Chapter I

To understand the Horace of the *Imitations* properly, it is essential to approach him through the texts and editions available to Pope, to place him in the general framework of thought provided by neoclassical critical documents. This Horace is not the playful Epicurean twentieth-century critics have posited, but a poet who took life and literature seriously. "Aut prodesse volunt, aut delectare Poetae," he had said; and the eighteenth century believed him. Critic after critic echoes the Horatian dictum; critic after critic traces the origin of poetry to Holy Writ and explains that Moses was the first poet, that from the beginning of time poetry conveyed morality, philosophy, science, and God's law to the minds and hearts of men.1 They claimed for it a present function as impressive as its pedigree: Tasso, for instance, toyed with the speculation of Maximus Tyrius, "that philosophy and poetry were one thing, double in name but single in essence,"2 and then went on to prefer poetry, as teacher, to scholastic philosophy—"to move readers in this way with images, as do the mystic theologian and the poet, is a much more noble work than to teach by means of demonstrations, which is the function of the scholastic theologian."3 Ben Jonson asserts no less: for him, poetry combines the learning of philosophy, divinity, and statesmanship, and teaches all of them well.

I could never thinke the study of Wisdome confin'd only to the *Philosopher*, or of Piety to the *Divine*, or of State to the *Politicke*: But that he which can faine a *Common-wealth* (which is the *Poet*), can gowne it with *Counsels*, strengthen it with *Lawes*, correct it with *Judgements*, informe it with
Religion and Morals, is all of these. Wee do not require in him meere Elocution, or an excellent faculty in verse, but the exact knowledge, of all vertues and their Contraries, with ability to render the one lov'd, the other hated, by his proper embattaling them.

In the Preface to Gondibert, Sir William Davenant spins out the implications of such remarks, down to their most specific and tedious details. He starts with the praises of poets and poetry, and then proceeds to the sacred poets—Moses, David, and Solomon—and the favor their verse won with God. He then harangues the divines because they failed to use poetry to smooth the unruliness of the people; this negligence has earned its proper return in the disobedience and sectarianism with which the masses, for lack of poetry’s soothing didactic influence, oppose the clergy.

Davenant recommends poetry to generals to rouse the courage of their troops and to statesmen to inculcate the principles of morality and order in their subjects.

But Poets, who with wise diligence study the People, and have in all ages by an insensible influence governed their manners, may justly smile when they perceive that Divines, Leaders of Armies, Statesmen, and Judges think Religion, the Sword, or (which is unwritten Law and a secret Confederacy of Chiefs) Policy, or Law (which is written, but seldom rightly read) can give without the help of the Muses a long and quiet satisfaction in government.

Poetry, Davenant asserts, is indispensible to the proper functioning of all branches of civil life. Poets excel as promulgators of religion and teachers of nature and divinity; they are the most pre-eminently useful of all moralists.

For Poesy, which like contracted Essences seems the utmost strength & activity of Nature, is as all good Arts subservient to Religion, all marching under the same banner though of less discipline and esteem. And as Poesy is the best Expositor of Nature, Nature being misterious to such as use not to consider, so Nature is the best Interpreter of God, and more cannot be said of Religion.
which are the Chiefs of the Church, neglect the help of the Moralists in reforming the People (and Poets are of all Moralists the most useful), they give a sentence against the Law of Nature: For Nature performs all things by correspondent aids and harmony. And 'tis injurious not to think Poets the most useful Moralists, for as Poesy is adorn'd and sublim'd by Musick, which makes it more pleasant and acceptable, so Morality is sweetned and made more amiable by Poesy.  

Such commonplace opinions represent the shared critical stance of the English Augustans; their attitude toward satire in particular grows naturally out of these ideas. In addition to the prestigious historical background it shares with poetry in general, the genre was regarded as peculiarly didactic, and was recognized, at least in theory, as a most effective means of accomplishing moral reformation. The comments of Pope's fellow satirist Edward Young offer a fair idea of its pedigree and prestige:

But it is possible, that Satire may not do much good: men may rise in their affections to their follies, as they do to their friends, when they are abused by others: It is much to be feared, that misconduct will never be chased out of the world by Satire; all therefore that is to be said for it, is that misconduct will certainly be never chased out of the world by Satire, if no Satires are written: nor is that term unapplicable to graver compositions. Ethics, Heathen and Christian, and the Scriptures themselves, are, in a great measure, a Satire on the weakness and iniquity of men; and some part of that Satire is in verse too: nay, in the first Ages, Philosophy and Poetry were the same thing; wisdom wore no other dress: so that, I hope, these satires will be the more easily pardoned that misfortune by the severe. If they like not the fashion, let them take them by the weight; for some weight they have, or the author has failed in his aim. Nay, Historians themselves should be considered as Satirists, and Satirists most severe; since such are most human actions, that to relate is to expose them.

Dryden agrees: he quotes with approval Heinsius' definition, that "Satire is a kind of poetry, without a series of actions,
invented for the purging of our minds; in which human vices, ignorance, and errors, and all things besides, which are produced from them in every man, are severely reprehended. . . . Such ideas reverberated through the poetical and critical tracts of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Buckingham’s *Essay on Satire* informs us that

Poets alone found the delightful Way,  
Mysterious Morals gently to convey  
In charming Numbers, that when once Men grew  
Pleas’d with their Poems, they grew wiser too.  
*Satire* has always shin’d among the rest,  
And is the boldest Way, perhaps the best,  
To shew Men freely all their foulest Faults;  
To laugh at their vain Deeds and vainer Thoughts.  

Some theorists pushed their respect for satire’s strength far beyond the limits of Buckingham’s encomium. It was even common to regard satire in quasi-legal light as a supplement to the laws of the nation, as an effective weapon to terrorize sinners who have no fear of the laws of the land or of religion.  

In many ways, Joseph Trapp’s *Praelectiones Poeticae* constitutes the definitive statement of this body of Augustan theory. He conglomerates elements from every aspect of the critical tradition to draw out its fullest implications and articulate what well may be the most elaborate presentation of neoclassical criticism:

The word *Satire* was anciently taken in a less restrain’d sense than it is at present, not only as denoting a severe Poem against Vice, but consisting of Precepts of Virtue, and the Praises of it; And even in the Satires, as they are call’d, of *Horace, Juvenal, and Persius, &c*, which are principally levell’d against the Weaknesses, the Follies, or Vices of Mankind; we find many Directions, as well as Incitements to virtue. Such strokes of Morality, *Horace*, particularly, is full of; and in *Juvenal* they occur very frequently. . . .
of them sometimes correct Vice, like Moralists, I may say, like Divines, rather than Satirists: what less can we say of this of Persius?

