out that even Arnold in some of his poetry depicts nature as far from being calm all the time. Also, Culler argues that the poetry that Arnold

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<sup>18</sup>Kenneth Weaver, "The Incredible Universe," National Geographic 145 (May 1974): 616-620. The star's final form is so compressed by gravitational forces that it turns in on itself and disappears, but its gravitational field, attracting other stars within its range, sucks them in, and they are devoured by the "black hole" which continues to grow.

<sup>19</sup>Sherman, p. 144.

wrote did not express Stoic concepts but, rather, expressed Arnold's desire to achieve that which he did not have: serenity and calm. Once Arnold achieved the serenity he sought, he expressed himself in the literary medium of prose.<sup>20</sup>

Arnold believes that man could learn from nature to work quietly at times. But since Nature itself has a dual nature, man in his noisome toil keeps seeking for the quiet ideal. If he could achieve the ideal and work only along with nature's quiet side, he could achieve virtue according to the Stoic. But man is consigned to a life of noisy toil while nature seems to be working and moving quietly. Three lines of the sonnet express this idea:

Yes, while on earth a thousand discords ring,  
 Man's fitful uproar mingling with his toil,  
 Still do thy sleepless ministers move on.  
 (ll. 9-11)

Another one of Arnold's early poems is "Youth and Calm." Here, Arnold seems to say that only with death does calm come to an individual. But he also says that there are hopes and dreams of youth, and that youth does

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<sup>20</sup>Culler, Poetry and Criticism of Matthew Arnold, pp. xi, xvii.

not really desire calm after all. Arnold writes:

Ah no, the bliss youth dreams is one  
 For daylight, for the cheerful sun,  
 For feeling nerves and living breath--  
 Youth dreams a bliss on this side of death.  
 (ll. 16-19)

There are sensual appeals in these lines, and they, as well as youth's dream, are not really a part of the Stoic philosopher's world of reason and systematic thinking. The poem suggests that there is more than calm to life.

In the last lines of the poem, Arnold writes:

Calm's not life's crown, though calm is well.  
 'Tis all perhaps which man acquires,  
 But 'tis not what our youth desires.  
 (ll. 23-25)

The meaning here seems to be that youth has desires, but man (having the maturity which youth does not have) settles for calm. Even so, this is really not "life's crown." Culler, in discussing Arnold's "calm," says that this calm is not the calm of the Stoic, but a kind of makeshift Joy which he calls Calm.<sup>21</sup>

Arnold's "Rugby Chapel," written in 1857, is an elegy written in memory of his father, Dr. Thomas Arnold, who died in 1842. It is an elegy full of praise for his

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. x.

father who must have spent much of his time helping other people. While the Stoic attempted to achieve virtue by helping others merely for the purpose of becoming virtuous, Arnold's father helped others because he was a "servant of God." There is no indication that Arnold's father was a Stoic. He praised his father because his father wanted to and did help others. The virtue his father reflected was not due to Stoic beliefs. Dr. Arnold became involved with people he helped; he did not remain indifferent and withdrawn from them. Arnold indicates this when he writes:

Still thou turnedst, and still  
 Beckonedst the trembler, and still  
 Gavest the weary thy hand.  
(ll. 131-133)

Then, further on, Arnold says in words suggesting an image of pastoral care:

And, at the end of thy day,  
 O faithful shepherd! to come,  
 Bringing thy sheep in thy hand.  
(ll. 142-144)

In the last stanza of the poem, Arnold seems to say that man rekindles faith and hope in man through serving others as servants of God. Arnold says:

Then, in such hour of need  
 Of your fainting, dispirited race,  
 Ye, like angels, appear,  
 Radiant with ardour divine!  
 Beacons of hope, ye appear!  
 Langour is not in your heart,  
 (ll. 188-193)

Arnold seems to acknowledge the importance of a heavenly, spiritual inspiration in his reference to "ardour divine" which in reality may not be readily substantiated by reason.

In this last stanza Arnold also indicates the importance of prayer in service to others for he says, "Eyes rekindling, and prayers, / Follow your steps as ye go" (ll. 202-203). Even though Marcus Aurelius says not to pray at all (Meditations, Bk. V. Sec. 7),<sup>22</sup> Arnold seems willing to acknowledge that there are times when dependence upon a divine guide is essential.

Curtis Dahl, referring to Arnold's "Rugby Chapel," concludes that "Arnold's hope lies in social order and unity" and that Arnold postulates a "clear purposed goal; he believes in a sure ideal."<sup>23</sup> But the certainty of an

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<sup>22</sup>Oates, p. 518.

<sup>23</sup>Curtis Dahl, "The Victorian Wasteland," Victorian Literature: Modern Essays in Criticism, ed. Austin Wright (New York: Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 36.

ideal may exist only in the imagination since by definition an ideal is something that may be purely visionary, not real or practical, a conception of something in its perfection--hence not logically attainable.

It can be agreed that knowledge and virtue are both commendable attributes in an individual, and that both knowledge and virtue are developed by one's becoming involved experientially in situations and with people. Man is the only creature capable of accumulating knowledge and of passing it on to following generations, but even these succeeding generations must make the effort to read the knowledge their ancestors have recorded. In short, they must become involved in the communication process.

Arnold's respect for virtue is commendable; but the acquisition of virtue is not dependent solely on man's being in harmony with nature as, indeed, Arnold explicitly recognizes in his sonnet "In Harmony with Nature." Nature's changing moods run the gamut from calm to fury--so that at any particular time moods, whatever they may be, may be in harmony with nature. Virtue and knowledge are not necessarily the sole property of the

Stoic; nor is there only one way to achieve them. An appropriate observation by Trilling serves to conclude this section. He suggests that harmony between man and Nature is almost impossible, for he says: "The new cosmos suggested an idea which became paramount in men's minds: the disparity between the course of nature and the values of man."<sup>24</sup> Stoicism, which holds that man achieves virtue by being in harmony with nature, looks toward an ideal. On the other hand, man, who seeks that ideal, is relegated to the role of one trying to copy nature in her quiet achievements, but he never succeeds. Fraser Neiman probably sums up this disparity understandably when he says that "nature is divorced from the moral sense" and that "the processes of nature (outside of man) are emblematic of an ideal of activity performed in tranquility that man might emulate."<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>Trilling, p. 80.

<sup>25</sup>Fraser Neiman, Matthew Arnold (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1968), p. 38.

### Peace through Subjective Withdrawal

According to Hanley, one concept of peace through subjective withdrawal is the reward of self-conquest in the achievement of tranquillity through an independence of the outside world and a reliance on the things of the mind. In his dramatic poem, Empedocles on Etna, Arnold displays the unhappiness and confusion in the character of Empedocles who, in spite of his subjective withdrawal, seems to be unable to reach a solution to his problem other than to commit suicide. This display of dejection, despair, and hopelessness does not seem to fit in with the Stoic philosophy of being able to arrive at a conclusion by reason, for it is doubtful that suicide is a logical or rational solution to any problem.

In examining Empedocles on Etna in this section, certain sections of the poem will be selected and appropriately discussed. Then, comments by several writers will be presented with accompanying comments, and, finally, a brief discussion of suicide together with a conclusion will close the discussion of Arnold's Empedocles on Etna.

At the beginning of the poem Callicles suggests that Empedocles is "half mad / With exile, and with brooding on his wrongs" (ll. 23-24). Shortly thereafter,

Pausanias, in his conversation with Callicles, referring to Empedocles, says that

. . . there was a time  
 (But that is passed), he would have paid thy strain  
 With music to have drawn the stars from heaven.  
 He hath his harp and laurel with him still,  
 But he has laid the use of music by,  
 And all which might relax his settled gloom.  
 (ll. 79-84)

Here the implication seems to be that even though Empedocles heard the music, he is not soothed by it, since "he has laid the use of music by" because of his being greatly upset over his exile and brooding over his wrongs. In his loneliness and desolation on the mountain top he is untouched and unmoved by the music, and he continues his course of inaction up to the very last instant.

Further on, in Scene ii of Act I, Empedocles recommends what seems to be Stoic philosophy when he says,

Spells? Mistrust them!  
 Mind is the spell which governs earth and heaven.  
 Man has a mind with which to plan his safety;  
 Know that, and help thyself!  
 (ll. 26-29)

Then, ignoring the statement that "man has a mind with which to plan his safety," Empedocles, a short time later, commits suicide by walking off the edge of the crater's

lip into the fire below. Two assumptions can be made: either Empedocles' advice was not worth taking for himself, or Empedocles was no Stoic.

