

CHAPTER XI

Contrasting Identities of the Poet: Matthew Arnold and Thomas Carlyle

It is the critical cast of mind that separates Arnold distinctively from his more illustrious contemporaries Tennyson and Browning. It is a sustained self profiting quest to discover what poetry in his age should be. Arnold's systematic criticism is in contradistinction to Tennyson's unsystematic, hardly a paragraph of critique and Browning's one noteworthy essay. Arnold's poetics is a remarkable phenomenon that vibrates and stirs itself with the dialectic of 'quietness' and 'excitement'; the teleology of his art is a combination of the aesthetic and the ethical that demands from the poet a paradoxical detachment with participation, a passionate austerity and contemplative identification and reconciliation to the currents of life.

The poet's attention should be fixed upon excellent models; the subject must be human actions – actions that appeal to elementary feelings – independent of time. The Greeks had the choice of 'great action' and made it control and govern the structure of the poem. He must cull 'actions' that possess an inherent interest. The reasons that Arnold puts forth to justify the exclusion of "Empedocles on Etna" from his collection of poems (1853) is quite pertinent. The poet should write to strengthen the individual. Poetry must *do* something for the reader and thereby for the society in which the poet is placed. It must cure him and the society of the paralysis that has set in modern times - the paralysis resulting from the mind which has a sense of being divided within itself. The poem "Empedocles on Etna" is unrelieved by incident, hope or resistance. (Later he raised the same question about the effect of "The Scholar-Gipsy" on the reader, but he perhaps felt that it was certainly more positive than "Empedocles". This crisis, in some form or another, troubled Arnold throughout.) The poet is antagonistic to self-pity, enervation and immobilisation that are caused by a mind divided against itself. Empedocles is convicted of mental spasm in the *Preface*. It was a malady from which

the Spasmodics, as their name signifies, suffered too – a too morbid preoccupation with thought, to the neglect of action. Representation to be poetical, in the aesthetics of Arnold, needs to interest, ‘inspire and rejoice the reader’(Jones 1919:357); it must ‘convey a charm, and infuse delight’. (ibid) To Arnold, therefore, as to Aristotle, the joy that poetry imparts is dependent on its subject. So the business of the poets, he said,

‘is not to praise their age, but to afford to their men who live in it the highest pleasure which they are capable of feeling. If asked to afford this by means of subjects drawn from the age itself, they ask what special fitness the present age has for supplying them: they are told that it is an era of progress, an age commissioned to carry out the great ideas of industrial development and social amelioration. They reply that with all this they can do nothing; that the elements they need for the exercise of their art are great actions, calculated powerfully and delightfully to affect what is permanent in the human soul.’ (372-3)

This is an important statement on Arnold’s concept of the poet. Passing actions possess so much that is of passing value that the Greeks wisely left them for the comic poet to treat. The poet must choose actions that please always and please all; he should select actions of such nature that ‘most powerfully appeal to those elementary feelings which are independent of time’. (360) The poet’s art aims higher: it is cathartic. The poet cannot conceal the ugliness of the substance of his art in the event of a compromise with subject that is sought to be compensated by rhetorical embellishment. The Greeks understood this better than we do. The poetical character of the action in itself was their first consideration; ‘with us, attention is fixed mainly on the value of the separate thoughts and images which occur in the treatment of an action. They regarded the whole; we regard the parts. With them action predominated over the expression of it; with us, the expression predominates over the action. Not that they failed in expression, or were inattentive to it; on the contrary, they are the highest models of expression, the unapproached masters of the *grand style*: but their expression is so excellent because it is so admirably kept in its right degree of prominence; because it is so simple and so

well subordinated; because it draws its force directly from the pregnancy of the matter which it conveys.' (362) So for the Arnoldian poet, expression is subservient to the excellence of action. The 'total impression' or the *symmetria prisca* is the poet's prime concern – 'Who saw life steadily, and saw it whole;' ("To a Friend" 12) His art should not influence in parts but should impact as a whole. However, it should not be a plain forcible inevitable whole but should be guided by a deep internal law of development to a necessary end. Certain dimness and indistinctness may impair the impression but a vigorous action would have everything converging upon it. He has to develop situations stroke by stroke, without wasting a word and freakishly throwing in a sentiment.