_O curvae in terras ammae, & cælestium inanes!
O souls, in whom no heav'ny Fire is found._

_Dryden._

Sentiments, these, one would think, were fetch’d from true Religion, not from unassisted Reason; and which we might expect from the Christian, more than the Stoic.¹²

Trapp’s statement draws upon a traditional body of literary criticism that runs far back into the Renaissance and makes explicit the inherent tendency of that tradition to approximate pagan philosophy to Christian faith. It allocates the name satire entirely, or at least primarily, to the three Roman greats, Horace, Persius, and Juvenal. Satire for the Augustans seems often not so much a literary genre as a living creature, a three-headed beast named Horace-Persius-Juvenal. Mention of satire inevitably conjures them up; mention of any one of them inescapably calls forth the other two.¹³ For the neoclassicists, classical verse satire was one solid body of work, tending toward one end: moral instruction. In Dryden’s _Discourse concerning the Original and Progress of Satire_ the three Latin poets are considered alike in purpose, in their attempt to correct and instruct a foolish and wicked world. The only differences among them are those of technique and success, as his comparison of the merits of Juvenal and Horace evidences:

That Horace is somewhat the better instructor of the two, is proved from hence, that his instructions are more general, Juvenal’s more limited. So that, granting the counsels they give are equally good for moral use, Horace, who gives the most various advice, and most applicable to all occasions which can occur to us in the course of our lives,—as including in his discourses, not only all the rules of morality, but also of civil conversation,—is undoubtedly to be preferred to him who is more circumscribed in his instructions, makes them to fewer people, and on fewer occasions, than
the other. I may be pardoned for using an old saying, since 'tis true, and to the purpose: *Bonum quo communius, eo melius*. . . . Horace is teaching us in every line, and is perpetually moral. . . . 14

Dryden's concession of Horace's superiority as a teacher, despite his personal preference for Juvenal, is also a well-established prop of the traditional view: by the beginning of the eighteenth century, few readers dispute the pre-eminence of Horace as a moral instructor. Dunster, in the preface of his translation, tells us that Horace's satires and epistles "were written, as he himself assures us, for the Instruction of Mankind; they abound with many excellent Rules and Precepts, the Knowledge of which contributes very much to be Improvement of Life, by imprinting in our Minds just and true and lively Sentiments of Moral Honesty and Vertue." 15 Edward Young is equally confident, and somewhat more sophisticated:

Moreover, Laughing Satire bids the fairest for success: the world is too proud to be fond of a serious tutor; and when an Author is in a passion, the laugh, generally, as in conversation, turns against him. This kind of Satire only has any delicacy in it. Of this delicacy Horace is the best master: he appears in good humour while he censures; and therefore his censure has the more weight, as supposed to proceed from judgment, not from passion. 16

Thus the Augustan poets and critics formulated their vision of Horace. The seriousness with which they regarded poetry generally and satire specifically molded their conception of the first great satirist: Horace was inevitably for them earnest, serious, "perpetually moral," and ever instructive, a source of guidance in matters of ethics and civility both.

I

Alongside Renaissance and Augustan critical and poetic pronouncements about literature, there flourished a com-
plementary tradition of scholarly commentary. From the earliest Renaissance printing of Horace through the eighteenth century (well into the nineteenth for that matter; the Delphine edition was still being reprinted during the Romantic period), editions flowed off the presses in numbers increasing to match Horace's ever-growing popularity. It is no doubt superfluous to say that these editions were totally unlike the prim classics texts we have become accustomed to, but the point needs to be emphasized. A representative Renaissance edition of Horace—say, that of Cruquius or of Christoforo Landino—tosses the reader adrift in a sea of commentary, with only a spar or two of text to cling to. The commentary itself is a hodgepodge of heterogeneous materials—philology, interpretation, verbal criticism, philosophy, variant readings, allegorizations, comparisons with other classical satirists or with similar loci in other Horatian poems, or with Scripture. But perhaps the most impressive aspect of the commentaries is their general unanimity: in almost all important cases, and certainly in the larger areas of interpretation, they are usually at one. The same annotations recur in commentator after commentator, generally without mutual acknowledgment; plagiarism is never a consideration. This can be easily demonstrated by tracing the annotations on any given line of Horace chronologically through editions. The scholars evidently felt that their task was to document what was common knowledge, to write down and restore to the public what was originally its own, to publish the conclusions any right-thinking man would come to. This accounts for their silence about their predecessors, broken only when a faulty derivation or a particularly ingenious reading and interpretation disturbs the tranquillity of some scholarly soul, and calls—in the interests of truth—for a crushing refutation, ending more often than not in vituperation. Such unity within confusion is the basic condition of the scholarly Horatian tradition.

Out of this welter of elements grows a consistent and coherent image of Horace, and a conception of him and
his poetry that is perfectly at one with—in fact, is an amalgam of—the critical and scholarly traditions. This view has been shaped in many cases by the very same minds, but always by the same kind of minds, that had formed those attitudes; and it is, of course, inescapable that the same opinions should reappear. Horace’s moral pronouncements are related to similar dicta in the poems of the other satirists on the same or like themes, or they are reinforced by comparison to like statements in the Old and New Testaments. Horace, the chorus of annotators tells us, has written seriously and importantly, imparting rules for the wise government of human life. Torrentius puts it briefly:

At studiose & sedulo singula Horatii poemata lege & perpende: inuenies non disputationes quidem subtiles, aut ratiocinationum acumina; sed pleraque omnia quae ad recte, sancte, tranquille, beate viuendum a profano homine proficisci possunt, argute ac graviter praecepta, exemplisque poetarum historiarumque & vitae communis de copia de promtis explicata, confirmata, ac quasi condita. Hie enim mos, haec ratio philosophandi, vnice Horatio placuit.\(^9\)

That is, in essence, the traditional Horace, the Horace whom Pope and the Augustans knew. André Dacier, whose scholarship and sensitivity Pope admired, explains the implications of such statements more fully: like the figures of the Sileni, whose homely exteriors hid images of all the gods, Horace’s playful surface matter conceals the doctrine of all the virtues, which should be the constant pursuit of everyone who wishes to correct his vices.\(^{20}\) The satires and epistles constitute an almost complete course in morality:

Ce n’étoit pas là la difference qu’on devoir établir entre les Satires et les Epitres; il y en a une plus essentielle, et plus digne de notre curiosité. Il falloit faire voir qu’Horace s’étant aperçu que le défaut de ceux qui, avant lui, avoient entrepris de combattre les vices, et de donner des preceptes pour la vertu, venoit de ce qu’ils n’avoient gardé aucun ordre ni aucune methode, il a voulu rendre son Ouvrage plus complet, et mieux suivi; et pour cet effet il a divisé et rangé
This is the Horace of the Renaissance and of those who were bred, as Pope was, in the final days of the Renaissance tradition; he was for them, as he could never be again after their reverential attitude toward Augustan Rome passed away, a nearly unimpeachable moral arbiter and guide, on the level of authority almost with the Scriptures to which his sentiments were so often compared.

The ultimate tests of the grasp that any idea has on the minds of men are the instances of its practical application; and everywhere, the men of the eighteenth century proved by their deeds that they quite firmly believed in their conception of Horace. Essay after essay calls upon the authority of Horace to reinforce its didactic point; writer follows writer in his turn to bow at the shrine of ever moral, ever instructive Horace. Men as diverse as Henry Fielding and Lord Chesterfield in effect agree: one looked to Horace as the great master of the equanimity he tried to practice; the other drew from him a conception of personal integrity and innocence as the source of human happiness. Horace was their sure guide, as he was the firm and unquestioned authority for many of the laws Addison dictated to his little senate and to an England proud (and occasionally embarrassed) to call itself Augustan.

Pope in no way stands apart from his time, except in the brilliance of his talent. These assumptions about the nature of satire, about the matter of Horace, were his by birthright. His poetic statements do not imply that he disagreed with the Renaissance critical tradition he inherited; his poetic
practice in translating Homer forcefully suggests the opposite. His careful attention to the translation and notes of Mme Dacier and the commentary of Eustathius (translated for him by Broome and Fenton), which frequently guided his translation of the Greek text, indicates, not the feebleness of his knowledge of Greek as his contemporary enemies claimed, but a sturdy respect for the matter and authority of the learned tradition, a position quite in line with his conservative stance in many other areas of thought.

In employing such aids in his poetic task, Pope in no way enslaved himself to the mind of another, or sacrificed his own "artistic freedom." He did what any sensible poet would, what there was much honorable precedent for. His English master Dryden had done as much in his translation of Virgil, apparently regarding it as a duty incumbent upon him; he accepted the responsibility of knowledge laid upon him by the commentary tradition as a natural and essential part of his poetic task:

I return to our Italian translator of the Æneis. He is a foot-poet, he lacqueys by the side of Virgil at the best, but never mounts behind him. Doctor Morelli, who is no mean critic in our poetry, and therefore may be presumed to be a better in his own language, has confirmed me in this opinion by his judgment, and thinks, withall, that he has often mistaken his master's sense. I would say so, if I durst, but am afraid I have committed the same fault more often, and more grossly; for I have forsaken Ruæus (whom generally I follow) in many places, and made expositions of my own in some, quite contrary to him. . . .

This and his other frequent apologies for deviation from the commentators' interpretations make it more than clear that Dryden recognized the authority of this scholarly tradition as a factor not lightly to be set aside; and it hardly needs to be said that Dryden's example in so crucial a matter would carry great weight with Pope.

Dryden's practice, of course, is not unique, nor is Pope in following him merely obeying the peculiar whim of an esoteric poet. Both exploit a knowledge and a tradition that,
until the early eighteenth century at least, lay squarely in the public domain. In one of the few Augustan public statements of policy on the business of poetic translation, the Earl of Roscommon strongly urges poets to turn the commentators to advantage if they would translate aright:

Take pains the genuine meaning to explore,
There sweat, there strain, tug the laborious oar;
Search every comment that your care can find,
Some here, some there, may hit the poet's mind.²⁸

In the light of such pronouncements and such examples, it is impossible not to conclude that Pope employed the lore of the annotators in his *Imitations of Horace*, and that his achievement was guided and influenced by it and by the traditional conceptions of Horace that his age inherited and cherished.

But even more specific evidence (if it be needed) indicates that Pope utilized the labors of the scholars and expected his readers to recognize their influence in his poems. Lilian Bloom has long ago brought to our attention the fact that Pope possessed at least four different editions of Horace,²⁹ and there is every likelihood that he was familiar with the contents of even more. The four that he certainly owned were those of Bentley, Cunningham, Heinsius, and Desprez. Of these, Pope was probably aided least by Bentley's edition, however much he may have been guided by him in establishing a text. Bentley, of course, stood in the vanguard of the new classical scholarship that was busily engaged in undermining the prestige of the older editors and obliterating their accumulated learning from the pages of Latin and Greek authors. Pope, conservative here as in politics, remained true to his humanist heritage and heaped scorn and literary damnation on the narrow specialization of the exponents of the new *Wissenschaft*.

Pains, reading, study, are their just pretence,
And all they want is spirit, taste, and sense.
Comma's and points they set exactly right,
And 'twere a sin to rob them of their Mite.
Yet ne'er one sprig of Laurel grac'd these ribalds,
From slashing Bentley down to pidling Tibalds.

(Epistle to Arbuthnot, 159-64)

Cunningham's edition is only lightly annotated and, although anti-Bentleian in tone, continues the kind of verbal scholarship that Bentley had for all practical purposes begun. Heinsius had prepared his edition for the Elzevir press, which had set itself the task (continuing the work of the Aldine press) of issuing uniform, sound texts of the classics, relatively unencumbered by commentary. Still, this edition managed to cram the entire Horatian corpus into its first half, leaving the remainder for Heinsius' bulky annotations that were, in addition, frequently reinforced by his lengthy and highly influential essay De Satyra Horatiana Libri duo. This latter filled as many pages as did the text of the Roman poet. Pope's fourth edition, that of the French Jesuit Desprez, was one of the series of classical texts published in usum Delphini (the Delphine editions). This is a volume in the grand Renaissance tradition, in which a postage stamp of Horace is often surrounded by an outsized envelope of commentary. The annotations themselves form a confluence or digest of the main streams of the Horatian tradition, which by this time had settled down into rather marked channels of thought. This particular edition appears to have been highly instrumental in shaping Pope's Horatian poems.