Evidence of Empedocles' apparent Stoicism is given in the long speech or sermon where he says that

The world's course proves the terms  
On which man wins content;  
Reason the proof confirms--  
We spurn it, and invent  
A false course for the world, and for  
ourselves, false powers.  
(ll. 222-226)

Here, Empedocles seems to be uttering a paradox. On the one hand, he supports the proof obtained by reason but, then, follows it by stating that it provides a false course for the world and false powers for man--practically an admission that Stoicism does not really provide either answers to or solutions for problems. Further on in this long speech, Empedocles asks, "Why should I say that life need yield but moderate bliss?" (l. 391). Wishing for life to yield bliss does not really seem to be Stoic; furthermore, "moderate bliss" is evidently nonexistent, since by definition bliss is complete happiness. Ips  
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o, there can be no "moderate bliss"; it is either complete happiness or it simply is not. Empedocles, then,

follows this musing with a few stanzas wherein he recalls more of the happier and more pleasant moments of his life. His final words, before Callicles begins his speech are, "Because thou must not dream, thou need'st not then despair!" (l. 426). This seems to be hollow advice, for Empedocles seems to have done just that very thing, despaired, and is on the verge of suicide.

At the beginning of Act II Empedocles addresses himself and says,

And being lonely thou art miserable,  
 For something has impair'd thy spirit's strength,  
 And dried its self-sufficing fount of joy.  
 (ll. 20-22)

Again Empedocles seems to be uttering a paradox if his philosophy is Stoicism, for he says that he is both lonely and miserable. If his subjective withdrawal was supposed to help him to arrive at a logical solution to his problem, then reason seems to have failed him, because he is miserable in his loneliness. Additionally, he says that the "self-sufficing fount of joy" has dried itself up; but, if it is "self-sufficing," then the fact that it has dried up is contradictory. Callicles, then, continues the dialogue by dwelling on the past, followed by a reference to Hebe, who,

. . . bears  
 The cup about, whose draughts beguile  
 Pain and care, with a dark store  
 Of fresh-pulled violets . . . .  
 (ll. 84-87)

The appeal here is a sensual one emphasizing that escape is possible through drink, a worldly pleasure, rather than by means of Stoicism.

Callicles' last speech, closing the poem, deals with Apollo and the Nine. When it is considered that Apollo was the god of light, prophecy, music, poetry, and pastoral pursuits and that the "Nine" are the Muses of the arts which include history and astronomy, it may be a matter of conjecture what Apollo and the Nine have to do with Stoicism. History may be more or less related to reason, but, of all the Muses, only astronomy seems to have any definite appeal to reason. Thus, the poem ends on a note which is certainly not Stoic and may well have a strong esthetic and emotional appeal.

Arnold's Empedocles has been commented on by several writers and the comments of some of them are worth considering here. Stopford Brooke comments on Callicles by saying:

. . . When Arnold created him he was half way to a higher region of thought, feeling, and action

than he could ever have attained by stoicism on the one hand, or by wailing and indignation on the other.<sup>26</sup>

This may in some measure provide an explanation for Callicles' speech, indicating that he was more responsive to Apollo and the Nine on an emotional basis than on an intellectual one. At the end of the poem the reader is confronted with the situation wherein Empedocles, who is despondent and despairing, succumbs, but Callicles, who is seemingly joyous and carefree, survives. Douglas Bush has, perhaps, provided a most succinct observation of Empedocles' final action when he says, "Empedocles' suicide solves no problem."<sup>27</sup>

Lionel Trilling provides two observations relative to Empedocles' final action. One indicates the conclusion that Empedocles reached, and the other indicates the futility of his carrying out that conclusion. Trilling says that

Rationalism and materialism have destroyed mystery by "rule and line," have clipped the angel's wing and emptied the once-haunted air and Empedocles feels that life is no longer to be supported.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>Brooke, p. 84.

<sup>27</sup>Bush, p. 61.

<sup>28</sup>Trilling, p. 83.

Then, later, Trilling adds, "Empedocles had suggested that one might evade the unhappiness of life by escaping into the self. In the end this does not serve."<sup>29</sup>

Lionel Stevenson, adding his comments on Empedocles' final action, says:

. . . Arnold could portray Empedocles as uttering a plausibly logical defense of Stoic acceptance, with scorn for self-regarding "dreams of future bliss," but the next moment the wise philosopher follows a totally emotional impulse when he leaps into the fiery crater.<sup>30</sup>

Robert Super provides a further informative observation about Empedocles and his final action when he says:

. . . For this line of reasoning justified by classical stoicism is: death is the common human condition, which no man can avoid; if then the external forces of the world are so great that one can live only by sacrificing one's integrity of spirit, it is better to choose death . . . after one has surrendered.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 112

<sup>30</sup>Lionel Stevenson, "The Relativity of Truth in Victorian Fiction," Victorian Essays: A Symposium, eds. Warren D. Anderson and Thos. D. Clareson (Wooster, Ohio: The Kent State University Press, 1967), p. 76.

<sup>31</sup>Super, The Time-Spirit of Matthew Arnold, p. 21.

The question to be decided, then, is whether or not Empedocles indeed had surrendered.

Perhaps, it was not so much the sacrificing of the integrity of his spirit and surrendering with Empedocles as it was the loss of poise upsetting the balance between sense and reason. William Jones, expressing an idea Marcus Aurelius had on man's acceptance of death, says:

The fact that the wise man welcomes death does not mean, Aurelius thought, that it is right for him to hasten its coming. On the contrary, a man ought to live out his life, . . ., playing his part until the curtains ring down. Aurelius was prepared, however, to allow suicide if the conditions of life make virtue impossible.<sup>32</sup>

The conditions that make virtue impossible are not defined, however, and since Empedocles was apparently unsuccessful in defining them, it was here that he suffered a loss of poise. If Stoicism had been able to provide an answer to Empedocles' conditions and free him from them, he could have survived his ordeal and lived out his life as Marcus Aurelius recommended that a man should. Pooley and others, in referring to "that philosophy" in Brutus' speech in Act V, Scene ii, of Shakespeare's Julius Caesar, state:

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<sup>32</sup>Jones, p. 283.

"Stoicism . . . taught indifference to pleasure or pain. The Stoics did not believe in suicide."<sup>33</sup>

According to A. Dwight Culler, Arnold himself has provided an outlook on art which seems to be in direct contrast to the action Arnold gave Empedocles. Culler refers to Arnold's preface of 1853 wherein Arnold rejected "Empedocles on Etna." Culler writes: "He says that the subject of the drama is morbid and that all art ought to be dedicated to Joy. It should 'inspirit and rejoice the reader . . . , convey a charm, and infuse delight.'"<sup>34</sup> It is certainly not clear as Arnold saw, how Empedocles' suicide can be "dedicated to Joy" and "inspirit and rejoice the reader" or how it can "convey a charm, and infuse delight."

Culler's analysis suggests that the philosophies of both Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius were not satisfying to Arnold, either. He points out that Arnold criticized Lucretius for his gloomy despair and likened this philosopher to the Stoics:

. . . So too with Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius. It is impossible, says Arnold, to rise from a reading

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<sup>33</sup>Pooley et al., ed., Exploring Life through Literature, p. 367.

<sup>34</sup>Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 201.

of these philosophers "without feeling that the burden laid upon man is well-nigh greater than he can bear. . . . Yet, even for the sage, this sense of labour and sorrow in his march towards the goal constitutes a relative inferiority; the noblest souls of whatever creed, the pagan Empedocles as well as the Christian Paul, have insisted on the necessity of an inspiration, a joyful emotion, to make moral action perfect."<sup>35</sup>

Empedocles seemed to lack the inspiration; there evidently was no joyful emotion; he seemed to despair in spite of his own advice to Pausanias; he did not accept that which God had given him; he was not able to achieve that freedom of balance between sense and reason; and it is highly doubtful that his suicide, definitely an action including moral values, reflected an act which could be described as inspirational, joyful, and perfectly moral. It might be inferred that Arnold was passing judgment on Stoicism in Empedocles when he makes Empedocles despair.

Henry Duffin seems to find a quantity of courage in Empedocles' action, for he says, "Empedocles is no coward soul (as I am tempted to call Arnold). His message to Pausanias is--not to despair: life teems with ill but provides scope for man's efforts."<sup>36</sup> Empedocles' courage

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<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 167.

<sup>36</sup>Duffin, p. 22.

may be questioned, however, because in spite of his advice to Pausanias, that man can rise above depressing situations provided he exerts the effort to face them, he saw fit not to take his own advice but rather his own life. Had Empedocles followed the suggestion of Epictetus, he might have survived, for Epictetus teaches that "we should accept whatever god gives us, i.e., whatever life brings us,"<sup>37</sup> which in point of fact was exactly what Empedocles did not do.

There are several writers who believe that there is a particularly personal relationship between Empedocles and Arnold. Culler believes that essentially Arnold is living through Empedocles, since at the time Arnold wrote Empedocles he was in Switzerland trying to get his own thoughts straightened out, and that Empedocles' suicide via the burning crater was Arnold's way of using Empedocles as a scapegoat for getting rid of his own problems. Culler says the poem "dramatizes what he was saved from doing by the fact that he did it vicariously in the realm of art."<sup>38</sup> It would seem, though, that the youth, Callicles, finds

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<sup>37</sup>Jones, p. 278.