...modern poetry can only subsist by its *contents*: by becoming a complete magister vitae as the poetry of the ancients did: by including as theirs did, religion with poetry, instead of existing as poetry only, and leaving religious wants to be supplied by the Christian religion, as a power existing independent of the poetical power. But the language, style, and general proceedings of a poetry which has such an immense task to perform, must be very plain direct and severe: and it must not lose itself in parts and episodes and ornamental work, but must press forward to the whole. (Stange 1967:35)

The true poet sees even the segments of life in its totality; it is a unified vision where the poet penetrates into the essential, underlying realities that help him to conjure a comprehensive vision.

...- he must life's movement tell!

The thread which binds it all in one,

And not its separate parts alone. ("Epilogue to Lessing's Laocoon" 140-3)

Clearly, Arnold is here under the spell of Goethe who possesses the double notion of seeing the whole and seeing things as a whole.

Immer strebe zum Ganzen, und Kannst du selber

Kein Ganzes

Werden, als dienendes Glied schliess an ein

Ganzes dich an.

[Aspire always toward the whole, and if you are unable to become a whole, attach yourself, as a serviceable member, to a whole.] (Stange 1967:33)

The Arnoldian poet never overlooks the value of imagination as the living power and prime agent of all human perception. He stresses the imaginative reason. Science and the scientific understanding of the world 'dehumanise'. Science, does not, as Arnold was to declare later, present us the 'countenance' and 'expression'. But a distortion of the central truth about the creative imagination had brought about a confusion and the emphasis had come to be laid on art as 'a true allegory of the state of one's own mind in a representative history' (Jones 1919:365). This is something akin to the confusion resulting from a reliance on the *inner voice* against which Eliot had to protest later. Arnold realised that even Goethe's *Faust* was remembered more for its wonderful local felicities of expression (texture) than for its structure. The poet, for Arnold, must learn from the Greeks to subordinate expression to construction. Keats and Shakespeare come in for criticism as bad models for the younger poets to imitate. Shakespeare occurs to him as one – 'a name never to be mentioned without reverence' (366). For he 'chose excellent subjects', 'had no theory of choosing subjects of present import' (367), finding 'his best in past times'(ibid): and 'knew well what constituted a poetical action'(367), - all of which fitted in well with Arnold's concept of the poet.

Others abide our question. Thou art free,
We ask and ask – Thou smilest and art still,
Out-topping knowledge. ("Shakespeare" 1-3)

But Shakespeare has, what appals Ben Jonson too, such an unbridled expression, such a gift of happy phrase, that he is unable to say a thing plainly, even when the press of the action demands the very directest language. Arnold's poet should know 'how unspeakably superior is the affect of the one moral impression left by a great action treated as a whole, to the effect produced by the most striking single thought or by the

happiest image'.(Jones 1919:371) He will cultivate, too, a respect for 'the wholesome regulative laws of poetry' (375) which were threatened by 'their eternal enemy, Caprice'(ibid) Towards the close of the preface after quoting Goethe about two kinds of dilettanti: 'he who neglects the indispensable mechanical part, and thinks he has done enough if he shows spirituality and feeling; and he who seeks to arrive at poetry merely by mechanism, in which he can acquire an artisan's readiness, and is without soul and matter'(374) – he says he would prefer to be the second kind since the first seems to do most harm to art.

The best poetry, Arnold professed, was a criticism of life under the conditions fixed for such a criticism by the laws of poetic truth and poetic beauty. The core of poetry should be strong; the poet should have for his subject some weighty idea or substantial 'action' which must be accompanied by a sense of *architectonice*. He acknowledges the unity of form and content; form is the container where the poet can pour the content. In Wordsworth, the profound truth of subject and profound truth of execution are balanced – the congruity between conception and expression, which is the result of the 'trueness' in the poet's vocation. Poetry is an interpretation of life as the poet experiences and knows it, bringing into play his intellect and mind matured by experience and reading. Poetry is not, however, merely an intellectual exercise; it is subject to the laws of poetic truth and beauty. These laws insist on one condition: the poet's treatment of life. Indeed the quality of 'high seriousness' comes out of the deepest sincerity with which the poet *feels* his subject. This accent on 'high seriousness' can be found in the poetry of Dante, Homer and Milton; this is what gives their poetry its power. The sincerity of the poet comes from his speaking from the depths of his soul, and this sincerity, which gives birth to this phenomenon, should be consistent, and be found uniformly through a poem. It is the poet's commitment which gives an authentic signal of an order of life, a vision of life, behind the verbal. Aristotle meant by *Spoudaiotes* a concern with the depths and heights of our being. In fact, the poet is more extraordinarily endowed than other men,

