The historian of contemporary literary theory can clearly trace influential notions of Matthew Arnold in the critical writings of a variety of twentieth-century theorists who might seem, otherwise, to have little in common. They can be seen as strongly at work in a T. S. Eliot, whose attitude to Arnold is consistently antagonistic, as in those like I. A. Richards or Northrop Frye, who themselves at times suggest their sympathetic allegiance to Arnold. Indeed, the haunting suggestion of Arnoldian doctrine may be the more significant as it appears, unasked and unwanted, in the work of an alien mind that cannot rid itself of the influence. And Eliot, surely, could not get the reviled Arnold off his back.

We can note once more the strange fact of the occasional similarity between the positivistic early Richards and the orthodox Eliot who is repelled by the notion that poetry (or anything else!) can take the place of religion. But we may be able to account for such unexpected theoretical brotherhood by marking the significance of their joint Arnoldian legacy. Eliot's apparent colleagueship with a natural ideological enemy like Richards, especially in the matter of "poetry and beliefs," was clearly a source of discomfort, or at least embarrassment,
to him. We have only to look at the lengthy, half-apologetic Note he appended to his Dante essay. If Eliot would feel little comfort in an assertion of momentary brotherhood with Richards, he would feel less in being even more intimately related—as a child—to the theories of that alien humanist, Matthew Arnold. Yet Eliot’s incongruous, if momentary, kinship with Richards should point us toward their common parent, Arnold, to find a major source of the direction—if not the temperament—of his critical notions.

I

Arnold may be seen as ultimately (or, rather, originally) responsible, not only for Eliot’s (as well as Richards’s) ideas on poetry and beliefs, but also for such other central doctrines in Eliot as the objective correlative and the unity of sensibility. Indeed, if we account for the Arnoldian basis of these, we have accounted for about all the distinctly Eliotic notions. The odd thing is that at least three different—sometimes almost incompatible—stages in Arnold’s critical writings are represented in these influences. There is, first, the Arnold of the 1853 Preface, whose Aristotelianism is used to explain the exclusion of “Empedocles on Etna.” There is also the Arnold of the 1864 “The Function of Criticism at the Present Time,” whose historical concern with the source of ideas—the enabling factor of poetry—leads him to belittle the Romantics. There is, finally, the Arnold of the 1880 “The Study of Poetry,” whose devotion to poetry’s moving power—its power to unify our sensibilities—leads him to make it the substitute for “what now passes with us for religion and philosophy.”

It seems clear enough that roots of Eliot’s objective correlative can be traced to Arnold’s 1853 Preface. We recall Eliot’s infamous complaint against Hamlet as suffering from “the buffoonery of an emotion which can find no outlet in action.” But we must recall also that this complaint is all too reminiscent of Arnold’s rejection of his “Empedocles” because it is a representation of a situation “in which the suffering finds no vent in action.” Arnold goes on, in language suggestive of the language Eliot is to apply to Hamlet: such situations are those “in which a continuous state of mental distress is prolonged, unrelieved by incident, hope, or resistance; in which there is everything to be endured, nothing to be done.” Obviously, what the Aristotelian Arnold here requires to head off such “morbid,” “monotonous,” and hence “painful” rather than “tragic” representations is an objective structure of action (Eliot’s “chain of events”) which can justify externally (become the objective equivalent of?) the otherwise unvented subjective expression.
Partly in debt to Arnold for his objective correlative, Eliot seems also to carry on Arnold's unfortunate separation between "ideas" (or, even worse, the creation of ideas) and the creative act of the poet. The opening paragraphs of Arnold's "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time" offer a sharp distinction between the functions of criticism and of poetry-making, one based on an equally sharp distinction between the materials of each. And both distinctions seem founded on a pessimistic determinism borrowed from the historicist tradition extended through Taine and Sainte-Beuve. It may well be argued that Arnold is invoking these distinctions—and arguing for the primacy, indeed the greater creativity, of the critical rather than the creative—in order to justify, to himself as well as to others, his own decision to turn his career from poetry to criticism. For surely there seems to be in this distinction an implied criticism of his own poetry which his critics have shared. In any age insufficiently stocked with mature ideas, the poet finds himself burdened with the need to create, as well as to combine, ideas; puts on himself the role of critic as well as the role of poet; and in part fails at both. Thus Arnold implicitly apologizes for the excessively bare, prosaic, ideational nature of his verse, as he signals his turn to criticism.

