Chapter Three

Carlyle's Religious Development

... I, turning, call to thee, O Soul, thou actual Me,
And lo, thou gently masterest the orbs,
Thou matest Time, smilest content at Death,
And fillest, swellest full the vastnesses of space.
—Walt Whitman

Just as there is manifest a sharp division in Carlyle's literary attitude, so too do there appear antipathetic strains in his religious nature: the one essentially personal, dynamic, and parallel to his intellectual development; the other received, static, and for the most part instinctive. The first of these strains submits more easily to a chronological dialectic, despite its heterodoxy, and it is at the growth of such a body of individualized convictions in Carlyle that we ought first to look.

From Burgher Faith to "Everlasting No"

His parents, Margaret and James, enforced, almost in equal measure, the piety of his childhood. Both were orthodox Calvinists, unshakable in their strict adherence to "Scriptures" and the creeds. Carlyle describes his mother as a descendent "of the pious, the just, and the wise." Froude says of his father's reputation among the Ecclefechan townsfolk, "It was well known that he was strictly temperate, pure, abstemious, prudent and industrious." In the case of James Carlyle, this was no hastily acquired paternal image: from boyhood he had acted toward his contemporaries with the studied gravity of a God-fearing moralist. Carlyle re-
cords an incident from his father's youth in which James and his friends, meeting to play cards, had begun to argue: "My father spoke out what was in him about the folly, the sinfulness, of quarreling over a perhaps sinful amusement. . . . They threw the cards in the fire, and . . . not one of the four ever touched a card again through life." James owed the tenets and dogma of his faith to the teachings of his uncle, Robert Brand, a "vigorous religionist, of strict Presbyterian type." Through him, James had joined a dissenting sect known as "Burghers," a group dedicated to the most rigorous kind of Christian commitment. Their Puritan worship, they believed, was of a purer sort than that practiced in St. Giles. As Carlyle points out in his Reminiscences, "All dissent in Scotland is merely stricter adherence to the National Kirk in all points." Margaret Carlyle supported her husband in his arch Calvinism, and, together with their children, they attended weekly services at the Burgher meetinghouse. Carlyle recalls, sixty years later, the sincerity and plainness of that Dumfriesshire congregation: "This peasant union, this little heath-thatched house, this simple evangelist, together constituted properly the 'church' of that district. They were the blessing and the saving of many. On me too their pious heaven-sent influences still rest and live." The average Scottish Burgher of that time was a practicing Stoic without the slightest knowledge of ancient philosophy and a believer in a Miltonic universe without the smallest taste for poetry:

His was not a creed for cowards and weaklings. According to its articles, life was a hard, ungracious bargain between man and his Maker, the great Task-Master. As a partial expression of the Scotch with a meagre soil, of their centuries of oppression under Church and State, the creed naturally exalted labor and suffering as the chief realities of life.

Although the Carlyles were relatively prosperous, James was careful to preserve in his family those habits of parsimony and hard work he thought to be in keeping with a godly life:
Frugality and assiduity, a certain grave composure, an earnestness (not without its constraint, then felt as oppressive a little, yet which now yields its fruit) were the order of our household. We were all particularly taught that work (temporal or spiritual) was the only thing we had to do, and incited always by precept and example to do it well.

The young Carlyle was seldom permitted to forget these stern Puritan realities and they bred in him a lifelong distrust of pleasurable experiences: "It was not a joyful life (what life is?) yet a safe, quiet one; above most others . . . a wholesome one." As to the precepts (or "principles," as they were called) of his parents' faith, they rose, as in other species of Calvinism, from a belief in the terrible immanence of God, the reality of sin, the corruption of the world, and the literal truth of the Bible. Carlyle was daily fed a diet of scriptural lessons, particularly from the Old Testament. His parents, untutored in the doubts and qualifications that accompany intellectual training, accepted much in the Bible as actual and miraculous that theologians, even then, spoke of as metaphor or parable. Their dogmatic interpretation of Christianity, doubtless fostered by the parochialism of village life, was, as Carlyle later said, one of the last examples of the Burghers' uncompromising system of belief. It was as a product of this "old system" that Carlyle left Annan for Edinburgh University in the fall of 1809.

Almost at once his convictions were challenged. At best, professors and students were far less earnest about religion than his father had been, and many of them openly questioned the commandments of the Bible. They did not, at first, sway Carlyle from his catechisms, since much of the student skepticism seemed to him unthinking and sophomoric. To reinforce a defense of his father's doctrine, he read Evidences of Christianity and debated the problem of miracles and divine immanence. But soon his own maturing intellect protested against what is recognized as a largely emotional allegiance to Calvinism. He later admitted that he was then supporting orthodox Christianity "with the greatest desire to
be convinced, but in vain.” After his first year at the university he came home full of questions, none of which he dared put to his unbending father. Instead he asked his mother, “Did God Almighty come down and make wheelbarrows in a shop?” And, “What can be the meaning of the Song of Solomon? How is it known that it is symbolical, representing Christ and the Church?” The anguish such blasphemy caused her compelled him thereafter to “shut up” his thoughts in the presence of his parents.

In spite of, or perhaps because of, the ban on religious speculation at home, Carlyle pressed his inquiries with greater urgency in Edinburgh. His parents had always spoken of their religious principles as if they were demonstrable laws, so it was not surprising that their son read, at first, with an eye to empirical proofs of God. Out of the “chaos” of the University Library he “succeeded in fishing up more books than had been known to the keeper thereof,” but none of them quelled his rising doubts. In fact, he began to cultivate a sarcastic manner in treating the facile beliefs and cynicisms of his colleagues. The more he read, the less he was able to tolerate conviction, either positive or negative; he filled the breach in his certainties with ridicule of others and acquired, among his associates, the pseudonyms “Jonathan” and “Dean” (after his Swiftian temper).

Carlyle also found consolation in his talent for mathematics—but even this small pleasure was “due mainly to the accident that Leslie [his instructor in that science] alone of my Professors had some genius in his business.” These diversions kept Carlyle, during his college days at least, from the emotional crisis of an absolute rejection of Calvinism.

When, in 1814, he had completed his undergraduate study, Carlyle was still sufficiently indulgent of his parents’ wishes to begin training for the ministry. Election to clerical office seemed to them the natural fruit of an eldest son’s education; indeed, it had always been the particular hope of Margaret Carlyle’s life. Thomas struck a compromise between his own misgivings and his parents’ fervor by agreeing to a six-year course of schoolmastering and oc-
It was probably his hope that over so many years either he would resolve his doubts or his family's ambitions would die of attrition. Carlyle's inclination for teaching was no stronger than his enthusiasm for the church, yet for two years he maintained a tutorship at Annan and delivered annual papers in theology before his Edinburgh examiners. He nevertheless set limits to filial duty: between mathematics lessons at the schoolhouse, he read books of a different character—a few of which were profoundly heterodox. They included works of Voltaire, Diderot, and Rousseau. The independence of mind that led Carlyle to their writings had immediate rewards: with some relief he recognized, in Confessions and the life of Diderot, many of the elements of his own religious dilemma. But perhaps the writer who did the most to promote his doubts and hasten an eventual apostasy was David Hume.

Hume, unlike the French philosophes, made an appeal not only to Carlyle's intellect but also to his sense of decorum. Hume's skepticism appeared more deliberate and thus better suited to the high seriousness of the questions it raised—certainly it was stripped of any consciousness of fashion or volatile self-pity. Of the essays, "Superstition and Enthusiasm" and An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding particularly interested Carlyle. They treated ultimate problems, as he had been trying to do, in the light of common sense; they avoided the contemporary extremes of careless exegesis and abstruse analysis. Philosophy and religion had, according to Hume, slipped out of touch with man and his immediate concerns—formal thought was now exclusively academic; formal belief was rooted in superstition. No one better expressed the frustration Carlyle felt between the alternating irrelevancies of village life and university life. To a friend he admitted that he "liked the Essays of the infidel 'better than anything I have read these many days. I am delighted with the book.' " The Enquiry dismissed those "disjointed notions and nondescript ideas" of Carlyle's professors and theologians as phantasms of the
cerebellum. Moreover, Hume incorporated into his argument a clear distaste for complexity of method—a prejudice that at times reached almost to anti-intellectualism:

The only method of freeing learning, at once, from these abstruse questions is to enquire seriously into the nature of human understanding, and show, from an exact analysis of its powers and capacity, that it is by no means fitted for such remote and abstruse subjects.\(^\text{21}\)

For Hume, the power of that understanding was limited by sensations, or “impressions.” All ideas were, to him, merely “feeble perceptions” or copies of sense experience.\(^\text{22}\) Carlyle understood the prosaical bias behind such an assumption, but at the time it seemed to him a far more plausible hypothesis than those offered by Burgher divines.\(^\text{23}\) Hume summarily denied meaning to whatever was inexplicable or innate: every idea, he said, could be traced to an impression or combination of impressions; only ideas that could be so traced were meaningful; therefore, any idea to which it was impossible to assign an antecedent impression must be dismissed as meaningless.\(^\text{24}\) This rapid and obviously tautological chain of reasoning excluded from the *Enquiry* any impartial discussion of a supersensible reality—a fact that did not escape Carlyle. Given Hume’s premise, God became extraneous, or worse, He became an illusion created from the echoes of sense experience:

The idea of God, as meaning an infinitely intelligent, wise and good Being, arises from reflecting on the operations of our own mind, and augmenting, without limit, those qualities of goodness and wisdom. We may prosecute this enquiry to what length we please; where we shall always find that every idea we examine is copied from a similar impression.\(^\text{25}\)

Carlyle saw at once the consequences of such a view. He later wrote of this period in his development: “I began with Hume
and Diderot, and as long as I was with them I ran at Atheism, at blackness, at materialism of all kinds."\textsuperscript{26} Carlyle was perhaps too careless in grouping Hume with the philosophes—the Scotsman stopped short of the fanatical temper of atheism—but he was certainly correct in marking the anti-Christian sympathies of both schools. Once again, as in the case of Diderot, Carlyle must have drawn parallels between his own intellectual development and that of Hume: both were brought up in strict Calvinist households; both rejected the doctrines of their parents during adolescence; both adopted mildly abusive attitudes toward organized religion in the early years of their adult lives.\textsuperscript{27} Yet despite Hume's disaffection with the church, the Essays were far too good-naturedly optimistic to breed in Carlyle that kind of thoroughgoing existential despair which was later to overtake him. Instead, they encouraged him to postpone an answer to the problem of God and pursue his "more relevant" secular interests.

Thus admonished, Carlyle temporarily suspended religious considerations in order to explore the tidier world of science. During the winter of 1816 he read Newton’s \textit{Principia}, Wood’s \textit{Optics}, Delambre’s \textit{Astronomie} and passed what he later recalled as the "happiest time" of these early years.\textsuperscript{28} Here, in the region of empirical law and discovery was a certainty and direction denied to priests and metaphysicians. For a time, Carlyle held all wider speculation in contempt, assuming the stoical view that "Heaven and Hell are for knaves and fools to talk about."\textsuperscript{29} Yet Carlyle could not avoid the admission that by refusing to think about thought he was operating in an ontological vacuum: that, in fact, he was repressing the urgent demands of his own unconscious by escaping into the deadliest kind of actuality. Soon enough he turned back to those first-order questions, this time with redoubled frustration: "When will there arise a man who will do for the science of mind what Newton did for that of Matter—establish its fundamental laws on the firm basis of induction—and discard for ever those absurd theories that so many dreamers have devised?"\textsuperscript{30} Carlyle owed such phrases as "firm basis of induction" to Hume and the
philosophes, and it was on such a basis, and such a basis only, that he was then determined to decide ultimate issues.

Late in 1816 he accepted a teaching appointment at Kirkcaldy to replace the somewhat headstrong Edward Irving. Carlyle and the former schoolmaster became immediate friends; more importantly, Irving made available to his curious and rather unsettled companion the whole of his extensive library. Among the books Carlyle found there, one in particular—Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*—put the coup de grace to his flagging trust in a Christian God: those "winged sarcasms" finally convinced him of the hypocrisy of priests and the foolishness of belief in miracles. With heavy irony, Gibbon hammered away at the superstitious intolerance of the early church:

> The condemnation of the wisest and most virtuous of the pagans, on account of their ignorance or disbelief of the divine truth, seems to offend the reason and the humanity of the present age. But the primitive church, whose faith was of a much firmer consistence, delivered over, without legislation, to eternal torture, the far greater part of the human species. A charitable hope might perchance be indulged in favour of Socrates, or some other sages of antiquity, who had consulted the light of reason before that of the gospel had arisen. But it was unanimously affirmed, that those who, since the birth or death of Christ, had obstinately persisted in the worship of the daemons, neither deserved nor could expect a pardon from the irritated justice of the Deity.\(^{31}\)

Many years later Carlyle confessed, "I then first clearly saw that Christianity was not true."\(^{32}\)

Earlier, in the winter of 1817, he had allowed his enrollment as a divinity student to lapse,\(^{33}\) and now, with doubt hardening into denial, he refused even to attend church with his family. He told Irving of his loss of faith\(^{34}\) and of the wretchedness it brought him, but Irving, as an ordained minister who believed not only in miracles but, later, in the "gift of tongues," could offer little help.
James Carlyle, although he held his temper in the face of his son's irreverence, said nothing to comfort him. Only Carlyle's mother gave religious counsel, and that was doctrinaire and uncomprehending. She wrote to him in 1819:

Seek God with all your heart; and oh, my dear son, cease not to pray for His counsel in all your ways. Fear not the world; you will be provided for as He sees meet for you. . . . I beg you do not neglect reading a part of your Bible daily, and may the Lord open your eyes to see wondrous things out of His law!