The poet to whose mighty heart

Heaven doth a quicker pulse impart,
Subdues that energy to scan
Not his own course, but that of man. ("Resignation" 144-47)

The poet cannot rest content with a romantic self-absorption for that would render his art weak much in the same way Keats got his art enervated. With the quick impulse within, the poet experiences the strong and the beautiful forces of life and yet grows a detachment that whets his aesthetic appetite. It is the aesthetic disinterestedness. The poet should not stray into more than one sense for that precludes a disciplined accomplishment. Here Stange makes a perceptive observation: 'In "The Strayed Reveller" the implications of the centaurs are not laboured, but the two aspects of these myths express what Arnold felt to be a central truth about poetry and the poet's task. Only the gods can see events on earth without being involved in them or feeling their painful consequences. For the artist there is no escape from the human lot; it is the cost of his humanity that he must become what he sings. But as Arnold came to see the problem for the poet of his time, it was primarily one of striking a balance between involvement and removal or put another way of finding the razor-edge of sympathetic detachment.' (1967:26) He is the artist who *contains* and *removes* himself from life's profuse activity. Eschewing romantic excess, the poet has the 'stream of life's majestic whole' ("Epilogue to Lessing's Laocoon" 187) mirrored on the soul. He manifests an untiring attendance on life's activity with the dual aim of combination and transcendence. He has the 'fine balance'.

... their eye
Drinks up delighted ecstasy,
And its deep-toned, melodious voice
For ever makes their ear rejoice.
They speak! the happiness divine
They feel, runs o'er in every line;
Its spell is round them like a shower –
It gives them pathos, gives them power. (194-200)

The poet is expected to exude the 'energy' through each curve and angle of his art; the accent is on objectivity and 'steadiness' with the imperative of expressing *joy* standing out as the essential function of his art. He,

Sees his strong thought in fiery flood
Roll through the heaving multitude;
Exults – yet for no moment's space
Enviest the all-regarded place. ("Resignation" 155-59)

However, the poet, exulting in the "heaving multitude", cannot afford to stand alone. He cannot say: 'I am alone.' ("Resignation" 169) Here one can draw parallel with Gibran's poet (*A Poet's Voice*) who believes in the extension of the self. In a direct communication with the outer world lies the enrichment of the inner self.

Heaven fills my lamp with oil and I place it at my window to direct the stranger through the dark. I do all these things because I live in them; and if destiny should tie my hands and prevent me from so doing, then death would be my only desire. For I am a poet, and if I cannot give, I shall refuse to receive. (Sherfan 1997: 242)

Arnold's poet mingles with the crowd; he sees the gentle stir of birth; he has the murmur of a thousand years in his ears; with a Sophoclean breadth of vision he perceives life as a continuous whole which does not cease and 'whose secret is not joy, but peace' ("Resignation" 192). Amidst "lurid flow" and "insane distress" he attaches things to nature and to the whole. In fact Clough's poet who can 'tell the purport of their pain' echoes him.