In addition to these, a letter of Pope's to the Duke of Buckingham gives ample evidence that Pope was familiar with yet another important edition, Dacier's.

I cannot think quite so highly of the Lady's [Mme Dacier's] learning, tho' I respect it very much. It is great complaisance in that polite nation, to allow her to be a Critic of equal rank with her husband. To instance no further, his remarks on Horace shew more good Sense, Penetration, and a better
Pope’s interest and the point of his praise turn on Dacier’s ability, not as an emendator of texts in the manner of Bentley, but on his perspicuity as a commentator on Horace. Dacier’s edition, published in ten volumes from 1681 to 1689 and reprinted many times thereafter, constitutes, like Desprez’, an omnium gatherum of the main elements of the established commentary tradition—with this difference: while the space and format requirements of a uniform edition restrained the exegetical tendencies of the French cleric, the French classicist was free to spin out to their finest the threads of meaning and implication with which the previous commentaries were woven. As a result, his volumes are fat with annotation and explanation, all of it building on the work of the savants who preceded him. In Dacier, the neoclassical image of Horace appears drawn most clearly; in him, Horace attains most overtly the semidivine status the Augustans were so willing to confer upon him. Dacier’s Horace is a man both serious and moral, dedicated to the philosophical pursuit of the true and the good. His poetry is a compendium of theoretic and useful knowledge about conduct and character and the duties a man must discharge in life. As Dacier often points out, it pleasantly leads young people into the necessary rigors of philosophy; and it contains, for both young and mature, an almost complete course of moral philosophy, according to the best of classical knowledge.

That Pope employed, and wished his readers to recognize, Dacier’s commentary is also fortunately quite clear. A note of Warburton’s demonstrates this:

Dacier laughs at an able Critic, who was scandalized, that the antient Scholiasts had not explained what Horace meant by a wall of brass; for, says Dacier, “Chacun se fait des difficultez à sa mode, et demande des remarques propor-
tionées à son goût:" he then sets himself in good earnest about this important inquiry; and, by a passage in Vegetius, luckily discovers, that it signified an old veteran armed cap-a-pie in brass, and placed to cover his fellow. Our Poet has happily served himself of this impertinence to convey a very fine stroke of satire.

This remark presents certain problems that will be taken up in discussion of Epistle I.i., but its meaning and its intent are plain. Pope has employed Dacier's commentary, and he or his editor (if it makes any real difference) is here calling attention to it. In effect, Warburton warns the reader that if he doesn't remember his Dacier, he will miss this satiric thrust. The whole statement and the detail with which Dacier's explanation is reported strongly imply much beyond this: they suggest that familiarity with Dacier may well convey many a "very fine stroke of satire." It is evidently essential, then, to consult Pope's Horaces in order to understand Pope's Horace. Neither Dacier nor any other critic can be considered alone; if he were idiosyncratic, he could not possess the authority he does for Pope and for the eighteenth century. It is as another voice in a long tradition, a compiler of knowledge that has almost the hallowed seal of the concensus gentium, that Dacier is valued; and it is in company with his cultural brothers in that tradition that he must be employed to illuminate the poetic achievement of Alexander Pope.

II

In addition to understanding the neoclassical Horace, it is important also to examine the component parts of satire as the eighteenth century understood them. Fortunately, our contemporary critical equipment here stands us in better stead than in evaluating Horace; there is a stability about literary kinds that literary ideas frequently and distressingly lack. The basic pattern of satire, at least in its
most rigorous manifestation as formal verse satire, has changed little since Horace solidified the genre. Verse satire, for the eighteenth century as for him, demanded that the poet empty his whole bag of rhetorical tricks in denunciation of a single vice or group of related vices, often choosing as the foil for his artistic fury a straw-man *adversarius*, who can also serve to counterpoint the heroic virtue of the satirist. Equally essential is the active presence in the satire of positive norms, either explicitly or implicitly stated. If there is any real difference between our contemporary theory of satire and that of the Augustans, it centers on the degree of importance attached to this factor. For the Renaissance and the eighteenth century, the presence of such norms is crucial, as Trapp’s statement, quoted above, should indicate. It is, of course, the presence of such moral norms that won the palm for Horace against his two rivals; his “many excellent Rules and Precepts” constituted the superiority of his satires.

For the eighteenth-century reader, one of these norms was presented ready-made in Horace himself. The Augustan reverence for the golden age of Roman civilization and language endowed Horace with an authority that, as we have seen, was little short of canonical. With this as his pre-text, Pope’s moral dicta in the *Imitations* were already half-sanctified by the mere fact of their existence in the Horatian original; thus his criticisms of eighteenth-century England had behind them the massive weight of Horace’s denunciations of first-century Rome; or, inversely, Pope’s scorn is all the more withering if he condemns where Horace could praise—as when George Augustus is weighed in the balance with Augustus Caesar, and found wanting. Horace and the noble Roman civilization of which he is the moral and poetic spokesman reinforce every barb and every taunt Pope points at his England: it is noble to be worthy of Horace’s praise, damnable to merit his scorn; the good life, the life worthy of rational man, is described in his poems, and poetic damnation awaits the eighteenth-century sinner
who falls short of it. By classical standards the neoclassicists
are judged.

More important than this, however, is the norm by which
the classics themselves are judged: the ethical standards
of Christian religion. The relations of Christianity and
classical culture had, of course, always been tangled in a
hopeless ambiguity. Church fathers who denounced the
errors of the pagans and the seductions of classical letters
also quoted from them to bolster their own arguments. How­
ever much the evil influence of classical literature may have
been deplored, it was most certainly never ignored; and
the practice of assimilating pagan authors by showing their
likenesses to Scripture may truthfully be said to have begun
even before the patristic aversion to them had entirely
waned. By the late seventeenth and early eighteenth cen­
turies, this practice had become almost commonplace, and
was applied to the greater part of classical literature.