It was, after all, just at this point that Carlyle broke with his parents: where, he asked, were the evidences of moral consciousness in the conduct of the world? Where was the immanent God of which the Bible spoke? Where, in a random clutter of things, was the token of divine wisdom? In Sartor, Carlyle records the anxiety and disillusionment he then felt: "A desert this was, waste, and howling with savage monsters. Teufelsdröckh gives us long details of his 'fever-paroxysms of Doubt'; his Inquiries concerning Miracles, and the Evidences of religious Faith; and how . . . with audible prayers he cried vehemently for Light." But the God of Carlyle's father would not answer; the church, it seemed, worked everywhere against the current of history and his own senses. To help him put off "the dead Letter of Religion," Carlyle read Hume again and attempted a new career, more in keeping with the conscience of a skeptic. In December 1818, he left Kirkcaldy for Edinburgh and resolved, rather tepidly, to take up law.

This time Carlyle found slight comfort in a preoccupying worldliness; he attended a series of law lectures, but could not generate in himself any enthusiasm for the intricacies of the juridical code. The palliative simply would not serve: Carlyle's despair had matured too far to dissipate in the face of diversions. Mathematics and legal quibbling were now games far too feeble to hold back the dark; those unanswered final questions, left in the wake of Christian disillusionment, could not be treated by "various dull
people of the practical sort." Carlyle execrated his Edinburgh col­
leagues, calling them "mere denizens of the kingdom of dulness, [who worked] towards nothing but money as wages."39

During the next three years, Carlyle continued, ostensibly, to study law; but in fact, his reading was undisciplined by the pur­suit of any practical ambition. No book answered his needs, no one pointed the way toward certainty, no activity seemed relevant to the demands of his spirit. Carlyle operated under a single imperative: he must unravel the metaphysical dilemmas that ob­sessed him, for without some sense of the ultimate ground of "this time-element" he believed that no labor was possible for a man of "earnest nature."39 Intellectually, as well as emotionally, he sought a final cause. Carlyle was, in these years, a most unwill­ing skeptic, almost childlike in his determination to regain convic­tion. To him, it was inconceivable that an intelligent being could fashion his life and his work upon doubt alone.40 Only in the sense that a life so fashioned is conceivable and acceptable to the twentieth-century thinker can we scoff at Carlyle's early wretchedness as the "emotional need for a faith." Among most of his contemporaries, such thoughts were part of a common and rational demand for truth. He looked into French and Italian au­thors, but was not persuaded to any new beliefs. Again his mother proffered her advice to him to make "the word of God" his "great study," but Carlyle was too honest to retreat into catechisms either:

One circumstance I note . . . after all the nameless woe that Inquiry, which for me was genuine love of Truth, had wrought me, I nevertheless still loved Truth, and would bate no jot of my allegiance to her. Truth! . . . though the Heavens crush me for following her: no Falsehood! though a whole celestial Lubberland were the price of Apostasy.41

This scrupulous intensity presaged a mental crisis in Carlyle's de­velopment. By 1820, it was clear to him that as a man of "moral nature, the loss of his religious Belief was the loss of everything."42
Disquietude and impatience gave way to trauma as Carlyle confronted the depth of his ignorance:

Shade after shade goes grimly over your soul, till you have the fixed, starless, Tartarean black. . . . A feeble unit in the middle of a threatening Infinitude, I seemed to have nothing given me but eyes, whereby to discern my own wretchedness. . . . The men and women round me, even speaking with me, were but Figures: I had practically forgotten that they were alive, that they were not merely automatic.43

When his mood was blackest, Carlyle lost even the sense of evil—the sense that indifference to moral values was in any way sinful. The devil became as meaningless to him as God: “To me the Universe was all void of Life, of Purpose, even of Hostility: it was one huge, dead, immeasurable Steam-engine, rolling on in its dead indifference, to grind me limb from limb.”44 Thus Carlyle documents the full agony of his “Everlasting No.” His Calvinist dogmas had been exploded by skeptical analysis, and he had no belief-propositions to replace them. Conventional Christianity seemed no longer to justify moral behavior: because of its rigid literalism, in Carlyle’s mind, it would always be exposed to the prick of common sense. In such mental circumstances, there were open to Carlyle, at the age of twenty-five, only two courses of action: either to surrender to intransigent self-pity or to renew the search for a radical theology from which to launch his energies. He did, in fact, do both.

From sympathetic references to Byron in letters and essays,45 and especially from Teufelsdrockh’s admonition to “close thy Byron,” we may presume that for a short time at least, Carlyle entertained the more extravagant sentiments of that poet. The ferocity of his later repudiation of Byronic attitudes only lends credence to the view that he once indulged the same weaknesses. About this time, he was also introduced to The Sorrows of Young Werther, a novel that appropriately dwelt on the despair of an intelligent and sensitive youth. There is much in his “Everlasting
No" (even in its peculiar German character) that echoes the his­
trionic agony of Wertherism. This is not to say Carlyle enjoyed
either his melancholy or his inactivity; on the contrary, he com­
plained to his brother:

It is a shame and misery to me at this age to be gliding about
in strenuous idleness, with no hand in the game of life where
I have yet so much to win, no outlet for the restless faculties
which are thus up in mutiny and slaying one another for
lack of fair enemies.

He was clearly anxious for a way out, and, soon enough, one of­
fered itself. In 1818, Carlyle's curiosity about German ideas and
culture had been piqued by reading Madame de Staël's Germany,
and he shortly set himself the task of learning the language of that
country. With little difficulty, he found a tutor willing to instruct
him in German in return for lessons in French; he was further en­
couraged in his studies by the "advice of a man who told him he
would find in that language what he wanted." What he wanted,
of course, was a body of positive principles upon which he might
construct an unassailable new religion, and through which he
could discern the work he was to do.

German Literature and Transcendental Faith

There is no question that Carlyle, at this time of life, ap­
proached German literature as he had recently approached French,
Italian, and every other: with an eye to his spiritual needs. The
"love of truth" was with him (as perhaps it is with all of us) not
altogether disinterested: he had begun to pursue in his reading
that aspect of the truth which would satisfy both his emotions and
his intellect. British "common sense" philosophy and French
"persiflage," despite their direct appeal to his logical faculties,
had undermined all of Carlyle's deeper props. Whether inten­tionally or not, their insistence upon the primacy of external evi­
dence conjured up, in Carlyle's developing consciousness, the
picture of a mechanical and wholly amoral world. Without the “Hebrew old-clothes” of Christian dogma, Carlyle felt himself reduced to slow, material suffocation: he had become a “feeble unit,” pining “in the imprisonment of the Actual.” The “Everlasting No” was, after all, essentially the experience of a man overwhelmed by concretions and his own physicality. History, science, and “logic-chopping” had begot a “steam-engine” universe that, it appeared to Carlyle, man was not only reluctant but powerless to change. Certainly, the Bible, as a source of spiritual energy and a refuge from nihilism, had proved itself exhausted and barren. It was in this mood of profound depression and religious longing that Carlyle began his study of German art.

Of particular importance in considering the connection between religion and Carlyle’s view of the arts is the fact that in the days before 1820 he had exhibited no marked predilection for imaginative literature. With the exception of a native fondness for Burns (the poet died only a few miles from his birthplace) and some admiration for the “passion” of Byron, Carlyle had focused his reading largely on intellectual and historical subjects. That is not to say he was ignorant of, or prejudiced against, “creative” writers, but merely that, before his introduction to German, he had shown no preference for artists above other thinkers.

One of the earliest and most significant contacts Carlyle made with German literature was in the works of Goethe. As had often been the case in his appreciation of other authors, Carlyle was first aroused to sympathy by the writer’s intense pessimism. Werther and Faust convinced him that another, wiser man had undergone the terrors of “Unbelief”: later, and more importantly, Wilhelm Meister assured him that after despair, there was a road back toward affirmation. One of the characters in Meister describes a mental crisis that closely parallels the morbid selfishness of Carlyle’s “Everlasting No”:

Wrapped up in himself, he has looked at nothing but his own hollow empty Me, which seemed to him an immeasur-
able abyss. . . . “I see nothing . . . here there is no height, no depth, no forwards, no backwards; no words can express this neverchanging state. . . . No ray of a divinity illuminates this night: I shed all my tears by myself and for myself.”

But Goethe was not content simply to express unhealthy emotions—he saw them as a necessary part of enlightenment, asserting that without some experience of these pains no true belief was possible:

Who never ate his bread in sorrow,
Who never spent the darksome hours,
Weeping and watching for the morrow,
He knows ye not, ye heavenly Powers.

Somehow, in spite of recriminations and apparent familiarity with the world, Goethe displayed precisely the sense of purpose and tranquility of mind for which Carlyle was searching. In contrast to the sustained pessimism that characterized most of his other reading, Carlyle found in Wilhelm Meister a surprising amount of confidence and hope: the novel’s hero works slowly out of his difficulties and his prejudices until, in the end, he looks upon his own prospects with tolerance and faith. Carlyle did not immediately understand the source of Meister’s optimism, but he did see that it involved one radical renunciation. Before all else, Meister disowns any claim to sensual happiness. After his travels (in Part Two) he understands the pointlessness of dependence on external circumstances:

Emigration takes place in the treacherous hope of an improvement in our circumstances; and it is too often counterbalanced by a subsequent emigration; since, go where you may, you still find yourself in a conditional world, and if not constrained to a new emigration, are yet inclined in secret to cherish such a desire.
There is perhaps here an echo of *Rasselas*, but Goethe, unlike Johnson, finds ground for hope in man’s dissatisfaction with material delights: “Let a man learn, we say, to figure himself as without permanent external relation; let him seek consistency and sequence not in circumstances but in himself: there will he find it: there let him cherish and nourish it.” Indeed, life is everywhere to be enjoyed, if one can first dismiss those preoccupying external manifestations of “self” that inhibit deeper joys. True life begins with *Entsagen*, with the renunciation of animal appetites as ultimate concerns and with the quiet admission that you are your own world. Encouraged in part by his recent Leith Walk experience, Carlyle assented enthusiastically and dated his spiritual renewal from that moment:

There was one thing in particular which struck me in Goethe. It was in his *Wilhelm Meister*... No man has the right to ask for a recipe of happiness: he can do without happiness. There is something better than that... Spiritual clearness is a far better thing than happiness. Love of happiness is but a kind of hunger at the best: a craving because I have not enough of sweet provision in this world.

That “spiritual clearness” of which Goethe spoke did not come at once to Carlyle, but at least he had made a beginning. Years later, in *Sartor*, he acknowledged the debt:

Foolish soul! What Act of Legislation was there that thou shouldst be Happy? A little while ago thou hadst no right to be at all... Art thou nothing other than a Vulture, then, that fliest through the Universe seeking after something to eat: and shrieking dolefully because carrion enough is not given thee? Close thy Byron: open thy Goethe.

Perhaps one confusion that may arise in translating *Entsagen* should be cleared up at once: by “self-denial” and renunciation of happiness Goethe did not mean asceticism; on the contrary, the
"self" to be denied was the self as object and not the self as subject. Mechanical relationships and rewards, matter considered as an end in itself, personal happiness as "appetite" alone—these, not the individual consciousness or spirit, were the elements of our nature to be repressed. Thus Goethe advised men to "annihilate" their materially preoccupied selves in order to promote their moral, aesthetic selves. Carlyle obviously understood the double significance Goethe attached to "self" when, speaking of Wilhelm Meister, he said, "the Ideal is in thyself, the impediment too is in thyself." For Carlyle, the impediment to wisdom and faith had been exactly what Goethe suggested it was, namely, an imprisonment in his own senses and a total dependence, brought about by his reading of Hume and the philosophes, upon the pleasures of the phenomenal world.