And what our silly joys contain;
In lasting lineaments pourtray
The substance of the shadowy day;
Our real and inner deeds rehearse,
And make our meaning clear in verse: (Ghosh 2000: 74)

The poet achieves a superior self and a 'stillness' – a stillness that the moonlight has, a stillness that the bee has while sucking honey from the chosen flower, a stillness that a wisdom-fed soul possesses. He is free from the accidents of the weary kingdom of time, imparting a new sense to men and making them find a 'world' within their world. With his innate power,

He read each wound, each weakness clear;
And stuck his finger on the place,
And said: *Thou ailest here, and here!* ("Memorial Verses" 20-3)

So Goethe emerges as the clearest and largest and the most helpful thinker of modern times – "physician of the iron age"(17). This echoes Sri Aurobindo:

A perfect face amid barbarian faces,
A perfect voice of sweet and serious rhyme,
Traveller with calm, inimitable paces,
Critic with judgment absolute to all time,
A complete strength when men were maimed and weak,
German obscured the spirit of a Greek. ("Goethe" 1994:26)

As a true poet he bears a proximity to Truth; he is the gifted soul in whose hands God has placed a viola to soothe the spirit and bring his fellow men close to life and the beauty of life. In the background of a soul-numbing age, Arnold accords Wordsworth a similar status.

He too upon a wintry clime
Had fallen – on this iron time
Of doubts, disputes, distractions, fears.
He found us when the age had bound
Our souls in its benumbing round;
He spoke, and loosed our heart in tears.

("Memorial Verses" 42-47)

He understands the real value of 'tears' (Arnold, it may be observed, harbours a complaint against the Carthusian monks). Through his sensibility he combines light, wisdom, and freedom, evoking a power that makes the hitherto worn-out smile break forth with the freshness of a sun-lit field. He can assume the role of the father who comforts the weeping child in Whitman's "On the Beach at Night". By his powers of receptivity he can grasp reality in all its grandeur, doling out instalments of knowledge to the 'inconsummate' community. Gifted with the power that challenges the wintry clime, he inheres the wonder and the bloom of the world with a vision and 'healing power'.

So poetry, as criticism of life would suggest that the poet's art is an interpretation and a healing representation of life. Disparaging Dryden and Pope as 'claims of our prose', Arnold disclaims poetry that is conceived and composed in wits for poetry that is conceived and composed in soul should be the teleology of the poet's creative abilities. The soul here is not the Christian soul but as Wellek points out is something like the German *Gemüt*, the heart. (1983:167) The true poet needs to provide the spiritual healing and consolation without the overdose of intellect. As poets, Dryden and Pope lose the imaginative life of the soul as their criticism of life is not a 'poetic criticism'; their application of ideas to life may be powerful but it is not poetical. It is the 'art' that proceeds from ratiocination, antithesis and other intellectual devices. Mere clever craftsmanship cannot afford the desired satisfaction to Arnold – it falls short of genuine poetry. Actually, Arnold values many poets and among them his greatest favourites, Wordsworth and Goethe, for their consoling, 'healing power', for the 'joy' and even the optimism they radiate. Leopardi whom Arnold admired highly, loses out against Wordsworth and Goethe because of his pessimism and Coleridge is criticised for his lack of joy, which seems to Arnold something unnatural and shocking. The emphasis on 'joy', as opposed to pleasure, surely derives from Wordsworth (though Arnold also quotes Schiller), as the idea of healing power (*vis medicatrix*) comes from Keble's *Lectures*. The recurrent stress on "joy" which is clarified by his speaking poetry as addressed to the "great primary human affection", to "the elementary part of our nature", seems to refute an interpretation of "high seriousness" as churchyard

solemnity.' (165) High seriousness and the style in which it is clothed cannot be separated and the best way to define poetry is not to do it in the prose of the critic, but to recognise it by feeling it in the verse of the master. Hence the touchstones; and the touchstones have all the characteristics one would expect in Arnold's poet – a solemnity, a sublimity, a melancholy reflection on life and its transience, and a longing for the impossible. Arnold's 'The Study of Poetry' thus anticipates I.A. Richards's view of the saving power of poetry, its capacity to mould our aesthetic responses and impulses, and F.R. Leavis's emphatic conviction of the moral role of literature. Arnold was also aware, while speaking of the moral value of poetry, of the importance of the 'form' and the laws of 'poetic truth' and 'poetic beauty'. He recognised again the vitality and value of the cultural tradition and aesthetic heritage of civilised Europe as the background and measure of new aesthetic achievement. In this, as in many other things, he prepares the ground for Eliot and others.