<sup>38</sup>Culler, Imaginative Reason, pp. 154, 163.

escape from the world with the things of the world while Empedocles cannot find escape from the world even within himself and, therefore, decides that the only answer is death. DeLaura points out that, "in his rejection of 'Empedocles,' and in this busying himself with action, Arnold was escaping from life under the pretense of entering more deeply into it. His way of life lay through the despair of Empedocles."<sup>39</sup>

Paull F. Baum, commenting that Arnold was irked by criticism of his poem "Empedocles on Etna," says that "apparently also he was even more annoyed by the remarks of Shairp and others that he had put too much of himself into his poem, had 'used it for the drapery of his own thoughts.'" Baum also says that, "possibly he thought of himself as committing a kind of suicide when he sacrificed his poetic ambitions for the sake of 'the world' of security, marriage, and school inspecting." Finally, Baum makes a rather unusual observation when he says that Arnold "produced a splendid psychological study of mental disintegration he hardly recognized and doubtless would have been unwilling to admit if convinced of it."<sup>40</sup> Then,

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<sup>39</sup>DeLaura, A Guide to Research, p. 258.

<sup>40</sup>Paull F. Baum, Ten Studies in the Poetry of Matthew Arnold (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1958), pp. 47, 133, 134.

Lafcadio Hearn echoes a similar train of thought when he says that, "the long soliloquy of Empedocles is really the soliloquy of no Greek, but of Matthew Arnold himself."<sup>41</sup>

Tinker and Lowry also believe that there is a personal relationship between Arnold and Empedocles. They state that:

. . . In the summer of that same year [1849] J. Campbell Shairp wrote to Arthur Hugh Clough, "I saw the said hero--Matt--the day I left London. . . . He was working at an 'Empedocles'--which seemed to be not much about the man who leapt in the crater--but his name & outward circumstances are used for the drapery of his own thoughts."<sup>42</sup>

Super implies a like relationship when he says that:

. . . Forced to choose between a stoic life of resignation and suicide, Arnold in real life chose resignation; Empedocles' suicide, as he later remarked, was not a course of action literally recommended in the poem.<sup>43</sup>

In another instance Culler also presents the possibility that Arnold used Empedocles as a means of expressing himself, although Arnold attempted to deny it.

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<sup>41</sup>Hearn, p. 343.

<sup>42</sup>Tinker and Lowry, A Commentary, p. 287.

<sup>43</sup>Super, The Time-Spirit of Matthew Arnold, p. 18.

Culler writes that:

. . . It is sometimes said that the discourse [of Empedocles] presents the "philosophy" of Empedocles and that, as such, it ought to bear a clear relation to the suicide which follows. Even Arnold has lent support to this view by suggesting that the discourse does explain the suicide. In a letter to a friend, Henry Dunn, in which he was concerned with denying that the discourse embodied his own personal views, he said, "No critic appears to remark that if Empedocles throws himself into Etna his creed can hardly be meant to be one to live by." But the creed is meant to be one to live by, and it does not contain the reason why Empedocles throws himself into Etna. Indeed, it is not really Empedocles' "creed" at all. It is offered to Pausanias as a view of the world, better than what he has, by means of which he can, if he will, descend into the cities and live a life more satisfactory than that which he now knows.<sup>44</sup>

George Anderson and William Buckler comment on the fact that the poem could very well be autobiographical, for they say:

There has been a persistent inclination to read Empedocles on Etna as an autobiographical document. One critic, for example, has maintained that the poem contains "the inner truth about Arnold himself, which, as soon as he told it, he wished to suppress because it was indeed a conflict in himself to which he could see no solution."<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup>Culler, Imaginative Reason, p. 164.

<sup>45</sup>Anderson and Buckler, vol. 2, p. 1193.

Whether the poem is or is not autobiographical may again prove to be one of those propositions that will never be resolved to the satisfaction of everyone. Even so, this should not prove a barrier to discussing the fate that Empedocles met or what Arnold might have had in mind in connection with Empedocles. Hearn, for one, believes that "Arnold makes Empedocles commit suicide because of doubts and despondencies;<sup>46</sup> but Fuller shows that in reality there were several choices available to Arnold as to how to dispose of Empedocles. Fuller says:

. . . And there were stories that instead of dying, he disappeared at the summons of a great voice and in the midst of a great light from heaven. Other sensational reports had him jump into the crater of Etna, hang himself, be killed by falling out of a chariot, and die by drowning.<sup>47</sup>

Thus out of several ways of disposing of his hero, Arnold chose the suicide route apparently for no clear reason. Had Empedocles returned from the summit of Etna, two possibilities present themselves: either he had arrived at a solution to the problem, or else he had decided to take his own advice and exert enough effort and display the

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<sup>46</sup>Hearn, vol. 1, p. 343.

<sup>47</sup>Fuller, pp. 70-71.

courage needed to face the problem and rise above it. Since he did not return, however, he must not have had a solution to his problem nor did he have courage to face the situation and attempt to rise above it. As a result, with no solution and lacking the courage required to face the world, Arnold had Empedocles jump into the crater.

The situation of Empedocles' suicide has its peculiarities because Arnold knows more of Empedocles' background than appears in the poem. For example, Tinker and Lowry show that in Arnold's manuscript for the poem, Arnold knows that Empedocles' skill as a musician kept a young man from killing the judge who had just condemned the young man's father.<sup>48</sup> Also, in the poem, Arnold shows that Empedocles' medical skill recalled a woman from death. In spite of all of Empedocles' ability, skill, and position as a ruler, he still was not able to extricate himself from his own untenable situation. Allott, it seems, provides an insight of some value relative to Arnold's value judgments when he says that Epictetus taught Arnold that some questions are perhaps incomprehensible to the human mind and that Arnold's philosopher, Empedocles, is

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<sup>48</sup>Tinker and Lowry, A Commentary, pp. 289-290.

wretched and cannot live by the philosophy of resignation which he preaches.<sup>49</sup>

That some questions are incomprehensible to the human mind and that Empedocles may have been wretched because of the philosophy he could not live with seem to be substantiated by several writers who have made appropriate comments. Tinker and Lowry point out that "the stoical ethics, which forms so large a part of Empedocles as Arnold sees him, came, however, not from any one source. Much of it is in the spirit of Marcus Aurelius."<sup>50</sup> Douglas Bush says, "Empedocles' sermon draws wisdom from many sources which had become more or less parts of Arnold's being: . . . including the Bhagavad Gita."<sup>51</sup> Gilbert Murray points out, in referring to a criticism of the Stoic system by modern psychologists that "it paid too much attention to fully conscious and rational processes, and too little attention to the enormously larger part of human conduct which is below the level of consciousness."<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>49</sup>Allott, pp. 60, 65.

<sup>50</sup>Tinker and Lowry, A Commentary, p. 297.

<sup>51</sup>Bush, p. 57.

<sup>52</sup>Murray, pp. 114-115.

If there are grounds for suspecting that Empedocles was confused in his thinking, there seems to be ample material to support such a contention.

Arnold, through both Pausanias and Empedocles, seems to give indications that Stoicism is not the answer to Empedocles' problems. For example, Pausanias, a doctor who seems to be speaking from wisdom gained through experience, says, "Mind is a light which the Gods mock us with, / To lead those false who trust it" (ll. 32-33). Then, further on in Act I, Scene ii, Empedocles says,

The Gods laugh in their sleeve  
To watch man doubt and fear,  
Who knows not what to believe,  
Since he sees nothing clear,  
And dares stamp nothing false where he  
finds nothing sure.  
(ll. 87-91)

That Empedocles found no solace, or perhaps little of it, in applying Stoic principles, is further indicated when Russell's Stoic concepts are applied to Empedocles' position. Russell says, "Not only bad passions are condemned, but all passions. The sage does not feel sympathy." He also says that according to Stoic belief "every man has perfect freedom, provided he emancipates himself from mundane desires."<sup>53</sup> Whether or not Empedocles'

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<sup>53</sup>Russell, A History of Western Philosophy, p. 255.

grief over his own position had the intensity of having passion may be difficult to assess; if it had, then Stoicism seemed to have failed Empedocles just at the time he most needed it. Also, one must define what "mundane desires" are. If Stoicism fails to free man from "mundane desires," then it seems that Stoicism from its very inception is doomed to failure. Evidently Empedocles, guided by Epictetus' advice to emphasize the other and more asocial tendency in Stoicism--withdrawal from the world,<sup>54</sup>--could not spend his final moments in apathy and inaction but rather took an irrevocable action which resulted in his suicide.

Hanley writes that, with respect to Empedocles' suicide, "this stress on the power of the mind to free the soul no matter what one's worldly condition, . . . is . . . an idea basic in Stoic doctrine."<sup>55</sup> Hanley says, further, however, that Empedocles' alleged suicide is "not part of Stoic philosophy, but rather that his sudden disappearance might convince people that he was a god."<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup>Jones, p. 279.