Inevitably, an even more curious ambivalence rose out
of this process of assimilation: as respect for the ethical
thought of the ancients grew, that thought more and more
resembled, in contemporary interpretations, Christian mo­
rality. The dividing line between pagan and Christian nar­
rowed from the great gulf the fathers had fixed to an almost
invisible seam in the cloak of Renaissance culture: in many
Renaissance texts, it is difficult to distinguish the pagan
from the Christian, the light of reason from the illumination
of faith. The scholars of the Renaissance labored mightily
to explain these similarities. In some cases they were attrib­
uted to the clarity of classical reasoning; in others, they
were held to stem from the preservation of traditional truths
first known to Adam. Alexander Ross, eccentric in other
matters, is typical here: he explains, for instance, that the
pagans of India believed in the immortality of the soul by
the light of natural reason, and that this doctrine was pro­
fessed also by the "learned Gentiles"—and to prove this he
cites Zoroaster, Trismegistus, Phocillides, the Pythagoreans,
Many such passages may be seen in his [Seneca's] writings: and that generally the Gentiles believed this truth, is plain by their opinion they had of torments in Hell, and the joyes in their Elysian fields." Nor was this the only orthodox doctrine known and believed by the ancients: they—or at least those of them that the Renaissance was concerned with, the poets and philosophers—were also practicing monotheists. Ross remarks, in the course of a discussion of classical polytheism, that "we must observe, that although the ignorant multitude among the Gentiles did worship many Gods, yet the wiser sort acknowledged but one true God. . . ." He then goes on for two pages naming poets and philosophers to substantiate that statement. But the orthodoxy of the pagans does not end here. The same exclusive group was aware of even more esoteric Christian doctrines:

... It was held an act of justice and mercy both to bury the dead; of justice, that earth should be restored to earth, and dust to dust; for what could be more just than to restore to mother earth her children, that as she furnished them at first with a material being, with food, rayment, sustentation, and all things needful, so she might at last receive them again into her lap, and offer them lodging til the Resurrection, whereof some of the wiser Gentiles were not ignorant. . . .

Ross's statements may fairly be taken as representative of his time on these matters. For educated men of the Renaissance, the "wiser sort" of the ancients had, whether by reason or traditional revelation, attained a moral state and a body of beliefs similar to, and all but identical with, Christianity.

Theophilus Gale's The Court of the Gentiles stands as the summation and culmination of this attitude toward the religion and knowledge of the ancients. His research both advances the prestige of the classical thinkers and provides a pedigree that would make that prestige acceptable to the most scrupulous of Christians. The full title of his work
POPE'S HORATIAN POEMS

is its own best explanation: The Court of the Gentiles: or a Discourse Touching the Original of Human Literature, both Philologie and Philosophie, from the Scriptures, and Jewish Church. Although no previous writer had handled these materials with the thoroughness and devotion Gale brings to them, the prefatory advertisements to his study give some idea of the intellectual history, repute, and popularity of his central thesis. He began this study because he found hints “in Grotius and others, touching the Traduction of Human Arts and Sciences from the Scriptures, and Jewish Church. . . .” By further research, he “found a general concurrence of the Learned, both Philologists and Divines, of this and the former Age, endeavoring to promote this Hypothesis.” There follows a list of the major authorities that make the muster of Gale’s troops: Steuchus Eugubinus, Ludovicus Vives, “with other learned Papists of the former Age,” Julius Scaliger, Joseph Scaliger, Serranus, Vossius, Sandford, Heinsius, Bochart, Selden, Jackson, Hammond, Usher, Preston, Owen, Stillingfleet, “with others among the Protestants,” Josephus, Origen, Clement of Alexandria, Eusebius, Tertullian, Augustine, Johannes Grammaticus, “with others, as is shown in the Bodie of this Discourse.” The first of his two lengthy, learned volumes concerns itself with proving that pagan poetry in its entirety—form and matter and purpose—is derived from the sacred poetry of the Hebrews and from their stock of divine knowledge; the second accomplishes the same feat for pagan philosophy. His purpose is the strictly edifying one, welcome to all Renaissance Christians, of showing the incapacity of mere unaided reason to attain the highest truth and of demonstrating the necessity of a divine revelation.

A farther Designe the Author has in promoting this Hypothesis is, to beat down that fond persuasion, which has of late crept in among, and been openly avowed by many, too great Admirers of Pagan Philosophie, (especially that of Plato) as if it were all but the Product of Natures Light. Whereas, I take it, the author has, or will in what follows, evidently
evince, that the choicest Contemplations of Gentile Philo­s­phie, were but some corrupt Derivations, or at best but broken Traditions, originally traduced from the Sacred Scriptures, and Jewish Church.

He accomplishes this lofty aim by tracing the dispersal of Judaic tradition through Egyptians, Syrians, Phoenicians—"Sanchoniathon and Mochus, those great Phenician Sophists, who, as 'tis very likely, had immediate and frequent Conversation with the Jews; [and] the Egyptian Priests, who seem to have been instructed first by Joseph who founded and endowed a college for them. . . ." Gale then goes on to argue what almost everyone in the Renaissance conceded, "that several of the first Poets, Sophists, and Philosophers of Greece, travelled into Egypt and Phenicia; and made considerable abode there, at those very times when the Jews, in great multitudes, frequented those parts." The main body of his argument concerns itself with proving that in this way Orpheus, Linus, Homer, Hesiod, Solon, Thales, Pherecydes, Pythagoras, and Plato acquired their highest and truest ideas. 

By this mode of argumentation, Gale both explains the basis of the similarities between pagan and Christian thought and makes that thought acceptable and useful to the most tender-consciened Christians. Rather than being demonically inspired, as some of the early fathers had charged, the "wiser sort" of the ancients were in much the same situation as the Jews: they were pre-Christians, waiting for the fulness of God's revelation.