So the poet's art should touch some profound truth in man. It is in this sense that poetry interprets and it is in this sense that 'life' is the subject of interpretation. Criticism of life signifies evaluation and feeling for sympathetic 'sharing in'; it cannot mean mere castigation and rational interpretation. What Arnold speaks about poetry, qualifies indirectly the abilities of the poet. He believes, as I.A. Richards does, that poetry is sure to take the place of religion for it is in poetry that the religious, moral, and aesthetic elements coalesce. It is the poet who through his unique art gives us a special kind of knowledge where thought and feeling are fused. Arnold further makes a distinction between 'facts' and 'ideas'. Religion is failing us for it has attached its emotion to historical facts and when the facts come to be questioned the very foundation is shaken. For poetry, the idea, what we would now call myth is everything; hence the greatness and importance of poetry.

It is in poetry which is a criticism of life that the spirit of our race will find its last source of consolation and stay. Arnold believes that poetry does not present life as it is, rather the poet adds something to it from his own noble nature, and this *something* contributes to his criticism of life. The poet gives in his poetry what he really and seriously believes in; he speaks from the depths of his soul, and speaks it beautifully

enough to create perennial source of joy. The poet's art must sustain and delight us as it answers the question, 'How to live?' by conforming to the ideals of truth and goodness. However, Arnold is against direct moral teaching, for he regards didactic poetry as the lowest. Without being simply didactic, the poet needs to be concrete and on this note he criticises Emerson for lacking concreteness and energy. The poet's style has to have order, elegance and charm; style, here, could mean something moral and ethical as well; style could be the expression of the nobility of the poet's character. The true poet's work is a work of synthesis and exposition; his creative being lies in being happily inspired by a certain intellectual and spiritual milieu and by a particular order of ideas. He presents the most effective and attractive combination without being analytical and exploratory, making his art survive as the interpretation of the natural world. He cultivates natural magic and moral profundity. The power of his art lies in drawing out an explanation of the 'mystery' of the universe, a strength that awakens in us a new, intimate and wonderfully profound sense of things along with our relation to them.

Poetry, for Arnold, has a twofold function: poetry as interpretation of the physiognomy and movement of the natural world, and poetry as the interpretation of the inward world of man's moral and spiritual nature. Arnold can only but reject the poetry of Omar Khayyam, which, he says, represents a revolt against moral ideas. Omar Khayyam does give an answer to the question, how to live, but the answer seems unpalatable to Arnold's moral sense. His *weltanschauung* disclaims any dogmatic philosophy but stands as the convincing principle that has morality touched with emotion.

So Arnold's concept of the poet owes its emergence to the dynamic awareness of the bristling issues of the day. The opposition between his romantic leanings and a conscious desire for objectivity stabbed him from within – the stabs that made him try his hand at epic and dramatic poetry. 'Arnold can be fairly called the critical voice of Victorian imagination. Like his early and late contemporaries, he was a great experimentalist in the quality of modern life: like them, he turned all his creative energy – and the style in which that creative energy functioned – upon the stresses with which

human nature in his time was struggling and dealt with them both literally (as current and real) and imaginatively (as metaphors of man's perennial condition for which the great literature of the past has genuine relevance).' (Buckler 1980:12-13) This critical status of Arnold shaped his concept of poet with maturity and systematic rigour. Also, his intellectuality, innate religious sense, love of heroic past, love of freedom and awareness of the need for order, the need to see life steadily and holistically, brought out deeper antinomies and contradictions. His conceptualisation of the Poet goes to resolve these tensions, even if that is without impeccable success. His poet is the *life* of this life and has triumphed over the ages despite their severity. His kingdom has no ending.

Whose natural insight can discern
What through experience others learn;
Who needs not love an power, to know
Love transient, power an unreal show;
Who treads at ease life's uncheer'd ways-
Him blame not, Fausta, rather praise!

("Resignation" 233-38)

It is this untainted "praise" that the true poet enjoys at the hands of Thomas Carlyle. He has a deep seated belief in the transformational aspect of literature – the shift in locus – that breaks fresh grounds and triggers a 'perception' which is at odds with the prevalent modes. Thinking and theorising in the same age with Arnold, he, however, generates a radicality that evinces a novelty in methods of 'seeing' and in empowering the artist with hitherto unrealised modes of knowledge. The Carlylean aesthetic is always moistened with a social conscience and it remains alive in the same way as the finite in universe is embosomed in the infinite in Tagorean aesthetic. The poet stands amidst the imperatives of historical development and yet is not covered for, the literary imagination serves as a saving grace.