It is the critic's responsibility, then, to create the ideas which must be made available to the poet. These the poet can only combine: they are his received materials, but their creation is not under his control qua poet. The critic's task is "analysis and discovery," the poet's is only "synthesis and exposition." So, in historicist and determinist fashion, "two powers must concur, the power of the man and the power of the moment, and the man is not enough without the moment; the creative power has, for its exercise, appointed elements, and those elements are not in its own control." In an age not supplied by ideas, an age for which criticism has not paved the way, the poet—rather than being insufficient as poet—should sacrifice himself to the poets of the future by turning critic and creating the needed materials that can turn a non-poetic age into a pre-poetic age, into at least a forerunner of a poetic age. It is in this sense that I earlier suggested that perhaps the "critical power," as the only inventor of ideas, is more creative than the "creative power" for Arnold, so that his forgoing of the creative for the critical in his own career may not be such a "sacrifice" after all. He must not fail the future, he argues in an indirect self-defense, as the Romantics failed him.

The poet can create only poems, not ideas. Arnold is this explicit about precluding the poet from the genesis of ideas, thus making him dependent on previous ideas "current at the time, not merely accessible at the time." This separation of the poet from ideas must lead to
a distinction between the poem as made and the beliefs it incorporates; it is this distinction that turns up everywhere in the work of Eliot that grows out of his concern with the objective correlative. The prohibition of ideas for the poet surely throws a pall over his possible creativity, even as it unleashes the creativity of the critic (again a seeming act of self-serving at this stage in Arnold's career). And it remains to affect Eliot's restriction of the poet as well.

Thus it is that Eliot is able to praise his idol, Dante, despite (or because of) the fact that "when [he] has expressed successfully a philosophy we find that it is a philosophy which is already in existence, not one of his own invention. . . ." He and Lucretius "both drew their material from the work of philosophers who were not poets." How closely this resembles Arnold's assignment of their respective functions to the critic (critical power) and the poet (creative power). And when Eliot, by contrast, laments the unavoidable failure of Blake, we see the unhappy consequence of a single figure trying to encompass both powers in his poetry:

What his genius required, and what it sadly lacked, was a framework of accepted and traditional ideas which would have prevented him from indulging in a philosophy of his own, and concentrated his attention upon the problems of the poet. . . . The concentration resulting from a framework of mythology and theology and philosophy is one of the reasons why Dante is a classic, and Blake only a poet of genius. The fault is perhaps not with Blake himself, but with the environment which failed to provide what such a poet needed; perhaps the circumstances compelled him to fabricate, perhaps the poet required the philosopher and mythologist. . . .

Do we sense here an echo of Arnold's implied judgment of himself as poet? Now we understand why, in his Dante essay, Eliot speaks glowingly of "the advantage of a coherent traditional system of dogma and morals like the Catholic."

Of course, these statements are also the consequences of Eliot's well-known traditionalism—if, that is, they are not rather the source of it. Eliot's famous criterion for beliefs, that they be "coherent, mature, and founded on the facts of experience," is his way of saying that they must be the consequence of one of the great traditional systems of belief, since their staying power is the proof of their serving the requirements of coherence, maturity, and adequacy to experience. Otherwise Eliot could not see how they would be likely candidates for

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the allegiance of a substantial following of people for many years. (Shades of Dr. Johnson’s dictum that “nothing can please many, and please long, but just representations of general nature.”) Clearly it is on this conservative basis that Eliot can distrust the more esoteric sets of beliefs and the sort of poetry stemming from them, as he moves to his lamentation for such as Blake. While it may be that Eliot’s traditionalism causes him to deny the poet a role in creating new beliefs, it may also be the other way around: that so puristic a conception of the poet’s role must lead the poet to search out the comforts—with the freedom they allow for his intellectual irresponsibility—of a fully formed and easily borrowed tradition. In either case the fact remains that Eliot as traditionalist is quite at home with the Arnoldian separation of ideas and poetry and that Eliot’s objective correlative comes to depend on this separation.