<sup>55</sup>Hanley, p. 143.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., p. 201.

Hanley then points out that Arnold describes Empedocles as an irrational being.<sup>57</sup> This, then, poses the peculiar situation wherein an irrational individual arrives at what is supposed to be a rational solution to a problem, the inference being that suicide is the Stoic's rational answer to a problem that itself may be insoluble. Although Empedocles' final action was supposedly an act of Stoic resignation, it is apparent that Empedocles did not actually present a picture of a mind free of trouble and dedicated to clear, logical thinking.

The poem presents a contrast with the opposites posited by Callicles' reference to the great beauties of nature to be found in the forest regions on the slopes of Mt. Etna and the reference to the desolate place Empedocles is in at the top of the volcano. As a matter of philosophy, it seems that Empedocles had reached the peak of his apparent Stoicism; he had withdrawn from the world; he was in isolation at the summit of the mountain; he could reason logically; and he could, therefore, arrive at a solution to his problem. Callicles, evidently, was enjoying the beauties of nature and was reveling in his

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<sup>57</sup>Ibid., p. 142.

song, but Empedocles was desolate and alone with no place to go and ended a suicide. He seemed to feel that the force of the mind could not or would not release him to be absorbed in the universe. E. V. Arnold, in referring to the beauty of the universe says, "thus from beauty we pass to usefulness, and the Stoics now maintain that the world has been created and is maintained for the use of man."<sup>58</sup> If beauty leads to usefulness, then Empedocles, in spite of the beauty of the music he heard, could not make the transition from beauty to usefulness and see any point in his continuing to live.

The act of suicide may be defined as voluntary intentional self-destruction, and, in England, it is considered to mean an act of self-destruction committed only while the deceased was of unsound mind. Additionally, the explanation of suicide does not lie in external forces but in the attitudes and emotions of people. Through family training, religion, and education some people acquire strong inhibitory attitudes against suicide, regardless of the stresses of life. Others, with a different philosophy, turn to suicide as a way out of

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<sup>58</sup>E. V. Arnold, Roman Stoicism, p. 204.

difficulties, (e.g., some Japanese turn to hara-kiri). Some, whether because of temperament or training, are able to adjust more readily than others to frustration and hardships; but it can be seen that some people are subjected to greater social pressures than others are.<sup>59</sup> In summary, it can be said that suicide is evidently the terminal result of irrational thinking. Even if Empedocles' attitude is acknowledged to be one of depression, this still would not necessarily finally end in his committing suicide, because depression is an inward feeling of despair leading to almost complete inactivity both physical and mental. Thus, even a Stoic would not arrive at such a condition through his reasoning process. Sorrow, an emotional reaction to an external stimulus, would similarly not be part of the Stoic's philosophy, because he would be withdrawn from the world and would theoretically not be touched by an external stimulus. Neither through depression nor sorrow, therefore, would Empedocles' suicide make sense. The Stoic philosophy holds that reason is the guide to life and that there should be little, if any, room for emotional experiences in the life of the

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<sup>59</sup>Encyclopedia Britannica, 1957 ed., s.v. "Suicide."

Stoic. Yet, Empedocles seemed to be grieving in the last few moments of his life on Etna. If the Stoic has a nonesthetic ethical philosophy, then, as a matter of principle there should be no room for grief, since reason and lack of emotional experience would nullify the need for it. If Darwin's doctrine of natural selection, struggle for existence, and survival of the fittest is applied to the particular situation where Empedocles jumps into the fiery crater, the conclusion could be drawn that, since Empedocles did not survive; he must have been weak, and certainly weakness is manifested by his surrender.

If Arnold was a Stoic, this poem shows that there were confusion and serious doubts in his mind that Stoicism could provide acceptable answers to life's problems. While it may be alleged that Empedocles' demise is an example of Stoic resignation associated with his withdrawing from the world, there seems to be enough evidence to substantiate a reasonable doubt that such was the case and that, rather than being such an example, Empedocles' suicide was in fact an act of irrationality.

It seems strange that, in spite of Arnold's having read Spinoza, he did not consider a statement made by Spinoza more seriously than merely to mention it in his

writings. The statement by Spinoza, which is used several times in Trilling's book on Arnold and which significantly appears as the epigraph to the first chapter of his book, reads as follows: "No virtue can be conceived as prior to this virtue of endeavoring to preserve oneself."<sup>60</sup> It is unfortunate that Empedocles did not find sufficient cause to be motivated by one of the strongest motivations in human beings--that of self-survival.

The other poem to be examined in this section is "Obermann Once More," which Tinker and Lowry classify as an elegy, and according to definition an elegy is pensive and reflective, as this poem is. It may also be elegiac because of its lamentation and sorrow for the two decades that have passed since Arnold's writing of the first Obermann poem. While the poem may be elegiac, however, it is also a poem expressive of joy and hope--especially in the second half of the poem.

Arnold dwells at some length on Obermann and the Geneva countryside and notes the changes that have taken place in the intervening years. The tone is thoughtful and reflective as he recalls several incidents. Beginning

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<sup>60</sup>Trilling, p. 15.

with line 237, however, a change in tone is indicated when Arnold recognizes that man has need for joy and hope, and that these are in keeping with the changes that are taking place in the social, religious, and literary world. Arnold writes,

'And yet men have such need of joy!  
But joy whose grounds are true;  
And joy that should all hearts employ  
As when the past was new.

'Ah, not the emotion of that past,  
Its common hope, were vain!  
Some new such hope must dawn at last,  
Or man must toss in pain.'

(ll. 237-244)

Arnold finds that even withdrawal no longer provides soothing relief, for he says,

'Then to the wilderness I fled.--  
There among the Alpine snows  
And pastoral huts I hid my head,  
And sought and found repose.'

(ll. 249-252)

He rejects withdrawal when he says,

'The day I lived in was not mine,  
Man gets no second day.  
In dreams I saw the future shine--  
But ah! I could not stay!'

(ll. 257-260)

Arnold continues building this joyous vein and later writes,

'The world's great order dawns in sheen,  
After long darkness rude,  
Divinelier imaged, clearer seen,  
With happier zeal pursued.'

(ll. 293-296)

Here Arnold seems to be suggesting that a new order will come in a new brightness and with a more divine, spiritual image than before that will be clearer and more zealously sought after in happiness. Then, both joy and hope are indicated a few stanzas following when he says,

'What still of strength is left, employ  
That end to help attain:  
One common wave of thought and joy  
Lifting mankind again!'

(ll. 321-324)

Finally, after several stanzas indicating that man still has the capability of inspiring man, Arnold closes the poem on the uplifting note of hope and joy in the dawning of a new day:

And glorious there, without a sound,  
Across the glimmering lake,  
High in the Valais-depth profound  
I saw the morning break.

(ll. 345-348)

That Arnold seems to have found the dawn of a new day filled with hope and joy and happiness for the future of

man seems to be supported by Bush, who says that "the most elaborate statement of Arnold's reborn hope for mankind is Obermann Once More."<sup>61</sup>

The two poems in this section tend to show the lack of adherence of Arnold to Stoic principles. The first, the dramatic poem entitled Empedocles on Etna, shows that Empedocles broke away from Stoicism and acted in an irrational manner by taking his own life. Fuller states that according to the Stoics "emotions were all irrational."<sup>62</sup> It is conceded that much space has been devoted to this poem, but it seems justified in the light of the focus of much attention, discussion, and criticism by the several writers and critics referred to. The second, an elegy, although beginning on a note of sorrow and sadness, ends on a note of joy and hope, which is dependent not only upon the changing times but also upon man's hope in man. In either case, the withdrawal of the individual did not suffice to provide an answer to the immediate situation.

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<sup>61</sup>Bush, p. 42.

<sup>62</sup>Fuller, p. 250.

## Duty

One of Arnold's early poems, "Mycerinus," tells the story of a young, good king who, after inheriting the throne from his father, a bad king, is told by the gods he is doomed to die in six short years. Thereupon, the young king spends his remaining years in revelry trying to understand the reasoning behind the gods' decision. Trilling points out that the response of Mycerinus to the judgment of the gods is immediate and crude, and his reaction is to turn at once to sensual anarchy. When he leaves his throne, the young king retires to the cool groves of the Nile, bitterly giving his days and nights to revelry and fleshly delight.<sup>63</sup>

Paul Baum points out that in the reading of the poem nowhere does Arnold condemn Mycerinus for leaving his throne to indulge in six years of idle ease and tumultuous feasting, nor does he suggest reproof for the king. Baum also observes that Tinker and Lowry believe that the meaning of "Mycerinus" is not clear, not only for the reason that Arnold expresses no disapproval of the young king's abandonment of his duty, but also that he

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<sup>63</sup>Trilling, p. 82.

seems to sympathize with the king's devotion of his six remaining years to revelry.<sup>64</sup> Duffin expresses a similar opinion when he says that Arnold gave an oversympathetic handling to the unstoical and resentful king who turned his back on duty.<sup>65</sup>

In the normal course of events, when the young king inherited the throne he should have faced a long, happy reign. Unfortunately, the gods decreed that Mycerinus' reign would last only six years. It is apparent that reason was not applicable in this situation. Even dreams in this instance are vain according to the disenchanted King.