The apocalyptic orchestrator and aesthetic organicist, Carlyle presses hard towards a new definition and an attitude that runs counter to conventional wisdom. Man suffers

the incarceration of a phoney, self-destructing myth that is rooted to the engineered misvision of the 'establishment', precluding as a consequence, the purgation of vision, which is thought to be the *de riguer* in his survival under the tyranny of 'facts'. On the contrary, true vision would have enabled him to discern his past, his present, his universe and his nature.

Carlyle harboured an exemplary fondness to conceptualise the poet in the Goethean sense.

The coldest sceptic, the most callous worldling, sees not the actual aspects of life more sharply than they are here delineated: the Nineteenth century stands before us, in all its contradiction and perplexity; barren, mean and baleful, as we have all known it; yet here no longer mean and barren, but enamelled into beauty in the poet's spirit; for its secret significance is laid open, and thus, as it were, the life-giving fire that slumbers in it is called forth, and flowers and foliage, as of old, are springing on its bleakest wilderness, and overmantling its sternest cliffs. (Hughes 1957:3)

A poem for him is a musical thought and the mind behind it has penetrated into the heart of the thing, disclosing the inmost mystery and the melody that lies hidden in it. It is the revelation of the harmony of coherence. The poet is the man of intuitive intellect 'which could apprehend and define the eternal essence embodied in the material shape; and the truth of his observation was of much higher importance than the strength of his rhetoric.'(Buckley 1981:38) He is with the touch of the 'universal' (having the infinitude in him), communicating an *Unedlichkeit*. Victor Hugo writes:

The realm of poetry is without bound. Beneath the real world there is an ideal world which reveals itself in all its brilliance to the eye of those accustomed by serious meditation to see in things more than just things. (Furst 1980:92)

The poet is the man with the clear eye and the loving heart with the special ability to penetrate into the mystery of Nature; a healthy mind that is at unity with itself. Wise and good, the poet needs to conquer his suffering and make it all his own. He is the man with a profound faith and the ignorant community stands to be indoctrinated by this faith. Here Carlyle's poet conforms to Schlegel's thesis that the artist is a higher organ of the soul. He is the 'point where the vital external forces of mankind converge, and where the inner forces are in most immediate effect'.(72)

In this respect, Dante and Shakespeare are Carlyle's models of Hero as Poet. Carlyle calls Dante the saint of poetry and says that he has been worshipped, and will continue to be worshipped as such, in times to come also. He is the voice of ten silent centuries, the singer of "a mystic unfathomable song". Dante was heroic in his suffering; he was heroic in his devotion, and in his capacity for being hard and careless. He had also the passion and sincerity which all great man have, and these qualities impart to his poems an inner music and inner harmony. Dante's greatness lies not in liberality, but fiery emphasis and depth. He is world-deep, not world-wide. "The very movements in Dante have something brief, swift, decisive, almost military. It is of the inmost essence of his genius, this sort of painting. The fiery, swift, Italian nature of the man, so silent, passionate, with its quick abrupt movements, its silent pale rages, speaks itself in these things." (Jones 1919:273) He possesses the gifts of sympathy and an essentially moral nature. This sympathy enables him to grasp the *essence* of things. The moral nature enables him to leave out the trivial and the worthless and seize upon the essentially noble and the worthwhile. From this arises the power of his immortal work. Dante's intensity gives him the intellectual insight which makes a great painter as well as a great reasoner in verse. "For rigour, earnestness and depth, he is not to be paralleled in the modern world; to seek his parallel we must go to the Hebrew Bible, and live with the antique Prophets there."(275) In fact Carlyle's transcendentalism, his faith in a divine world of ideas, is also seen in his appraisal of Dante as one who had a clear and intense perception of the other world, firmly and sincerely believed in its reality, and hence the vividness of his presentation of it.