This attitude did not satisfy everybody, of course. There were those who maintained that what the pagans knew, they knew by the light of reason, and that this natural knowledge was sufficient for salvation. These deists would not disagree with Gale's conclusions about the content of ancient belief, but they did quarrel with him over its mode of acquisition and over the necessity of a special revelation. Lord Herbert of Cherbury is the most important early spokesman for this view. In his tract De Religione Gen-
tilium, he concludes that the pagans held these five essentials of true religion:

I. That there is one Supreme God. II. That he ought to be worshipped. III. That Vertue and Piety are the chief Parts of Divine Worship. IV. That we ought to be sorry for our Sins, and repent of them. V. That Divine Goodness doth dispense Rewards and Punishments both in this Life, and after it.42

In his De Veritate, these conclusions are applied even more broadly: he argues that every past religion has acknowledged, and every future religion will acknowledge, one sovereign deity. No race, however savage, has ever been found without this belief, as well as the concomitant doctrines of providence and grace. Priestcraft and superstition supply in themselves the sole causes of the corruption or distortion of this sound belief, which was nevertheless preserved in its purity by the “wiser sort” of the ancients.43

Lord Herbert’s statements are the basis of the deist position: later deists elaborated upon them, but did not alter them in their essentials. Wollaston, for instance, in The Religion of Nature Delineated, documents many of Herbert’s “Common Notions” by reference to, and quotation from, innumerable classical authors. To support the thesis of a universal belief in a single supreme being, for example, he quotes Horace’s “Nec veget quid quam simile aut secundum,” which he translates, “Nor is there any being in the world like or anything near to him.”44 And the two most important English deists of the eighteenth century, John Toland and Matthew Tindal, are equally explicit and outspoken on the subject of the pagans’ knowledge of true religion. Toland seems to be mingling Alexander Ross and Herbert of Cherbury when he remarks, in the course of explaining away pagan polytheism, that “the more learned and virtuous had many times better Notions of Things,” yet were prevented from promulgating them by the persecutions of the priests and the superstitious rabble.45 Toland
makes a clear distinction between these preservers of the true light of reason and the debased and priest-ridden mob, and refuses to even consider such a person as Cicero, for instance, a heathen.\textsuperscript{46} Tindal seems to extend the franchise of salvation even further by arguing that the truths of religion are at all times equally apparent to all men (he quotes Horace to prove this) and that God's justice demands that this be so. He cites the "wisest Heathens" and the Stoics to prove that the path to salvation was at all times open and easy to know.\textsuperscript{47}

The orthodox response to all this was necessarily awkward: the divines found themselves committed to granting as much to pagan knowledge as did the deists, and, at the same time, showing the absolute necessity of a special revelation. Tindal in particular mercilessly exposed the contradictions of their position, quoting their own pronouncements to the effect that whatever was necessary to be known of God was clear in all ages.\textsuperscript{48} This did not deter other ecclesiastics from falling into the same trap: in essence, orthodoxy had committed itself to Theophilus Gale's thesis. It had, therefore, no choice but to repeat his conclusions and content itself with the paradoxes of pagans as proto-Christians and an indispensable divine revelation that seemed completely unnecessary.\textsuperscript{49}

That, at any rate, fairly accurately summarizes the common opinion of the ancients and their religion at the time Pope was writing. Everyone agrees, in effect, that the ancients were monotheists who knew at least the essentials of the requirements for salvation, and in many cases much more. However much the theologians and polemicists argued about the sources of pagan knowledge, almost no one found it incompatible with the major doctrines of Christianity, and certainly not in conflict with Christian ethics.

Naturally, Horace shared fully in the effects of this general tendency to find correspondences between pagan and Christian ideas. Renaissance Polyanthea, for instance, clearly revealed the results of this sort of conflation or assimilation:
there the apothegms of the Bible and the fathers are printed side by side with those of Horace and other classical writers as representing the body of received and authoritative opinion on any given subject. Equally striking are the overtly Christianized Horaces produced throughout the Renaissance. The Polish Jesuit Sarbiewski—"the divine Casimir"—wrote his Latin and heavily moralized odes in direct imitation of Horace: he was, in fact, known as the "Christian Horace." Their popularity carried them through many editions and many translations (including one in English in 1646), and the poems themselves left their marks in the works of several English poets, especially Vaughan. Thomas Sagittarius brought out a Horatius Christianus, sive Parodiae sacrae ad Horatii ductum noviter accommodatae, which consisted of adaptations of Horatian poems to Christian themes. This often meant as little as changing the dedication, as when he converts Ode I.i. to orthodoxy by transforming Maecenas to the Messiah, and expunging all reference to the pagan gods. There is even a specifically Horatian emblem book—also quite popular and frequently reprinted—the Horatius Emblematus, which draws its denunciations of vice and praise of virtue indiscriminately from odes, satires, and epistles, and never fails to parallel them with like remarks from the Bible or the fathers.

Such ideas and attitudes toward Horace would also naturally belong to his Renaissance editors, and influence their commentaries. Here, for example, is an annotation of Dacier's on line 79 of Satire II.ii.:

Divine Particulam Aurae) Une particule du souffle de la Divinité. C'est-à-dire une partie de la Divinité même, qui n'est qu'un esprit, & que Platon appelle l'âme du monde. Cette idée du souffle de la Divinité, est venue sans doute aux Anciens de l'Histoire de la Création, qui leur étoit connu. Dieu après avoir formé l'homme de la poussière, lui inspira un souffle de vie: inspiravit in faciem ejus spiraculum vitae. Et c'est souffle de vie qu'ils ont appelé particulum divinae auras.
This brief paragraph contains all the elements of the traditions we have discussed. It directly confronts classical poetry with biblical narrative; it overtly states that the ancients knew and believed and utilized a piece of Judeo-Christian truth that came to them through their acquaintance with the Mosaic account of creation. It implies that Platonic philosophy is based—at least in part—on that account; and it clearly demands an understanding of Horace that is markedly not twentieth-century and hedonist, but Renaissance and Christian.

All these same attributes stand out in Pope's rendering of the passage:

How pale, each Worshipful and rev'rend Guest
Rise from a Clergy, or a City, feast!
What life in all that ample Body, say,
What heav'nly Particle inspires the clay?
The Soul subsides; and wickedly inclines
To seem but mortal, ev'n in sound Divines.

(Imitation of Sat. II. ii., 75-80)

It is obvious that Pope's poem makes use of the allusion that the commentators (Desprez also notes it) have provided. Horace's "divinae particulam aurae" has been transmuted into a "heavenly Particle" that scripturally "inspires the clay" of which man is made. Seen in the context of the poem, Pope's gluttons here reveal the extent of their alienation from God: their depravity is the undoing of his creation and the restoration of primal chaos. Their souls do quite literally subside and stoop to become gross matter. Pope's moral point is quite clear and quite Christian: for him, the same point appears to have been already clear in Horace, in very much the same terms as those he uses.

