On the whole, these are much sadder ages than the early ones; not sadder in a noble and deep way, but in a dim, wearied way,—the way of ennui, and jaded intellect, and uncomfortable-ness of soul and body. The Middle Ages had their wars and agonies, but also intense delights. Their gold was dashed with blood, but ours is sprinkled with dust.—John Ruskin, Modern Painters III (1856)

The predominance of thought, of reflection, in modern epochs is not without its penalties; in the unsound, in the over-tasked, in the over-sensitive, it has produced the most painful, the most lamentable results; it has produced a state of feeling unknown to less enlightened but perhaps healthier epochs—the feeling of depression, the feeling of ennui. Depression and ennui; these are the characteristics stamped on how many of the representative works of modern times!—Matthew Arnold, "On the Modern Element in Literature" (1857)
The Modern Element in Art and Literature

The fact that "The Nature of Gothic" is so often reprinted in isolation from the rest of *The Stones of Venice* may give the impression that in 1853 Ruskin's career had taken a definitive new direction and that his life had assumed its distinctive and permanent form. But Ruskin's letters in the period immediately following the publication of the work he had written in such joy show that *The Stones of Venice* was but a halfway house on his path to a new and less congenial kind of work.

Ruskin's demanding conscience, far from being satisfied with his massive three-volume effort to enlist art in the service of morality, now reproached him more than ever before for his aloofness from mundane human affairs. To observe Ruskin in these years is to be reminded of Bernard Shaw's definition of the Puritanical Englishman as someone who thinks he is being moral when he is only being uncomfortable. No more than before was Ruskin's discomfort over his ambiguous role in the world purely the result of external criticism, though such criticism certainly existed. John Millais (a prejudiced source, to be sure) described Ruskin in the very month (July) that the second and third volumes of *The Stones of Venice* were appearing as "a good fellow but not of our kind, his soul . . . always with the clouds and out of reach of ordinary mortals." But Ruskin's real problem was that he was becoming too sensitive to the plight of ordinary mortals for his own comfort, and was already growing desperate to find a means of response that was commensurate with the massive-ness of the problem, or at least an intellectual point of view from which to survey it in all its variety and complexity: "The whole sys-tem of modern society, politics, and religion seems to me so exquis-itely absurd that I know not where to begin about it—or to end."
My father keeps me in order, or I should be continually getting into scrapes. . . . \(^2\)

Far from thinking that *The Stones of Venice* had fulfilled his deep moral and religious obligations, Ruskin now felt that he had never in his work been other than comfortable, or done more than please himself. Despite all his ingenious efforts to devote his books on art to the service of man and the glory of God, he felt as he approached his thirty-fifth birthday that

my next birthday is the keystone of my arch of life . . . and up to this time I cannot say that I have in any way "taken up my cross" or "denied myself"; neither have I visited the poor nor fed them, but have spent my money and time on my own pleasure or instruction. I find I cannot be easy in doing this any more, for I feel that, if I were to die at present, God might most justly say to me, "Thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things.” I find myself always doing what I like, and that is certainly not the way to heaven. I feel no call to part with anything that I have, but I am going to preach some most severe doctrines in my next book, and I *must* act up to them in not going on spending in works of art.\(^3\)

To cease spending enormous amounts of money on works of art may seem rather a paltry step to take in the direction of selling all one has and giving it to the poor, but for Ruskin it seemed the natural first step to take, for it was sure to cause him pain.

If doing as one liked was not the way to heaven, neither was withdrawal from the world, always a powerful temptation to Ruskin. His mother at this time was even more concerned than was her wont about his health and tried to exact from her son a promise not to lecture until he was forty-two. He responded to her pleas by invoking the great Victorian watchword, *duty*: "There is a great deal to be done in the world which is inconsistent with health—yet is duty. Perhaps for *my health*, it might be better that I should declare at once I wanted to be a Protestant monk: separate from my wife and go and live in that
hermitage above Sion which I have always rather envied. But then I
don't think my works . . . would do so much good as when I bear
a little with the world. . . . " In the deepest part of his soul Ruskin
must have known that he could not be true to himself or even truly
happy in isolation from society. "Men like Ruskin," Shaw was later
to write, " . . . have enormous social appetites and very fastidious
personal ones. They are not content with handsome houses: they want
handsome cities. . . . They turn up their noses at their neighbor's
drains, and are made ill by the architecture of their neighbors' houses.
. . . The very air is not good enough for them: there is too much fac­
tory smoke in it. They even demand abstract conditions: justice, hon­
or, a noble moral atmosphere, a mystic nexus to replace the cash
nexus."5

But the more deeply involved Ruskin became in the effort to allevi­
ate human suffering and to bring happiness to others, the more loudly
he began to deplore his own lost happiness. It was to be one of the
terrible ironies of his career that he had no sooner published a work
asserting that the right question to be asked respecting any product
was whether the worker was happy in producing it than he was im­
pelled by his uneasy conscience toward a kind of work that made him
miserably unhappy.

The year 1854 was for Ruskin one of violent fluctuation between
effervescent enthusiasm and blank despair. It was the year of the dis­
integration and annulment of his marriage in July but also of a great
sense of relief and freedom after the ordeal was over. He again trav­
eled in his beloved Switzerland in preparation for continuing Modern
Painters; and he was, as usual, filled with myriad plans and proj­
ects:

. . . I am rolling projects over and over in my head. I want
to give short lectures to about 200 at once in turn, of the
sign painters, and shop decorators, and writing masters, and
upholsterers, and masons, and brickmakers, and glass-blow­
ers, and pottery people, and young artists, and young men
in general, and school-masters, and young ladies in general,
and school-mistresses; and I want to teach Illumination to the
sign painters and the younger ladies; and to have prayer
books all written again (only the Liturgy altered first, as I
told you), and I want to explode printing, and gunpowder
—the two great curses of the age; I begin to think that
abominable art of printing is the root of all the mischief—it
makes people used to have everything the same shape. And I mean to lend out Liber Studiorum and Albert Dürers
to everybody who wants them; and to make copies of all
fine thirteenth-century manuscripts, and lend them out—all
for nothing, of course; and to have a room where anybody
can go in all day and always see nothing in it but what is
good, with a little printed explanatory catalogue saying why
it is good; and I want to have a black hole, where they shall
see nothing but what is bad, filled with Claudes, and Sir
Charles Barry’s architecture, and so on; and I want to have a
little Academy of my own in all the manufacturing towns,
and to get the young artists—Pre-Raphaelite always—to help
me; and I want to have an Academy exhibition, an opposition shop, where all the pictures shall be hung on the line—in
nice little rooms decorated in a Giottesque manner—and
no bad pictures let in, and none good turned out, and very
few altogether—and only a certain number of people let in
each day, by ticket, so as to have no elbowing. And as all this
is merely by the way, while I go on with my usual work about
Turner, and collect materials for a great work I mean to write
on politics—founded on the thirteenth century—I shall have
plenty to do when I get home.  

Yet this irresistible buoyancy masked a feeling of growing
desperation. For the more Ruskin saw of the world, the more help­less he felt to right its disastrous course, and the more doubtful he be­came about the possibility of doing this “merely by the way” as he
pursued his “usual work about Turner.” “The more I see of the hu­man race,” he wrote to Acland in July, “the more I think they are
divided into two classes—intensely fixed in their natures—creatures
made to honour and to dishonour, as the Potter willed. At least I
find it a marvellous hard thing to Unbake myself—which I have been trying to do more than usual lately. . . .” In August he counseled a young friend to a patience and a resignation he could not encompass himself. Long and steady effort made in a contented way, he advised J. J. Laing, does more than violent effort made for some strong motive or at the call of enthusiastic impulses. Great things come easily and naturally, for they flow from one's genius; the "innumerable vexations and irritations" of life generally result from such noble motives as the wish to "do good to your fellow creatures." "The great lesson we have to learn in this world is to give it all up. It is not so much resolution as renunciation, not so much courage as resignation, that we need." But it was one thing to counsel resignation, another to practice it. At the very time that Ruskin was preaching renunciation of the world, he was telling his disciple Furnivall that "I must speak if I see people thinking what I know is wrong. . . . Until people are ready to receive all I say about art as 'unquestionable,' just as they receive what Faraday tells them about chemistry, I don't consider myself to have any reputation at all worth caring about."

Ruskin might demonstrate that good work was the product of happy workers, and might tell others that work which came easily and naturally was the key to happiness; but his own experience confirmed neither precept. In 1855 he told Rossetti that his own pleasures consisted "in seeing, thinking, reading and making people happy (if I can, consistently with my own comfort)." But he was finding that he could not work toward the happiness of others except at the sacrifice of his own. "All I hope for," he wrote, "is to be able to show, and to make men understand, how they may live more comfortably —get better wages—and be happier and wiser than they are at present." But this kind of "useful" work went against his grain and made him wretched: "I find trying to be of use to people is the most wearying thing possible. The true secret of happiness would be to bolt one's gates, lie on the grass all day, take care not to eat too much dinner, and buy as many Turners as one could afford." The same man who in the winter of 1851–52 had been writing with all the joy that he could ever ascribe to a Gothic sculptor now, in 1855, found that
he was sacrificing his life to his work: "I never write with pleasure to myself—nor with purpose of getting praise to myself—I hate writing—and know that what I do does not deserve high praise, as literature; but I write to tell truths which I can't help crying out about—. . . . ")

William Butler Yeats, a wayward pupil of the school of Ruskin and William Morris, was later to define in starkest terms the alternatives facing the modern writer:

The intellect of man is forced to choose
Perfection of the life, or of the work,
And if it take the second must refuse
A heavenly mansion, raging in the dark.
("The Choice," 1-4)

In 1855, several years before becoming embroiled in the economic and political controversies that were to fill his life with storm and contention, Ruskin was already becoming aware of the choice that was soon to be forced upon him, and of the terrible consequences, the "raging in the dark," that choosing the perfection of the work over perfection of the life might bring. He now found that his favorite figure from the Bible was Job, and his favorite figure from romance, Don Quixote: "If Don Q. had not been mad, I should have liked him best—on the whole I believe I do."

But in 1855 Ruskin has not yet been forced to make the hard choice, and has not yet taken to calling himself, as he later would, "the Don Quixote of Denmark Hill." In the previous year John Stuart Mill had paid high tribute to Ruskin as the single English writer who was not a mere commentator on other people’s ideas but seemed to draw what he said from a source within himself; and in 1856 George Eliot called him "the finest writer living."

As yet the world was all before him; and wherever his omnivorous appetite led him—into the realms of intellect, of politics, or of practice—he found confusion and an invitation to his eager reforming impulse. Moreover, he had sought to bring order into his own confusion of purpose and his miscella-
neous activities by entering what Matthew Arnold liked to call "that most perfidious refuge of men of letters": the profession of teaching.

Ruskin was hard at work on the third and fourth volumes of *Modern Painters* late in 1854—Rossetti had been chiding that "*Modern Painters* . . . will be old masters before the work is ended"—when the Working Men's College opened in an old house in Red Lion Square. This project to give the working classes the same kind of education that the upper classes enjoyed without making them ambitious of rising out of their class had been organized under the leadership of F. D. Maurice and the Christian Socialists, among them Dr. Arnold's pupil Thomas Hughes (who taught gymnastics). But the Platonic idea of the college was contained in the copies of "On the Nature of Gothic," which were distributed, with Ruskin's blessing now, at its opening; and Ruskin was not long in volunteering to teach art at the school.