Mycerinus' appeal then turns to joys and sensual pleasures of life when he says,

'Seems it so light a thing, then, austere Powers,  
To spurn man's common lure, life's pleasant things?  
Seems there no joy in dances crown'd with flowers,  
Love, free to range, and regal banquetings?'  
(ll. 31-34)

He continues, and, just before he "gives the rest to joy," he says,

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<sup>64</sup>Baum, pp. 17, 18.

<sup>65</sup>Duffin, p. 20.

'Oh, wherefore cheat our youth, if thus it be,  
Of one short joy, one lust, one pleasant dream?'  
(ll. 49-50)

Instead of thinking out the problem logically according to reason, he decides to surrender everything to joy; to shirk his responsibility; and to withdraw, not for the purpose of reasonable thinking, but for the purpose of devoting the rest of his life to revelry. In this, however, he finds comfort where he apparently did not expect to find it. That he decides to run away is indicated by the king when he says,

'Into the silence of the groves and woods  
I will go forth; . . .'  
(ll. 67-68)

Then, a few lines later he says, "I go and return not."

Finally, he gives himself over to revelry:

Here came the king, holding high feast, at morn,  
Rose-crown'd; and ever, when the sun went down,  
A hundred lamps beam'd in the tranquil gloom,  
From tree to tree all through the twinkling grove,  
Revealing all the tumult of the feast--  
Flush'd guests, and golden goblets foam'd with wine;  
While the deep-burnish'd foliage overhead  
Splinter'd the silver arrows of the moon.  
(ll. 92-99)

Even though the king was outwardly occupied with all of these pleasures and feasting and revelry, inwardly he pondered upon his situation with calm, inner strength; but Stoic calm did not suffice him, for the poet says,

. . . he, within,  
Took measure of his soul, and knew its strength,  
And by that silent knowledge, day by day,  
Was calm'd, ennobled, comforted, sustain'd.  
It may be; but not less his brow was smooth,  
And his clear laugh fled ringing through the gloom,  
And his mirth quail'd not at the mild reproof  
Sigh'd out by winter's sad tranquillity;  
(ll. 108-115)

There is no definite way of knowing exactly how the king's plan worked out. All that can be determined is that after he complains to the gods, he goes on reveling to the end and seems to accept his fate, although in a state of revelry rather than Stoic apathy. If a judgment has to be made, the calm tone of the conclusion of the poem points more toward Buddhism than toward Stoicism, for Buddhism is a system of philosophy and ethics which holds that the final goal of the religious man is to escape from existence into blissful nonexistence. This is, possibly, what Mycerinus was attempting to do. Warren D. Anderson believes, however, that the poem gives no impression of

any single predominant philosophy.<sup>66</sup> To what extent the king was religious is highly speculative, but, at best, there was some communication between the king and the gods.

That the poem may reflect an Oriental philosophy is not strange when one considers what two writers have said about Arnold's sources of information. Kenneth Allott states that Arnold "studied the Bhagavad Gita for spiritual guidance,"<sup>67</sup> and Douglas Bush shows that about the time "Mycerinus" was written, "among the apparent influences operating here were some works Arnold especially prized . . . the Bhagavad Gita."<sup>68</sup>

Another poem which may be used to explore the concept of duty is the early narrative poem "The Sick King in Bokhara." The poem relates the story of a young king who is faced with the problem of not only directing the execution of a Moolah who had broken the law, but of also taking an initial part in the execution of the man. That the young king is sick seems to provide an excuse for his

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<sup>66</sup>Warren D. Anderson, Matthew Arnold and the Classical Tradition (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1965), p. 141.

<sup>67</sup>Allott, p. 57.

<sup>68</sup>Bush, p. 35.

feeling so much pity for the Moolah that he tries to ignore the situation and avoid getting involved with both the passing of a sentence and the execution of it.

When the king is informed of the crime and told that the Moolah insists he be executed by stoning to death according to the law, the king refuses to believe the story and does not seem to want to recognize the truth. After first refusing to listen to the story and, later, suggesting that the Moolah is mad, the king has to accept the facts of the story. He, then, suggests that the Moolah be allowed to escape if he attempts to when the punishment begins. Finally, since the king must throw the first stone, he does so and casts it "softly," after which he hides his own face.

The king seemed to be unable to face the truth and sought an escape from his responsibility. He could not bring himself to be completely objective about the criminal because he felt pity for the man. He needed a guide other than the reason of the state and his royal duty to reach a decision which would not bear too heavily upon his own conscience. So, he abdicated reason which dictated that, since he was the king, he would have to obey the law as well as anyone else in the kingdom. Forced

to obey the law, the king still tried to evade both the letter and the spirit of the law. In the light of Fuller's observation that "virtue was a matter of the will, and not of the deed,"<sup>69</sup> the king was not truly an example of virtue for the people. Yet, it seems apparent that Arnold attempts to project the sick king sympathetically, so that possibly a feeling of compassion is generated for the king rather than the criminal.

That the king is sick is established in the first stanza of the poem. The nature of the sickness is not disclosed, but several interpretations are possible, including one just mentioned. Since the king is young he may have other ideas about what his responsibilities are, and he may be sick of the responsibility he has as the ruler of the kingdom. This may have been the king's first participation in an execution, and that in itself may have sickened him, because the poem relates that, "So saying, the King took a stone, / And cast it softly" (ll. 117-118), after which we are told, "My lord had cover'd up his face" (l. 125). This may have been an indication that the king was sickened by his part in the execution as well as by

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<sup>69</sup> Fuller, p. 250.

his realization that he in essence shirked his duty. The fact that he could not have his own way may have been a contributing factor in the king's extreme discomfiture.

In a comment on the Stoic attitude toward punishment, E. V. Arnold says that "as a remedy for cruelty in its milder forms it is well to consider the true objects of punishment; first, to reform the offender; secondly, to make others better by a warning; thirdly, to give a sense of safety to the community by removing offenders."<sup>70</sup> Judged on these principles (though actually the cruelty involved in the king's case was not mild) the king's behavior hardly exhibits a Stoic bias. He did not reform the offender, and whether others were made better is debatable, since the king gave an indication that he was not in favor of execution as a form of punishment. Whether the community felt safer with a king who was evidently reluctant to enforce the law is also highly debatable; but, at the least, the offender was removed.

Douglas Bush, referring to what Culler says, reports that "the poem dramatizes 'the conflict between redemptive and sociological justice,' between absolute and

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<sup>70</sup>E. V. Arnold, Roman Stoicism, p. 336.

relativistic ethics, and also the conflict between reason and feeling, age and youth."<sup>71</sup> According to Fuller, ethics is the theory of the nature of the good and of how it can be achieved.<sup>72</sup> Probably all that can be inferred from what Bush and Fuller say is that assessing judgment in conflicts involving justice, ethics, reason, feeling, age, and youth depends largely upon a personal point of view and the sense of responsibility and duty. Duty, if it is pushed to the exclusion of all else, can at times be sickening.

Toward the end of the poem the king seems to be salving his conscience by attempting to justify his actions. He says that he is young and inexperienced and cannot reason things out, and that he has a responsibility to a higher authority or rule, but he identifies no rule: The rule he refers to seems to be a moral rule or value rather than an objective rule of reason. The king says,

O Vizier, thou art old, I young!  
Clear in these things I cannot see.  
My head is burning, and a heat  
Is in my skin which angers me.

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<sup>71</sup>Bush, p. 46.

<sup>72</sup>Fuller, p. xxxviii.

But hear ye this, ye sons of men!  
 They that bear rule, and are obey'd,  
 Unto a rule more strong than theirs  
 Are in their turn obedient made.

(ll. 181-188)

The king makes one last attempt to soothe his conscience and to make amends for having been instrumental in causing the death sentence for the Moolah to be carried out. The king has a brick tomb nearby, and he directs that the corpse be interred there. After the body is placed in the grave, the king says,

Bring water, nard, and linen rolls!  
 Wash off all blood, set smooth each limb!  
 Then say: 'He was not wholly vile,  
 Because a king shall bury him.'

(ll. 229-232)

While the king may have been trying to placate his conscience, the Moolah had already been convicted by his and nothing could change this. Here, again, the king may have been trying to avoid the reality of the situation by rationalizing his burying the Moolah in the royal tomb. There is a Biblical parallel here with the story of Joseph of Arimethea burying the body of the crucified Christ in his own tomb, indicating that he felt compassion for the Man and that his death was an example of man's cruelty to man.