This vision of Horace—a serious moral poet whose best and highest ideas were only slightly distorted versions of Hebraic truth—is clearly ideal for a Christian satirist who, however great his reverence for the ancients, believes that the ultimate court of appeal for human conduct must be
found in the full revealed truth of Christianity. Given this propensity in the tradition, combined with Pope's own preoccupation with ethics and morality, it is to be expected that he will follow the commentators' lead and buttress his satire with the authority of Scripture and Christian tradition. He probably did not even need Dacier's specific advice to urge him to do this:

Homère ajoute ces derniers mots pour faire entendre que ces tromperies surprennent bien plutôt les esprits fins & délicats, que les esprits lourds & grossiers; & la Poésie en est d'autant plus dangereuse. C'est pourquoi il faut bien examiner la doctrine qu'elle présente, & éplucher ces opinions, pour rejeter les fausses, & pour confirmer les véritables, par les lumieres sûres que nous donne la vérité.

... Je m'en étonne, car Plutarque en avoit ouvert le chemin dans son excellent Traité sur la maniere dont il faut lire les Poëtes, où il donne des avis très-utiles pour mettre les jeunes gens en état de discerner dans les Poëtes ce qu'ils ont de bon, d'avec ce qu'ils ont de mauvais, & pour leur donner dans cette lecture comme un avant-goût de la Philosophie. Au lieu de le suivre, on s'est contenté d'expliquer littéralement leurs maximes sans les approfondir, & sans en montrer la fausseté ou la vérité, en les appliquant à la véritable règle.

C'est pourtant ce que nous pouvons faire aujourd'hui beaucoup mieux, & plus sûrement que Plutarque ne l'a fait. Car, outre que la vérité de la Philosophie ne lui étoit pas entièrement connue, la superstition lui a fait souvent prendre pour contraires à la Religion & aux moeurs des choses qu'il aurait trouvé très-veritables, s'il avoit mieux connu la nature de Dieu, & s'il avoit pu remonter jusqu'aux véritables sources.55

All the weight of Renaissance learning works to this same end, to enable Pope to understand and employ Horace as a moral instructor illuminated by the best of classical knowledge, and to be further brightened by the light of Christian revelation. The Horace his culture presented to him was a poet serious, moral, didactic, and—to use a congenial twentieth-century term—committed. His poetry,
as seen through the prism of commentators and scholars, formed a thorough study of ethics and practical morality, and reflected a life passionately spent in the pursuit of reason, truth, and virtue. It is this Horace that Pope knew and utilized; and it is precisely the harmony of pagan knowledge and Christian faith that the Renaissance strove after, and which it thought it found implicit in Horace, that Pope has worked into great satire.

1. For such ideas about literature, see, for instance, André Dacier's Preface to Aristotle's Art of Poetry (English trans. 1705; Augustan Reprint Society, no. 26, Los Angeles, 1959), pagination A3-A4reor; Joseph Trapp, Lectures on Poetry (London, 1742; originally published in Latin in 1711 as Praelectiones Poeticae), pp. 1-12; and Sir Thomas Pope Blount's De Re Poetica: or, Remarks upon Poetry (London, 1694), pp. 1-9. J. E. Spingarn's three volumes of Critical Essays of the Seventeenth Century (Oxford, 1957) are, of course, a storehouse of like opinions. George Chapman, for example, prefaces his translation of Homer with a long encomium of poetry, in the course of which he informs us that poetry is of all human activities most closely bound to truth, "as having perpetual commerce with the divine majesty, and embracing and illustrating all his most holy precepts, and enjoying continual discourse with his thrice perfect and most comfortable spirit" (Spingarn, I, 67-68). See also Henry Reynolds, Mythomystes (Spingarn, I, 131-75); and Sir William Temple, Of Poetry (Spingarn, III, 86-88). Ernst Robert Curtius describes an identical attitude toward poetry in Renaissance Spain; see European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages, trans. Willard R. Trask, (New York, 1953), pp. 542-48.


3. Ibid., p. 476.

4. Ben Jonson, Timber, or Discoveries (Spingarn), I, 28. See also pp. 51-52.

5. Sir William Davenant, Preface to Gondibert (Spingarn), II, 32-35.

6. Ibid., p. 38.

7. Ibid., pp. 48-49.


9. John Dryden, A Discourse Concerning the Original and Progress of Satire (Ker), II, 100; (Kinsley), II, 660.


13. See, for example, Heinsius' De Satyra Horatiana Libri duo, in his edition of Horace (Leyden, 1629); or Casaubon's Persiorma Horatii Imitatio, in his edition of Persius (Leipzig, 1839; first ed. 1605), pp. 344-67.

14. Dryden, Discourse (Ker), II, 82-83; (Kinsley), II, 648. See also pp. 81-82, 84, 97-98 in Ker, II, all of which are concerned with Horace's excellence as a moral instructor. It is important for an understanding of the traditional nature and authority of these ideas to realize that Dryden's essay is greatly indebted to Dacier's Preface to his own edition of Horace, and, in fact, frequently translates whole pages of it. Dacier's essay in turn draws heavily upon Casaubon.


17. The following are the editions that I have principally used in tracing the vagaries of the Renaissance Horace and in examining Pope's Horatian poems:

Opera cum quatuor Commentariis et Figuris nuper additis (Pomponius Porphyrio, Pseudo-Acron, Cristoforo Landino, and Antonio Manzinelli) (Venice, 1509; first ed., 1492).


Quinti Horatii Flacci Poemata, novis Scholiis et Argumentis ab Henr. Stephano illustrata (np., 1588; first ed., 1549).

Q. Horatii Flacci Sermonum Libri quattuor . . . a Dionysio Lambino Monstroliensi . . . (Venice, 1566; first ed., 1561).


Q. Horatius Flaccus, cum Commentariis selectissimis variorum: & Scholiis integris Johannes Bond . . . (Leyden, 1658; first ed., 1606).

Q. Horatius Flaccus, cum erudito Laevini Torrentii Commentario . . . item Petri Alcmariani in Artem Poeticem (Antwerp, 1608).

Quintus Horatius Flaccus accedunt nunc Danielis Heinsii (Leyden 1629; first ed., 1612).


I have also employed, to a lesser extent, the following:

Opera, (Venice, 1483).

[32]
Carmina atque Epodos. Bernardini Putheni Spilimbergii (Venice, 1584).
Quinti Horatii Flacci . . . Poemata omnia (Frankfurt, 1600).
Quinti Horatii Flacci Opera . . . (Cambridge, 1699).
Q. Horatius Flaccus, ex Recensione et cum Notis atque emendationibus Richardi Bentleii (Berlin, 1869; first ed., 1711).
Quinti Horatii Flacci Opera (London, 1733).
Horace’s Satires, Epistles and Art of Poetry done into English with Notes by S. Dunster (London, 1739; first ed., 1709).
Céuvres d’Horace traduites en Francois par le P. Tarteron . . . avec des remarques critiques sur la traduction par Pierre Coste (Amsterdam, 1710).