The question of the practicality of his social doctrines was always to be a sore point with Ruskin. Mill himself had qualified his glowing tribute to Ruskin's unique originality in January 1854 by adding that "to the practical doctrines and tendencies" of Ruskin "there are the gravest objections." Ruskin might bridle at criticisms leveled by the practical men at social critics—"There is really nothing funnier . . . than the way the 'practical' people turn round upon Carlyle and Tennyson and Kingsley, and all Thinkers whatsoever, who find fault with said 'practical' persons, saying, 'You find fault with what is going on—why don't you tell us what would be right?'") Yet his very own principles obliged him to answer them. For a critic who had written that modern thought was morbid and modern work miserable because the two had been unlawfully divorced could hardly evade the question of the practical applicability of his ideas and the practical alternatives he proposed to the existing practices he deplored. Indeed, before he retired from the public eye to Brantwood, he was to have entered the realm of practice in a variety of ways, from slum-clearance to road-mending, which were to call down upon his head the wrath of many, not least among them, as we shall see later, Matthew Arnold.
But Ruskin's first entrance into the realm of "practice," (if we are willing to forgo the popular distinction between those who do and those who teach) was a successful one, partly because it was not a striking departure from his major enterprise. Writing had by this time become for him a form of teaching (if not preaching), and so the class-room instruction was but a variant of his primary activity. He hoped, of course, that it would be a more effective kind of teaching: "One may do more with a man," he later wrote, "by getting ten words spoken with him face to face, than by the black lettering of a whole life's thought."

Ruskin's teaching techniques and purposes were in accordance with the principles he had laid down in his *Times* letter of 1852 on education and in "The Nature of Gothic" on the relation between the workman's life and his work. "My efforts," he told the National Gallery Site Commission in 1857, "are directed not to making a carpenter an artist, but to making him happier as a carpenter." He taught drawing primarily in order to direct his pupils' attention to the beauty of God's work in the natural universe. The aim, in short, was to effect a moral improvement in working men by developing their aesthetic sense.

For four years Ruskin taught a weekly class at the Working Men's College, and the conscientiousness of his practical benevolence can be seen in the following description of his methods, one of many that have been bequeathed us by his grateful students (for Ruskin was, even according to the hostile Ford Madox Brown, "wildly popular with the men"): Mr. Ruskin did not confine his work with the men to mere teaching. He gave the easels for them to work at, and from time to time furnished them with examples for drawing—always trying their powers at first with a round plaster ball pendent from a string, then going on to plaster casts of natural leaves (all of which were paid for by him). Also, he frequently brought drawings by various artists, belonging to him, for the purpose of showing how certain effects were got, e.g., the rounding of a pear by William Hunt. (This
Mr. Ruskin was always pleased to bring anything associated with any work of his in progress, if he thought it would interest the men. I remember, one evening, his showing proofs of "The Lombard Apennine" and "St. George of the Seaweed," then just engraved by Thomas Lupton for vol. iii. of *Modern Painters*. Another time, when he wanted the men, for a change of subject, to draw cordage, he sent me down to a shipbreaker's at Rotherhithe to buy some old ships' hempen cable.18

This letter serves to remind us that Ruskin taught at the college during most of the time that he was composing *Modern Painters* III and IV. It is easy to believe that he partially assuaged whatever feelings of guilt he had about returning to his labor of love begun as a boy by engaging in practical benevolence (of which teaching was but the most public form at this time). He ceased to teach regularly at the college in May of 1858, but returned in 1860 for a term. 1860, however, was the year of *Unto This Last*, and by that time Ruskin had come to believe that in his teaching as in his art criticism he had put the cart before the horse. When in 1867 he had to explain to Maurice why he had ceased attendance at the school altogether, he wrote that "it is not from any failure in my interest in this class that I have ceased from personal attendance. But I ascertained beyond all question that the faculty which my own method of teaching chiefly regarded was necessarily absent in men trained to mechanical toil, that my words and thoughts respecting beautiful things were unintelligible when the eye had been accustomed to the frightfulness of modern city life."17 Ruskin as a schoolmaster taught his pupils much, but they were to teach him more, by enabling him to see that art by itself could not effect moral regeneration in an unregenerate and unreformed society. Arnold was destined to learn a similar lesson in the schools. Only Arnold, unlike Ruskin, would be obliged by his straitened circumstances to remain in the schools and to discover in the maladies of the school system the maladies of English society, and in the effort to reform that school system the principles of his social and political philosophy.
Perhaps it is the optimism natural to young men who have never stood in front of a classroom that leads them to believe that instruction in art and literature can transform the human condition. Arnold had not yet become a school official (though he had spent some months teaching the lower fifth at Rugby) when in 1848 or 1849 he wrote to Clough that "those who cannot read G[ree]k sh[ou]ld read noth­ing but Milton and Wordsworth: the state should see to it. . . . "¹⁸ But Arnold was shortly to find that between literature in general (to say nothing of the poetic life in particular) and state education there existed a violent, though not a natural, antipathy.

It was one thing to say that students should read Milton, another to find people who could teach them how to read Milton. "You should have heard the rubbish the female Principal, a really clever young woman, talked to her class of girls of seventeen to eighteen about a lesson in Milton." To the world at large Arnold was to become known as a champion of classical education, yet it was his constant complaint about the schools that, as he wrote later, in 1868, "We have still to make the mother tongue and its literature a part of the school course. . . . "¹⁹

In Arnold's 1852 report to the government on the elementary schools, he let it be known that the most striking impression he had received of the failure of the elementary schools during his first year as an inspector came from the inability of the pupil-teachers to understand English literature. The pupil-teachers, who had been the prize products of the elementary schools, seemed to Arnold, when he exam­ined them at the end of their apprenticeship, at about age eighteen, possessed of an amount of positive, factual information out of all pro­portion to their mental culture and intelligence: "Young men, whose knowledge of grammar, of the minutest details of geographical and historical facts, and above all of mathematics, is surprising, often cannot paraphrase a plain passage of prose or poetry without totally misapprehending it, or write half a page of composition on any sub­ject without falling into gross blunders of taste and expression." Ar­nold, believing that poetry was a moral instrument, as Ruskin be­lieved that art-teaching would make not artists but better men,
wanted, just as Ruskin did, the same kind of education for these young men that the upper classes received. "Too little attention has hitherto been paid to this side of education; the side through which it chiefly forms the character; the side which has perhaps been too exclusively attended to in schools for the higher classes, and to the development of which it is the boast of what is called classical education to be mainly directed." To remedy the situation, Arnold proposed that the study of portions of the best English authors be given a much larger role in the regular course of instruction.

The extent to which his earliest experience of the failure of English literary education penetrated Arnold’s consciousness can be seen in the way he exploited it, thirty years later, in “Literature and Science,” to prove the inadequacy of a purely scientific education. Arnold never ceased to bemoan his sufferings as a school inspector, and to complain of the obstacle that school-inspection posed to his poetry: "I hope you will remember," he once scolded a correspondent, "that while Mr. Tennyson has nothing to do but to read poetry or write it, I am a school inspector with hundreds of school-children to examine and report upon every week." Nevertheless, Arnold knew that even out of “business documents and school-books,” as Tolstoy describes the prosaic life, one might make, if not poetry, then certainly literature. When he did turn his experience of the classroom into literature, he stressed not the incongruity of the poet mired in a particularly disordered and grimy kind of life but the power of poetry to act, in the best and most literal sense, as a criticism of that life:

I once mentioned in a school-report, how a young man in one of our English training colleges having to paraphrase the passage in Macbeth beginning, “Can’st thou not minister to a mind diseased?” turned this line into, “Can you not wait upon the lunatic?” And I remarked what a curious state of things it would be, if every pupil of our national schools knew, let us say, that the moon is two thousand one hundred and sixty miles in diameter, and thought at the same time that a good paraphrase for “Can’st thou not minister to a mind diseased?” was, “Can you not wait upon the lunatic?”
If one is driven to choose, I think I would rather have a young person ignorant about the moon's diameter, but aware that "Can you not wait upon the lunatic?" is bad, than a young person whose education had been such as to manage things the other way.\(^{22}\)

But in the fifties Arnold had not yet achieved that Olympian detachment from his own miseries which would allow him to transform the life in the schools into the object of literary criticism. School-inspecting was for him still only life, and not yet literature; and an oppressive life it was. He who had recently called on poets to rejoice their audiences now felt more than ever the joylessness of his own existence. He told his wife that only her presence on some inspection tours could "make this life anything but positive purgatory."Ironically, poetic composition, which had caused him much pain when it was his main occupation, now, as a spare-time activity, provided him with his only pleasure. Of "Sohrab and Rustum," which was to replace "Empedocles on Etna" as the chief poem in the new volume, Arnold wrote to his mother in May, "I have had the greatest pleasure in composing it—a rare thing with me, and . . . a good test of the pleasure what you write is likely to afford to others. . . . " A few months later he told Clough that "a thousand things make one compose or not compose: composition seems to keep alive in me a cheerfulness—a sort of Tüchtigkeit, or natural soundness and valiancy, which I think the present age is fast losing—this is why I like it."

But the predominant mood of these years was grim frustration. "Sohrab and Rustum," he told Clough too, "pleases me better than anything I have yet done—but it is pain and grief composing with such interruptions as I have. . . . " Arnold's duties as an inspector were leading him to believe that life after thirty was little besides "cares." If Ruskin was during these years moved by conscience toward a kind of worldly endeavor uncongenial to his artistic and contemplative tastes, Arnold was compelled by financial necessity to pursue "an employment which I certainly do not like, and which leaves me little time for anything else." Ruskin, when his mother
warned of the damage that lecturing might do to his health, had re­plied that he must do his duty; and Arnold, who suffered not only from the bad health that sometimes beset Ruskin but from such mundane miseries as fatigue, wretched food, and even bare hunger, told his mother at the end of 1854: "I am not very well lately, have had one or two things to bother me, and more and more have the feeling that I do not do my inspecting work really well and satisfactorily; but I have also lately had a stronger wish than usual not to vacillate and be helpless, but to do my duty, whatever that may be; and out of that wish one may always hope to make something."

In the idea of doing one's duty, even if it were in "purgatory," there lay hope; and that hope was by 1859–60 to bear fruit in Arnold's conversion to the cause of popular education. But as yet he not only did not see, but even resisted any suggestion of, a connection between his dreary work and the high educational mission of his father. His mother sends him a newly discovered letter of Dr. Arnold's that plots the education of his children, and he remarks that "this is just what makes him great—that he was not only a good man saving his own soul by righteousness, but that he carried so many others with him in his hand, and saved them, if they would let him, along with himself." Yet Dr. Arnold's son is irritated by having to accept invitations from managers of schools who are recalcitrant toward government regulation yet "ask me on my father's account to come and inspect them"; and he even resents the popular supposition that any son of Thomas Arnold must have a talent for education. He wrote in 1856 to his brother Willy, who had been appointed director of public instruction in the Punjab: "I too have felt the absurdity and disadvantage of our hereditary connexion in the minds of all people with education, and am always tempted to say to people, 'My good friends, this is a matter for which my father certainly had a specialité, but for which I have none whatever.'"