It was only upon rereading Wilhelm Meister that Carlyle began to understand the direction this rededication of his energies ought to take. The hope that Goethe first raised of transcending the senses could be of little lasting value to Carlyle unless it carried with it the promise of a goal toward which he might work. In Meister, that action which spiritual clearness and self-abnegation most naturally encouraged was the impulse toward Art. Man and nature, once stripped of their implacable externality, become for Goethe's hero derivatives of the spirit and metaphors of the unseen truth behind the universe. As an advocate of that spiritual redefinition of life, Meister feels bound to interpret the beauty of natural objects through the faculty of his expanding imagination:

To see this lordly world lying round one day after day. . . . What delight, in figures and tints, to be approaching the Unspeakable! . . . The surrounding world also was opened to his sight. . . . And while Nature unfolded the open secret of her beauty, he could not but feel an irresistible attraction towards Art, as toward her most fit expositor.

Nature, then, is the symbol of truth—a symbol that yields its secret to the liveliest apprehension of its beauty. Aesthetic aware-
ness and the individual’s refinement of the symbolic truth he sees—that is, Art—are passive and active sides of the same coin; together they comprise the highest duty of a reverent man. Thus, for Goethe, Nature and Art pointed the same ultimate meaning:

As all Nature's thousand changes
But one changeless God proclaim;
So in Art's wide kingdom ranges
One sole meaning still the same:
This is Truth, eternal Reason,
Which from Beauty takes its dress,
And serene through time and season
Stands for aye in loveliness.

Many of these ideas anticipated Carlyle’s understanding—he did not immediately grasp the relationship between beauty and truth or the function of the external world as a key to spiritual elevation. In order to follow a systematic development of such Goethean ideas, Carlyle would have needed to consult Kant’s Critique of Aesthetic Judgment—a treatise that Goethe admired for its contribution to the theory of romantic poetry, and that contained a formal argument of the steps from Entsagen to the sentiments of an artist. Lacking this, Carlyle nevertheless caught the thrust of Goethe’s argument: from a renunciation of pure materialism, one gained the qualities of reverence, balance, and tranquility necessary for constructive labor; and from the nature of that change of attitude, art suggested itself as the fittest career for the convert. Because Carlyle’s skills were of the verbal sort, he took Goethe’s exhortation as a call to develop his talent for literature and poetry. He confessed to Froude many years later that German writers, especially Goethe, had made him “impatient of the trodden ways which only led to money or to worldly fame,” and the example of their quiet faith had convinced him that “literature was the single avenue which offered an opening into higher regions.” Wilhelm Meister had not supplied him with all the arguments necessary for a sound and workable religion—that would
come later—but it had taught him to admire, above all else, the "profound sentiment of beauty, [and the] delineation of all its varieties." Without the antidote of Goethe in these early years, Carlyle owned that he would have "pistolled his way through" his difficulties. As it was, he grew eager to be up and working at some original expression; whether in the form of novel, poem, or essay he could not yet determine. Over the next five years, he made attempts at all three genre, with varying success. He wrote to his brother in March 1822: "It is in fact certain that I must write a book. Would to Heaven that I had a subject which I could discuss, and at the same time loved to discuss. . . . My condition is rather strange at present. I feel as if I were impelled to write." As if to emphasize his indebtedness to Goethe for the inclination toward literature, Carlyle ended the same letter with an epigram from Wilhelm Meister: "Therefore, Jack, I mean to try if I can bestir myself. Art is long and life is short." Goethe may have been the strongest, but he was certainly not the only recuperative influence on Carlyle. About this time, equipped with his new facility for German, Carlyle read extensively in Schiller. He found there ideas pleasingly similar to Goethe's; more importantly, he encountered in Schiller another artist who spoke with sincerity and spiritual conviction. Like Goethe, Schiller argued for the renunciation of happiness as the prelude to wisdom, since "A boundless duration of Being and Well-being simply for Being and Well-being's sake, is an Ideal belonging to Appetite alone, and which only the struggle of mere animalism longing to be infinite, gives rise to." Such "animalism" was, for Schiller and Goethe, the chief characteristic of the modern "Philistine": above all, the Philister equated his welfare with a happiness of "agreeable sensations." Carlyle quite properly saw in the convictions of these German artists an indictment of utilitarianism as well. Experience measured merely in quantities of pleasure and pain was a gospel suitable to the insensitivity of lower animals; the human spirit, Carlyle and Schiller agreed, demanded something closer to its own potentialities: "Strictly con-
sidered, this truth, that man has in him, something higher than a
love of Pleasure, take pleasure in what sense you will, has been
the text of all true Teachers and Preachers, since the beginning
of the world." Of false preachers, dedicated to utility and "stom-
ach-philosophy," Carlyle saw too much in his own country. He
began to look toward Schiller and Goethe as toward the principal
advocates of spiritual values in an age of philistinism, and to hope
that their opposition might "one day inspire a universal battle of
Mind versus Matter." Schiller certainly conceived of his own
role as part of a crusade against triviality and unbelief: "The art-
ist comes [into this world] . . . not . . . to delight it by his pres-
ence, but dreadful like the son of Agamemnon, to purify it!" In
this respect he was far more zealous than Goethe: Schiller's com-
mitment to Art as truth informed his work and his life with an
almost unrelieved earnestness. As Carlyle said, "he is the gravest
of writers," renouncing all "outward, honour, pleasure, social re-
creation, [even] friendly affection" in favor of his poetry:

To Schiller the task of the Poet appeared of far weightier
import to mankind, in these times, than that of any other
man whatever. It seemed to him that . . . when the noise of
all conquerors, and demagogues, and political reformers had
quite died away, some tone of heavenly wisdom that had
dwelt even in him might still linger among men, and be
acknowledged as heavenly and priceless, whether as his or
not; whereby, though dead, he would yet speak, and his
spirit would live throughout all generations, when the syl-
lables that once formed his name had passed into forgetful-
ness forever. . . . He lived for it: and he died for it;
"sacrificing," in the words of Goethe, "his life itself to this
Delineating of Life."

It was precisely this single-mindedness of Schiller's that gave
Carlyle further hope of personal salvation. Schiller's world-view,
though narrower than Goethe's, was more intensely religious, and
it pointed, with greater specificity, to the literary man as the pos-
sessor of “heavenly wisdom.” Again, Schiller’s religious development resembled Carlyle’s: he had endured his own “Everlasting No.”

I have looked at men, at their insect anxieties and giant projects—their godlike schemes and mouselike occupations, their wondrous race-running after Happiness... this whirling lottery of life, in which... blanks are the whole drawing. ...

And all our conquest in the fight of Life
Is knowledge that ’tis Nothing.76

And he passed beyond it into religious affirmation. Moreover, he apparently sustained and deepened his faith by the refinement of his literary skills:

Literature was his creed, the dictate of his conscience; he was an apostle of the Sublime and Beautiful, and this his calling made a hero of him. ... As Schiller viewed it, genuine Literature includes the essence of philosophy, religion, art. ... The treasures of Literature are thus celestial, imperishable, beyond all price. ... Man may have lost his dignity, but Art has saved it.77

But Carlyle did not limit himself to an admiring exposition of Schiller’s ideas; impressed by the poet’s religious fervor, he soon adopted the Literary Man as his own ideal. In the Life of Schiller, begun in 1823 as a short essay and finally issued as a book, Carlyle says as much:

Among these men of letters are to be found the brightest specimens and the chief benefactors of mankind! It is they that keep awake the finer parts of our souls; that give us better aims than power or pleasure. ... Such men are the flower of this lower world: to such alone can the epithet of great be applied with its true emphasis.78
Three elements combined in the nature of these German artists to inspire Carlyle’s praise: for him, they were at once “noble souls” able to withstand the “Sovereignty of Mammon,” leaders in “the war of Mind against Matter,” and, above all, religious men, planting spiritual values in a world of sense. Imbued with the rudiments of a new faith, Carlyle began to proselytize, recommending Schiller and Goethe to his wife and friends, often over the objections of more conventional companions. His eagerness to carry the message of the new Germany to English readers led him into the “journey-work” of translating Wilhelm Meister’s Apprenticeship. With its publication in 1824 and the completion of the biography of Schiller in 1825, Carlyle launched his own literary career.

Yet he was not altogether happy as the purveyor and critic of other men’s ideas, however noble. Carlyle longed to create an original work—to match those of Schiller and Goethe—but as yet he had no exact sense of the religious principles that underlay their eloquence. Goethe had not cited a specific source for his doctrines, and from metaphysical theories, current or traditional, he remained steadfastly aloof. He had, however, spoken with enthusiasm of Kant’s Critique of Aesthetic Judgment and appeared, to Carlyle, to share with a number of other Germans a basic allegiance to the precepts of transcendentalism. In the Philosophical and Aesthetic Letters of Schiller, Carlyle again came up against the influence of Kant, this time more directly. Although Schiller’s chief concern with idealistic philosophy was in its poetical application, he went a good deal farther than Goethe toward adopting its cosmological ground-plan:

The Transcendental Philosophy, which arose in Schiller’s busiest era, could not remain without influence on him: he had carefully studied Kant’s system, and appears to have not only admitted but zealously appropriated its fundamental doctrines. ... Schiller ... appears to have been well contented with his Philosophy; in which, as harmonized
with his Poetry, the assurance and safe anchorage for his moral nature might lie.\textsuperscript{84}

Carlyle, of course, was anxious to find a similar “anchorage” for his own moral nature, and it seemed to him that his best hope of a fully articulated and intellectually acceptable religion lay in the labyrinthine structure of transcendentalism. The path Carlyle had taken through German literature led inevitably to Kant and Fichte as sources of moral and aesthetic conviction.\textsuperscript{85} But he was not immediately prepared to tackle what rumor held to be the immensely difficult task of comprehending German idealism at first hand.

Instead, Carlyle sought an interpreter of “Kant & Co.” The new German system had not gained wide acceptance in England; in fact, only Coleridge was known to have mastered its principles.\textsuperscript{86} To him, Carlyle first went for enlightenment. Twenty-five years after the visit, in his well-known portrait of “Coleridge at Highgate,” Carlyle recalls both his own eagerness and his disappointment at the sage’s unintelligibility: Coleridge sat, surrounded by admirers, an old man nodding and mumbling about “om-m-ject” and “sum-m-ject,” lost in a “tide of ingenious vocables, spreading out boundless as if to submerge the world.”\textsuperscript{87} Carlyle took him aside in an effort to obtain a definition of \textit{Vernunft} and \textit{Verstand}—key terms in the transcendental system—but could get nothing sensible from the “meandering discourse” of the man. Some of Carlyle’s scorn in this account is undoubtedly a later interpolation (perhaps the exaggerated reaction of a rival warming to the joys of caricature), but a passage from the \textit{Life of Schiller} suggests both that in 1825 Carlyle had not yet read Kant on his own and that he was indeed frustrated by Coleridge’s obscurity: “The Philosophy of Kant is probably combined with errors to its very core; but . . . may bear in it the everlasting gold of truth!”, and in a footnote, “Are our hopes from Mr. Coleridge always to be fruitless?”\textsuperscript{88}

It is difficult to believe that Carlyle dismissed the aid of Cole-
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ridge without reading his published studies, or that from them he did not gain valuable, albeit occasional, insight into transcendentalism.⁸⁸ Most of the major tenets of Coleridge’s beliefs were included in The Friend, Biographia Literaria, and Aids to Reflection (written between 1809 and 1825), but nowhere did he arrange ideas in anything like a logical sequence. Another obstacle for Carlyle, as an opponent of orthodox theology, seems to have been the tendency of Coleridge, especially in his later years, to obscure the differences between transcendental faith and Christian dogma. As he aged, Coleridge grew more conventional (in politics as well as religion) and probably, in consequence, lost much of the young Carlyle’s respect.⁹⁰ Nonetheless, transcendentalism had been for Coleridge an important first step to intelligent belief, and his popular adaptations of Kantian principles surely gave Carlyle at least a rough outline of the new system.

Yet whatever glimpses Carlyle got into transcendentalism through his appeal to Coleridge were insufficient: he understood, by the end of 1826, that full comprehension of the Kantian and Fichtean structure required a direct confrontation with the original writings. There is some doubt about the extent to which Carlyle carried his investigation of these primary sources—a few critics claim that he filled the gaps in his understanding through the expedient of critical expositions.⁹¹ However that may be, Carlyle’s own records during the period testify to his having studied the major works of Kant, Fichte, and Schelling.⁹² Moreover, his writings, after the winter of 1827, indicate a thorough familiarity with the metaphysical and aesthetic outline of transcendentalism, despite a clear disregard for the formal methods of the philosophers in question.⁹³ From this moment onward, Carlyle was apparently satisfied that he had a working knowledge of the fundamentals of transcendental religion. Yet before we can understand precisely how these basic principles of German idealism affected Carlyle’s opinion of literature (our prime objective), we must first attempt a brief analysis of the doctrines themselves. For purposes of clarity and relevance, I shall limit exposition to four
The rationale of the *Critique of Pure Reason* must have seemed to Carlyle the scientific equivalent of Goethe's *Entsagen*; for it, too, denigrates man's hopes of ultimate happiness through an adjustment of external circumstances. More strictly, it recommends a refutation of empiricism as the necessary antecedent to the apprehension of truth. In order to justify such a refutation, Kant had first to investigate the limits of sense experience and of the reasoning faculty. Other philosophers had been approaching the problem of God, morality, the limits of the universe in space and time, and so on, in the belief that their instrument—reason—was sufficient to resolve these questions, either positively or negatively. In particular, Kant was dismayed by the assumptions underlying Hume's skeptical empiricism. The Scottish philosopher claimed to be denying "knowledge in order to make room for faith," but what he really advocated was practical atheism. Kant made the same claim to faith in his preface to the first *Kritik*—the difference being that, unlike Hume (who intended the remark only as a ruse to prevent the censure of his books by Edinburgh divines), Kant meant what he said. Carlyle obviously caught the significance of this split between the motives of the two philosophers. He wrote in January 1827: "I begin to see some light through the clouds in Kantism . . . empiricism, if consistent, they say, leads direct to Atheism!—I am afraid it does."