The poet, we are told, is only to show us how it feels to hold certain beliefs rather than to present the beliefs themselves. Thus Dante, assuming that we are instructed in the beliefs presented by St. Thomas Aquinas (which Dante borrows for his own), gives us the emotional equivalent of those beliefs. But the poet also gives us “words for [our] feelings”;² that is, he gives us, not the feelings themselves (which, according to the impersonal doctrine of the objective correlative, must be kept out of the poem), but the objective or verbal equivalents for those feelings. So to take these equivalences to the second power, as Eliot does, we may say that the poet is to give us the verbal equivalent of the emotional equivalent of the beliefs he borrows from his intellectual environment. In thus eliminating the ideological responsibility of the poet in this Arnoldian manner, Eliot enables himself to utter such strange judgments as his claim (which, despite its initial impression upon us, he meant as unqualified praise) that Henry James had a mind too fine ever to be violated by an idea. He is rarely any more liberal in what he allows or denies the poet than in the following passage:

I believe that for a poet to be also a philosopher he would have to be virtually two men: I cannot think of any example of this thorough schizophrenia, nor can I see anything to be gained by it: the work is better performed inside two skulls than one. Coleridge is the apparent example, but I believe that he was only able to exercise the one activity at the expense of the other. A poet may borrow a philosophy or he may do without one. It is when he

philosophizes upon his own poetic insight that he is apt to go wrong. But if the poet must keep his beliefs separate from his poetry, he still is to preserve behind both beliefs and poetry the psychic unity that enables him to work one within the confines of the other. Here we have that other central Eliotic doctrine of the unity (in opposition to the dissociation) of sensibility. One might predict that so sharp a separation between poetry and belief in the poetic function would be seen to flow from a dissociated rather than a unified sensibility. Yet Eliot insists on having it the other way round: apparently the mark of the poet of unified sensibility is his capacity to feel his beliefs with an emotional immediacy that frees him from the self-consciously intellectual need to conceptualize them (although, as we have seen, the Arnoldian inheritance suggests that we cannot be sure whether this unity is found in the poet's capacity to contain his belief or in the belief's capacity to contain its poet). In either case, what counts is the poet's sense of being so at home in his world of beliefs, so comfortable in them and so secure in their unchallenged sway, that he is free to poetize without intruding them self-consciously, argumentatively, from the outside. For they are inside, inside him, informing the emotional complex that seeks verbal objectification as the unimposed-upon poem, the poem that guarantees the unified sensibility behind it.

Eliot's notion of the unified sensibility is clearly indebted to Arnold's nostalgic admiration for the unity in the Middle Ages of the senses of conduct, beauty, and knowledge. It is the splitting up of these senses, and the rivalry among them—now with their separate ends and methods—that mark the divisiveness of the modern world. (This is Arnold's equivalent for Eliot's dissociation of sensibility.) It is this desire for unity, for the enfolding of the practical within the coordinate Kantian virtues of the true and the beautiful, that is the basis for Arnold's call for disinterestedness (also Kantian). Hence the Arnoldian insistence on the separation, in our intellectual life, of the sphere of ideas from the sphere of practice. The overpowering need is to keep our ideas free of the personal intrusions of interest and desire. It is these ideas, after all, which are to feed that ripe critical moment that can sustain the poet's creativity. This disinterestedness that preserves the purity of the world of ideas leads, in the domain of criticism, to Arnold's attack on the "personal estimate," surely a forerunner of Eliot's doctrine of impersonality, the notion that poetry is "an escape from emotion" rather than "a turning loose of emotion,"

that in the poem there must be an absolute separation of "the man who suffers and the mind which creates." The submerging of the poet's personality in his poem, like the submerging of his beliefs in their emotional equivalents and the submerging of his emotion in its objective equivalent, is permitted by the unity of his sensibility and that in turn by the unity of his culture, external or internal. These are the ways he can absorb ideas and contain them in his work, disinterestedly in order to objectify them, rather than to be taken up by them in a manner that would sacrifice his status as poet.