But William Arnold was at least better off than Matthew, for he threw himself into the work and therefore ceased to feel it a burden. "I on the contrary half cannot half will not throw myself into it, and feel the weight of it doubly in consequence." The reason Arnold
could not plunge wholeheartedly into the dreary routine of inspection was that he was determined to save himself for "something worth doing in my own way," although, as he wrote less and less poetry—"Balder Dead" had been the only important new poem in the 1854 volume—he was not at all sure what his own work was. Arnold certainly felt the dullness and subjugation of school inspection to the full, and yet he had sufficient self-knowledge to recognize that "it would have been the same with any active line of life on which I had found myself engaged—even with politics." That it was his destiny to lead a divided life Arnold already knew; and there is fatalistic resignation as well as humor in the picture he gives of himself after telling his brother that he has declined the offer to become colonial secretary of Mauritius at a salary of £1,500 (six hundred more than he earned as an inspector): "The climate of the Mauritius is heavenly and we could have taken the children—I should have sate all day on a coral rock, bathing my legs in the Southern ocean."25

But Arnold was no more likely to go to the Indian Ocean than Ruskin to a Protestant monastery; and the flight into fantasy is abruptly followed by a descent into the great, mundane world of London: "There is nothing here in literature worth speaking of—except that the National Review is doing well—that Ruskin has published a new volume of Modern Painters even fuller than the others of true 'apercus,' even more than the others deprived of the 'ordo concatenatioque veri' which is the one thing needful. However to have good and faithful 'apercus' is a great thing."26

That the third volume of Modern Painters, which Ruskin had published on 15 January 1856, was much on Arnold's mind in March is at least suggested by the fact that, having enlightened his brother about Ruskin's continuing inability to marshal his excellent perceptions according to the order and concatenation of truth, Arnold at once felt obliged to put pen to paper and tell his sister why Ruskin was unable to find an organizing idea for his insights: "Have you seen Ruskin's new volume of Modern Painters? I ask you because I saw William alluded to him in his speech. Full of excellent apercus, as usual, but the man and character too febrile, irritable, and weak to allow him to possess the ordo concatenatioque veri."27
Arnold had once before, in a letter to Clough of 1848-49, deplored the impatient disregard for organizing ideas in much modern English literature. He had charged that modern poets like Keats and Browning "will not be patient neither understand that they must begin with an Idea of the world in order not to be prevailed over by the world’s multitudinousness: or if they cannot get that, at least with isolated ideas. . . ." He now found in Ruskin’s ambitious new prose work further illustration of the capacity of the troubled multifarious modern world to overwhelm a writer unarmed with coherent general ideas.

G. M. Young has said that the mind of Ruskin "was endowed with every gift except the gift to organize the others." For Arnold, Ruskin’s transgression was in one sense worse than that of Keats of Browning because it was polemical and intentional, and positively invited such criticisms as Arnold’s. Not only did Ruskin entitle the new volume Of Many Things, but as he launched his discussion of the "Grand Style," he brashly announced his contempt for system-makers, his absolute indifference to assigning groups of facts to general laws, and his total freedom to wander whither he would in his inquiries:

Much time is wasted by human beings, in general, on establishment of systems; and it often takes more labour to master the intricacies of an artificial connection, than to remember the separate facts which are so carefully connected. I suspect that system-makers, in general, are not of much more use, each in his own domain, than, in that of Pomona, the old women who tie cherries upon sticks, for the more convenient portableness of the same. . . . I purpose, therefore, henceforward to trouble myself little with sticks or twine, but to arrange my chapters with a view to convenient reference, rather than to any careful division of subjects, and to follow out, in any by-ways that may open, on right hand or left, whatever question it seems useful at any moment to settle.

If we wish to discover what Arnold’s principle of the ordo concatenatioque veri is in addition to being the reverse of what Ruskin
does, we have only to turn to the opening remarks of Arnold's inaugu-ral lecture of the following year as Oxford Professor of Poetry. He had been elected on 5 May 1857 to the position, whose duties consisted in examining the prize compositions, delivering a Latin oration in praise of founders at alternate commemorations, and giving three Latin lectures on ancient poetry in the course of the year. But he broke with tradition and decided to lecture in English. Ruskin, starting in March of this year, had begun to show how effective the public lecture might be in conveying serious ideas on society and the arts; and in any case Arnold did not want "to entomb a lecture which, in English, might be stimulating and interesting" by speaking in Latin.\(^{31}\)

Arnold delivered the first of a projected series of lectures on "The Modern Element in Literature" on 14 November 1857. Young William Wordsworth, grandson of the poet, said of it that Arnold "seems to lust after a system of his own: and systems are not made in a day. . . ."\(^{32}\) Arnold would later in life be quite as harsh with system-makers as Ruskin is at the outset of the third volume of *Modern Painters*, but if "On the Modern Element in Literature" is in large part what I believe it to be, a response to Ruskin, then we need not be surprised that Arnold, in combating so brazen an antiphilosophical position as Ruskin's, should at least have seemed systematic to some of his Oxford audience.

Arnold opens his lecture by asserting that, although both are necessary, a modern nation is more in need of intellectual than of moral deliverance. He promises to show, in the course of his lecture, that the literature of ancient Greece can be a mighty instrument of intellectual deliverance for modern England. But first he must show why it is that an intellectual rather than a moral deliverance is the particular need of modern societies.

Implicitly, the elevation of intellectual above moral deliverance is a contradiction of one theme of Arnold's earlier piece of criticism, the 1853 Preface. For in rejecting "Empedocles on Etna" Arnold had explicitly said that literature must do more than add to the knowledge of men; it must also add to their happiness. *Catharsis* could be achieved only through action, not through understanding. The contradiction is
partly explainable, as are other changes in emphasis from the 1853 Preface, by Arnold’s wish to be more accommodating to those who had criticized his own lack of modernity, and to ask how literature can be adequate to the modern age instead of deploring the modern age as an inadequate subject for great literature. But the new emphasis on intellectual control is also explainable as a response to Ruskin’s recent work.

Arnold had in the previous year attributed Ruskin’s failure in *Modern Painters* III to attain the *ordo concatenatioque veri* to the nervous irritability of Ruskin’s character. He now tells his Oxford listeners that the present age demands an intellectual deliverance because it is faced by “the spectacle of a vast multitude of facts” that invite yet defy comprehension. Deliverance will come when man can comprehend his present in relation to his past; and it begins “when one mind begins to enter into possession of the general ideas which are the law of this vast multitude of facts.” Intellectual deliverance will be perfect, however, only “when we have acquired that harmonious acquiescence of mind which we feel in contemplating a grand spectacle that is intelligible to us; when we have lost that impatient irritation of mind which we feel in presence of an immense, moving, confused spectacle which, while it perpetually excites our curiosity, perpetually baffles our comprehension.”

Could there be a more striking example of the irritation excited in an eager, curious mind by the immense, confused spectacle of modern facts than Ruskin’s description of his state of mind as he was composing *Of Many Things*?

Not that I have not been busy—and very busy, too. I have written, since May, good 600 pages, had them rewritten, cut up, corrected, and got fairly ready for press—and am going to press with the first of them on Gunpowder Plot Day; with a great hope of disturbing the Public Peace in various directions. Also, I have prepared above thirty drawings for engravers this year, retouched the engravings (generally the worst part of the business), and etched some on steel myself. In the course of the 600 pages I have had to make var-
ious remarks on German Metaphysics, on Poetry, Political Economy, Cookery, Music, Geology, Dress, Agriculture, Horticulture, and Navigation, all which subjects I have had to "read up" accordingly, and this takes time. Moreover, I have had my class of workmen out sketching every week in the fields, during the summer; and have been studying Spanish proverbs with my father's partner, who came over from Spain to see the great Exhibition. I have also designed and drawn a window for the Museum at Oxford; and have every now and then had to look over a parcel of five or six new designs for fronts and backs to the said Museum. During my above mentioned studies of Horticulture I became dissatisfied with the Linnaean, Jussieuan, and Everybody-elsian arrangement of plants, and have accordingly arranged a system of my own; and unbound my botanical book, and re-bound it in brighter green, with all the pages through other, and backside foremost—so as to cut off the old paging numerals; and am now printing my new arrangement in a legible manner, on interleaved foolscap. I consider this arrangement one of my great achievements of the year. My studies of political economy have induced me to think also that nobody knows anything about that, and I am at present engaged in an investigation, on independent principles, of the Natures of Money, Rent, and Taxes, in an abstract form, which sometimes keeps me awake all night. My studies of German metaphysics have also induced me to think that the Germans don't know anything about them; and to engage in a serious inquiry into the meaning of Bunsen's great sentence in the beginning of the second volume of Hippolytus, about the Finite realization of the Infinity; which has given me some trouble. The course of my studies of navigation necessitated my going to Deal to look at the Deal boats; and those of Geology to rearrange all my minerals (and wash a good many, which, I am sorry to say, I found wanted it). I have also several pupils, far and near, in the art of illumination, an American young lady to direct in the study of landscape painting, and a Yorkshire young lady to direct in
the purchase of Turners—and various little bye things be­
sides.34

Many years after the publication of the 1856 volumes of Modern Painters, Ruskin explicitly admitted, regarding his discussion of the cause of love of mountains, that “the more I analysed, the less I could either understand or justify.” If love of mountains was, as Ruskin claimed, an index of nobility, why was it not present in all noble minds? “In the end, I found there was nothing for it but simply to assure those recusant and grovelling persons that they were perfectly wrong, and that nothing could be expected, either in art or literature, from people who liked to live among snipes and widgeons.” Even E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn, usually undeviating in their loyalty to Ruskin, comment that “at this one point . . . at least, Ruskin may be held to have confirmed a criticism which Matthew Ar­nold made upon reading the book in 1856. . . . ”35

The earlier chapters of the third volume of Modern Painters repeatedly refer to the seeming contradictions in the work—not to deny but to flaunt them. In 1858 Ruskin expressed himself positively pleased by the charge that he was apt to contradict himself: “I hope I am exceedingly apt to do so. . . . I am never satisfied that I have handled a subject properly till I have contradicted myself at least three times.” Mere intellectual disunity and a shifting point of view could always be covered by his blanket assertion of singleness of religious purpose throughout Modern Painters, in which “there is no vari­ation from its first syllable to its last. It declares the perfectness and eternal beauty of the work of God. . . . ”36

Arnold, after having stated the reason for, and the nature of, an intellectual deliverance in his first Oxford lecture, proceeded to iden­tify the facts that required comprehension. They are, according, to him, nothing less than the collective life of humanity up to the pres­ent time; and to be understood they must be viewed not as isolated phenomena but as coherent parts of a general pattern: “Everywhere there is connexion, everywhere there is illustration: no single event, no single literature, is adequately comprehended except in its relation
to other events, to other literatures. The literature of ancient Greece, the literature of the Christian Middle Age, so long as they are regarded as two isolated literatures, two isolated growths of the human spirit, are not adequately comprehended. . . .” Yet they must be comprehended if the modern age is to comprehend itself, and to be freed from what Arnold takes to be the illusion that “modern” problems are historically unprecedented. All facts do not, of course, have an equal importance; and selection is necessary not only to maintain a sense of proportion but because “no man would be adequate to the task of mastering them all.”

Yet one man among Arnold’s contemporaries had just attempted precisely this. In the book that had captured Arnold’s attention in 1856 Ruskin had undertaken the ambitious design of comprehending the art and literature of ancient Greece in relation to the art and literature of the Christian Middle Age in order to comprehend the Modern Age. The first part of Ruskin’s third volume of *Modern Painters* is primarily devoted to separating those things “which we ought to paint . . . from the nothings which we ought not.” In it Ruskin discusses the painter’s duty of recording in detail his own impressions of nature, and also the related duty of faithful imaginative vision of ideal truth. The second part of the volume is a vast historical survey of landscape art as it has manifested itself in painting and in literature. This history of human feelings toward the natural world treats, in chronological order, “Of Classical Landscape” (chapter 13), “Of Medieval Landscape” (chapters 14, 15), and “Of Modern Landscape” (chapter 16). It is to this section of Ruskin’s volume that Arnold appears to address himself in “On the Modern Element in Literature”; not until his Homer lectures would he turn his critical attention to the first half of the volume and particularly to the opening chapter on the “Grand Style.”