Kant begins the first *Kritik* by defining the bounds of sense. The general limiting features of the empirical consciousness, without which we could have no experience as we know it, seem to him to rest on six principles. These principles—temporality, unity of consciousness, objectivity, spatiality, spatio-temporal unity, permanence, and causality—depend upon a further condition, the principle of significance. According to that principle, for our ideas of the world to be empirically intelligible, there must be experiences that correspond to those ideas; that is, for every con-
cept there must be an example—in Kant's language, sensibility and understanding, “intuition” and “judgment” are interdependent. To this extent, he agrees with Hume's reasoning in the *Enquiry* and Carlyle's speculations prior to 1821. But it is at this point that Kant breaks with the arguments of materialistic philosophers. Since systematic inquiry itself conforms to the principle of causality, Kant asserts that we are compelled by that principle to pursue, in our inquiries, an ever greater generality of explanation. This serial process eventually leads us to entertain the idea of totality, and that idea may assume one of two forms: either our inquiries are ultimately limited, i.e., by the beginning of time or matter or the outward limit of space; or they are infinite and unlimited. If we then invoke the principle of significance to prove either possibility, we are left in an empirically untenable position. Thus the nature of systematic investigation inevitably leads us to posit its totality—what Kant calls “the demand of reason for the unconditioned”—and that idea, whether finite or infinite, transcends all possible experience. In other words, reason ultimately confounds itself. And since reason cannot tell us either how, what, or where we are, we must own that the objects we perceive are merely appearances that may or may not correspond to things as they are in themselves. Even space and time are relative concepts upon which we can hang no certainties at all. Thus the interpretive value of experience is wholly subjective, and we must take care to differentiate between the apprehended Actual and the unknown Real—what Kant calls the disjunction between phenomena and noumena. The practical value of this first *Kritik* is substantially negative: by dismissing reason as a standard for absolute judgments, and by affirming that the problem of ultimacy is a vital one, it constitutes no more than a prelude to transcendental faith. Carlyle, prepared as he was by his own experiences of the fruitlessness of “logic-chopping” and by the bracing example of Schiller's accomplishment as a Kantian, had no qualms in following Kant through these initial stages in the establishment of a new spiritual doctrine. As Carlyle puts it in 1827: “The Germans
... assail Hume, not in his outworks, but in the centre of his citadel. They deny his first principle, that sense is the only inlet of knowledge, that experience is the primary ground of Belief."

Kant's second *Kritik*, that of *Practical Reason*, argues back to a positive position. Having already put the interpretive value of experience in the subject, he holds further that the form of the intuition of external things does not depend on them, but on the human mind. And among the human mind's concepts is the idea of morality—the faculty of desire to live according to the good. This originates with what Kant calls the Categorical Imperative; that is, with the demand that one "act so that the maxim of thy will can always at the same time hold good as a principle of universal legislation." Thus he points to the existence of an innate reason higher than, and distinct from, the understanding. From this moral law, he eventually works outward to a belief in divine realities and the immortality of the soul. The moral consciousness, when dominant, allows us "a prospect into the supersensible" though "only with weak glances." Kant concludes that if God *could* be proved with the aid of empirical data, our behavior would be determined by fear and necessity—we would become "virtuous mechanisms." But since our behavior is self-determined and our morality disinterested, transcendental faith is at least as valuable as transcendental knowledge might be: "Thus what the study of nature and of man teaches us sufficiently elsewhere may well be true here also, that the unsearchable wisdom by which we exist is not less worthy of admiration in what it has denied than in what it has granted." The inner moral sense, the thought of freedom, God, immortality, all constitute some higher Reason and demonstrate the probability of God (and for the Kantian transcendentalist, they are sufficient for his faith—he says, after all, that God *must* be, not that he is), but they do not make up a rational proof. It is in this sense, despite all the formidable machinery of formal argument, that Kant's system must be considered mystical doctrine rather than strict philosophy. Nonetheless, it goes a great deal further than Christianity in its appeal to
the intellect, and it is this, coupled with the encouragement he received from German romantic writers, that probably won Carlyle as a disciple.

The third, and for Carlyle (since it complemented so much of the thinking of Goethe and Schiller) the most pertinent of Kant's major statements, was the Critique of Aesthetic Judgment. It is here that Kant attempts to define the direction and practical force of transcendentalism. In essence, he argues that the faculties of Understanding and Reason can function together to bring about the moral perfection of the individual. He contends that behind our ideas of the beautiful and the sublime there operates a crucial union of these faculties, and that this synthesis is capable of producing, in the abstract, aesthetic principles, and in their application, Art.110 Our consciousness of beautiful objects, whether in nature or Art, is a "presentation" of the "morally good," and those symbols in turn provide a "foot-hold" for our a priori concepts.111 This interaction permits a reconciliation between the sensuous and the good:

We call buildings or trees majestic or stately, or plains laughing and gay; even colors are called innocent, modest, soft, because they excite sensations containing something analogous to the consciousness of a state of mind produced by moral judgments. Taste makes, as it were, the transition from the charm of sense to habitual moral interest possible without too violent a leap, for it represents the imagination, even in its freedom, as amenable to a final determination for understanding, and teaches us to find, even in sensuous objects, a free delight apart from any charm of sense.112

Thus in a sensible world where a disparity exists between Reason and Understanding, beauty is truth, but in the ideal world, truth is its own manifestation. Again, Kant sees exquisite compensation in those "weak glances" which nature and Art allow us into the supersensible, and goes on to suggest that Fine Art ("the rendering of moral ideas in terms of sense")113 presents us most often with
the "prototypes of excellence" that our Reason demands: "For only when sensibility is brought into harmony with moral feeling can genuine taste assume a definite unchanging form." Kant is not so much interested in objective aesthetic criteria, which he admits cannot be deduced rationally, as he is in the faculty of judgment itself and the moral efficacy of the artist's creations.

Another source to which Carlyle turned for an exposition of transcendental doctrine was Fichte. In the 1790s as one of Kant's first disciples, Fichte had dedicated himself to the task of simplifying and strengthening the system of the *Kritiks* so that it might reach beyond the province of the German lecture hall. In doing so, he naturally altered Kantian idealism at many points, but he retained what was the essential excitement of it: the sense that here was a higher philosophy for this world, a release from the paradoxes of space and time and the understanding. In the *Science of Knowledge*, first published in 1794, Fichte made his crucial contribution to transcendentalism. The work begins with an essentially romantic premise extrapolated from Descartes: the simple identity "I am I" is Fichte's root, and in the peculiar reality of the "I" lies the foundation of his argument. Like Kant, Fichte believes that the world of objects is one of appearances; he calls it the "Nicht Ich," or Not I, and thinks it merely the projected habitation in which the I conceives of itself. Transcendental Reason (among the elements of which is the moral sense) is for Fichte the I's innate demand for freedom from the Not I; that is, the I's urge for absolute independence. What the individual's Reason desires is to be wholly subject, to be a creative awareness that produces its own object without itself being the object of sense—in other words, what Fichte calls the "Divine Absolute" or God. Although this desire involves a contradiction—individuality and thus I-ness would be lost as the I approaches the Absolute—yet it is, for Fichte, the ideal which should be the aim and the inspiration of every life, and a life is glad and triumphant as it draws near to this. This approach is indeed in appearance only . . . yet
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nonetheless is every advance a gain. Thus there is open to the soul a career of joy and victory that shall know no limit.\textsuperscript{119}

Later Fichte restates this upward progress in Hegelian terms:

It is by the Divine Life within it that the spirit presses on toward the Divine Ideal. . . . And the ideal to which the soul aspires is infinite. So soon as one form has been attained another and higher takes its place. In the fact of its impulse to attain to this ideal, the spirit finds the pledge of its own immortality.\textsuperscript{120}

In the realm of metaphysics, Fichte is obviously less of the formal philosopher and more of the religious enthusiast than Kant, and Carlyle had difficulty in following the steps of the argument. He wrote in his notebook in January 1827: "'the subject and the object as absolutely identical,' etc.—to this I can attach next to no meaning."\textsuperscript{121} Yet a few years later, in an essay on Novalis, Carlyle appears to have assimilated Fichte's concept of the "I" and the "Not I" and acknowledges the profound value of that distinction:

To a transcendentalist, Matter has an existence, but only as a Phenomenon: were \textit{we} not there, neither would it be there; it is a mere Relation, or rather the result of a Relation between our living Souls and the great First Cause; and depends for its apparent qualities on our bodily and mental organs; having itself \textit{no} intrinsic qualities; being, in the common sense of the word, Nothing. . . . There is, in fact, says Fichte, no Tree there; but only a Manifestation of Power. . . . This, we suppose, may be the foundation of what Fichte means by his far-famed Ich and Nicht-Ich.\textsuperscript{122}

Both Kant and Fichte, despite methodological differences, draw what was for Carlyle the same essential conclusion, namely, that time and space do not exist objectively and that the phenomenal world is somehow dependent upon the activity of man's mind and
In 1829, he spoke of what was to him the inestimable importance of transcendentalism:

It is the most serious in its purport of all Philosophies professed in these latter centuries; has been taught chiefly by men of the loftiest and most earnest character; and does bear, with a direct and comprehensive influence, on the most vital interests of men. . . . [For] if Time and Space have no absolute existence, no existence out of our minds, it removes a stumbling-block from the very threshold of our Theology. For on this ground, when we say that the Deity is omnipresent and eternal, that with Him it is a universal Here and Now, we say nothing wonderful; nothing but that he also created Time and Space, that Time and Space are not laws of His being, but only of ours. Nay . . . the whole question of the origin and existence of Nature must be greatly simplified; the old hostility of Matter is at an end, for Matter is itself annihilated; and the black Spectre, Atheism, "with all its sickly dews," melts into nothingness forever.

As Carlyle said of Kant, so might he also have said of Fichte, that in reading them he was bound to entertain the view "that all the world was spirit . . . that there was nothing material at all anywhere."

In Fichte's aesthetics, Carlyle again found strong parallels with Kant's doctrine. Both philosophers saw beauty as a manifestation of good, and Fichte particularly emphasized aesthetic perception as the antecedent to ethical behavior: "In the contemplation of beauty, the limitations of the material and the sensuous are broken through and the spirit returns to itself. The enjoyment of beauty is thus not virtue—it is the preparation for virtue." To Fichte as well as to Kant, Art and nature were keys to unlock the door between the actual and the ideal. To both thinkers the poetical sense preceded and informed all others, since the very nature of our being seemed to demand that we proceed through the sensuous
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and the articulate to an understanding of the supersensible and the unuttered. These ideas quite understandably reassured a generation of German poets and artists: Richter welcomed Kant's Critique of Judgment as a "whole solar system" of thought; Schiller and Novalis accepted the "antithesis between the physical and the moral, the natural and the ideal, the phenomenal and the noumenal" and like Kant and Fichte saw "in the aesthetic experience the bridge that spans the abyss between them." Carlyle was faced with one inescapable fact: German Art and German Transcendentalism were inseparably linked; and this new religion to which he had pinned his hopes thrived on nothing so much as on the consciousness of beauty. As Kant said:

All other forms of perception divide the man, because they are based exclusively in the sensuous or the spiritual part of his being. It is only the perception of beauty that makes him an entirety, because it demands the co-operation of his two natures. . . . Beauty alone confers happiness on all, and under its influence every being forgets that he is limited.

Carlyle understood that for the transcendentalist, Art's intangible values stood far in advance of any practical concern: "The Earth and all its glories are in truth a vapour and a Dream, and the Beauty of Goodness the only real possession. Poetry, Virtue, Religion, which for other men would have but, as it were, a traditional and imagined existence, are for him the everlasting basis of the Universe." Moreover, Carlyle found in Fichte a specific defense of the Literary Man, and thus a moral justification for his own activities. It is on the authority of Fichte that Carlyle can say "Literature is an 'apocalypse of Nature' . . . a 'continuous revelation' of the God-like in the Terrestrial and Common." Goethe and Schiller had exalted the poet, but Fichte was the first of Carlyle's mentors to emphasize the equivalent importance of Men of Letters and to speak of them as the "supreme moulders of an age." In such manner did Carlyle's religious inquiries come
full circle: imaginative literature encouraged him to explore and
accept the tenets of transcendental faith, and that faith, in its turn,
led him back to literature as to its practical complement.