This impersonal union of elements in poetry that properly flows from the properly fused sensibility—backed by a properly fused culture—may be a Goethean ideal that Eliot adapts from Arnold. But it seems to be allied—if not confounded—with the psychological unity he derives from the Coleridgean imagination. Thus, in speaking of Marvell's union of levity and seriousness, of the self-consciousness of wit and the devotion of imagination, Eliot can invoke the all-inclusive claims of Coleridge's now famous "elucidation of Imagination" (the capital "I," which doesn't appear elsewhere when Eliot uses the word in this essay, is significant).

This power . . . reveals itself in the balance or reconcilement of opposite or discordant qualities: of sameness, with difference; of the general, with the concrete; the idea with the image; the individual with the representative; the sense of novelty and freshness with old and familiar objects: a more than usual state of emotion with more than usual order; judgment ever awake and steady self-possession with enthusiasm profound or vehement. . . .

This passage, with much else in Coleridge, came also to influence I. A. Richards, and, through either or both of these masters of Cleanth Brooks, came to exert its force on an entire school of criticism. It may be at points such as this that such divergent influences as the Coleridgean and the Arnoldian are crucially joined, perhaps in ways not unlike the joining in our own day of the even more divergent influences from Eliot and Richards. Be this as it may, the fusion of ideology in the poetic complex must be seen—thanks to the poet's unified sensibility sanctioned by Arnold or thanks to the poet's organic imagination sanctioned by Coleridge—as a victory over ideology, a disinterested freedom from it. The freedom from the self-conscious creation of ideas, like the freedom from the practical service performed on

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4 This well-known description from chapter 14 of Biographia Literaria is quoted by Eliot in "Andrew Marvell," Selected Essays, new ed., pp. 256–57.
The Critical Legacy of Matthew Arnold

behalf of ideas, is a freedom to play with them, the sort of play that Schiller, as Kantian aesthetician, used as the defining quality of art.

II

The freeing of the poet from responsibility for ideas, freeing him for the unity of his poem as impersonal object, is seen—from the perspective of Arnold’s influence on Eliot—as developing from the dependence of the poet’s sensibility on the unity of the culture he inherits. Poetic unity is thus grounded in psychic unity. It is here that we see the point of union between Eliot and the early Richards as the common heirs of Arnold. It is true that we find the early work of Richards marked by a far narrower selection out of the broad range of Arnold’s concepts, so that we perhaps feel that work to be far less in the Arnoldian spirit, even a distortion of that spirit in its excessive concentration and in the partiality of that concentration. If, unlike Eliot, Richards adapts only one or two of Arnold’s points of emphasis, he attaches himself to them with an intensity that almost persuades us (but, in the end, only almost) that these may after all be the very center, the reduction of, Arnold’s varied plenty. The reduction is created out of that notion of psychic unity that Arnold wistfully attributed to the outworn faith of the Middle Ages. This created or discovered center of Arnold, what Richards believes to be Arnold’s indispensable definition of the capacities and limitations of modern culture, and poetry as its spokesman, is found behind the selection which Richards quoted for his epigraph to Science and Poetry:

The future of poetry is immense, because in poetry, where it is worthy of its high destinies, our race, as time goes on, will find an ever surer and surer stay. There is not a creed which is not shaken, not an accredited dogma which is not shown to be questionable, not a received tradition which does not threaten to dissolve. Our religion has materialized itself in the fact, in the supposed fact; it has attached its emotion to the fact, and now the fact is failing it. But for poetry the idea is everything. . . .