In *The Stones of Venice* Greek architecture had been the foil to Medieval or Gothic architecture. But in plotting the history of landscape Ruskin is free to use ancient Greece as the pinnacle from which the decline into modernity commenced. For he is now dealing not with Greek buildings but with Greek literature. He says at the out-
set, "I use the words 'painter' and 'poet' quite indifferently," particularly since classical landscape has been expressed mainly in literature.

Ruskin's theory of ancient Greek landscape is that, because the Greeks found divinity in nature, they were able to subordinate nature to the service of man. Homer, he says, would never have indulged in the pathetic fallacy of Keats by describing a wave as wayward or indolent because he knew that the wave was always salt water and no more. But Homer also saw something in the wave that Keats did not see; and that something was a god. In a passage that must surely have struck Arnold as one of Ruskin's "excellent apercus," Ruskin reminds the bitter and shortsighted Puritan who assumes the classical god to be either an idol or a diabolic power that "the Greek lived in all things, a healthy, and, in a certain degree, a perfect life. He had no morbid or sickly feeling of any kind."

Discarding the tendentious elevation of Christian above pagan religion that pervaded The Stones of Venice, Ruskin now attributes the spiritual health and the human sympathy of the Greek to his religion. Ruskin's contemporaries, imagining God upon a cloudy throne, not in flowers or water, believe that flowers and water are dead, or governed by physical laws; but when their experience suggests that the flowers and water really are alive, they are jolted into those awkward sentimentalities and pathetic fallacies that form the modern view of nature. The Greek never removed his god from nature yet had no qualms about cutting down trees, because he had put his faith in nothing but the image of his own humanity. "Content with this human sympathy, he approached the actual waves and woody fibres with no sympathy at all." The Greeks were moved not by the beauty of nature but by that of the human form and countenance, which they conceived of as "eminently orderly, symmetrical, and tender."

The Greeks' reverence for order and symmetry—the effects of which on architecture Ruskin had deplored three years earlier—made them fear all that was disorderly, unbalanced, and rugged. Hence every Homeric landscape is composed of a fountain, a meadow, and a shady grove. Everything in the landscape bespeaks its subjection to the service of men and appeals to the love of utility rather than beauty.
In the Christian Middle Age—like Arnold, Ruskin seems to think that, in a survey of literature, Greek and medieval are naturally to be paired for comparison and contrast—the feeling for landscape has undergone three changes, one bad, two good. The evidence of the new spirit of landscape is drawn from more varied sources, sculptured and painted landscapes as well as written ones; yet it bears united testimony to the medieval idea of landscape. This idea resembles the ancient Greek in that it is based on the assumption that flat land, brooks, and shady groves are much preferable to rocks and mountains as places to live, but differs from it in making the flat land a garden covered with flowers rather than a ploughed field or pasture meadow. The ideal occupation of mankind in the Middle Ages has become gathering roses or eating oranges in the garden instead of cultivating the meadows.

The most prominent feature of the changed view of nature as evidenced in medieval art is for Ruskin a disastrous one, morally and socially if not artistically. The nobility has begun to disdain agricultural pursuits; lovely but useless flowers abound; and a medieval Cincinnatus (could he be conceived) once discovered at his plough could never again have shown his face in society. Flowers and fruits became for the nobility mere sources of pleasure rather than gifts from the divine hand.

But the two other changes from Greek landscape feeling were healthy. One was a more poetical enjoyment of nature, the other the feeling that there was something else to be done in the world besides hawking and apple-eating, pleasurable as they were; and that this something else was to be done in the mountains. Ruskin is pointing, of course, to the Christian association of mountain solitude with the heroes of the Bible and thus with a special sanctity and terror.

But Ruskin is disinclined to dwell on those medieval changes from the Greek temper that tend to "a passionate, affectionate, or awestruck observance of the features of natural scenery, closely resembling, in all but this superstitious dread of mountains, our feelings at the present day."

For he wants to keep before the eye of his reader's mind the main truth of landscape history, that, in contradistinction to mod-
ern landscape artists, medieval artists as well as Greek artists placed human beauty above that of nature. People of the middle ages not only had personal beauty (Ruskin assures us that both men and women were more beautiful than their Greek counterparts), but they directed much of their art genius to the adornment of this beauty in radiant costume and dazzling armor. Finally, in yet another departure from his earlier naturalism, Ruskin invokes Scott's *Marmion* to remind readers that the test of a flower or leaf inlaid in armor was not its truth to nature but its visibility at a distance:

"Amidst the scene of tumult, high,  
They saw Lord Marmion's falcon fly,  
And stainless Tunstall's banner white,  
And Edmund Howard's lion bright."

In conclusion, then, although there had arisen in the Middle Ages a new poetical love of nature, human figures were still the dominating center of landscape art, and the material universe was still subordinate to human nature.

Turning in chapter 16 to "Modern Landscape," a subject that had occupied him since his earliest vindication of Turner, Ruskin finds that its most striking physical feature is cloudiness. Whereas the medieval landscape celebrated what was stable, definite, and luminous, modern landscape art rejoices in darkness and mutability. The attention to clouds is partly a sign of, and an occasion for the display of, the modern scientific spirit, which likes to make the faithful representation of the appearance of objects an end in itself.

The second prominent characteristic of modern landscape is "the love of liberty." Nature has been liberated from the service of men and grows freely or even wildly throughout modern painting and literature. Connected with the new love of liberty is a love of mountains, but a love unconnected with sanctity or with terror, as may be seen from the fact that "our modern society in general goes to the mountains, not to fast, but to feast, and leaves their glaciers covered with chicken-bones and egg shells." And this profane love of moun-
tains is but a sign of a profanity of temper regarding all nature. The medieval artist painted a cloud in order to put an angel in it; and the Greek never entered a wood without expecting to meet a god within it. But Ruskin’s contemporaries would dismiss the appearance of an angel in a cloud as unnatural, and would be surprised to meet a god anywhere. "Our chief ideas about the wood are connected with poaching. We have no belief that the clouds contain more than so many inches of rain or hail, and from our ponds and ditches expect nothing more divine than ducks and watercresses." Finally, the last visible characteristic of modern landscape is its denial of "the sacred element of colour." With rare exception, modern color is drab, somber, subdued, "chaste." Since medieval times, the sky has changed from bright blue to gray, and the foreground from bright green to black.

The main social lesson Ruskin hopes to draw in plotting the history of landscape from ancient Greece to modern times is that modern art, like modern society, has withdrawn its admiration from men to mountains, and from human emotion to natural phenomena. But before he draws this "moral of landscape" in chapter 16, Ruskin proposes to distinguish between the good and the bad characteristics of the modern age, for he finds it harder to generalize about his contemporaries than about the men of ancient Greece or medieval Europe. We must, he says, discover which characteristics of modern art and life are founded on "the inferior and evanescent principles of modernism," and which on "its science, its new affection for nature, its love of openness and liberty." The inferior principle of modernism that is for Ruskin the most striking fault of the age is its faithlessness, which is the root of all other modern habits of mind. The history of landscape has also been a history of the national habits of mind that gave rise to landscape. In the chapter on Classical Landscape Ruskin had depicted the emotional life of the Greeks as similar to that of a healthy child:

They had indeed their sorrows, true and deep, but still, more like children's sorrows than ours, whether bursting into open cry of pain, or hid with shuddering under the veil, still pass-
ing over the soul as clouds do over heaven, not sullying it, not mingling with it;—darkening it perhaps long or utterly, but still not becoming one with it, and for the most part passing away in dashing rain of tears, and leaving the man unchanged: in nowise affecting, as our sorrow does, the whole tone of his thought and imagination thenceforward.⁴⁶

Melancholy and sorrow have existed in all ages, but in Greek and also in medieval times they were not only frequently relieved by action and more frequently replaced by joy: they were a divine melancholy and a divine sorrow.

In one of the most splendid passages of *Modern Painters* Ruskin sees the disappearance of the formal element of color from modern art as the sign of the profane and thought-ridden quality of its sorrow:

At first, it is evident that the title "Dark Ages," given to the mediaeval centuries, is, respecting art, wholly inapplicable. They were, on the contrary, the bright ages; ours are the dark ones. I do not mean metaphysically, but literally. They were the ages of gold; ours are the ages of umber.

This is partly mere mistake in us; we build brown brick walls, and wear brown coats, because we have been blunderingly taught to do so, and go on doing so mechanically. There is, however, also some cause for the change in our own tempers. On the whole, these are much sadder ages than the early ones; not sadder in a noble and deep way, but in a dim wearied way,—the way of ennui, and jaded intellect, and uncomfortableness of soul and body. The Middle Ages had their wars and agonies, but also intense delights. Their gold was dashed with blood; but ours is sprinkled with dust.

The cause of this new darkness of the heart that has in turn darkened art is the loss of religious faith; and Ruskin asserts that "nearly all our powerful men in this age of the world are unbelievers."⁴⁷

"The nobleness of grief is gone," Arnold had written in his own lament for the dead medieval faith in "Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse," published in the previous year, 1855. "Ah, leave us not," he
begged, "the pang alone!" In his lecture "On the Modern Element in Literature," delivered in 1857, the year after he had read Ruskin's dissertation on the moral of landscape, Arnold offered this diagnosis of "the disease of the most modern societies":

The predominance of thought, of reflection, in modern epochs is not without its penalties; in the unsound, in the over-tasked, in the over-sensitive, it has produced the most painful, the most lamentable results; it has produced a state of feeling unknown to less enlightened but perhaps healthier epochs—the feeling of depression, the feeling of ennui. Depression and ennui; these are the characteristics stamped on how many of the representative works of modern times!48

Unlike Ruskin, Arnold does not speak explicitly in his lecture of the loss of religious faith as the cause of the jaded intellect, the depression, and the ennui they both see as the most prominent spiritual characteristic of modern art. But that he assigned it as the cause both his many poems of melancholy and his previously published prose work leave no doubt. When Empedocles loses his faith, he is transformed from a man into "a devouring flame of thought," "a naked, eternally restless mind" (Act Two, lines 329–30); and in the 1853 Preface the feelings of Empedocles in the period of decline of Greek religion are described as "exclusively modern" because they flow into "the dialogue of the mind with itself."49 In "The Scholar-Gipsy" Arnold describes himself and his contemporaries as "Light half-believers of our casual creeds, / Who never deeply felt, nor clearly willed, / Whose insight never has borne fruit in deeds . . . " (172–74).

For Ruskin the melancholy and doubt and jaded intellect of modern literature were its most prominent features, distressing accompaniments of more hopeful features of the new sensibility, and perhaps necessary to be borne for their sake; and for Arnold excessive intellectualism, the peculiar disease of modern life, seemed the nearly inevitable price that had to be paid for seeking "an intellectualdeliverance." "I feel immensely," he had written to Clough in 1853, "—more and more clearly—what I want—what I have (I believe) lost and
choked by my treatment of myself and the studies to which I have addicted myself. But what ought I to have done in preference to what I have done? there is the question."

By 1857 Arnold, like Ruskin, took it for granted that explorations of the past had to serve the needs of the present. He therefore tells his audience in the Sheldonian that those past ages will be of most interest that were themselves "highly developed" and in search of an intellectual deliverance. The past literatures most deserving of present attention will be those that solved for their own age the modern problem of discovering a point of view from which a complicated multitude of phenomena can be seen steadily and coherently, those that "saw life steadily and saw it whole."