But transcendentalism did more than predispose Carlyle toward
the arts. It also allowed him to experience, for long periods of
time, that enviable sense of serenity that belongs to the man who
has become “independent of the world.” Unlike the matter-of-fact
fundamentalism of his father, Carlyle’s new theology discounted
the appearance of evil in the face of events. As one orthodox critic
put it: “Goethe and the philosopher of Chelsea tell us to dismiss
our fear, because reverence, not fear, is the proper feeling, and the
only one which the true religion permits us to entertain.” To
the follower of Kant and Fichte, all that was, was ultimately spiritu­
tal and functioned only as emblems of divine truth. Thus, since
“our Me” was “the only Reality,” the idealist felt no need to tie
his hope to the fortunes of “this so solid-seeming World.” In place
of warfare, punishment, hysteria, and sorrow, the transcendentalist
held his duty to be a tranquil delineation of the truth he rev­
erenced behind phenomena. Fichte in particular exhorted Carlyle
to set a tolerant optimism between his moral ideal and the ap­
parent failure of the world to match it. Under the influence of
transcendentalism, Carlyle escaped the depressing contradictions
of religious orthodoxy and intellectual iconoclasm and was en­
couraged to cultivate his own indwelling divinity. As he said him­
self, in interpreting the message of Goethe’s Faust:

Joy ye in the living fullness of the beautiful (not the logical,
practical, contradictory, wherein man toils imprisoned); let
Being (or Existence), which is everywhere a glorious birth
into higher Being, as it forever works and lives, encircle you
with the soft ties of Love; and whatsoever wavers in the
doubtful empire of appearance (as all earthly things do);
that do ye by enduring faith make firm.

To exhaust oneself attempting material reforms in this “doubtful
empire of appearance” or to despair at their apparent failure was,
for the transcendentalist, a foolish profligacy, since all we see is but the reflex of our inward attainments. \(^{137}\) Thus, in his commitment to German idealism, Carlyle found himself committed not only to literature but also to a highly pacific, often contemplative world-view. \(^{138}\)

While he was still occupied in unraveling the exact purport of transcendental doctrine, Carlyle continued his work as translator and editor of German literature. By the end of 1826, he had compiled a group of essays and German stories to be published under the title *German Romance*. \(^{139}\) The anthology included critical appraisals of the authors (among whom were Musaeus, Tieck, Hoffmann, and Richter); and these editorial judgments understandably contained a number of ideas borrowed from the Kantian aesthetics Carlyle was then studying. \(^{140}\) In particular, Carlyle evaluated the contribution of these romantic writers in accordance with the degree of religious awareness they displayed: those who were witty, sentimental, and superficially comic drew Carlyle’s censure for putting talent ahead of genius; those who revealed strong moral affections, and a profound faith in the life of the spirit were praised as “pure” poets. \(^{141}\)

But the business of literary criticism, however educative, did not satisfy Carlyle’s needs as a writer. He was not, he said, content simply “to Germanize the public.” In fact, the discovery of the achievements of Tieck, Richter, and later, Novalis, only whetted his appetite for a personal triumph in the field of letters. In his anxiety to be about some original work, he again suffered from dyspepsia and sleeplessness. He wrote to his mother in December 1826: “If I could heartily commence some book of my own, of the sort I wished, it could do more for me than any mere publishing or editorial engagement.” \(^{142}\) By the beginning of 1827, he felt the confidence necessary for such an effort. German writers, especially Goethe, had urged him to find an outlet for his convictions; \(^{143}\) and now, with transcendental faith as an anchor for his ideas, Carlyle was prepared, finally, to test his own artistic powers. \(^{144}\) That he had
not done so earlier (the desire to write a novel had been one of Carlyle's preoccupations since 1822), may be in part attributable to his intellectual honesty, that is, to his recognition of the inchoate nature of his religious beliefs. Not until he had reinforced the literary impulse (that followed on that first reading of Wilhelm Meister) with a broader understanding of German idealism was Carlyle willing to give his own ideas single prominence. Masson agrees that Carlyle's slow start on an original composition was rooted in his reluctance to speak before he was sure of his ground. "It was not enough that he should be able to write fluently and eloquently in a general way, by the exercise of mere natural talent, on any subject turned up. He had to provide himself amply with matter, with systematized knowledge of all sorts." After January 1827 he was fairly certain that he had extracted from Kant and Fichte what in them was of essential value; at least he was sure enough of what he believed to undertake the writing of Wotton Reinfred.

Needless to say, Wotton has received slight critical attention in the 140 years since it was written—largely because Carlyle left it unfinished and unrevised, and because it did not find its way into print until 1892. Whatever technical faults it may have as a novel, Wotton is nonetheless extremely valuable as an indicator of Carlyle's religious convictions in the months immediately following his exposure to German philosophy. Perhaps because artistically it represents a false start on the road to Sartor Resartus, Wotton ought, rightly, to be left in obscurity. Certainly, as Froude says, it lacks inventiveness; and as a fictional vehicle for Carlyle's views, it is often embarrassingly frail. Characterization and plot are wooden throughout, and the dialogue, when it is not baldly philosophical, is generally insipid. The hero thinks nothing of "internally" exclaiming "in Doric words" or of beating his breast in Latin:

"O causa causarum, miserere mei!" cried Reinfred, looking upwards, with the tears almost starting to his eyes. "Miserere
mei!" repeated he, throwing himself down on the table, and hiding his face in his hands.

His cousin looked at him sympathizingly, but spoke not.140

If we concede (as we must) that dramatic bathos of this sort dooms Carlyle’s novel from the outset, we are still left with Wotton as an accurate history of the author’s religious education—second only to Sartor itself.

The novel’s hero is introduced to us in a state of extreme depression, closely resembling the “Everlasting No” of the Teufelsdröckh saga. This crisis in his development has arisen from his immersion in sceptical philosophies, particularly those of Hume, Gibbon, the philosophes, and various scientific materialists. Like Carlyle in 1820, Reinfred has been “intellectualized” out of his sense of purpose.

After two chapters of “soul-agonizing,” the remaining five chronicle a kind of ungainly resurrection—and are disturbingly similar to Wilhelm Meister. The hero and his friend set out on a journey that functions in the same metaphorical sense as Meister’s travels. Along the way, Wotton encounters men and circumstances that slowly convert him to a new spirituality and optimism. The travelers meet a “sociably frank” stranger who advises them, in what might pass for a paraphrase of Goethe’s warning in Meister, against a reliance on material happiness:

| True goodness of all sorts must have its life and root within ourselves; it depends on external appliances far less than we suppose. The great point is to have a healthy mind, or, if I may say so a right power of assimilation, for the elements of beauty and truth lie round us on all sides, even in the meanest objects, if we could but extract them.160 |

In the speaker’s idea of internal truth and external symbols of that truth, he is already hinting at Kantian concepts. Wotton’s interest is aroused by these remarks in much the same way Carlyle’s had been by the conclusion to Wilhelm Meister’s Travels, and he
agrees to follow the stranger to a house where it is promised that “refreshment and rest are waiting for us.” Once there, Wotton is astonished to find a company of devout, intelligent men who have apparently kept their faith without losing their intellectual honesty. Wotton’s feelings must come very close indeed to representing Carlyle’s own mood when, in 1821, he first viewed the enormous vitality of German idealism:

That air of candour and goodness, those striking glimpses of man’s nature and its sufferings and wants, had his sympathy and hearty approval; but he sought in vain for the basis on which these people had built their opinions; their whole form of being seemed different from his. Men equally informed and cultivated he had sometimes met with, but seldom or never had he seen such culture of the intellect combined with such moral results, nay, as it appeared, conducing to them. Here were fearless and free thinkers, yet they seemed not unbelievers, but, on the contrary, possessed with charity and zeal.

And from the far side of transcendentalism, Carlyle can look back disapprovingly at Wotton’s initial distrust: “It is not always that originality, even when true and estimable, pleases us at first; if it go beyond our sphere, it is much more likely to unsettle and provoke us.” Soon the more articulate members of the company offer clues to the tenets of their unique religion. Wotton is first presented with what amounts to a summary of Kant’s *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*: “Demonstrability is not the test of truth; logic is for what the understanding sees; what is truest we do not see for it has no form, being infinite; the highest truth cannot be expressed in words.” Wotton’s hosts go on to condemn the antagonists of Kant, especially Hume, who, as the current “ruler of the world,” has carried a herd of ambitious utilitarians and epicureans in his train:

Was man made only to feel? Is there nothing better in him than a passive system of susceptibilities? Can he move only
Like Kant, Carlyle’s company of enlightened philosophers discriminates between the faculties of Reason and Understanding: “Understanding perceives and judges of the images and measures of things... reason perceives and judges of what has no measure or image. The latter only is unchangeable and everlasting in its decisions, the results of the former change from age to age.”

But perhaps most significantly, Wotton’s new teachers emphasize the applied transcendentalism of Kant’s Critique of Judgment. The hero asks, reasonably enough, how their divine idea of the world can be expressed, and Dalbrook, the chief among them, answers: “Expressed?... in the still existence of all good men. Echoes of it come to us from the song of the poet; the sky with its azure and its rainbow and its beautiful vicissitudes of morn and even show it forth. ... It is an open secret... woe to us if we have no vision for it.”

Although the “open secret” belongs to Goethe, even the nonconverted guests are quick to recognize Kant’s influence behind the words, and to protest: “Kantism! Kantism! German mysticism! mere human faculties cannot take it in.”

Carlyle in fact highlights two major corollaries of German transcendentalism: that the poet is the “high priest” of the noumenal universe, and that the essence of his message is unification, clarity, and love. Carlyle makes very clear both what he takes the role of the poet to be and what our estimate of his value ought to be:

The first poets were teachers and seers, the gifted soul, instinct with music, discerned the true and the beautiful in nature, and poured its bursting fulness in floods of harmony, entrancing the rude sense of men; and song was a
heavenly voice bearing wisdom irresistibly . . . into every heart . . . [Let us] Look with their eyes on man and life! All its hollowness and insufficiency are there; but with them, nay by them, do beauty and mercy and a solemn grandeur shine forth, and man . . . is no longer little or poor, but lovely and venerable; for a glory of Infinitude is round him. . . . Life with its prizes and its failures . . . were a poor matter itself; [to the poet] it is baseless, transient and hollow, an infant's dream; but beautiful also, and solemn and of mysterious significance. Why should he not love it and reverence it? Is not all visible nature, all sensible existence the symbol and vesture of the Invisible and Infinite? Is it not in these material shows of things that God, virtue, immortality are shadowed forth and made manifest to man? Material nature is as a jatamorgana, hanging in the air; a cloud-picture, but painted by heavenly light; in itself it is air and nothingness, but behind it is the glory of the sun. . . . It is only the invisible that really is, but only the gifted sense that can of itself discern this reality!

Carlyle could in no way enter more fully into the spirit of idealism or paraphrase more closely the essence of the aesthetic theories of Kant, Schiller, and Fichte. But in order to make the interdependence of literature and religion thoroughly explicit, Carlyle—through one of his characters—puts the obvious question: "What is all this? Must a poet become a mystic, and study Kant before he can write verses?" The transcendental philosopher replies that "Kantism" is "but the more scientific expression of what all true poets and thinkers, nay, all good men, have felt more or less distinctly, and acted on the faith of, in all ages." That is to say, Kant merely formulates the doctrines of a transcendental faith that has always operated behind the poetic consciousness of true artists. The belief in beauty as sensible truth, the sense of tranquility and optimism in the face of material hardship, which together sustain the disciples of Kant, have been the property, so Carlyle asserts, of the literary genius in every epoch. For Wotton and, of course, for Carlyle, transcendentalism is an acquired rather
than a native faith. Nonetheless, from this fragmentary novel, it is evident that by 1827 Carlyle had familiarized himself with German idealism, adopted it as his own faith, and accepted the commitment to literature which it implies.