Richards could have added the last two sentences of this paragraph in Arnold, sentences which foreshadow the mood of George Santayana: “Poetry attaches its emotion to the idea; the idea is the fact. The strongest part of our religion today is its unconscious poetry.” And, in

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5 This and later quotations from “The Study of Poetry” are from its opening paragraphs.
the same spirit, he could have added words from the next paragraph in that essay, "The Study of Poetry":

Without poetry, our science will appear incomplete; and most of what now passes with us for religion and philosophy will be replaced by poetry. . . . our religion, parading evidences such as those on which the popular mind relies now; our philosophy, pluming itself on its reasonings about causation and finite and infinite being; what are they but the shadows and dreams and false shows of knowledge? The day will come when we shall wonder at ourselves for having trusted to them, for having taken them seriously; and the more we perceive their hollowness, the more we shall prize "the breath and finer spirit of knowledge" offered to us by poetry.

What is central here is the conviction (1) that religion has lost its influence on modern man because of its dependence on supposed facts that turned out to be error and (2) that poetry, so long as it does not depend on facts that have a claim to truth, can take on the role of the now defunct religion. Clearly, poetry must be kept clear of the claim to truth if it is to be spared the fate of religion.

It is the development of modern science, with the revolutions it has forced upon our sense of man's place in the universe, that for Arnold has destroyed the possibility of faith. Arnold sees medieval faith, with its cornerstone in the Church, as providing enormous psychological advantages. Primarily, it is the psychic unity allowed by the hegemony of the Church which related our senses for knowledge, conduct, and beauty to one another as they met in the transcendentally controlling domain of theology. Each sense moved only in accord with the others, with a watchful eye keeping it from straying too far on its own, in response to its own objectives. The autonomy of the free pursuit of knowledge awaited the grand breakup of disciplines that marked the Renaissance. The explosion of inductive knowledge, with each science unleashed to create its own methods for authenticating its own discoveries, responsible to no authority or inhibition beyond its own orbit, led to fantastically impressive results, but at an enormous cost. For what was being exploded was not just the previous unity of "supposed" knowledge, but the psychic unity required for human emotional satisfaction. Lost, then, were the great psychic advantages of the unity of our senses of knowledge, conduct, and beauty. This is to say that the Middle Ages—to the extent that it created a theocratic unity of arts and sciences—had the advantage of being everything but right. Just as a positivist like Thomas Henry Huxley would, Arnold concedes that the supposed knowledge that was humanly comfortable, warm, and wishfully complete and rounded, turned out to be utterly
false, disproved by the empirical criteria of sciences whose only authority is from contingent experience below, not from dogmatic necessity above.

Once exposed to the convincing verifiability of the knowledge of modern science, for all of the psychic comforts it precludes, man is no longer able to will his return to those wrongly supposed facts—source of his prior faith—which sustained the psychic unity needed by man to sustain him. However discomfited by the new facts that coldly put him in his cosmic place, man will not deny them or their consequences as they affect his psychic security. So Arnold is one with the positivists in conceding to laboratory-controlled science the sole access to truth. But he will not concede, as did the Huxleys, that the human psyche can live without the satisfactions, now foregone, that the now outmoded supposed facts had afforded. If then, the need is constant and the supply is cut off, some substitute way of supplying that need must be found. Poetry is to be that way.

The special usefulness of poetry to perform this function stems from its power to unify our sensibilities without founding this power on supposed fact. Psychological power founded on supposed fact will founder as the supposed fact crumbles under the impact of proven counter-fact. Poetry must then be prevented, by the very nature of its assumptions and the modesty of its presumption, from exposing itself to the fact of science. We remember that for Arnold it was religion which “materialized itself in the . . . supposed fact . . . attached its emotion to the fact and now the fact is failing it.” Hence religion becomes “but the shadows and dreams and false shows of knowledge.” We must retain the psychic efficacy of religion without involving the commitment to those supposed facts that can undermine that efficacy. Or, put from the other side, from the positivist’s viewpoint, we must not permit the advance of an independently empirical science to be slowed by the intrusions of the comforting warmth of human needs and the wishful thinking it sponsors. From either side the answer is poetry, an art which would have to be invented if it did not already exist, which now can come into its own to substitute for religion. Let it perform the psychological function, which science with its new facts is obliged to ignore, but let it leave all claims to knowledge to science, lest it enter into the impossible competition which will explode it as that competition exploded its predecessor. Indeed, we are almost brought to wonder why, in those earlier days when religion could do its job unchallenged, poetry ever did exist!