But great epochs, Arnold is quick to point out, do not always get the literatures they deserve. It is here that Arnold's deterministic theory becomes more complicated than Ruskin's. In his inquiries into Greek and medieval art Ruskin was always able "to describe, in general terms, what all men did or felt." He might allow for changes within medieval art—for example, from Symbolic to Imitative—but he had always to insist that all artists changed at once, in about 1399. Arnold says that a nation may well achieve a full social and political development without having that development adequately comprehended or represented in its literature. Conversely, great authors may exist in ages less great than themselves and so lack a subject worthy of their powers. What will most enlighten the modern age as to the means of intellectual deliverance is "the simultaneous appearance, of a great epoch and a great literature."

Like Ruskin, Arnold begins his historical survey with ancient Greece; but whereas Ruskin chose most of his illustrations of classical landscape from Homer's poetry, Arnold finds that the life of Athens in the fifth century of the old era was the great culminating age of ancient times that had a literature adequate to represent its greatness. More than that, it was a "modern" age. Arnold refuses to be bound, as Ruskin was, by chronology in defining modernity because Arnold is resistant to the notion that certain experiences and phenomena are exclusively modern. Nevertheless, the positive characteristics he as-
signs to "modernity" in this earliest of his many circular definitions are somewhat similar to those Ruskin claims to have discerned in the ubiquitous clouds of modern landscape. Of supreme importance is the spirit of science, or "the tendency to observe facts with a critical spirit; to search for their law, not to wander among them at random. . . . " But modernity is also characterized by liberty, in the form of religious and intellectual toleration, and by civil peace and security. Thucydides is then called upon by Arnold to give evidence of the modern characteristics of Periclean Athens.

To show what a modern age is not (and as if to flaunt his indifference to chronological definitions), Arnold moves hundreds of years ahead in time to Elizabethan England. Why Arnold chooses to compare ancient Greece with Elizabethan England when earlier in his lecture he has spoken of the importance of studying the literature of ancient Greece in conjunction with that of the Christian Middle Age, it is difficult to say with certainty. But he had long maintained that the effort of nineteenth-century poets like Keats to imitate the exuberant expression of the Elizabethan poets had done great harm in English poetry because the complexity of the modern world required the use of plain rather than extravagant speech. Critics could not learn this because the Elizabethan poets were undoubtedly England's greatest. If, therefore, Arnold could show that Elizabethan England was not a modern age and that, as he wrote to his brother Tom in December 1857, "Shakespeare . . . is the infinitely more than adequate expression of a second class epoch," he might do some practical good to working poets.

Arnold's own critical and scientific spirit may seem somewhat lacking when he uses Walter Scott's Kenilworth for testimony on the "barbarous magnificence" and "fierce vanities" of the Elizabethans; but since Ruskin had used Marmion for testimony on the Middle Ages, the sin may have been general and in this study at least is forgivable. What we learn from Kenilworth is that the pleasures and recreations of the Athenians were spiritually more edifying than those of the Elizabethans. More important, in place of the intellectual tolerance prevalent in Periclean Athens the Elizabethans had Puritanism.
Most important of all, the Athenians possessed a critical spirit, and the Elizabethans did not. The eminent historian of the earlier, but more modern, time was Thucydides. His is the work of a scientific historian who sifts current stories, separates fact from rumor, and orders facts in a rational and coherent way. The great historian of the Elizabethan age, by contrast, is Sir Walter Ralegh, who equals Ruskin and Sterne in his love of digression, who is mired in superstition, who makes no distinction between fact and fiction, history and romance, and wanders among the facts he does have "helplessly and without a clue."

Having, as he thinks, definitely established the modernity of Periclean Athens, Arnold asks whether this modern civilization had a literature adequate to interpret it, and finds that it did: "The peculiar characteristic of the poetry of Sophocles is its consummate, its unrivalled adequacy. . . . " It is not only that Sophocles accurately reflects the energy, maturity, freedom, and intelligent observation characteristic of his age—in other words, that he does what he can hardly help doing—but that he idealizes and glorifies these attributes by "the noblest poetical feeling."

Yet no sooner has Arnold emerged from the illogic of a purely deterministic theory of art that underestimates the aesthetic impulse than he invokes the deterministic theory to explain why Menander, despite all his gifts, perished but Aristophanes, despite his grossness, survived. The explanation is very like the one that Ruskin had used to interpret the decline of Venetian art, for it is that "between the times of Sophocles and Menander a great check had befallen the development of Greece;—the failure of the Athenian expedition to Syracuse. . . . " That disaster checked Athenian growth and dried up Athenian political activity; inevitably the art that reflected Athens after this "check" had to be inferior to the art of Athens in its period of glory.

Having used ancient Greece to establish the standard, by which all modern literature must measure itself, of the fruitful union of a great age with an adequate literature, Arnold passes on to consideration of the Roman world. His main aim here is to demonstrate that a great
age does not necessarily get the literature it deserves; having ad­mitted that the achievement of great poetry is not entirely within the power of the individual poet, he now returns to the definition of the weighty responsibilities of the individual poet to be adequate to his age.

Not all modern qualities are blessings, and the quality of morbid­ity, which Arnold, no less than Ruskin, finds the dominant quality of contemporary literature, renders literature inadequate to interpret its age. Lucretius and Virgil, for all their greatness, fell short of adequacy to the interpretation of the Roman world of their time. Lucretius was afflicted by excessive reflection, by depression, ennui, and gloom; and over the whole of Virgil's greatest work "there rests an ineffable mel­ancholy," not the rigid and moody gloom of Lucretius, but gloom nevertheless.62

Ruskin in his discussion of "Modern Landscape" had said that the literal darkness of modern art was the inevitable reflection of the faithlessness, sadness, and ennui of the modern age. Therefore, the greatest artists of the modern age, he believed, must themselves be faithless, sad, and bored. Walter Scott was for Ruskin the great rep­resentative of the modern mind in literature as Turner was its great rep­resentative in painting; and therefore, despite all his admiration for Scott, Ruskin had to visit all the afflictions of modernity on his hero's head. "Thus, the most startling fault of the age being its faithlessness, it is necessary that its greatest man should be faithless. Nothing is more notable or sorrowful in Scott's mind than its incapacity of steady belief in anything." Again—since sorrow is eminently characteristic of the modern age, Ruskin finds that "of all poetry that I know, none is so sorrowful as Scott's." The rigidity of Ruskin's determinism may have had its philosophical limitations, but at least it enabled him to be, for a Victorian critic, extraordinarily tolerant of modern writers and painters.63

Arnold, on the other hand, though he agreed with Ruskin's esti­mate of the pervasive melancholy of the modern age, was certain that "he who is morbid is no adequate interpreter of his age." That is why Arnold had so little good to say about his literary contempo-
raries. After all, the two most publicly melancholy writers of the mid-Victorian period were Alfred Tennyson and Matthew Arnold himself. Arnold had described the poet laureate as one who "takes dejectedly / His seat upon the intellectual throne; / And all his store of sad experience . . . / Lays bare of wretched days. . . ." "The Scholar-Gipsy" itself, which contains this description of the king of melancholy and of poetry, and which so eloquently deplores "the sick fatigue, the languid doubt" of modern life, was for Arnold a prime example of poetry rendered inadequate to the modern age by its morbidity. He wrote to Clough in November 1853: "I am glad you like the Gipsy Scholar—but what does it do for you? Homer animates—Shakespeare animates—in its poor way I think Sohrab and Rustum animates—the Gipsy Scholar at best awakens a pleasing melancholy."  

Arnold’s rejection of Lucretius and Virgil in his Oxford lecture, and his abandonment, at about the same time, of work on a tragedy about Lucretius, were but indirect ways of saying about most modern poetry, including his own, what he had said directly four years earlier about "Empedocles"—that literature which accurately reflects its age but fails to give joy to its readers is not adequate literature. Only now, instead of recommending that poets attend exclusively to elementary subjects independent of time and place, he implies that every age, even the Victorian age, is entitled to be interpreted adequately in literature.

Like Ruskin in Modern Painters III Arnold was to some extent making a theory of art out of his dissatisfaction with his own past achievements. When in the mid-fifties Ruskin’s feeling for the wonders of nature began to slacken and his interest in society to increase, he laboriously discovered that the moral of landscape was that, in the "starry crowd of benefactors of the human race," the "dreamy love of natural beauty . . . has been . . . subordinated either to hard work or watching of human nature."  When Arnold came to believe that it was literature’s function to make men happy, and that his own poetry (so far as he could tell) failed to do so, he drew from the history of literature the lesson that for the production of great literature
there must be a happy union of a healthy society and a healthy individual sensibility.

The secret of adequacy, Arnold still believed, lay somewhere in Greek literature, above all in Greek poetry. In 1853 he had written that the Greeks were in poetic expression "unapproached masters of the grand style." Surrounded as the expression is by injunctions to seek the classical grandeur of generality, Arnold did not feel obliged to define it. It had, after all, been defined already with unexampled articulateness by Joshua Reynolds in the discourses he delivered before the Royal Academy between 1769 and 1790.

Nature, Reynolds argued, should not be copied too closely because all the arts receive their perfection from an ideal beauty, superior to what can be found in individual nature. Yet ideal perfection and beauty must be sought on earth, not in the heavens. Greatness of style comes from attention in observing nature's works, and from skill in selecting, digesting, and methodizing one's observations. The true artist acquires by experience the power of discovering the deformed, the particular, and the uncommon in nature; perfection in his art comes when he is able to go beyond all single forms, local customs, particularities, and details in order to reach a central form from which every deviation will be recognizable as a deformity. The practical method for discovering the ideal to be imitated is to observe what any set of objects of the same kind have in common, to eliminate accidental deficiencies, excrescences, and deformities from their general figures, and finally to make an abstract idea of their forms more perfect than any original.

There was only one substitute for close observation of Nature, and that was a study of the works of ancient sculptors, who according to Reynolds had left to posterity models of the perfect forms of nature. Reynolds was in this respect merely echoing the sentiments of Pope, who in his *Essay on Criticism* had proposed the reading of Homer as an adequate substitute for the actual observation of nature:

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When first young Maro in his boundless Mind
A Work t'outlast Immortal Rome design'd,
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Perhaps he seem'd above the Critick's Law
And but from Nature's Fountains scorn'd to draw:
But when t'examine ev'ry Part he came,
Nature and Homer were, he found, the same:

(130-35)

Michelangelo, whom Reynolds called "the Homer of painting," performed for artists the function that Homer performed for poets; and both these exemplars of the grand style performed for men in general the function of lifting them above their ordinary selves. "The effect of the capital works of Michael Angelo," said Reynolds, "perfectly corresponds to what Bouchardon said he felt from reading Homer; his whole frame appeared to himself to be enlarged, and all nature which surrounded him diminished to atoms."66

Reynolds held that after reducing the variety of nature to an abstract idea, the artist's next task was to become acquainted with the genuine habits of nature as distinct from those of fashion. The artist—and here the indebtedness of Arnold's 1853 Preface to Reynolds is clear—must divest himself of all prejudices in favor of his age or country, must disregard local and temporary ornaments to fix his attention exclusively on those general habits that are everywhere and always the same. If he will succeed in thus detaching himself from the particular, the local, and the contemporary, he need add only that nobleness of conception which adds dignity to its subject, to achieve the Grand Style; and—Reynolds concludes his Third Discourse (which I have been summarizing)—there is only one Grand Style of painting.