18. For example, in explaining line 20 of Horace’s Satire II.i, almost identical opinions (opinions not readily apparent to twentieth-century readers) are offered by Porphyrius, by Cruquius, and his Vetus Commentator, by Despréz, by Torrentius, and by Dacier; in addition, in order to explain the grammatical usage of “undique tutus” in the same line, many of these commentators refer with the same conformity to Virgil’s phrase, “tuta lacu nigro.”

19. Pagination ***2verso, in his essay De Q. Horatii Vita ac Scriptis, preaced to his edition of Horace. “Carefully read and consider each poem of Horace: you will not find subtle disputations or cunning syllogisms, but almost all the rules that enable profane man to progress towards living in a right, holy, peaceful, and blessed manner disclosed and arranged and, as it were, ornamented with models chosen from the riches of poets and history and human life. This usage, this mode of philosophizing especially pleased Horace.”

20. Dacier, V, xv. Dryden translates this section in his Discourse (Ker), II, 97 ; (Kinsley), II, 657–58.


22. Caroline Goad’s exhaustive compilation of Horatian motifs has long ago demonstrated this point. See especially her appendix of references to Horace in the works of the authors she deals with, Horace in the English Literature of the Eighteenth Century (New Haven, 1916), pp. 293–620.

24. This can be demonstrated most conveniently by reference to Goad’s appendix on Addison, pp. 297-334. The other appendixes offer similar evidence for the authority of Horace in the writings of Rowe, Steele, Prior, Gay, Pope, and Swift.

25. Pope’s letter to Parnell of May 25 or June 1, 1714, will give some idea of the extent to which he employed the commentators while translating Homer: “The minute I lost you Eustathius with nine hundred pages, and nine thousand Contractions of the Greek Character Arose to my View—Spondanus with all his Auxiliaries in Number a thousand pages (Value three shillings) & Dacier’s three Volumes, Barnes’s two, Valterie’s three, Cuperus half in Greek, Leo Allatius three parts in Greek, Scaliger, Macrobius, & (worse than ‘em all) Aulus Gallius: All these Rushd upon my Soul at once & whelm’d me under a Fitt of Head Ach, I curs’d them all Religiously, Damn’d my best friends among the rest, & even blasphem’d Homer himself. Dear Sir not only as you are a friend & as you are a Goodnatur’d Man, but as you are a Christian & a Divine come back Speedily & prevent the Encrease of my Sins: For at the Rate I have begun to Rave, I shall not only Damn all the Poets & Commentators who have gone before me, but be damned my Self by all who come after me . . .” (The Correspondence of Alexander Pope, ed. George Sherburn [Oxford, 1956], I, 225).

26. Dryden, The Dedication of the Æneis; (Ker), II, 221; (Kinsley), III, 1050.

27. See, for example, Dedication, (Ker), II, 173, 174, and 176; (Kinsley), III, 1016 and 1018; and Preface to Sylvae, (Ker), I, 252 and 258; (Kinsley), I, 390 and 394.


30. All quotations from Pope and from the Latin text of his Horatian poems will be taken from the Twickenham Edition of the Poems of Alexander Pope (gen. ed. John Butt; [London, 1939-61]), hereafter referred to as TE.

31. Correspondence, I, 492.


33. For Dacier’s prestige and reputation, see S. H. Monk’s introduction to The Preface to Aristotle’s Art of Poetry, pp. i-iv.


39. Ibid., pp. 131–32.

40. All these citations are drawn from the "Advertisements to the Reader" in *The Court of the Gentiles* (Oxford, 1669), I, pagination *recto-* *verso; they form a concise summation of the main lines of Gale's massive and detailed argument. For specific arguments on the relation of pagan theology and poetry to the Hebrew traditions, see I, 8–17, 99–129, and especially 275–97; in this last, he demonstrates in particular that pagan poetry is derived from Scriptural poetry and like it in its purpose, instruction and edification.

41. For a concise review of the deist position and its dependence upon the works of previous orthodox theoreticians, see Frank Manuel, *The Eighteenth Century Confronts the Gods* (Cambridge, Mass., 1959), pp. 57–65. Manuel makes quite clear the prevalence of a belief in pagan monotheism, at least on the part of an intellectual elite.


46. Ibid., pp. 115, 176–17.


50. For examples of the citation of Horace in such circumstances, see the articles on *divitiae* in Laurentius Beyerlinck's *Magnum Theatrum Vitae Humanae* (Leiden, 1678), II, 995, col. 2; and Domenico Nani Mirabelli's *Polyanthea* (Geneva, 1600), p. 253.
51. His poems cover such topics as "That the shortness of man's life is to be lengthened by good deeds," "A Departure from things humane," and outright biblical paraphrases: see The Odes of Casimire, Translated by G. Hils (1646; Augustan Reprint Society, no. 44, Los Angeles, 1953), pp. 14-25 and pp. 30-45.


53. Octavio van Veen, Quinti Horatii Flacci emblemata (Brussels, 1684), An entry in Horace Walpole's Commonplace book (Huntington MS 1271), which is supposedly from Spence, attributes to Pope a rather detailed familiarity with the work.

54. Dacier, V, 517.

55. Dacier, I, 39; also, in the same volume, pp. 47-48: "Mais comme la Philosophie des Payens n'était pas exempte d'erreurs dans les Philosophes même, on ne doit pas s'attendre à la trouver plus saine et plus pure dans les Poètes. On y trouve souvent des maximes qui pourroient être dangereuses, et qu'il faut ou corriger ou expliquer, afin, comme dit Plutarque, que les jeunes gens soient instruits par cette lecture, et que la poésie les rends amis de la Philosophie, et leur serve auprès d'elle d'introducteur. Car c'est une grande erreur de croire que la lecture des poètes n'est qu'un délassement et qu'un amusement où l'on ne cherche qu'à réjouir l'esprit par de nobles expressions, de belles peintures, de fines allusions, et par toutes les finesse et les tours les plus ingénieux d'une langue riche et feconde. C'est une étude agréable à la vérité, mais qui doit préparer à une étude plus solide."