Viewed from the perspective of Richards’s positivism, Arnold’s concessions to Huxley seem to have been this substantial. Still, as humanist, he unremittingly defends poetry’s power to minister to
human needs—as he unremittingly defends the unchanged nature of those needs despite the changed world produced by science. As his disciple, who read the underlying concession and defense in Arnold’s words, Richards may well see himself as spinning *Science and Poetry* out of the quotation which is its epigraph. From this he derives the central separation of poetry from all questions of knowledge, the separation which Richards sees as the freeing of poetry to perform its therapeutic psychological task, created by the heartless but necessary “neutralization of nature.” Science marches ruthlessly on, annexing ever more territory in the land of “what is,” having long abandoned the proper province of poetry, with its pastoral tending of the nonsensical land of “what ought to be.” The latter, however, must not be taken seriously beyond the psychological occasion for which it is invented. For that occasion requires that poetry produce, not the singularity of commitment, but the balance of forces that permits an equilibrium, with its consequence of paralysis that prevents cognitive or practical decisiveness. This equilibrium is again a consistent outgrowth of Arnold’s adaptation of Kantian disinterestedness.

So long as poetry makes no cognitive claims, it cannot be denied. (Shades of Sir Philip Sidney’s claim that the poet “nothing affirms, and therefore never lyeth.”) Its future as “an ever surer and surer stay” for man is assured, whatever the aggrandizement of cold scientific certainty. Indeed, the greater science’s successes, the more we will need the soothing, unchallenging, unchallengeable, “emotive” accompaniments of poetry. Richards’s invention of the distinction between emotive and referential (or between pseudo-statement and certified statement) as an absolute dichotomy is inevitable. It is true, of course, that the nineteenth-century Arnold, trapped in an older language, still reverts to archaic phrases like “poetic truth,” suggesting to the less committed of us some uncertainty in him about taking the consequences of his occasional insights as agnostic humanist (distinguished from the religious humanist on the one side and the agnostic positivist on the other). He is, we must remember, father to Irving Babbitt as well. After all, he does admit that, if poetry does not attach its emotion to the fact, as religion does, it does attach its emotion to the “idea,” which must still strike us as an intellectual commodity. But Richards, systematizing the more radical of Arnold’s suggestions by rushing to take their consequences, must see such reversions as momentary lapses that may blunt the keen thrust of his pioneer daring without diverting us from its direction.6

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6 I will shortly, with the help of Frye, propose a way to make these terms, *idea* and *poetic truth*, less retrograde than I now suggest they are.
Though propelled this time by another motive and from another part of Arnold's forest, we find ourselves very close to where Eliot had earlier brought us in consequence of his response to Arnold. With Eliot too, poetry was to find its function by turning aside from any direct responsibility for world views or systems of belief. In restricting himself to verbal equivalents of emotional equivalents, Eliot's poet was—not altogether unlike Richards's—to steer clear of the question of intellectual assent. He was to allow his poem to perform its therapeutic task unencumbered by our agreement or disagreement with his beliefs, since these beliefs were not to offer themselves separately from our judgment of them as beliefs. No wonder the orthodox Eliot felt embarrassed enough with his obvious similarity to the radically positivistic Richards for him to append the apologetic Note to his Dante essay, with its ad hoc struggle to mark off some differences between them.

III

It is, however, in his Arnoldian awareness of the distinction between a determined, if neutralized, nature and the willful, emotive act of man needed to save his humanity, that the early Richards anticipates Northrop Frye. It may seem that we are trying to tame Frye if we temper the influence of Blake on his work with that of Arnold, but his own expressions of such a debt encourage us to do so. For the starting point for Frye is his distinction between the order of nature and the order of words, the first being the world of science and the second the world of language, the imposition of human forms. As we see that Frye's nature is an objectively determined order while his language is an order determined only by the free act of imagination, so we see in his distinction both the reflection of Kant's opposition between the realms of nature and of freedom and the operation of the Kantian categories. With the absolute break between subject and object, there is the total differentiation between that world out there that goes its indifferent way without regard to how we would have it and the world created—as Frye would say—in response to human desire, in accordance with our imagination and the creatures with which it chooses to people its world. Thus we can define the world of nature and the world of human freedom, or, more precisely, nature given the scientific forms of objective necessity and nature transformed by the requirements of human imagination. It is the opposition allegorized by Goethe in his Faust who, shut out from the indifferent world that exists before man and outside man, must create his human world—in competition with it and beyond it—out of his
own subjectivity that wills how man must have what he chooses to live in, his own humanly responsive world. This opposition also furnishes the answer, made in the shadow of Kant and Goethe, that Schiller's sentimental poet provides for the lost naiveté of the simple poet, his defunct ancestor.