"As for Sir Joshua," Arnold wrote to J. D. Coleridge in 1868, "your mention of his lectures recalls to my mind the admiration with which I read them and the debt I owe them."67 Arnold's 1853 Preface was a Victorian repetition of Reynolds's injunctions to timelessness, to wholeness, to general truth, and to ideal subjects of heroic action, especially if they were of Greek or Roman origin. One way of describing the opposition between Arnold and Ruskin in the fifties and the sixties is to say that whereas Arnold was, as a critic of the romantic
sensibility in Keats and Shelley and himself, a great continuator of the classical tradition, Ruskin was a great Victorian romantic, a writer who developed the aesthetic principles of romanticism into social and ethical imperatives.⁶⁸

Although Arnold mentioned the "grand style" in his 1853 Preface, he was not to discuss it at length until his 1860 lectures on Homer. In the interim Reynolds's classical doctrine of the Grand Style was subjected to the most searching criticism it had received since the onslaughts of Blake and Hazlitt during the Romantic period, in the opening chapter of Ruskin's Modern Painters III, which is entitled "Of the Received Opinions Touching the 'Grand Style.'"⁶⁹

Ruskin does not pretend to be the original iconoclast in a realm formerly dominated by Reynolds and his disciples. Although it is true that for one hundred and fifty years all writers on art aspiring to eminence have insisted on distinguishing between Great and Low Schools, "lately this established teaching, never very intelligible, has been gravely called in question."⁶⁹ Ruskin delights to see the emergence in his time of art forms (probably he alludes to Pre-Raphaelitism) that seek to be strong, healthy, and humble rather than high.

The "received opinion" touching the Grand Style had, in Ruskin's view, been most clearly formulated by Joshua Reynolds in two papers in the Idler. Ruskin stresses the fact that they were written "under the immediate sanction of Johnson," as if to signal his readers that he intends here to do for painting what Wordsworth had done for literature in combating the Johnsonian principles of generalization in his Preface to the Lyrical Ballads. Ruskin approaches Reynolds in no spirit of hostility, for he admired both his character and his painting, and in chapter 3 of this volume of Modern Painters says that Reynolds was fortunate in not having practiced what he preached: "He enforced with his lips generalization and idealism, while with his pencil he was tracing the patterns of the dresses of the belles of his day. . . ."⁷⁰ But it was Reynolds's precept rather than his practice that was still influencing modern art and criticism, and Ruskin hoped to stem that baleful influence by invalidating the precepts.

The first idea of Reynolds that Ruskin questions is the assertion
that the Grand Style is incompatible with minute attention to particular details. Reynolds had said that the injunction to imitate nature must not be taken literally, else "Painting must lose its rank, and be no longer considered as a liberal art, and sister to Poetry." Reynolds believed that painters of genius addressed the mind rather than the eye, and that only drudges stooped to mechanical imitation in which understanding played no part. He therefore said that Dutch painting, which excelled in literal truth and minute imitation of detail, was merely historical, whereas Italian painting, which attended only to the invariable, great, and general ideas inherent in nature, was poetical.

Ruskin, who elsewhere in this volume of *Modern Painters* says that the highest human activity is to see something, and report it clearly, and that "thousands can think for one who can see," is sure that Reynolds has misconceived the nature of poetry. Since Ruskin is writing his critique from a window looking out on the lake of Geneva, and the mountains above Chillon, the first example of verse that comes into his mind is naturally a descriptive passage from Byron's "The Prisoner of Chillon," which he quotes (inaccurately):

A thousand feet in depth below  
The massy waters meet and flow;  
So far the fathom line was sent  
From Chillon's snow-white battlement.

(162-65)

Ruskin now launches into a detailed reading of the lines—he was nearly unique among Victorians in his habit of "close" reading of poetry—which shows that the poetry, far from being distinguished from history by the omission of details, consists "entirely in the addition of details"; and instead of being characterized by exclusive attention to the universal and invariable, gains its power precisely from the "clear expression of what is singular and particular!" It is, in fact, not the exception but the rule that poetical statements are more specific, not more vague, than historical ones.
The insistence on fidelity to particular details in art was a natural outgrowth of Ruskin’s scientific reverence for natural forms. We have seen before how his discovery that the secret of capturing nature’s beauty in art was truth rather than generalization impelled him to become an art critic. It was a revelation that enabled him to recognize the truth to nature of the paintings of Turner, which combined the scientific passion for minute and particularized description of nature with the poet’s grasp of her spirit. Turner, like Ruskin, had grasped the truth of clouds, of rocks, of trees, by means of “the balanced union of artistic sensibility with scientific faculty.” It became Ruskin’s mission to demonstrate that Turner’s drawings of mountains and clouds, which the public had called absurd, were the only true drawings of mountains and clouds ever made, “and I proved this to be so, as only it could be proved, by steady test of physical science.”

Like his romantic predecessors, then, Ruskin argues that good poetry and painting are more specific and detailed, not more general, than history. But he brings to his support the new ideal of scientific objectivity, which holds qualities to be inherent in objects rather than dependent on observers. This new scientific ideal obliges a writer who seeks to be truthful—and “throughout our past reasonings about art, we have always found that nothing could be good or useful, or ultimately pleasurable, which was untrue”—to keep his eyes fixed firmly on the pure fact, out of which if any feeling comes to him or his reader, he knows it must be a true one.

So long as Ruskin uses science as a repository of objective facts about the natural world by which the accuracy of neoclassical painting or metaphorical poetry can be measured, his argument is simple enough. But, as Rosenberg, Hough, and Bradley have shown, Ruskin is as much opposed to the photographic realism of the Dutch or Venetian schools of painting as to the generalizing, idealizing school of Reynolds. Therefore, he moves to cover an exposed flank and to keep readers from supposing that he endorses the Dutch school by saying that addition of details cannot by itself turn history into poetry. The question then arises, as it was perpetually doing for Arnold in this
decade (although Ruskin says he hardly ever hears it), "What is poetry?"

Ruskin's answer, for all his objection to the Grand Style, is couched in the language of "nobility" that Reynolds's discourses on the Grand Style habitually employ. He comes, in fact, "after some embarrassment"—very brief embarrassment, to be sure—to the conclusion that poetry "is the suggestion, by the imagination, of noble grounds for the noble emotions." In case the reader is ignorant of what are the noble emotions, Ruskin identifies them as Love, Veneration, Admiration, and Joy, and their opposites, Hatred, Scorn, Horror, and Grief. Noble emotion, he continues, can no more than details alone make poetry; the poetic power is that of assembling, by the help of imagination, the images that will excite noble emotions in the reader. Having harnessed poetry to the horses of nobility, Ruskin returns to his criticism of Reynolds's _Idler_ essays.

Reynolds has said that great art, or art in the Grand Style, is like the writing of Homer in that it achieves nobility of style by having as little as possible of "common nature" in it. But Ruskin, knowledgeable and dedicated Homerian that he was, is quick to point out that Homer describes a great deal that is common: "cookery, for instance, very carefully, in all its processes." In fact, the most admired passage in the _Iliad_ describes such instances of common nature as a wife's sorrow at parting from her husband, or a child's fright at its father's helmet. Moreover, says Ruskin, Homer describes these common and unheroic matters, as he describes the heroic and uncommon ones, with the greatest attention to detail.

The second chapter of _Modern Painters_ III is a brief discussion of "realization" in painting; but in the third chapter Ruskin, having dismissed "received opinions" touching the Grand Style, attempts a definition "Of the Real Nature of Greatness of Style." The definition, like that of poetry, hinges on nobility, for the primary characteristic of genuine greatness of style is "CHOICE OF NOBLE SUBJECT." One cannot help being reminded of Arnold's 1853 Preface; for according to Arnold's distillation of Aristotle's poetics, "all depends upon the subject; choose a fitting action, penetrate yourself with the feeling of
its situations; this done, everything else will follow." Now, Ruskin insists that the first condition of greatness of style is the choice of subjects that involve wide interests and profound passions. The style will be "greater or less in exact proportion to the nobleness of the interests and passions involved in the subject." What Ruskin has done is to transfer his definition of poetry as the suggestion by the imagination of noble grounds for noble emotions to the realm of painting.

The remainder of chapter 3 adds Love of Beauty, Sincerity, and Invention to the list of prerequisites to the Grand Style. But the most important qualification of the injunction to nobility of feeling and subject is Ruskin's warning that expressional, or moral, purpose is useless in painting if it is not joined to technical power. Ruskin finds his ideal of union between mechanical competence and nobility of feeling realized in Holman Hunt's Pre-Raphaelite painting "The Light of the World," which is "the most perfect instance of expressional purpose with technical power, which the world has yet produced."

Arnold, at the conclusion of his 1853 Preface, had employed Goethe's distinction between two kinds of poetical dilettanti, those who neglected "the indispensable mechanical part" while priding themselves on their "spirituality," and those who sacrificed "soul and matter" to mechanism; and he had chosen, because an age unpropitious to poetry forced him to do so, mechanical perfection over spirituality. Ruskin, whose moral and humanitarian impulses were actively competing with his aesthetic ones when he wrote Modern Painters III, nevertheless refused to admit the necessity, or even the possibility, of subordinating one to the other. It was at about this time he composed, as an appendix to Modern Painters II, a piece of advice to painters that is, rather astonishingly, simultaneously an injunction to involvement with human suffering and an exhortation to aesthetic detachment from it:

Your ordinarily good man absolutely avoids, either for fear of getting harm, or because he has no pleasure in such places or people, all scenes that foster vice, and all companies that
delight in it. He spends his summer evenings on his own quiet lawn, listening to the blackbirds or singing hymns with his children. But you can’t learn to paint of blackbirds, nor by singing hymns. You must be in the wildness of the midnight masque—in the misery of the dark street at dawn—in the crowd when it rages fiercest against law—in the council-chamber when it devises worst against the people—on the moor with the wanderer, or the robber—in the boudoir with the delicate recklessness of female guilt—and all this, without being angry at any of these things—without ever losing your temper so much as to make your hand shake, or getting so much of the mist of sorrow in your eyes, as will at all interfere with your matching of colours; never even allowing yourself to disapprove of anything that anybody enjoys, so far as not to enter into their enjoyment. Does a man get drunk, you must be ready to pledge him. Is he preparing to cut purses—you must go to Gadshill with him—nothing doubting—no wise thinking yourself bound to play the Justice, yet always cool yourself as you either look on, or take any necessary part in the play. Cool, and strong-willed—moveless in observant soul. Does a man die at your feet—your business is not to help him, but to note the colour of his lips; does a woman embrace her destruction before you, your business is not to save her, but to watch how she bends her arms.

Ruskin, like Arnold, finds that there are two kinds of dilettanti in art. The first kind, who subordinates moral concerns to technical excellence, is merely “sacrificing his subject to his own vanity or pleasure, and losing truth, nobleness, and impressiveness for the sake of delightful lines or creditable pedantries.” Of the second group, whose members subordinate technical excellence to “tender emotions and lofty aspirations,” Ruskin says scathingly: “Some of them might have made efficient sculptors, but the greater number had their mission in some other sphere than that of art, and would have found, in works of practical charity, better employment for their gentleness and sentimentalism, than in denying to human beauty its colour, and to natural
scenery its light; in depriving heaven of its blue, and earth of its bloom, valour of its glow, and modesty of its blush.”

Although wrong-headed views of Homer originally provoked Ruskin to inquire into the nature of nobility in art and literature, Homer is barely mentioned between the first chapter of *Modern Painters* III, on the "Grand Style," and chapter 12, the famous discussion "Of the Pathetic Fallacy," where his poetry again becomes central to Ruskin’s argument. Homer is reintroduced in chapter 12 in order to illustrate the force of the expression of pure fact in literature, and to expose the nature of that lower order of poetic sensibility which causes Pope to mistranslate him.