With Shakespeare also we have the essential qualities of a hero. He is a poet who is divinely inspired with an intellectual greatness, a rare power of vision, keen insight, felicity of thought, understanding, sympathy, a calm and tranquil soul, and joyous strength. He could impose form and order on his chaotic material with the keen insight and the inner light that was in him.

Perfect, more perfect than any other man, we may call Shakespeare in this : he discerns, knows as by instinct, what conditions he works under, what his materials are, what his own force and its relation to them is: It is not a transitory glance of insight that will suffice : it is deliberate illumination of the whole matter; it is a calmly seeing eye, a great intellect in short. (285)

Like a God he said, "Let there be light"(286), and there was light; order was thus imposed on disorder, and clear and perfect plays took shape. The divine light within illumined the dark and the chaotic. Endowed with the penetrating eye, he could see the inner harmony which exists in the soul of men.

You can laugh over them, you can weep over them; you can in some way or other genially relate yourself to them; - you can, at least, hold your peace about them, turn away your own and others face from them. At bottom, it is the Poet's first gift, as it is all men's that have intellect enough. He will be a Poet if he have: a Poet in word; or failing that, perhaps still better, a Poet in act. Whether he write at all; and if so, whether in prose or in verse, will depend on accidents, who knows on what extremely trivial accidents. But the faculty which enables him to discern the inner of things, and the harmony that dwells there, is not the result of habits or accidents, but the gift of Nature herself; the primary outfit for a Heroic Man in what sort soever. (287)

He enjoys the intellectual and moral superiority that every true poet enjoys. Bestowed with an 'unconscious intellect', he sheds new light on human nature and increases our knowledge of the true nature of man and of the world. Under the influence of German philosophers Carlyle lauded the sovereignty of the unconscious in all literary, moral and political activity and held that the immortal works of art are created and not manufactured in the dark mysterious depths of the unconscious. In fact the true poet's aesthetics manifests an awareness of the wholeness of things, the organic unity. His art exhibits the ability to look upon that real world itself with holier eyes, rendering a solemn temple where the spirit of Beauty dwells with new emblems that await worship. 'In such spirit, and with an eye that takes in all provinces of human thought, feeling and activity, does the Poet stand forth as the true prophet of his time; victorious over its contradiction, possessor of its wealth; embodying the nobleness of the past into a new whole, into a new vital nobleness for the present and the future. Antique nobleness in all kinds, yet worn with *new clearness*; the spirit of it is preserved and again revealed in shape, when the former shape and vesture had become old (as vestures do), and was dead and cast forth.' (Hughes 1957:9) (italics is mine)

This new clearness makes the poet's art draw our attention to things that we might otherwise have missed.

...What's it all about?

To be passed over, despised? or dwelt upon,

Wondered at? oh, this last of course! – you say.

But why not do as well as say, – paint these

Just as they are, careless what comes of it?

God's works – paint anyone, and count it crime

To let a truth slip. Don't object, "His works

Are here already; nature is complete:

To let a truth slip. Don't object, "His works

Are here already; nature is complete:

Suppose you reproduce her – (which you can't)

There's no advantage ! you must beat her, then."

First when we see them painted, things we have passed

Perhaps a hundred times nor cared to see;

And so they are better, painted – better to us,

Which is the same thing.

("Fra Lippo Lippi", 290-304)

Fra Lippo Lippi simply could not understand how it was possible for anybody to ignore the beauty, wonder, the power and shapes of things and their colour, light, shades, changes and surprises all of which had been made by God. He believes that an artist should paint any of God's works, and consider it a crime to allow any truth to slip from him. It is wrong to raise an objection and say that since God's works are already there, there is no need to reproduce Nature. An artist paints the sights and scenes of Nature which most people are blind to and the artist is pledged to make people conscious of those sights to which they had been indifferent before. So like the true poet, Shakespeare's works are grounded in Nature's laws, and are fully in accordance with Truth. His tranquillity and spiritual calm renders him superior to Dante. Despite the inevitable arrowheads of suffering, laughter flows out of him in floods and is beautiful like sunshine on the deep sea. So if Dante was the musical priest of Middle-age Catholicism, Shakespeare was the musical priest of true Catholicism, of the universal church of the future and of all times. His works reveal the thousand-fold hidden beauty and divineness of Nature. He churns out a universal Psalm. Being unconscious of his own intellect he is a more successful prophet than Mohammad who was over-conscious of his own prophethood. He is the priest of mankind with the universal appeal as sincere and strong as Homer and Aeschylus. A Great Man is always a force of nature and his noblest words and action arise not from his own conscious self, but from the deep mysterious forces of nature at work within him. Shakespeare, as the true poet-hero, makes the grade quite easily.