All of which, from the point of view of Richards, may seem to be only an inflated way to speak of the emotive, and to authorize it by thus elevating it. To the still existing human needs which, for Arnold as for Richards, prolong the role of poetry in its pseudo-religious obsolescence, Frye adds the mythography of Blake which authenticates—all but metaphysically—the land of heart's desire. But still the central distinction in Frye between the worlds of nature and freedom, of science and language, for all the heavenly glories of the free word, can be seen to grow out of the lineage that moves from Kant, Goethe, and Schiller to its positivist reduction that, suggested in Arnold, we have seen realized in Richards. The transformation of nature by human creativity is, after all, what is being allegorized at the end of Faust's career in Part II when he literally remakes nature's waste in accordance with the orders of his human will. He reclaims land from the sea for the human purposes of its social future.

It is this concentration upon man's remaking of science's nature in his own image, upon his continuing act of symbolic construction, that enables Frye to speak interchangeably about imaginative literature and other, non-fictional modes of discourse since, whatever the differences among them, they are equally to be thought of as forms of imaginative projection. Of course, Arnold had more systematically treated all the major forms of human expression as coordinate, if not finally identical. We think of the several kinds of endeavor which Arnold asks to be concerned with "the best that has been thought and said in the world," and we recall the application of this criterion at various times to what he calls "poetry," what he calls "literature," what he calls "criticism," and, most broadly, what he calls "culture." Frye himself acknowledges the inclusive supremacy of Arnold's term, although in this regard he clearly separates himself from Richards and Eliot, who, however Arnoldian in most respects, cherish the role of poetry more exclusively. Frye's breadth in this matter is explicit: "But it seems clear that Arnold was on solid ground when he made 'culture,' a total imaginative vision of life with literature at its center, the regulating and normalizing element in social life, the human source, at least, of spiritual authority."7 This concession to culture, which is in effect the stretching of poetry to include the very process of imagi-

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native vision, can clearly be seen to have its philosophical sources in the tradition we have traced back through Goethe and Schiller to Kant.

The basis for Arnold's broad conception of human creativity, what Frye thinks of as its democratic appeal, is found in Arnold's special employment of that word idea. It is, though Frye himself may not credit the word, Arnold's ubiquitous idea that makes Arnold—for Frye as for others—the humanist par excellence who readies man to live, imaginatively and self-sufficiently, in a ruthlessly objectified world that lacks all awareness of subjects. Thus the question of the objective reality of God can be bypassed as humanistically irrelevant. It is now in a more profound sense that we return, through Frye's perspective, to Arnold's claim that "poetry attaches its emotion to the idea," rather than to the failing fact, as did religion. Further, the troublesome and seemingly retrograde notion of "poetic truth" may now be seen to fall more consistently into place with Arnold's other claims.

The ideas which his culture must furnish the poet clearly are the ideas to which he must attach emotion—much in the manner of Eliot's poet in his search for an objective correlative. But we now understand the sense of idea as a human creation, not to describe the state of nature (the proper business of science), but to create the conditions under which man wills to live in that nature. The idea, in the tradition which Arnold as middleman may have passed from Goethe to Richards and Frye, dares make no claim to objective truth, no religious or metaphysical claim. Otherwise it risks obliteration by those self-abnegating, dehumanized disciplines dedicated only to indifferent fact. But those ideas, unfit for attachment to fact, are fit for attachment to emotion. If not true of nature, they can be true of man in his imaginative freedom. Without risking the chance of being false to