Ruskin’s discussion of the pathetic fallacy and of the four different classes of perceivers who comprise the human race is really an attempt to justify poetic departures from scientific truth; and M. H. Abrams has pointed out how Ruskin anticipates Arnold’s attempts of the sixties to validate the natural object seen by the poet, as against the object analyzed by the natural scientist. Ruskin claims that, at the lowest level, the level where poetry cannot be said to exist, we have the man who perceives rightly only because he does not feel; at the second level, the man whose feeling makes his perception inaccurate; at the third level—which Ruskin momentarily calls the highest—we have "the man who perceives rightly in spite of his feelings"; but above even this level, which is that of the first order of poets, we find "the men who, strong as human creatures can be, are yet submitted to influences stronger than they, and see in a sort untrue, because what they see is inconceivably above them.”

The discussion of the pathetic fallacy, then, carries us beyond the simple notion that poets and painters prove their integrity by fixing their eyes upon pure fact. Ruskin is already moving toward the position of Wordsworth, who is omnipresent in *Modern Painters*, or of certain schools of twentieth-century scientific thought, that perception is itself a creative act in which we half-perceive and half-create, and that it is wrong to locate "science" in the object of perception and "art" in the perceiver. If we fail to perceive this, it is only because in *Modern Painters* Ruskin clings to a terminology based on the idea of
unending opposition between the fact and the artist who perceives it, at the same time that he is trying to steer a middle course between neoclassicism and photographic realism in painting, and between Coleridgian subjectivism and lifeless reportage in poetry.

There are, then, good as well as bad fallacies in poetry. When Coleridge speaks of "the one red leaf, the last of its clan, / That dances as often as dance it can," he is perpetrating a falsehood by ascribing to the leaf a will and life it does not have; but he achieves some beauty partly because a real emotion has vanquished his intellect. But when Pope translates the "simple, startled words" with which Ulysses addresses the shade of his daughter—"Elpenor! How camest thou under the shadowy darkness? Hast thou come faster on foot than I in my black ship?"—into

"O, say, what angry power Elpenor led
To glide in shades, and wander with the dead?
How could thy soul, by realms and seas disjoined,
Outfly the nimble sail, and leave the lagging wind?"

we have falsehood without emotion. The conceits have been put into the mouth of a passion that could never have uttered them, the passion of agonized curiosity.

It was precisely Homer's strict fidelity to fact that made modern translators stumble in rendering him into English. In order to emphasize how little Homer ever allows his own emotions to divert him from the expression of pure fact, Ruskin refers his readers to the famous moment in the Iliad when Helen wonders why her brothers Castor and Pollux are not visible among the Grecian host who have come from Lacedaemon, and Homer comments on the tragic irony of the situation: "So she spoke. But them, already, the life-giving earth possessed, there in Lacedaemon, in the dear fatherland." Having thus translated Homer's comment on the disparity between Helen's surmise that her brothers have absented themselves for fear of her scorn and the actual fact of their death, Ruskin urges his readers to "note, here, the high poetical truth carried to the extreme. The poet
has to speak of the earth in sadness, but he will not let that sadness affect or change his thoughts of it. No; though Castor and Pollux be dead, yet the earth is our mother still, fruitful, life-giving. These are the facts of the thing. I see nothing else than these. Make what you will of them."83

What Matthew Arnold made of these "facts" was, ironically, material for an indictment of Ruskin himself as a sentimental purveyor of pathetic fallacies. The indictment came in November of 1860 in the very first of Arnold's series of Oxford lectures On Translating Homer. The stated purpose of the lectures was to offer practical help to a translator of Homer by defining the peculiarly Homeric qualities—rapidity; plainness and directness in syntax and diction; plainness and directness of thought; nobility above all—and by exposing the want of one or more of these qualities in existing English translation. But Arnold also had other targets, social as well as poetic, in mind when he began the lectures. In December 1860 he wrote to his sister Fan that though his poetic interest in the Middle Age was again vibrant and refreshing, he had "a strong sense of the irrationality of that period, and of the utter folly of those who take it seriously, and play at restoring it." Tennyson had failed in Idylls of the King to convey the genuine flavor of the Middle Ages because he was deficient in intellectual power. "However," Arnold confesses, "it would not do for me to say this about Tennyson, though gradually I mean to say boldly the truth about a great many English celebrities, and begin with Ruskin in these lectures on Homer."84

At the outset of his lectures Arnold announces his refusal to enter the current controversy about the identity of Homer, the authorship of the Homeric poems, and related questions. These might be questions of scholarship, but since there exist no data for answering them, they are more likely to issue in pedantry, "and pedantry is of all things in the world the most un-Homeric." Certainly, they are not questions for the translator, whose work is likely to suffer—as Francis Newman's translation has suffered—from the attempt to make a translation of Homer illustrative of a particular theory of authorship and composition.
But pedantry is not the only danger that faces the modern translator of Homer; there is also the danger of "modernity." In an admonition that must surely have struck those who had heard his lecture "On the Modern Element in Literature" as an instance of the pot calling the kettle black, Arnold warns that "modern sentiment tries to make the ancient not less than the modern world its own; but against modern sentiment in its applications to Homer the translator . . . cannot be too much on his guard."

Ruskin serves as Arnold’s example of the imposition of modern sentiment on Homer. Arnold has been disturbed by an article on English translators of Homer in the National Review that praised Ruskin for his interpretation of Homer’s comment on Helen’s mention of her brothers as alive when in fact they were dead. He quotes Ruskin’s commendation of Homer for not letting the sadness of the event change his view of the earth as a fruitful, life-giving mother, and then launches into the most extended tirade against Ruskin’s work he was ever to publish:

"The poet," says Mr. Ruskin, "has to speak of the earth in sadness; but he will not let that sadness affect or change his thought of it. No; though Castor and Pollux be dead, yet the earth is our mother still,—fruitful, life-giving." This is a just specimen of that sort of application of modern sentiment to the ancients, against which a student, who wishes to feel the ancients truly, cannot too resolutely defend himself. It reminds one, as, alas! so much of Mr. Ruskin’s writing reminds one, of those words of the most delicate of living critics: "Comme tout genre de composition a son écueil particulier, celui du genre romanesque, c’est le faux." The reader may feel moved as he reads it; but it is not the less an example of "le faux" in criticism; it is false. It is not true, as to that particular passage, that Homer called the earth φυτέων because, "though he had to speak of the earth in sadness, he would not let that sadness change or affect his thought of it," but consoled himself by considering that "the earth is our mother still,—fruitful, life-giving." It is not true,
as a matter of general criticism, that this kind of sentimentality, eminently modern, inspires Homer at all. "From Homer and Polygnotus I every day learn more clearly," says Goethe, "that in our life here above ground we have, properly speaking, to enact Hell:"—if the student must absolutely have a keynote to the *Iliad*, let him take this of Goethe, and see what he can do with it; it will not, at any rate, like the tender pantheism of Mr. Ruskin, falsify for him the whole strain of Homer.85

In accusing Ruskin of romantic falsehood86 and of modern sentimentality, Arnold very likely has in mind not just the passage on Homer, or even the chapter on the pathetic fallacy in which it appeared, but the entire theory of the history of landscape in *Modern Painters* III. Ruskin had said in his discussion of classical landscape that it was precisely the pantheism of Homer that kept him from the sentimentality of Keats; and he had instituted a very Arnoldian contrast between the sorrow of the Greeks, which might darken the soul yet not become one with it, and the sorrow of the modern age, which permanently affected the whole tone of thought and imagination. Arnold is therefore using some of Ruskin's own criteria in finding Ruskin's criticism of Homer fallacious and sentimental, and in charging him with failure to live up to the ideal of unemotional depiction of pure fact.

But how can a modern critic or translator ever escape entirely from his modernity? Ruskin had actually said that "modern" writers had inevitably to participate in the vices as well as the virtues of modernity; and his manuscript notes on the passage in question amply confirm Arnold's accusations. After commenting on "the unsurpassably tender irony in the epithet—'life-giving earth'—of the grave," he compares the passage to one in *Vanity Fair*:

Compare the hammer-stroke at the close of the [32d] chapter of *Vanity Fair*—"The darkness came down on the field and city, and Amelia was praying for George, who was lying on his face, dead, with a bullet through his heart." A
great deal might have been said about it. The writer is very sorry for Amelia, neither does he want faith in prayer. He knows as well as any of us that prayer must be answered in some sort; but those are the facts. The man and woman sixteen miles apart—one on her knees on the floor, the other on his face in the clay. So much love in her heart, so much lead in his. Make what you can of it.  

But Arnold was not less guilty than Ruskin of applying modern sentiment to Homer when he recommended Goethe’s dictum that our life on earth is really an enactment of Hell as a truer keynote to the *Iliad* than Ruskin’s tender pantheism. Arnold’s keynote was as personal and therefore as modern as any could be, for in May of 1857, some months before he was to name depression and ennui among the characteristic elements of modern literature, he wrote thus to his sister Jane about his prospects for getting to the Alps and composing again: “I shall be baffled, I daresay, as one continually is in so much, but I remember Goethe, ‘Homer and Polygnotus daily teach me more and more that our life is a Hell, through which one must struggle as best one can.’”

Having found Ruskin guilty of something very like the sin Ruskin had himself defined as the pathetic fallacy, Arnold says that he has done with negative counsel and will commence with positive. He also appears to have done with Ruskin, who is mentioned but one other time in the lectures, and then in connection with the very same sin of Homeric interpretation. But I believe that Ruskin, whom Arnold had identified as his initial target in these lectures, was present to his mind throughout them.

Ruskin, in the section of his discussion of the pathetic fallacy from which Arnold was to wrench the remarks on Homer, had been insisting on the dignity Homer gains from his fidelity to fact; and he had since at least 1851 praised the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood painters for their stern fidelity to “the actual facts of the scene they desire to represent,” and for their insistence upon “working everything, down to the most minute detail, from nature, and from nature only.”
In the volume of *Modern Painters* that would command so much of Arnold’s attention, he not only gave the highest possible praise to Holman Hunt’s “Light of the World” but praised Pre-Raphaelitism generally for “the wholesome, happy, and noble—though not noblest—art of simple transcript from nature. . . .”

Arnold, shortly after he has finished with Ruskin and begun to test English translations of Homer for possession of Homer’s four characteristic qualities, blames Cowper for failing in rapidity and links Cowper’s failure with that of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. Cowper, Arnold points out, excused his deficiencies in other respects as a translator by boasting of his close fidelity to the original. But this will never do, for “to suppose that it is fidelity to an original to give its matter, unless you at the same time give its manner, is just the mistake of our pre-Raphaelite school of painters, who do not understand that the peculiar effect of nature resides in the whole and not in the parts.”

Arnold saw in the Pre-Raphaelite creed, as he saw in Ruskin’s inability to find or even to seek the *ordo concatenatioque veri*, a revival of the romantic aesthetic he had begun to attack in the 1853 Preface. His remarks about the Pre-Raphaelite aesthetic of naturalism and particularity really bring us nearer to the heart of his quarrel with Ruskin than does the somewhat petulant questioning of the purity of Ruskin’s anti-modernism, although the petulance may in itself be a good sign of Arnold’s feeling that whereas he and Ruskin tended to start out on the same track, Ruskin always deviated perversely from the appointed destination.