Unfortunately, he was not yet as skillful as he was convinced. For obvious reasons, among them lack of humor and the inability to integrate the philosophical and romantic strands of the story, Carlyle discontinued Wotton at the end of the seventh chapter.\textsuperscript{165} Instead he took up the work of criticism again, turning out, over the next four years, nearly twenty essays on German writers and the history of German literature.\textsuperscript{166} All of them reflect the critic's adherence to transcendental doctrine: Carlyle continued to look at poetry and prose as organs of mystical religion, condemning, where he found it, worldly and sensational writing, and reserving his praise for verse and fiction of an expressly spiritual sort.\textsuperscript{167} The systems of Kant and Fichte and the examples of Goethe and Schiller had convinced Carlyle that "not brute Force, but only Persuasion and Faith is the king of this world."\textsuperscript{168} As a result, he became an ever more fervid advocate of Goethe's new "World-Literature," which he agreed should be "all in all to us":\textsuperscript{169}

\begin{quote}
The more cheering is the one thing we do see and know: That [Literature's] tendency is to a universal European Commonweal, that the wisest in all nations will communicate and co-operate; whereby Europe will again have its true Sacred College . . . wars will become rarer, less inhuman, and in the course of centuries such delirious ferocity in nations . . . may be proscribed and become obsolete for ever.\textsuperscript{170}
\end{quote}

Thus the literary man, devout and peace-loving, assumed for Carlyle an exaggerated significance in a world that was otherwise inhabited by skeptics and Kraftmänner. But German idealism shaped more than his view of literature: Carlyle's first political tract, "Signs of the Times," (1829) also owed many of its articles
to Kant. The division of human faculties into “mechanical” and “dynamical” is clearly analogous to Kant’s discrimination between Understanding and Reason, and Carlyle’s final appeal for self-cultivation derives, in equal measure, from *Wilhelm Meister* and *The Critique of Practical Reason*. This bias toward subjective, internal values animates most of his criticism written before 1832, and can be traced to transcendental principles in almost every case. Year by year, Carlyle was becoming the most respected English spokesman for the ideas of modern Germany, yet, as his confidence and his reputation grew, so too did his impatience with the secondhand nature of his own accomplishments. Once more the wish to be “a kind of artist” obsessed him, and in the early months of 1831, he began another fictional self-portrait—*Sartor Resartus*.

This time he brought to the writing of his novel a surer grasp of the dramatic and technical elements of narrative prose. Like *Wotton*, *Sartor* was conceived, in outline, as a religious autobiography, but of a far subtler sort. From Richter he had learned the art of comic digression and the value of fully realized personae. More importantly, he understood now what he could not appreciate in 1827: that *double entendre*, when incorporated with didactic purpose, made the harshest truths more entertaining, if not more palatable. In fact the manner of *Sartor* displays the playful, even amoral aspect of parody and satire as much as the matter of it chronicles the growth of spiritual conviction in the author. In contrast to *Wotton*, Carlyle’s second novel has received a vast amount of critical attention in the last 130 years—much of it focused, naturally enough, on the tenets of the hero’s religion.

Certainly, that Carlyle derives Teufelsdrockh’s professed faith from Kantian sources is firmly established in each of the three sections of *Sartor*. In the first, his “humour of looking at all Matter and Material things as Spirit” constitutes a “clear logically-founded Transcendentalism,” of the sort that opposes “Reason” to “vulgar logic.” The professor from Weissnichtwo paraphrases Fichte’s
Ich-Nicht Ich distinction as well: “Think well, thou too wilt find that Space is but a mode of our human Sense, so likewise Time; there is no Space and no Time . . . this so solid-seeming World, after all, were but an air-image, our me the only reality: and Nature, with its thousandfold production and destruction, but the reflex of our own inward Force . . . the living visible Garment of God.”

In the second, autobiographical part, Teufelsdrockh is rescued from despair by reading Wilhelm Meister, accepts literature as his “calling,” and reconciles himself to a “life of Meditation” by the Kantian practice of looking “through the show of things into things themselves.” Here, as in Wotton, the process of self-discovery parallels the author’s own. In the final section, especially “Natural Supernaturalism,” Teufelsdrockh joins Fichte in dismissing custom, science and the Understanding as criteria for truth, since our physical being is but “dust and Shadow; a Shadow-system gathered round our Me; wherein, through some moments or years, the Divine Essence is to be revealed in the Flesh.” As in Kant’s third Kritik, the hero believes Art to be “the rendering of moral ideas in terms of Sense,” an aesthetic recognition that “the Universe is but one vast Symbol of God.”

Of course, Sartor contains a number of elements that have only tangentially to do with transcendentalism: the comic digressions on clothes, history, and politics; the “phoenix” theory of society; the amusing crotchets of diction and plotting. In consequence, it is an infinitely richer and more original work than Wotton, and the fact that its hero is a professor rather than a student gives evidence of Carlyle’s increased confidence in his own powers. Yet both novels are the result of a single impulse: to articulate the new spirituality to which Carlyle had been converted, and to persuade others to follow his example.

Throughout the rest of his life, Carlyle apparently remained faithful to the metaphysical convictions he formed in these years: he seldom attended church and certainly never took an active interest in the ecclesiastical movements of his day, yet he never
ceased to believe in Fichte's "Divine Idea of the world." As Espinasse puts it, "He used to say that he never felt spiritually at ease until he left the church behind him and went out into the 'bare desert' where there was a temple not made with hands." And as late as 1879, transcendental principles—the categorical imperative, time and space as appearances, nature as the symbol of the divine—still formed the nucleus of Carlyle's heterodox faith. The history, then, of Carlyle's religious development amounts (if we except the transitional stages of doubt and atheism) to a substitution of transcendental theology for dogmatic, Calvinist theology. Further, it is clear that the nature of his adopted religion stirred Carlyle's sympathy for the arts in general, and for literature in particular. Among men, Carlyle, like his hero Teufelsdröckh, recognized only one supreme example—the man who, in his external labor, is "endeavoring towards inward Harmony": "Highest of all, when his outward and his inward endeavor are one: when we can name him Artist; not earthly Craftsman only, but inspired Thinker, who with heaven-made Implement conquers Heaven for us!" Carlyle was especially attracted by the poet's peculiar ability to evoke that "awful sense of the mystery of existence" which is at the heart of transcendentalism.

Lastly, there is no question that as an idealist philosopher Carlyle had enormous influence on his contemporaries. Emerson, intrigued by his German essays, visited Carlyle at Craigenputtock and later arranged for the Boston publication of Sartor. The American had some prior knowledge of the systems of Kant and Coleridge, but Teufelsdröckh's Clothes-Philosophy undoubtedly acted as the catalyst for his own initial statement of transcendental faith in 1836. Years later, Walt Whitman—perhaps the greatest of transcendental poets—acknowledged that, without the inspiration of Carlyle, he and others like him would probably never have written at all. T. H. Green, in evaluating the religious contribution of Wordsworth, Carlyle, and Fichte to nineteenth-century thought, argues that his contemporaries found in them "the congenial idea of a divine life or spirit pervading the world, making nature intelligible, giving unity to history..."
and inspiring individual men of genius.” R. H. Hutton compares Carlyle’s transcendental utterances to those of Emerson and concludes that they have justly enjoyed greater currency than the American’s. In 1855, George Eliot anticipates these eulogies in a review of Carlyle:

There is hardly a superior or active mind of this generation that has not been modified by Carlyle’s writings; there has hardly been an English book written for the last ten or twelve years that would not be different if Carlyle had not lived. . . . The extent of his influence may be best seen in the fact that ideas which were startling novelties when he first wrote them are now become commonplace. And we think few men will be found to say that this influence on the whole has not been for good.

In the same vein, James Martineau remarks that it was not unusual, in the 1840s and 50s, to hear young, earnest Englishmen declaring, “Carlyle is my religion!” Like the rest of Carlyle’s contemporaries, Martineau looks at “the vast influence of Carlyle’s writing on the inmost faith of our generation,” as upon one of the “essential facts” of Victorian culture. Many critics feel, even now, that his introduction of transcendental ideas into the mainstream of British thought was his primary contribution: “To convince the English mind that there is an alternative to the garb of Hebrew old-clothes on the one hand, and the nakedness of Atheism on the other, was the main part of his function in literature.”

Carlyle was no less renowned as a friend of literature: Goethe honored him with gifts and medals; Goethe’s associates thought so highly of his talents that they entreated him to translate Faust for the English-speaking world; Tennyson, Hunt, Thackeray, Dickens, Browning, Sterling, Forster, Ruskin, and a score of other poets and writers cherished their acquaintance with the “sage of Chelsea”: on his eightieth birthday, many of them were among the 119 signatories of a scroll declaring Carlyle the “embodiment of the ‘Hero as Man of Letters.’ ” Leslie Stephen, who saw Car-
lyle frequently in his last years, writes in 1873 that "he is by far
the best specimen of the literary gent we can at present pro-
duce. . . . He is indeed a genuine poet and great humorist." Louis Cazamian declares that Carlyle will be remembered as "one
of the most spirited poets of modern England" whose imaginative
genius was nourished on transcendentalism:

His vision of the world is that toward which the poets of the
romantic generation had striven: a perception of the spiritual in the material. But the universality, the might and the lofty vistas of German idealism gave to Carlyle's vision . . .
a breadth and clearness beyond comparison. His imagination lived so freely under the sense of the unreality of time and space, that every spectacle he pictured had its double aspect of reality and dream . . . No poet has had in a higher degree, sublimity of imagination; no poet has with greater power evoked the infinite, or the eternal silences which lie behind the transitory sights and sounds of life . . . the quality which will best assure the duration of Carlyle's work is . . . that energy which is capable of . . . eliciting from the world and from the soul fragments mar-
velous in their beauty.  

Yet his idealistic convictions and his advocacy of literature not-
withstanding, Carlyle often entertained ideas contrary to the tenor of these commitments. His closest friends recognized—and we have seen in earlier chapters—that despite the inherent mildness
of his faith and his profession, Carlyle continually acted in "the
most curious opposition to himself." In such an unsettled mood, he confessed to his brother in 1833 his "crabbed one-sided persua-
sion that all Art is but a reminiscence now," that "Prophecy . . . not Poetry is the thing wanted," that "Goethe . . . is not
to have any follower, and should not have any." We must now
turn our attention from transcendentalism to another religious prejudice behind Carlyle's view of literature—namely, to that force that, in the main, dictated his antagonism toward the arts.
1. Reminiscences, I, 53.
2. First Forty Years, I, 7.
4. First Forty Years, I, 7.
5. Reminiscences, I, 82.
6. Ibid., I, 51-52.
9. Ibid.
10. Margaret Carlyle's education was so limited, in fact, that she only learned to write late in life in order to correspond with her eldest son.
11. Reminiscences, I, 89.
15. SR, p. 91. Although reliable as a history of Carlyle's early thought, Sartor is not always to be trusted for autobiographical details. It has thus been consulted, in every instance, with the author's caution in mind: "Nothing in 'Sartor Resartus' is fact; symbolical myth all" (First Forty Years, I, 103).
16. First Forty Years, I, 29.
18. In 1833, Carlyle told Emerson that in his early years "Rousseau's Confessions had discovered to him that he was not a dunce" (Emerson, English Traits, p. 20). See also "Diderot," Essays, III, 193: like Carlyle, Diderot preached sermons and taught mathematics in his younger days—neither with any conviction.
19. Carlyle was apparently unaware of Hume's work as an extension of Berkeley's speculations.
22. Ibid., p. 17.
25. Ibid., p. 17.
29. Ibid., p. 115.
33. For the journal account, see Froude, *First Forty Years*, I, 54.
34. See *Reminiscences*, I, 177.
35. Froude, *First Forty Years*, I, 59.
37. "He appears, though in dreary enough humour, to be addressing himself to the Profession of the Law" (*SR*, p. 93).
39. It was about this time (1819) that Carlyle first complained of dyspepsia—a fact that adds weight to the prevailing theory of its psychosomatic origin.
40. On Carlyle's need for a religion, see Cazamian, *Carlyle*, p. 19.
42. Ibid., p. 129.
43. Ibid., pp. 129, 132–33.
44. Ibid., p. 133.
46. He later said of this period: "I was then in the very midst of Wertherism—the blackness and darkness of death" (*Lectures*, p. 186). For Carlyle's comments on the novel itself, see *Essays*, I, 211–24.
48. Emerson, *English Traits*, p. 20. The "man" was probably Mr. P. Swan of Kirkcaldy, who also supplied Carlyle with a number of German texts. See Froude, *First Forty Years*, I, 91. Cazamian agrees that Carlyle was led to study German from rumors of its new answers to spiritual dilemmas (*Carlyle*, p. 32).
49. "Hume's philosophy, which had attracted him briefly in the beginning phase of his own religious scepticism, afforded him little or no positive aid in his personal difficulties as he passed through the more wretched years" (Shine, ed., *Unfinished History of German Literature*, p. 90).
50. *SR*, p. 156.
51. Carlyle's 1814 apostrophe to the glories of "literary fame" (see above, p. 13) should be ranked with similar early comments on the law ("It seemed glorious to me for its independency") as an example of the impetuous and understandably fickle temper of adolescence.
52. Spoken of, and by, the Harper, *WM*, II, 16.
54. Carlyle was immensely curious. He wrote in an early essay on Goethe, "How has this man, to whom the world once offered nothing but blackness, denial and despair, attained to that better vision which now shows it to him not tolerable only, but full of solemnity and loveliness?" (*Essays*, I, 210).
55. *WM*, II, 370.
56. Ibid., p. 415.
Carlyle's Religious Development

57. June 1821? This date is given by Froude for Carlyle's reading of Wilhelm Meister as well as for his Leith Walk "conversion"—an assertion disputed by Alexander Carlyle and others since. There survives little evidence to argue a preference for June 1821 or July-August 1822 in the Leith Walk matter, although signs of Goethe's influence appear as early as October 1821: from this date Carlyle's articles take for their subjects, not chemistry and geometry, but metrical romances, Milton, and, in an April 1822 review, Goethe's Faust. The larger question—of the validity and completeness of his mystical conversion—can be answered less equivocally. From a firsthand knowledge of Carlyle's letters and notebooks from 1822 forward, one is compelled to agree with Carlisle Moore's verdict that Leith Walk represented, at best, an initial successful skirmish with the "mud-gods" of the Everlasting No. Despite Carlyle's retrospective view of the issue—which telescoped a protracted rise from despair into a single, cataclysmic leap—his journals during the 1820s indicate that "there were ... other awakenings, other illuminations, which, with the help of Goethe, of Kant and Fichte [enabled] him gradually to leave the Everlasting No farther and farther behind" (C. Moore, "Sartor Resartus and the Problem of Carlyle's Conversion," p. 669). I do not agree with Moore, however, that the process of rebirth begun with Leith Walk and the reading of Wilhelm Meister was not finished until 1830 and the writing of Sartor Resartus. That work was, in fact, the highly wrought outward sign of a conversion inwardly confirmed and completed in the early months of 1827 (see below, p. 99).