From the beginning, the king is involved feelingly with the Moolah, who is insisting that he be punished for his crime. He is involved even to the point of having the criminal buried in the royal tomb. The king does not seem to have been able to remain objective in the affair. He may have been paying lip-service to Stoicism in that he did what was required of him, but his will did not parallel his deed. He did what had to be done only after he could not escape the burden of his responsibility. If the king had been able to see clearly in these things, then, his reason would have eliminated the problem; but the fact that he was not able to see these things clearly provides the basis for the poem.

An interesting speculation presents itself with the word "fretted" in line 221: "I have a fretted brickwork tomb." The word could also be applied to the agitated and upset condition of the king in his reaction to the entire affair.

In both of these poems there is a reluctance on the part of both individuals to perform their duty. In the first, the king shirks his duty for a short life of revelry in the world. In the second, the king is weak and overly sympathetic, cannot reason clearly, and allows

his emotions to dictate his actions. In either case, it is apparent that Stoic attention to duty is overshadowed by sensual and emotional appeal.

#### Apathy and Resignation

An early poem by Arnold, "Resignation," is not the easiest poem to understand, although it seems simple enough in dealing with a walk the poet is taking with his sister, duplicating pretty much a walk they had taken over the same Lake District ten years previously. The poem is a dialogue between the poet and his sister, and Trilling interprets the conversation as showing that Fausta frets at her inaction because she wants a life of accomplishment and adventure. Her brother, the poet, on the other hand, contrasts her view with his own view of the more admirable life of the Poet.<sup>73</sup> Henry Duffin believes that the relevance of the walk to the argument of the poem is not obvious.<sup>74</sup> Another writer, Paul Baum, says that the real argument or subject of the poem is Arnold's own problem--his conflict or his choice between the world and his own

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<sup>73</sup>Trilling, p. 99.

<sup>74</sup>Duffin, p. 97.

soul. He says that under the pretense of a conversation with Fausta, who is both Arnold's sister and Arnold himself, Arnold argues the possibilities of both the life of the adventurer and the life of the poet. Baum further says that the language of the poem is often actually obscure and that the poem is far from a coherent statement of the philosophy of resignation.<sup>75</sup> One can discern clearly the poet's expression of the beauty of nature and his ecstatic joy in appreciation of it, but it is evident that he has no longing for it. It is evident that both the walk and the conversation with Fausta become the vehicle by which Arnold presents his arguments for and against the kind of life that will merely "fill the day" and the life of the Poet.

After beginning the poem in a kind of historical panorama, in the third stanza Arnold regresses or reminisces about a previous walk, and it is here where he admires the beauty in nature and evidently experiences an emotional reaction from the scenery. He admires the "valley pastures" that "one by one, / Are threaded, quiet in the sun" (ll. 50-51). This is followed by the lines:

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<sup>75</sup>Baum, pp. 26, 27.

Cool farms, with open-lying stores,  
 Under their burnish'd sycamores;  
 All past! and through the trees we glide,  
 Emerging on the green hill-side.  
 (ll. 56-59)

And then he writes of

Mild hollows, and clear heathy swells,  
 The cheerful silence of the fells.  
 (ll. 66-67)

Just how silence can be cheerful is not clear, since silence is the absence of sound or noise. Nevertheless, if silence can be cheerful, then, there seems to be an emotional rapport between Arnold and the surrounding scenery. A few lines later on Arnold seems to revel in the happiness of being with people, since he rejoices in being near farms, and farms necessarily mean people. He says

O joy! again the farms appear.  
 Cool shade is there, and rustic cheer;  
 There springs the brook will guide us down,  
 Bright comrade, to the noisy town.  
 (ll. 74-77)

The stanza ends with another incongruity when the poet says, "We bathed our hands with speechless glee, / That night, in the wide-glimmering sea" (ll. 84-85). Glee, while it may be speechless, somehow does not seem to be a

Stoic characteristic, but rather an expression of intense emotional merriment.

Two other lines seem to be in opposition to each other and tend to confuse the reader. In line 67 the poet writes of "The cheerful silence of the fells," and, in line 266, the poet writes of "The solemn hills around us spread." The word "fells" could mean an upper pasture or plateau very possibly similar to the hills. It is not easy to understand how the hills or fells could be cheerful and solemn at the same time.

In the sixth stanza the poet seems moved by a heavenly inspiration, but he refuses it to overview man in a continuum of life:

The poet, to whose mighty heart  
 Heaven doth a quicker pulse impart,  
 Subdues that energy to scan  
 Not his own course, but that of man.  
 (ll. 144-147)

In the next stanza the poet implies acceptance of the inspiration or reliance on a vision when Fausta says,

In the day's life, whose iron round  
Hems us all in, he is not bound;  
He leaves his kind, o'erleaps their pen,  
And flees the common life of men.  
He escapes thence, but we abide--  
Not deep the poet sees, but wide.  
 (ll. 209-214)

The "he" is the ideal poet, and the inspiration or vision seems to provide an escape for the poet rather than a withdrawal whereby through objective reasoning he might find an answer to his problem.

Toward the end of the sixth stanza Arnold seems to indicate a oneness with the world and life. He says,

. . .--tears  
 Are in his eyes, and in his ears  
 The murmur of a thousand years.  
 Before him he sees life unroll  
 A placid and continuous whole--  
 (ll. 186-190)

The stanza closes with the lines,

Fate gave, what chance shall not control,  
 His sad lucidity of soul.  
 (ll. 197-198)

The oneness with mankind, the clear perception of soul given by fate, and the poet's perception being marked by scope rather than depth do not seem to be purely Stoic, but rather hint of Buddhist or Oriental philosophy. The concentration by the poet on the particular subject of mankind so that his mind passes through different stages of absorption, as in a trance, and sees "wide but not deep" tends to indicate this. That Arnold was exposed to this

Oriental philosophy is shown by two writers. Leon Gottfried says, "Resignation has received consistent appreciation from his critics, and sources of its thought have been more or less fruitfully sought in . . . the Bhagavad Gita."<sup>76</sup> Similarly, Douglas Bush points out that "among the apparent influences operating here were some works Arnold especially prized . . . the Bhagavad Gita."<sup>77</sup> (It may be recalled that Bush has this same comment to make about the influence of the Bhagavad Gita on Arnold's ("My-cerinus.")

Line 67, where the poet refers to "cheerful silence," and line 84, where he refers to "speechless glee," may be interpreted to mean that the poet is in the scene but not part of it; that is, he is impartial to the scene, and, while he appreciates what is going on, he has no desire to take part either in the glee or the speaking. Trilling, in commenting on "Resignation," notes that "the man whose spirit is controlled," says the Bhagavad Gita,

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<sup>76</sup>Gottfried, Matthew Arnold and the Romantics, p. 219.

<sup>77</sup>Bush, p. 35.

"who looks on all impartially, sees Self abiding in all beings, and all beings in self."<sup>78</sup>

In the ninth stanza the poet says to Fausta,

Rather thyself for some aim pray  
Nobler than this, to fill the day; . . .  
(ll. 239-240)

Here, the poet is telling Fausta to pray for guidance in life rather than to seek merely to "fill the day" with unfruitful activities. While Arnold advises his sister to pray for inspiration as to what to do with her life, in the last stanza the poet seems to say that nothing will change things. He writes,

And even could the intemperate prayer  
Man iterates, while these forbear,  
For movement, for an ampler sphere,  
Pierce Fate's impenetrable ear;  
Not milder is the general lot  
Because our spirits have forgot,  
In action's dizzying eddy whirl'd,  
The something that infects the world.  
(ll. 271-278)

There are three key words in this passage which suggest that the poet does not believe what he says. The "intemperate" or excessive prayer leads one to imagine that

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<sup>78</sup>Trilling, p. 99.

the person is badgering Fate, possibly because the one who is praying is confused and lacks humility. "Pierce" and "impenetrable" are mutually exclusive so that whatever prayer is prayed it cannot enter the ear of Fate, in the first place. While the poet may see wide but not deep, he may not be any better off than the one who prays intemperately trying to pierce the impenetrable ear of Fate.

The several incongruities mentioned tend to point out that the poet's reasoning contained inconsistencies, and his references to chance, spirits, heavenly inspiration and vision, prayer, and the overview of life and oneness with mankind indicate that the solace he sought came not solely from Stoicism, but possibly from other sources. Douglas Bush says, "In his [Arnold's] troubled search for light and direction he found help in such ... guides as ... the Bhagavad Gita [and] the Bible."<sup>79</sup>

Arnold's two "Marguerite" poems are two sections of a seven section series of love poems entitled "Switzerland." From the beginning the reader becomes aware that there is a strong emotional undercurrent running through the poem. That Arnold is not above being moved by passion

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<sup>79</sup>Bush, pp. xviii, xix.

is shown by Bush as he comments on the Marguerite series: "The depth of first love makes Marguerite a symbol of Arnold's youth and his capacity for being swept away by feeling."<sup>80</sup> This emotional undercurrent is evident as early as the third section of this series, where Arnold refers to Marguerite's being subject to "strong emotion's sway" and says, "I too have wish'd, no woman more, / This starting, feverish heart away." She then says, "I too have long'd for trenchant force, / And will like a divid-ing spear" (ll. 30-34). Marguerite is deeply in love with Arnold and wishes that she had the courage and the knowledge to make a decision one way or the other about her feelings for Arnold. This is a situation which calls for a clear-cut decision to be made, but Arnold is as emotionally involved as Marguerite is and unable to be objective about it. The poem records an emotional conflict that cannot be resolved at the moment.