In an almost Vedic spirit, averse to the dichotomy between the Poet and the philosopher, Carlyle finds the whole world mirrored in the poet's head. Novalis, in a similar strain, combines the poet and the philosopher for a disjunction of these two

selves is symptomatic of a febrile constitution. The rag-fair of the world with its freneticism, discord and desperation, lies to remain transmuted into a wise universe of belief, melody and reverence, disclosing in the transfiguration a plot of holiness and divinity. The poet does it heroically for he struggles and endures in the unabated misery of the existential arc. This understanding of the poet of the secrecy of the age finds integrated to the aesthetic whole in the Carlylean aesthetic. His ability is rooted in kneading the predominant currents of his era. True poets interpret facts and these facts are communicated 'musically'. They manifest a gleam of zeal and love of truth looking through the pestilent jungle of superstition. Goethe, Carlyle's true poet, emanates as the 'Uniter, and victorious Reconciler of the distracted, clashing elements of the most distracted and divided age that the world has witnessed since the introduction of the Christianity...' (Hughes 1957:9) So in Dickens he heard the real music of the genuine kind. He is the man with the gift of articulate pictorial utterance and with 'eyes', 'soul' and 'heart'. His concept of beauty entails 'harmony' and a sense of 'wholeness'. For instance, Schiller seemed a very worthy character for Carlyle with his pursuit of the beautiful. He represented it in suitable forms accompanied by a diffusion of feelings arising from it. Poet, the high-priest, bodies forth some glimpse of that unspeakable Beauty and in one or the other degree it becomes his afflatus. The Beautiful is higher than the Good and includes in it the Good.

For Carlyle, although the prophet seizes the moral side of things and the Poet the aesthetic side, these two provinces run into another and cannot be disjoined. The Carlylean aesthetic integrates intellect and morality where a great poet is a great man with a clearly developed character, insight, courage and real applicable force of head and heart, manifesting no haughtiness for courage, speculation and plausible show of force. He is the 'Able Man'. This is something that Carlyle learns in the first place from Fichte, with his idea of the 'learned man' as the interpreter of the Ideal to the mass of men unable to discern it for themselves. Here, the poet is Schlegel's 'mediator' who 'perceives the divine in himself, and who self-destructively surrenders his self in order to proclaim and communicate this divine perception, and to present it to all mankind in ethos and action, in words and works'. (Furst 1980:71) The Hero performs the traditional role of the Priest - the interpreter of God's will to man.. The Priest himself is

no longer available for this role, for Carlyle never recovered his faith in orthodox Christianity. But the hero, in any case, is a broader concept than the Priest. In *Sartor Resartus* he is still primarily the writer and teacher, as he is in Fichte; but he can also be the king and Carlyle recognises him in still other roles in which the Hero as Poet assumes special significance. But his essence is still to be the messenger of the divine to men. Novalis observes: 'Only an artist can divine the meaning of life'. (70) He has insight into the ultimate spiritual reality to which most men are blind, and all good men in a good society – will sense the fact, following him willingly, because only in conformity to the dictates of that ultimate spiritual reality does freedom lie.

For both Arnold and Carlyle, the poet enjoys a superiority that *distinguishes*, and yet the *distinctness* inhouses the power to *communicate*. The poet for them works in contrasting aesthetics of creation with differing perspective and vision; but the points of similarity lies in the 'extraordinariness' with which they view life and the 'competence' with which they comprehend and interpret what vibrates and irradiates them from within. Both emphasise the uniqueness of the creative self that comes to have a more insightful and comprehensive treatment in the hands of Sri Aurobindo and Tagore.