Were I writing this essay today, I would have emphasized the extent to which Arnold's distrust of metaphysics is in accord with the spirit of deconstruction which has been attributed to other nineteenth-century figures, like Marx and Nietzsche, and has made them spiritual fathers to recent criticism in the continental manner. It is true that Arnold's faith in scientific fact goes well beyond theirs and that his commitment to poetry as an emotive substitute for metaphysics suggests a formalistic humanism which they could not share. But his call for a discourse free of metaphysics and subject only to man's will to create on his own in an empty universe—this is a call which echoes other calls we hear from his contemporaries. And these others are credited by my contemporaries in ways that deprive the milder Englishman of his influence among those making our current critical theory. I speak here for Arnold since his version of deconstruction preserves a major role for poetry, as the versions of the others do not. I would have liked, in other words, to add a number of my more widely read fellow-critics to Eliot, Richards, and Frye as unlikely brothers in their common inheritance from Arnold. Thus, despite yawning differences, links emerge between adjacent periods, in this case the modern and the postmodern.
nature, the idea can become a human truth, a “poetic truth.” All ideas, by their very constitutive power, become poetic ideas, poetic truths. Thus the ideas which the poet must have to do his work, the ideas for which Arnold must sacrifice himself as poet so that he may create them as critic, are those which man must invent for himself to live with in the faithless age. Better for Arnold to contribute to the invention of such ideas than to lament poetically, but without new ideas, for the loss of faith—which is to say, the loss of bogus ideas, naively in hopeless competition with science. Here Arnold most anticipates Frye, if it isn’t rather that Frye forces us to reinterpret Arnold. In either case, Arnold can be seen as authorizing the Frye who has man imagine the forms that shape his world in response to human desire, thus creating his culture that has its own authenticity, in distinction from that objectively authenticated world of nature, bound by its ineluctable processes. That culture is our dream. But we are doomed to be creatures of the night, the time of dreams, so that it becomes our truth, the truth of our poetry. And all our ideas are in that sense poetic.

IV

We began by noting something close to an inconsistency in Eliot and Richards as in Arnold: They assert, on the one hand, the need for a separation between ideas and poetry and, on the other hand, the need for a fusion and unity in the poet’s work (as well as, for Eliot and Arnold at least, in his sensibility and his culture). Frye seems to resolve this difficulty, for Arnold as well as for himself, by overcoming the extra-poetic character of ideas. Of course, he can accomplish this, as we have seen, only by broadening poetry until it encompasses ideas, although Frye might prefer another, less Arnoldian term for ideas. Still, as the shaping of nature to human ends, ideas become poetry, become coextensive with poetry. The cost to poetry in this broadened sense is that it now is no longer limited to poems. It characterizes, not uniquely fashioned works with their specially manipulated medium, but all symbolic projections of human vision. It is a price which Eliot and Richards, whatever their other difficulties, need not pay. By elevating poetry to vision itself, Frye may seem to have freed it from the earthly burden of mere discourse. We have more than once noted the sense in which Arnold himself seemed anxious to free ideas, on which poetry and its “truth” depended, from the drag of material nature with its alien, inhuman laws. Frye has pursued this liberation of the human dream more extremely. The stubborn, intransigent reality that goes its way in indifference to us must be abandoned by imagina-
tion for the forms of human desire, the world as we choose to have it, as we must have it if we are to preserve our humanity. The dream of imagination must dismiss everything in nature that objectively is for a mythic transformation into its sense of the ought-to-be.

It may be that the extravagance of Frye's theory, in its most distinctive form, most consistently fulfills the promise implied by Arnold's criticism, with a theoretical courage beyond what was possible for the late nineteenth-century mind. But it must leave out that extrapoetic, perhaps inhuman reality—the ineradicable something-out-there in experience and language, whatever its downward pull—to which Eliot and Richards in their different ways paid homage by allowing it to disrupt the unity of their theories. That they too are children of Arnold is probably evidence that the world outside both man and his shapings of it, operating in its own maddening way, is one which Arnold also, for better or worse, could never altogether relinquish.