Nonetheless, there are nagging difficulties about the Leith Walk incident: first, Carlyle later spoke of it as the only autobiographical parallel in Sartor (under the alias Rue Saint-Thomas de l'Enfer) that the reader ought to take "quite literally" (Love Letters, II, 380); and second, the conversion precedes the Goethe-inspired Everlasting Yea and even the Centre-of-Indifference stage of Teufelsdrockh's spiritual growth. For that reason it seems to me whatever happened on that summer day in Edinburgh was largely a proto-conversion, a spontaneous revolt of the instincts that gave Carlyle some hope of a more unified, permanent restoration to follow. He tells us he outstared his fear of death and supplanted "whining Sorrow" with "Indignation and grim, fire-eyed Defiance"; finally he affirms that he "directly thereupon began to be a man." Such an emphasis upon the effort of will involved and upon the manliness of his triumph suggests that the impetus for this initial "New-birth" derived from his native, Puritan stoicism rather than from any vision of a new metaphysics. Frederick Roe, Werner Leopold, and J. H. Muirhead all take similar views (Carlyle as a Critic of Literature, p. 19; Die religiöse Wurzel von Carlyles literarischer Wirksamkeit, pp. 45-46; Platonic Traditions in Anglo-Saxon Philosophy, p. 190). The experience amounted, then, to a kind of visceral convulsion that, without the deeper reassurance of transcendental faith that followed, would soon have lost its force for lack of a directing epistemology.

58. Lectures, p. 187. See also Allingham, A Diary: "Goethe ... pointed out to me the real nature of life and things—not that he did this directly; but incidentally, and let me see it rather than told me. This gave me peace and great satisfaction" (p. 259). For other testaments to his reaction to Wilhelm Meister, see Froude, First Forty Years, I, 135, and Adrian Arthur, "Dean Stanley's Report of Conversations with Carlyle," p. 74.
59. In the chapter on his mental crisis in the Autobiography, J. S. Mill makes much the same comment on the inefficacy of Byron's poetry: "In the worst period of my depression, I had read through the whole of Byron. . . . As might be expected, I got no good from this reading, but the reverse." Instead he turned to Wordsworth, who offered "real, permanent happiness in tranquil contemplation," and to Goethe, who argued for "the maintenance of a due balance among the faculties." Both poets reject the external happiness that Mill had recently found so unsatisfying (see Autobiography, chap. 5).

60. Entsagen "was an aesthetic ideal. . . . It pointed to the harmonious out-flowering of all one's energies, the lower subordinated to the higher. . . . It has no similarity to the ascetic ideal; it is fundamentally a creative act, an effort at a constant envisaging of the whole" (Harrold, Carlyle and German Thought, pp. 216-17).

61. SR, p. 156. He defined Entsagen, in the 1827 essay on Richter, as "a harmonious development of being" (Essays, I, 20). See also Essays, IV, 39.

62. WM, II, 315, 305.
63. WM, II, 339.
64. See the Introduction, I. Kant, Kritik of Judgment, p. xiii.
65. Froude, First Forty Years, I, 132.
67. Ibid.
68. Froude, First Forty Years, I, 151-52.
69. The passage in Meister, from the Abbe's Indenture, reads, "Art is long, life short, judgment difficult, opportunity transient" (WM, II, 75).
70. From Aesthetic Letters, as translated by Carlyle in "Schiller," Essays, II, 192.


73. Ibid., p. 193.
74. Ibid., p. 197.
75. Ibid., p. 196.
76. From The Robbers and Maid of Orleans, as translated in part in Essays, II, 204, 208.

78. Ibid., pp. 43-44. According to Cazamian, it is in the Life of Schiller that Carlyle established his religious view of literature: "The bias of Carlyle's mind is revealed . . . the moral basis attracts him most . . . for him literature is a religion . . . swiftly and surely he seizes upon the pure idealism of the creative mind" (p. 87).
79. Irving, upset by the "subversive" German lessons Carlyle was giving Jane, tried on numerous occasions to "put in a word for Jesus" with the young girl (Wilson I, p. 212).
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80. That is, if we except the "small . . . unsatisfactory" articles that he wrote for Brewer's Encyclopedia in 1820 (see Froude, First Forty Years, I, 91).

81. See LS, p. 110.

82. "Unconscious of any illegitimate identification of Goethe's teachings with those of the philosopher, Carlyle regarded Fichte and Goethe as two exponents of one general doctrine" (Harrold, Carlyle and German Thought, p. 14).

83. "Carlyle's study of Schiller's aesthetics based upon Kantian thought had for some time beckoned the young Scot toward German transcendental philosophy" (Hill Shine, Unfinished History of German Literature, p. xxiii).

84. Essays, II, 211-12.

85. "The year 1825-26 was of great importance to Carlyle. It marked his emergence from the ethnic or purely humanistic phase of intellectual development, into the phase of transcendental thought. . . . Largely through the aesthetic writers in Carlyle's humanistic period he had gradually approached the tenets of transcendentalism" (Hill Shine, "Carlyle and the German Philosophy Problem during the Year 1826-27," p. 807).

86. "He was thought to hold, he alone in England, the key of German and other Transcendentalisms" (Sterling, p. 53). Norman Fruman, in a recent study, Coleridge, the Damaged Archangel, contends that S. T. C.'s philosophy was almost wholly derived from "Kant and Co.": "For we know that Coleridge read, avidly read, the German school and annotated their works, and used their ideas, their technical vocabulary, and sometimes page after page verbatim. . . . Studies of Coleridge's philosophy are not likely to be very much advanced by further insistence on the primacy of his English heritage, but rather by still more intensive study of the pervasive influence of Germany" (p. 120).

87. Ibid., p. 55.

88. LS, p. 114 (italics added). Carlyle also expressed his disappointment in a letter to his brother of 24 June 1824. In it, he reckons Coleridge "a man of great and useless genius" (Froude, First Forty Years, I, 228-29).

89. Although his notebooks for these years contain scattered references to Coleridge, only one recorded comment derives directly from S. T. C.'s published material (see Notebooks, pp. 46-47, and Biographia Literaria, chap. 15, on "talent" and "genius"). For a closer assessment of Carlyle's debt to Coleridge, see Shine, Unfinished History of German Literature, p. 100.

90. Gavan Duffy paraphrases Carlyle's opinion of the matter in 1849: "Whatever Coleridge had written was vague and purposeless, and, when one came to consider it, intrinsically cowardly, . . . He had reconciled himself to believe in the Church of England long after it had become a dream to him" (Conversations with Carlyle, pp. 59-60).

91. See Shine, "Carlyle and the German Philosophy Problem," p. 612. See also Shine, Unfinished History of German Literature, p. 111. In addition to Shine and Harrold, M. Storrs (The Relation of Carlyle to Kant and Fichte) and R. Wellek (Immanuel Kant in England, 1793-1838) have discussed the problem of determining the extent of Carlyle's firsthand intimacy with Kant's critiques. For Carlyle's report of having read 150 pages of the first Kritik by September 1826, see Love Letters, II, 234. I have examined Carlyle's edition
of the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (Leipzig, 1818) in his study in Chelsea, but have found no marginalia to indicate where, or whether, he cut short his reading of it.

92. This dating of Carlyle's exposure to transcendental philosophers is supported by the *Note Books*, pp. 112–13. See also Shine, "Carlyle and the German Philosophy Problem," p. 815, and James Martineau: "In 1827, he defended the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* against ignorant objectors" (*Essays, Philosophical and Theological*, I, 390). From a letter he wrote to Espinasse in 1841, it is also clear that Carlyle held Kant to be the principal figure among the German philosophers and that he thought the first *Kritik* quite intelligible: "After all the Fichteisms, Schellingisms, Hegelisms, I still understand Kant to be the grand novelty, the prime author of the new spiritual world, of whom all the others are but superficial transient modifications. If you do decide to penetrate into this matter, what better can you do than vigorously set to the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, a very attainable book and resolutely study it and restudy it until you understand it? You will find it actually capable of being understood, rigorously sequent, like a book of mathematics; labour that pays itself; really one of the best metaphysical studies that I know of. Once master of Kant, you have attained what I reckon most precious: namely, deliverance from the fatal incubus of Scotch or French philosophy, with its mechanisms and its Atheisms, and be able, perhaps to wend on your way leaving both of them behind you" (Espinasse, *Literary Recollections*, p. 59). See also *Essays*, I, 75.

93. "Though he never proceeded in his philosophic interests far enough to satisfy a systematic student of that subject, he did read some of Kant, and much of Kant's interpreters" (Shine, *Unfinished History of German Literature*, p. xxiii).


97. *Note Books*, p. 102.


99. Or, as he says in the preface, "reason cannot progress with *a priori* concepts alone in a scientific manner." (*Pure Reason*, p. 24).

100. What Kant calls the "categories of pure understanding" (see *Pure Reason*, pp. 71–74).

101. Ibid., p. 149.

102. Hume would argue that the question is practically, if not intellectually, irrelevant.


104. Unamuno sees *Practical Reason* as an emotional reaction to the void left after the first *Kritik*, an expression of the philosopher's "longing not to die" (*The Tragic Sense of Life*, p. 28).


106. Ibid., p. 119.

107. Ibid., p. 246.

108. Ibid., p. 245.
109. Ibid., p. 246.
111. Ibid., pp. 222, 223.
112. Ibid., p. 225.
115. Again the question of whether Carlyle read this work in the original German is unanswerable. He certainly read *The Nature of the Scholar* (see Letters I, 53, and Storrs, *The Relation of Carlyle to Kant and Fichte*, pp. 83–90) and *Outlines of the Science of Knowledge* (a condensed version of the Wissenschaftslehre) in *The Popular Works of J. G. Fichte*, a second edition (1848) of which can still be seen in his private library.
116. Kant would have questioned the substance of this "I," saying that Fichte had confused the unity of experience with the experience of unity; that, in other words, we cannot be sensibly certain of the I as an immutable quantity (see Strawson, *The Bounds of Sense*, p. 38). For a summary of Fichte's premises, see C. C. Everett, *Science of Knowledge: A Critical Exposition* (Chicago, 1892), pp. 77–84.
119. Ibid., p. 192.
120. Ibid., p. 273.
121. *Note Books*, p. 112.
123. He writes in the same essay, "Time and Space are not external, but internal entities . . . they are mere forms of man's spiritual being, under which his thinking nature is constituted to act" (pp. 25–26). See also Harrold, *Carlyle and German Thought*, p. 90.
125. Lectures, p. 205.
127. Epigraph opposite page one of the prefaces to Kant's *Theory of Ethics*.
as a designation for all serious prose writers: "It was in Fichte's conception of the nature of the scholar . . . that Carlyle found, or thought he found, his conception of the Hero as Man of Letters" (Shine, "Carlyle and the German Philosophy Problem," p. 822).