The fourth section, entitled "Isolation: To Marguerite," begins on an emotional tone which is carried through this section and through the remainder of the poem. The poet bids his heart "more constant be" and bids it

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<sup>80</sup>Bush, p. 52.

"keep the world away" (ll. 2, 3). That the poet is lonely becomes evident through the rest of this section, and the loneliness is not because he is a Stoic, but rather because Marguerite has left him and he is longing for her return. The last stanza of this section is highly illusionary in tone; through a dream the poet attempts to cure his loneliness. He says, speaking of "happier men":

. . . they, at least,  
 Have dream'd two human hearts might blend  
 In one, and were through faith released  
 From isolation without end  
 Prolong'd; nor knew, although not less  
 Alone than thou, their loneliness.  
 (ll. 37-42)

The fifth section entitled "To Marguerite-- Continued" refers to the continuing loneliness felt by the poet (line 4) as the result of being separated from his love and not because of a philosophy. Then, in line 13, the poet admits to a "longing like despair" to be with his love again, and in line 18 "wishes" that their island-selves were together again: "Oh might our marges meet again!"

Section six, "Absence," continues the highly emotional tone and shows that reason cannot provide an answer to the problem, for the poet says,

This is the curse of life! that not  
 A nobler, calmer train  
 Of wiser thoughts and feelings blot  
 Our passions from our brain;  
 (ll. 5-8)

The next stanza indicates that the inward self is incapable of coping with this particular problem, for the poet says:

But each day brings its petty dust  
 Our soon-choked souls to fill,  
 And we forget because we must  
 And not because we will.  
 (ll. 9-12)

There is no virtue in this particular situation because while each is in love with the other and knows that there must be a parting and forgetting, they forget because they must and not because they will. Fuller has previously pointed out that virtue according to the Stoic was a matter of the will, and not of the deed.

This section closes with the intimation that the poet is not exactly calmed and ennobled by his decision to attempt to forget Marguerite and accept a new love, but only chilled by it,<sup>81</sup> for he says,

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<sup>81</sup>Baum, p. 69.

I struggle towards the light--but oh,  
 While yet the night is chill,  
 Upon time's barren, stormy flow,  
 Stay with me, Marguerite, still!  
 (ll. 17-20)

Baum makes a further observation by saying that the poet exhibited a lack of constancy, he could not make a decision, he vacillated between trying to hold on to Marguerite and giving her up, he sought "escape" because he did not want to face the situation, he could not arrive at a reasonable solution, and he was neither apathetic nor resigned to the situation.<sup>82</sup> The impression gained here is that Arnold once again wanted the best of two worlds, not wanting to give up either his old love or his new love.

The seventh and last section, composed ten years after the preceding, continues the emotional, longing, despairing tone and ends with the lament of the poet. He relies on feelings and intuition to keep the memory of Marguerite alive, for he says,

Or is it over?--art thou dead?--  
 Dead!--and no warning shiver ran  
 Across my heart, to say thy thread  
 Of life was cut, and closed thy span!

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<sup>82</sup>Ibid., p. 68.

Could from earth's ways that figure slight  
 Be lost, and I not feel 'twas so?  
 Of that fresh voice the gay delight  
 Fail from earth's air, and I not know?  
 (ll. 25-32)

This section and the poem end on a note of sorrowing for a lost love, despair, and lament as Arnold says,

A gesture--anything--retain'd  
 Of all that was my Marguerite's own?

I will not know! For wherefore try,  
 To things by mortal course that live,  
 A shadowy durability,  
 For which they were not meant, to give?

Like driftwood spars, which meet and pass  
 Upon the boundless ocean-plain,  
 So on the sea of life, alas!  
 Man meets man--meets, and quits again.

I knew it when my life was young;  
 I feel it still, now youth is o'er.  
 --The mists are on the mountain hung,  
 And Marguerite I shall see no more.  
 (ll. 39-52)

The emotional upset of Arnold is shown throughout the poem, and it cannot be denied that the poet's involvement with Marguerite was more than superficial. Arnold's involvement with Marguerite was such that it was beyond the ability of Stoicism to provide a solution, since the answer involved more of the heart than it did of the intellect. Trilling believes that in this poem both

the past and the present are represented by Marguerite and Arnold. He says that Marguerite represents the past "and Arnold is the present, beclouded and diminished in emotion."<sup>83</sup> If this is so then there can be no answer, since past and present cannot be one and the same.

Resignation as viewed by the Stoic requires that one become indifferent to externals. The two poems in this section show that to the contrary, Arnold was more than a little involved with and dwelt on each situation--or in the two incidents evolving from the one situation. That he was neither resigned nor even apathetic is evident from the fact that he wrote about them in the first place. It can be concluded, therefore, that Arnold does not emerge as an outstanding example of Stoicism.

#### Reason

There are passages in Arnold's prose similar to passages in his poetry which tend to show that he was not such a strong adherent to Stoic apathy and detachment as some writers make him out to be. Arnold's essays are critical essays committed to judging, censuring, or, at least,

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<sup>83</sup>Trilling, p. 128.

assessing. His essays "Marcus Aurelius" and "Spinoza and the Bible" indicate that Arnold was concerned with the charges against Marcus Aurelius as a persecutor of the Christians and the strict, abstract intellectualism of Spinoza which tended to blot out emotional appeal. Arnold, at least, had to have been involved to a degree, since he had acted to put his thoughts into writing and expressing himself with some emotion.

"Marcus Aurelius" has already been mentioned with respect to Arnold's changing of word meanings (e.g., "persecutor"), but the additional point should be made that Marcus Aurelius apparently was becoming too affected by Christianity for Arnold not to mention it. Marcus Aurelius, evidently, is torn between giving in to emotion and showing compassion for the Christians, while at the same time maintaining an outward display of Stoic indifference. Stuart Sherman suggests that the emotional intensity of the situation probably caused Arnold to see Marcus Aurelius as a Roman emperor in "wistful solitude . . . in his high seriousness." Sherman says, further, that Arnold is speaking of an experience identical with his own and speaks with such intense emotion of

sympathy that he seems to be speaking about himself.<sup>84</sup> In this essay, Arnold states that Marcus Aurelius was yearning for something beyond himself, something unattained by him, even though Marcus Aurelius was regarded as self-governed.<sup>85</sup>

Sherman, in referring to the close of this essay, cites that portion where Arnold writes,

" . . . What an affinity for Christianity had this persecutor of the Christians! The effusion of Christianity, its relieving tears, its happy self-sacrifice, were the very element, one feels, for which his soul longed; they were near him, they brushed him, he touched them, he passed them by."<sup>86</sup>

It seems that Stoicism did not provide a completely satisfactory answer for Marcus Aurelius, so that in rejecting those "effusions" of Christianity (overflowings of reverence, gratitude, hope, joy, love, sorrow, for example) he accepted Stoicism as the orthodox alternative, but not because he fully believed in it. The "self-governed" Marcus Aurelius had no acceptable outlet for his expressions

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<sup>84</sup>Sherman, pp. 180, 181, 182.

<sup>85</sup>Ibid., p. 181.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid.

of emotion. In his preface to God and the Bible, Arnold indicates the power for morality that Marcus Aurelius lacked. It was the power of Christianity which lies "in the immense emotion which it has excited; in its engaging, for the government of man's conduct, the mighty forces of love, reverence, gratitude, hope, pity, and awe."<sup>87</sup>

Douglas Bush, referring to Arnold's "Marcus Aurelius," says,

. . . The main theme of his religious books appeared, for instance, in the deeply felt essay on Marcus Aurelius, where Arnold emphasized "the necessity of an inspiration, a joyful emotion, to make moral action perfect."<sup>88</sup>

Arnold clearly believed that Marcus Aurelius felt a philosophical insufficiency in Stoicism as a moral guide. It failed to inspire and rejoice the emperor, to the extent that he failed to achieve his goal in his search for moral perfection.

Baruch Spinoza, a philosopher who strongly supported reason and leaned toward Stoicism, was read frequently by Arnold, but Spinoza also receives a share of

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<sup>87</sup>Cited by Gottfried, Matthew Arnold and the Romantics, p. 57.