Jacques Barzun has said that “cultural periods are united by their questions, not their answers.” Ruskin, in *Modern Painters* III, and Arnold, in his lectures at Oxford, were asking many of the same questions. What is the role of the artist in modern society? What is the peculiarly modern element in art and literature, and what relation does it bear to the art and literature of the past? What kind of art will help us to master our own experience and to view it in relation to the collective experience of the human race? Can art and literature convey to us a nobility that modern society fails to provide?
Arnold's growing awareness of the Ruskinian enterprise of searching in art for answers to social questions was a sign that by the time he delivered his Oxford lectures on Homer the social question had become of great importance to him. He was seeking in Homer qualities that were disappearing from an increasingly democratic society, and so tended to stress the aristocratic qualities and connections of Homer. In order to make a point about Pope's weakness in rendering Homer's plainness and directness of style and diction, Arnold recounts the story of an English aristocrat, Lord Granville, who on his deathbed declined the opportunity to postpone his duty of considering the details of the Treaty of Paris to end the Seven Years' War. He was fulfilling his task, he said, because he would not prolong his life by neglecting his duty; and he then quoted from Book XII of the *Iliad* the speech of Sarpedon:

> Man, supposing you and I, escaping this battle, would be able to live on forever, ageless, immortal, so neither would I myself go on fighting in the foremost nor would I urge you into the fighting where men win glory. But now, seeing that the spirits of death stand close about us in their thousands, no man can turn aside nor escape them, let us go on and win glory for ourselves, or yield it to others.

(322–28)

Arnold says that he quotes this story from Robert Wood's *Essay on the Genius of Homer* primarily because "it is interesting as exhibiting the English aristocracy at its very height of culture, lofty spirit, and greatness." Ruskin, in the volume of *Modern Painters* that elicited both praise and blame from Arnold, had defined poetry as "the suggestion, by the imagination, of noble grounds for noble emotions," and made "noble subject" the chief prerequisite of that Grand Style which Reynolds had made synonymous with the poetry of Homer. Arnold now chose to link Homer with nobility more than with any other single quality because nobility was the preeminent quality of the English aristocracy, and because English aristocracy would soon be supplanted by English democracy. In his political pamphlet of the
previous year Arnold had praised the good qualities of this class, whose virtues were as undeniable as its demise was inevitable. Now he asserted that although arguments about Homer's identity were sterile, the best argument for the existence of a single poet of the *Iliad*, of a real Homer, was "precisely this nobleness of the poet, this grand manner. . . ." The *Iliad* carried the unique stamp of the great masters, "and that stamp is the grand style." In 1861 Arnold made explicit the implied link of the Homer lectures between the Grand Style of Homer and the English aristocracy by saying: "I have had occasion, in speaking of Homer, to say very often, and with much emphasis, that he is *in the grand style*. It is the chief virtue of a healthy and uncorrupted aristocracy, that it is, in general, *in this grand style*."

Arnold was by no means the only Victorian to recognize and assert the link between the principle of aristocracy and the nobility of Homer. "I am, and my father was before me," wrote Ruskin in *Fors Clavigera*, "a violent Tory of the old school (Walter Scott's school, that is to say, and Homer's). I name these two out of the numberless great Tory writers, because they were my own two masters. I had Walter Scott's novels, and the *Iliad* (Pope's translation), for my only reading when I was a child, on weekdays. . . ." Ruskin always maintained that in youth he had learned from Scott and Homer the whole philosophy of Toryism, which all his later experience only served to confirm; and in a letter to J. S. Blackie he once claimed to have acquired from Homer his ideas on kingship, on womanhood, on household order, on good workmanship, on political economy, and on rural labor.

The link that always existed in Ruskin's memory between Homer and Walter Scott as the two great teachers of Tory ideals led him to make them the chief representatives of their respective ages in his history of landscape in *Modern Painters*: "I believe the true mind of a nation, at any period, is always best ascertainable by examining that of its greatest men; and that simpler and truer results will be attainable for us by simply comparing Homer, Dante, and Walter Scott, than by attempting . . . an analysis of the landscape in the range of contemporary literature." Yet for all his devotion to Scott, Ruskin
was forced to admit that the identity that obtains between Homer and Scott in the realm of doctrine fails in the realm of art. Scott is the greatest representative of the modern mind in literature because he is a great man but also because he suffers from all the characteristic faults of modernity. Like all great men he is humble and unaffected, and he creates with ease; but, like all modern artists, he is faithless, sentimental about the past yet contemptuous of it, ignorant of art, and eminently sorrowful. "Life begins to pass from him very early; and while Homer sings cheerfully in his blindness . . . Scott, yet hardly past his youth, lies pensive in the sweet sunshine and among the harvest of his native hills." \(^95\)

For Arnold, in his lectures on Homer, it was also a matter of the first importance to separate Scott from Homer—not only because Francis Newman, the most ignoble and therefore the worst of Homer’s translators, had linked them, but because Homer belonged "to an incomparably more developed spiritual and intellectual order than . . . Scott and Macaulay." Francis Newman had asserted that Walter Scott was "by far the most Homeric of our poets" and had expressed the hope that some genius might arise who would translate Homer into the melodies of *Marmion.*" William Maginn, who produced *Homeric Ballads* on the assumption that Homer was most like the English balladists, had argued that "the truly classical and the truly romantic are one," and had gone so far as to label a descriptive passage by Scott "graphic, and therefore Homeric." \(^96\)

Arnold, who could hardly have forgotten Ruskin’s recent use of Homer and Scott to contrast classical and modern landscape, absolutely rejects the possibility that Scott could ever be Homeric. What Dr. Maginn has failed to remember is that Homer is not merely graphic; "he is also noble, and has the grand style." More important, says Arnold, although human nature may be the same in all ages, we only know the human nature of other ages through the artistic representations that have come down to us, "and the classical and the romantic modes of representation are so far from being ‘one,’ that they remain eternally distinct, and have created for us a separation between the two worlds which they respectively represent." \(^97\)

Arnold’s contrast between classical and romantic, Homer and
Scott, is similar to Ruskin’s but far more absolute. Arnold had rejected much of his own poetry because it was romantic—that is, as he saw it, mired in private melancholy and therefore incapable of giving joy to others. But Ruskin, though he could see the weaknesses of modern, romantic art, could not see what choice the modern artist had but to participate in the weaknesses of his age. He might trace the decline of landscape in several respects from classical to modern times, and might deplore the change from classical health to modern, romantic sorrow, yet for him it remained an open question “how far our melancholy may be deeper and wider than theirs in its roots and view, and therefore nobler.”

For Arnold the nobility of art lay exclusively in the past. Scott, he admitted, was a true genius, and a man of the highest powers; yet even Scott’s poetry at its best “is not in the grand manner, and therefore it is not like Homer’s poetry.” Scott in the best lines of *Marmion* may be touching and stirring; “but the grand style, which is Homer’s, is something more than touching and stirring; it can form the character, it is edifying.”

There seems little doubt that Ruskin in 1856 ascribed to Scott preeminence among modern landscape artists partly because of his attachment to Scott’s social and political principles. Scott’s shortcomings linked him to modern art, but his greatness as an ethical and political teacher linked him to Homer. For both Ruskin and Arnold, Homer and the Grand Style represented the principle of aristocracy. But whereas Ruskin derived, or claimed to derive, from Homer specific political doctrines that committed him to the defense of a hierarchical system of class based on the theory of *noblesse oblige*, and that disposed him to admire modern writers like Scott, who exalted these Tory virtues, Arnold was loyal only to the general spirit of nobility that was embodied in Homer and that was lacking in modern poetic style and in modern society. But if Ruskin was rigid in his political application of the Homeric heritage, Arnold could be equally rigid in deriving his aesthetic from Homer and the classical tradition. Arnold’s loyalty was to the spirit rather than the letter of Homer’s nobility, yet it was a fierce and exclusive loyalty. It obliged Arnold
to sacrifice almost completely the aesthetic flexibility that enabled Ruskin to find much that was admirable and even noble in Scott and in a host of modern writers and painters.  

Walter Pater was later to point out that ever since the time of Goethe the overwhelming question for the modern artist had been: "Can the blitheness and universality of the antique ideal be communicated to artistic productions, which shall contain the fulness of the experience of the modern world?" Arnold responded to this question negatively, and by the end of the fifties was on his way, as an artist, to opting for the blitheness of the antique ideal rather than for the fulness—and frightfulness—of the experience of the modern world. But even as his aesthetic creed and his own art became paralyzed, his social and political imagination became more flexible and inventive; the energy that was stopped in one direction found expression elsewhere. His fidelity, to use the terms of his own criticism of the Pre-Raphaelites, to Homer's noble manner rather than to the details of Homer's "Tory" creed liberated Arnold from the obligation to seek nobility only where it had existed in the past and enabled him to propose new social and political means for the perpetuation of ancient virtues. For the Arnold of the sixties there was no longer much possibility of linking writers across the centuries or of separating artistic virtues and faults from social virtues and faults; but there was every hope that new institutions might have an ennobling influence on the large numbers of people who could not even read Homer.

By the time Arnold delivered his last lecture on Homer, in November 1861, he had published his first major political essay and had devoted it not to Homeric Toryism or to aristocracy but to democracy, the new force that everyone talked of and everyone lamented, but for the reception of which no one prepared. Some, Arnold charged, think that "all democracy wants is vigorous putting-down; and that . . . it is perfectly possible to retain or restore the whole system of the Middle Ages." But now Arnold recalls once again the anecdote he had related in the first Homer lecture about Lord Granville and asks whether anyone can believe that the aristocratic culture indicated by that tale is still the culture of a whole class. Since it is not, the preg-
nant question for English society, according to Arnold, is: "On what action may we rely to replace, for some time at any rate, that action of the aristocracy upon the people of the country, which we have seen exercise an influence in many respects elevating and beneficial, but which is rapidly, and from inevitable causes, ceasing?"¹⁰²

When Arnold took up his professorial duties in 1857, he still conceived of deliverance as a task for intellect and for literature; by the time he completed his Homer lectures in 1861, the professor of poetry was more concerned with social action than with poetic style, though he saw them as inextricably bound up with each other. From one point of view, 1861 was an odd year in which to desert the criticism of art for the criticism of society, for the *Times* was expressing general sentiment when in December it described the state of England enjoying "a degree of general contentment to which neither we nor any other nation we know of ever attained before." Yet in 1860 Arnold's sometime adversary John Ruskin had made just the same move from art to society by publishing in the *Cornhill Magazine* a series of essays on political economy so violent in their denunciations of the existing social system—Ruskin called them his incendiary production—that George Smith, the publisher, was obliged to order his editor Thackeray to discontinue their publication. At least one person seems to have noticed the striking parallels between Ruskin's changing career and Arnold's, for in 1861 Arnold's sister Jane warned him that he was becoming as dogmatic as Ruskin. He replied:

So you find my tone in the Lectures too dogmatic? I shall be curious to see if the reviewers find the same thing. No one else has yet made this complaint, and you must remember that the tone of a lecturing professor to an audience supposed to be there to learn of him, cannot be quite that of a man submitting his views to the great world. The expression to speak ex cathedra in itself implies what is expected in one who speaks from a Professor's chair. Also it is not positive forms in themselves that are offensive to people—it is posi-
tive forms in defense of paradox; such as Ruskin's, that Claude is a bad colorist, or Murillo a second-rate painter.\textsuperscript{108}

In the early years of the new decade Arnold was to grow more and more conscious of Ruskin, as a predecessor more than a rival, and as one whose removal from art to society had been accompanied by errors that Arnold hoped to avoid.