133. Harrold, Carlyle and German Thought, p. 192.
135. Transcendentalism made possible, so Fichte said in Science of Knowledge, "a peace such as I never knew before"; for "if it lost the help that comes from the a posteriori argument, it escaped the difficulties that are involved in this . . ." (p. 8). "God is practically recognized as an ideal, and may thus be seen in absolute beauty and completeness. One can doubt His reality, and his perfection no more than one can doubt his own being" (p. 273).
137. According to Masson, the tranquility of the transcendentalist position was usually reasoned to in the following manner: "If the world of space, time, and history is but a fabrication of our present thinking, a phantasmagory of the present human spirit, what does it matter how much our present thoughts may change, or how many aeons of so-called time and imagined processes and marches of events we may find it necessary to throw into our phantasmagory?" (Carlyle Personally and in His Writings, p. 75).
138. Orthodox "religion represents . . . the Good as infinitely . . . different from the Evil, but sets them in a state of hostility (as in Heaven and Hell)—Art likewise admits and inculcates this quite infinite difference; but without hostility, with peacefulness. . . . In this way is Goethe's morality to be considered as a higher (apart from its comprehensiveness, nay universality) than has hitherto been promulgated" (Note Books, p. 204).
139. See his comments in a letter to John, 24 October 1826, Letters, I, 9. The four volumes appeared at the same time as his translation of Wilhelm Meister's Travels, i.e., January 1827.
140. For a full exposition of the transcendental elements in these essays, see below, pp. 160, 166-68, 173.
141. See especially GR, I, 18-17, 264-66; II, 18-19, 126-28.
142. Letters, I, 18.
143. "There is just one man unhappy: he who is possessed by some idea which he cannot convert into action, or still more which restrains or withdraws him from action" (excerpt from Goethe recorded by Carlyle in his journal, 7 December 1826; see Froude, First Forty Years, I, 384).
144. "In 1825-1826 his own doubts were settled . . . and he emerged, with Goethe and Schiller, upon an ethical and aesthetic approach to German transcendentalism" (Shine, Unfinished History of German Literature, p. 90).
145. Carlyle Personally and in His Writings, pp. 62-63.
146. At this time his meditations were those of a convinced Kantian; he condemns Herder as a materialist, Pope as a pedagogue, and says: "Yes, it is true. The decisions of reason (Vernunft) are superior to those of understanding (Verstand)" (journal entries for December 1826, in Froude, First Forty
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Years, I, 386-87). See also Shine, Unfinished History of German Literature: "By 1827 . . . he had found—largely through the Germans—much of the ethical aesthetic, philosophical, religious, and historiographical insight that was to make him an important figure in his generation. The German writings, he firmly believed, had led him out of his early darkness and had literally saved his life. And missionary that Carlyle essentially was, he proceeded in his attempt to show the light to others" (p. xxiv).

147. In addition to W. S. Johnson's early study (cited below, p. 113), two recent works include criticism of Wotton: G. B. Tennyson's Sartor Called Resartus (1965) and A. LaValley's Carlyle and the Idea of the Modern (1968). Neither isolates the full range of transcendental borrowings in the novel, but, rather, concentrates on its stylistic and autobiographical elements.

148. First Forty years, I, 385.

149. Wotton Reinfred, in Last Words of Thomas Carlyle, ed. R. Preuss, p. 2. W. S. Johnson declares that Wotton is interesting "if for no other reason . . . as evidence of Carlyle's entire unfitness for fiction" (Thomas Carlyle: A Study of His Literary Apprenticeship, 1814-1831, p. 77).

150. Wotton, p. 51.
151. Ibid., p. 55.
152. Ibid., p. 59.
153. Ibid., p. 60.
154. Ibid.
155. Ibid., pp. 69-70. His companion seconds their renunciation of external happiness: "We would have a paradise of spontaneous pleasures; forgetting that in such a paradise the dullest spirit would and must grow wearied, nay, in time unspeakably wretched" (p. 68).
156. Ibid., p. 63.
157. Ibid., p. 61.
158. Ibid.
159. Carlyle was especially fond of that aspect of poetic vision; he quotes Prospero's remark that we "are such stuff as dreams are made on" on some five separate occasions in his collected essays.
160. Wotton, pp. 96, 98.
161. He restates the Kantian concept of time and space at the end of another long paean to the poet: "Time and space are modes not things; forms of our mind, not existences without us; the shapes in which the unseen bodies itself forth to our mortal sense; if we were not, they also would cease to be" (p. 97). See also Essays, II, 25-26.
162. Wotton, p. 98. On this point, G. B. Tennyson agrees that for the rest of Carlyle's life "poetry and German philosophy" were linked in his mind (Sartor Called Resartus, p. 90). Tennyson also discusses Carlyle's dismissal of systematic differences between Goethe's "open secret" and Fichte's "Divine Idea," and his insistence that the legitimate poet is he who sees and deciphers spiritual truth behind phenomena (pp. 91-92).
164. A view that afterward prevented Carlyle from sympathizing with the
work of artists whose Weltanschauung, however moral, was essentially pessimistic.

165. According to a letter of 4 June 1827, he ceased work on the novel in May of that year (Letters, I, 62).

166. They were published mostly in Fraser's Magazine and the Edinburgh, Foreign, and Foreign Quarterly reviews.

167. For a more detailed discussion of the transcendental elements in these essays, see below, pp. 158-76.


169. See Carlyle's letter of December 1829 on this subject in his correspondence with Goethe (Goethe Letters, p. 163).


171. Parallels with A Tale of a Tub and Tristram Shandy suggest themselves as well.

172. Carlyle's style in Sartor compares closely with that of Richter: "abounding, without measure, in obscure allusions, in the most twisted phraseology; perplexed into endless entanglements and dislocations, parenthesis within parenthesis; not forgetting elisions, sudden whirls, quips, conceits and all manner of inexplicable crotchets: the whole moving on in the gayest manner, yet nowise in what seem military lines, but rather in huge, parti-coloured mob-masses" (Carlyle on Richter's style, Essays, II, 98).

173. As Cazamian puts it: "His imagination clothed with life the abstract conclusions of Kant, developing from the doctrine of the subjectivity of sensory images a poetic vision of the universe" (Carlyle, p. 35). In that sense, Sartor is the finished portrait for which Wotton was the sketch.

174. SR, p. 43.

175. Ibid., p. 212.

176. In a letter of December 1841, George Eliot admires the "solid, original" character of Carlyle's spirituality: "His soul is a shrine of the brightest and purest philanthropy, kindled by the coal of gratitude and devotion to the Author of all things. I should observe that he is not 'orthodox'" (Letters, ed. G. S. Haight, I, 123). David Masson emphasizes Carlyle's unyielding opposition to formal Christianity: see Carlyle Personally and in His Writings, pp. 85-83; also p. 86. Often Carlyle was patronizing in his attitude toward orthodox principles: see Espinasse, Literary Recollections, p. 199; and Allingham, A Diary, p. 217. Hugh Walker remarks as well upon Carlyle's independence of dogma, despite his being "one of the most religious men" ("The German Influence: Thomas Carlyle," p. 76). J. Tulloch speaks of the permanence and strength of Carlyle's "peculiar, personal" faith: see "Thomas Carlyle as a Religious Teacher," in Movements of Religious Thought in Britain, p. 202.

177. Espinasse, Literary Recollections, p. 196.

178. See Allingham, A Diary, pp. 203, 256, 264, 273. On the question of the maintenance of his beliefs, Cazamian concludes that Carlyle "always conceived of [the German idealists] primarily as transcendentalists, as men whose reflection bore upon the supreme realities, transcending the field of sensible appearances. The transcendental movement . . . was to be the constant rhythm of his thinking, the scheme of his doctrine" (Carlyle, p. 105).
179. Despite Froude’s temperamental opposition to mysticism, even he grudgingly agrees that this was the case with Carlyle (H. Paul, *The Life of Froude*, p. 293). Hugh Walker sees Carlyle’s reliance on transcendentalism in the same light and sets it in contrast to Coleridge’s: “Carlyle valued German idealism because he found in it the basis of a religion still possible to men of the nineteenth century . . . while Coleridge uses the distinction [between *Verstand* and *Vernunft*] to bring back by an intellectual jugglery an impossible past, Carlyle uses it to build up a new world out of the ruins of the old” (“The German Influence: Thomas Carlyle,” p. 43).


181. Shakespeare’s *Tempest* and Goethe’s *Faust* seemed to him to convey best this mystery (*SR*, pp. 212-14). For a time at least, Carlyle appears to have enjoyed his own reputation as a mystic. He wrote to Eckerman in December 1828: “I mean to write on Novalis, and not in the style of mockery, but in the true ‘mystic vein’ which is thought to be peculiar to me. For you must know that I pass here generally enough for a ‘Mystic’ or man half-drowned in the abysses of German speculation: which, considering everything, is all, in my opinion, exactly as it should be” (*New Letters of Thomas Carlyle to Eckermann*, ed. W. Speck, pp. 4-5).

182. “The Germany of Kant, Fichte and Goethe . . . and the mighty stream of philosophical doctrine upon which these masters launched Carlyle, in giving a new depth to his ideas, gave a new depth to the intellectual life of England, and brought about one of the principal transitions in the history of British thought” (Cazamian, *Carlyle*, p. 55).

183. In 1835, three years before the British hard-cover edition appeared.

184. Carlyle himself believed that “Emerson had, in the first instance, taken his system out of ‘Sartor’ and others of my writings, but he worked it out in a way of his own” (Duffy, *Conversations with Carlyle*, p. 93). In Emerson’s case, Platonic and Christian antecedents (imperfect actuality, the deceitfulness of this world, and so on) have also to be considered. Consult the appendix for a comparison of the essay “Nature” and *Sartor*.

185. See F. Roe, *Victorian Prose*, p. 3. With more humor than Froude, Whitman also blames most of Carlyle’s contrariety on dyspepsia: It “is to be traced in every page, and now and then fills the page . . . behind the tally of genius and morals stands the stomach, and gives a sort of casting vote” (“Death of Carlyle,” in *Essays from the Critic*, p. 32).


187. “Ralph Waldo Emerson,” in *Brief Literary Criticisms*, pp. 238-39. On the question of his impact and popularity, David Masson remarks: “In and from 1840 Carlyle’s name was running like wildfire through the British Islands and through English-speaking America: there was the utmost avidity for his books especially among the young men; phrases from them were in all the younger men’s mouths and were affecting the public speech” (Carlyle **Personally and in His Writings**, p. 67). With his successful adaptation of German idealism, he appeared to his readers to have “knocked out his window from the blind wall of his century” (R. H. Horne, quoted in K. Tillotson, *Novels of the Eighteen Forties*, p. 151).

188. *Essays of George Eliot*, pp. 219-14. High praise indeed from a woman who knew full well that Carlyle refused, categorically, to read her novels. Ac-
cording to a letter from Mary Sibree, Miss Eliot's own religious position in 1843 had been partly determined by Carlyle's teachings: "She . . . seemed to be leaning to the doctrine of Carlyle and Emerson when she remarked that she . . . considered herself a revelation of the mind of the Deity" (Letters, I, 162n). Another letter—from Miss Eliot to Harriet Beecher Stowe in July 1869—indicates her belief in Goethe's "open secret" (Letters, V, 49).

189. Essays, Theological and Philosophical, I, 393.

190. Essays, I, 388. See also Neff on Carlyle as one of the two poles of nineteenth-century thought (Carlyle and Mill, pp. 184–200).


193. See letter from Eckermann of 6 December 1830 and Carlyle's reply of 22 January 1831, in which he states his intention to translate Faust (Goethe Letters, p. 106). Also discussed in New Letters of Thomas Carlyle to Eckermann. This later edition includes Carlyle's letter of 6 May 1834, in which he tells Eckermann that he can no longer consider such a feat of translation among his literary plans (p. 9).

194. See his Punch review of 1850 and his criticism of the French Revolution in the Times for August 1837, as quoted in K. Tilloston's Novels of the Eighteen Forties, pp. 79n, 153n. Carlyle found Thackeray's novels, particularly Vanity Fair, far less pleasant reading than Dickens's: Amy Cruse, in her valuable study The Victorians and Their Books, pp. 261–62, paints an amusing picture of Carlyle's reaction to the "terrible cynicism" of Vanity Fair.

195. Mrs. Tilloston remarks: "He considered it 'indispensable' to try out The Chimes on Carlyle before publication, dedicated Hard Times to him, and long before he wrote Tale of Two Cities was reading 'that wonderful book,' The French Revolution, 'for the 500th time'" (Novels of the Eighteen Forties, p. 153).

196. For Browning's comments on the death of Carlyle, see entry for March 1881, in Allingham, A Diary, pp. 310–11.

197. The plaque still hangs on the wall of Carlyle's attic study in Cheyne Row. His popularity among writers of fiction is not so inexplicable as it may seem. Despite occasional contemporary charges of "didacticism," Mrs. Tilloston concludes that Carlyle's insistence upon the religious orientation of literature was welcomed by most serious-minded novelists: "The 'novel proper' as distinct from the novel as the product of an 'amusement-industry' was helped by Carlyle to a status in literature and life which it has hardly lost" (Novels of the Eighteen Forties, p. 156). Partly because of Carlyle, novelists were once more led to acknowledge religion "as a powerful element in all life—in art, in speculation, in every intellectual growth. . . . Many saw that no human product, least of all literature, can be divorced from religion" (J. Tulloch, Movement of Religious Thought in Britain, pp. 194–95).


201. Letter of 1 October 1833, in Froude, First Forty Years, I, 385–86.