<sup>88</sup>Bush, p. 169.

criticism from Arnold. In "Spinoza and the Bible," Arnold seems to take exception to the argument that Spinoza uses with respect to miracles. The argument is not so much circular as it is contradictory, and Arnold seems to be questioning Spinoza's reasoning. In this essay, Arnold writes:

. . . The reader feels that Spinoza, proceeding on a hypothesis, has presented him with the assertion of a miracle, and afterwards, proceeding à priori, has presented him with the assertion that a miracle is impossible. He feels that Spinoza does not adequately reconcile these two assertions by declaring that any event really miraculous, if found recorded in Scripture, must be "a spurious addition made to the Scripture by sacrilegious man." Is, then he asks, the vera vox of Mount Sinai in Spinoza's opinion a spurious addition made to Scripture by sacrilegious men; or, if not, how is it not miraculous?<sup>88</sup>

Arnold, continuing his criticism of Spinoza, who was a Hebrew, finds fault with Spinoza's claim that the Hebrew prophets were one of the main elements of weakness of the Hebrew nation. Arnold, then, continues his criticism of Spinoza by saying, "No intelligent man can read the Tractatus Theologico-Politicus without being profoundly instructed by it." Yet, Arnold asserts that the reader

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<sup>88</sup>Lectures and Essays in Criticism, vol. 3 of Works, edited by Robert H. Super, pp. 172, 173.

will feel that, "in a certain sense, it [the Tractatus] is in want of a base and in want of supports." Arnold continues being critical of Spinoza's relation toward things religious by saying that "his cheerful and self-sufficing Stoicism is essentially alien to the spirit of the New [Testament]." Once more, in this same essay, Arnold says, "Spinoza never forgets his destination: 'the love of God is man's highest happiness and blessedness, and the final end and aim of all human actions.'"<sup>90</sup>

Stuart Sherman, in commenting on Arnold's writings on the works of other men, says that a spiritual portrait of Arnold could be drawn by selective extracts from these writings. Among the values of others that Arnold shared he mentions Spinoza's desire for "the love and knowledge of God." Sherman goes on to say that "Arnold distinguishes the Christian's love of God, which is primarily emotional, from Spinoza's love of God, which is primarily intellectual."<sup>91</sup> On the one hand, then, Sherman says that Arnold shared Spinoza's desire for the love and knowledge of God but that Arnold characterizes Spinoza as

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<sup>90</sup>Ibid., pp. 174, 177, 179, 180.

<sup>91</sup>Sherman, pp. 179, 180.

having an intellectual love for God rather than an emotional one.

Trilling continues along this line of thought when he says about Arnold's prose writing that "one of the discoveries of Arnold's criticism was that intellect was not enough, that it could not be the guide to a multitude of matters for the multitude of mankind--that religion still had its important place."<sup>92</sup> For all practical purposes, from the foregoing, it seems that intellect, e.g., logic and reason, is not sufficient as a guide for life. By extension, Stoicism does not provide a sufficient guide, either. Arnold concludes that there must be a blending of both intellect and religion in the make-up of a full life.

Trilling also comments on Arnold's essay, "Pagan and Mediaeval Religious Sentiment." Referring to the "old pagan world" that Arnold writes about in his essay, he observes that "Arnold is to pay his respects [to paganism] even while he speaks of its failure as a way of life for the millions of mankind who must forego the 'religion of pleasure' for Christianity, 'the religion of sorrow.'"

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<sup>92</sup>Trilling, p. 193.

Trilling believes Arnold's essay illustrates both the charm and insufficiency of pagan feeling.<sup>93</sup> Further on, Trilling comments on both the essay on Marcus Aurelius and the essay on paganism and religion by saying,

. . . The essay on Marcus Aurelius insists on the advantages of religion over philosophy; the essay "Pagan and Mediaeval Religious Sentiment" shows the advantage of the religion of sorrow over the religion of pleasure despite the charm of the latter. If negativism lies anywhere, Arnold insists, it does not lie in Christianity but in the intellectual and philosophic systems of morality which guide life but cannot affirm it.<sup>94</sup>

It is evident from Trilling's analysis that Arnold is pulling away from the "intellectual and philosophic systems" and moving in the direction indicated by the "advantages of religion over philosophy."

In his essay, "Pagan and Mediaeval Religious Sentiment," Arnold writes,

Now, the poetry of Theocritus' hymn is poetry treating the world according to the demands of the senses; the poetry of St. Francis's hymn is poetry treating the world according to the demand of the heart and imagination. The first takes the world by

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<sup>93</sup>Ibid., p. 125.

<sup>94</sup>Ibid., p. 221.

its outward, sensible side; the second, by its inward, symbolical side.<sup>95</sup>

Arnold, in this same essay, says "human nature is neither all senses and understanding, nor all heart and imagination" and he also says, "the power of God is mighty in them [the race of mortal men] and groweth not old."<sup>96</sup> At this time Arnold seems more in sympathy with Christianity than with Stoicism. This idea tends to agree with Brooke's idea mentioned previously that Arnold's self-isolation (i.e., withdrawal) was modified.

In view of what has been pointed out not only by what these writers have said but also from Arnold's essays, it is evident that Arnold was not enchanted with Stoicism and that he came to accept what could be termed a less Stoic, if not a counter-Stoic, outlook on life. While reason has a place in life, religion along with emotion also has an important part.

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<sup>95</sup>Lectures and Essays in Criticism, vol. 3 of Works, edited by Robert H. Super, p. 225.

<sup>96</sup>Ibid., pp. 226, 231.

## C H A P T E R     V I

### CONCLUSION

It was the objective of this thesis to provide sufficient documentation to create a reasonable assumption that along with Matthew Arnold's inclination toward Stoicism there existed also a definite counter-Stoic attitude. No attempt was made to prove that Arnold's counter-Stoicism was due to any one circumstance in his social environment, education, or culture, but only that it was the result of the impact created by all of these factors working concurrently in his life. Not all of Arnold's poetry or all of his prose was examined, but only those poems and essays that showed Arnold's counter-Stoic as well as his Stoic leanings. It is conceivable that not every poem or essay of Arnold's would lend itself to this kind of examination. Nevertheless, nothing in his writings that would lessen the validity of this thesis was omitted from consideration. Arnold's counter-Stoicism was not proved to be only a particular philosophy or belief; rather, the aim was to show that there were numerous manifestations of Arnold's thinking which ran counter to some of the Stoic tenets stated at the beginning of this thesis.

This thesis has attempted to show that the Stoicism attributed to Arnold did not exclude his consideration of other beliefs. Beginning with Chapter II several factors which affected Arnold's beliefs were examined, among them his education, his social background, the changing milieu in which he lived, the readings as recorded in his notebooks, and his personal relationships.

Chapter III provided an opportunity to examine several major Stoic principles, and it was demonstrated that some of these principles may have contributed to an apparent confusion or conflict of beliefs in Arnold.

In Chapter IV, several items were examined which were believed pertinent to Arnold's counter-Stoicism. It was shown that Arnold seemed to be continually seeking answers to his problems by exploring various philosophies, including Stoicism and Christianity, but that his lack of success caused him to become dissatisfied with them. The view that Arnold explored several means of finding answers to his problems is supported by Douglas Bush, who points out that Arnold, in his "troubled search for light and direction," found help in such guides as the Bhagavad Gita and the Bible, and that among the several writers who

influenced Arnold was Thomas à Kempis. That Arnold's writings were influenced by one or more of these sources is also shown by Bush, who says that Empedocles' speech "draws wisdom from many sources which had become more or less parts of Arnold's being," among them the Bhagavad Gita.<sup>1</sup> Some of the factors mentioned in early chapters were examined again as they continued to impinge upon Arnold's life. Some of the analyses undertaken indicated the development of a melancholia in his poetry which became a characteristic of his poems. It was shown that Arnold was, himself, no philosopher and that he tended to mistrust systematic thinking.

In Chapter V some of Arnold's pertinent poetry and prose were examined to show that counter-Stoic (or non-Stoic) strains were identifiable in each selection. It was shown that some of Arnold's poetry contains numerous references or appeals to such non-Stoic characteristics as prayer, inspiration, emotional appeals, intuition, and love. It has been similarly shown that Arnold was not always a systematic thinker, a conclusion supported by Warren D. Anderson, who says that "In Harmony with

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<sup>1</sup>Bush, pp. xvii, xviii, xix, 35, 37.

Nature" is an anomaly.<sup>2</sup> Some other non-Stoic tendencies appearing in Arnold's poetry were pointed out; for example, that he valued calm, but not the Stoic calm; that he appreciated reason, but did not trust the philosophic, systematic kind; that he accepted imagination as a basic guide to the good life, a mental power not accepted by the Stoics; and that he also exhibited emotional involvement rather than objective resignation. There are indications, too, that his attempts at objectivity with respect to some situations consisted of a mixture of Buddhist detachment rather than Stoic calm. It was also shown that Arnold's tendency to accept some religious beliefs was not Stoic.

It cannot be gainsaid that some Stoic characteristics were reflected in Matthew Arnold's writings. At the same time, considerable evidence points to several counter-Stoic characteristics that dilute or modify them seriously.

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<sup>2</sup>Anderson, p. 145.

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