THE CHANGING EMPHASIS OF THE IMAGERY
IN SATIRES ON LANGUAGE
AND LEARNING

by

CAROL ANNE McCANDLESS
B.A. (Honours), Simon Fraser University, 1976

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
(Department of English)

We accept this thesis as conforming
to the required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
June, 1979

© Carol Anne McCandless, 1979
In presenting this thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements for an advanced degree at the University of British Columbia, I agree that the Library shall make it freely available for reference and study. I further agree that permission for extensive copying of this thesis for scholarly purposes may be granted by the Head of my Department or by his representatives. It is understood that copying or publication of this thesis for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission.

Department of English

The University of British Columbia
2075 Wesbrook Place
Vancouver, Canada
V6T 1W5

Date June 11, 1979
ABSTRACT

The tradition of satires on the perversions of language and learning has been characterized by a recurrence of themes and, particularly, of stock images. There are two broad themes that invariably appear in satires on language and learning. One is the rational man's capacity for garbled knowledge and for self-approving opinion, concomitant with his superior ability to deceive both himself and others. The other is the consequence of man's Faustian desire for all knowledge combined with a propensity for metaphysical and speculative theories and doctrines abstracted from common sense and the practicalities of everyday life.

The imagery of satires on learning is also consistent throughout the tradition. Stock characters such as the pedant, the plagiarist, the windy philosopher, the shallow-read "Modern," the critic who preys on better men's works, and the poseur who empties all words of meaning, some or all of these form a part of all satires on language and the uses of knowledge. But, even though there was a common fund of satiric imagery and allusion that satirists could and did draw upon, each satirist was still responding to the ideological context of his own period, and this response is reflected in each satirist's particular emphasis.

There are two intellectual events that are of particular importance to this satirical tradition, the Greek rationalist enlightenment of the fourth century B.C. and the "new rationalism" of the eighteenth century A.D. Each resulted in a profound ideological shift in Western intellectual thought. The Greek enlightenment signaled the separation of the rational from the mythological mode of thinking. The eighteenth
century enlightenment was a movement which secularized many areas of intellectual endeavour previously thought to lie solely within the purview of the Church. These two movements are of particular importance because both rely heavily on the Word as the ultimate rational expression of man.

Historically, the Word has had a unique significance. The Classical and Christian humanist views of the Word are two distinct but related attitudes. The Classical attitude developed in two directions, in the art of rhetoric and in the conception of the Logos as the informing principle of the Word.

The Classical doctrine of the Logos had an important place in the early Christian church, and the idea of reason as the divine principle in man, and the Word as an expression of that divine principle was absorbed into, and reinforced by, scholasticism. Even when Christian humanists rejected the methodology of scholasticism, they reinforced its rationalistic assumptions that all the data of sensation "becomes an object of cognition that in its hierarchical sweep leads ultimately to God. Thus every fact takes on, as it were, a sacramental function of attesting to the glory of God" (Herschel Baker, The Wars of Truth, p. 5.)

By examining a number of satirists from different historical periods we can see how stock images introduced by Aristophanes have been adopted and developed by succeeding satirists through to Swift and we can get the sense of a fairly constant satiric tradition. It is not the purpose of this paper to examine the tradition exhaustively but merely to indicate that the tradition exists, and that its main characteristics can be determined.
In order to establish the existence of a tradition it is necessary to establish the reason for its existence, and therefore I have attempted to demonstrate the importance of the Word to men imbued with Classical and Christian humanist ideals. I have also briefly described the nature and the impact of the ideological changes that took place during the two rationalistic movements of the fifth century B.C. and the eighteenth century A.D.

Within the tradition of satires on language and learning it is possible to show how each satirist's emphasis has differed in response to the ideological context of his time. For example, Aristophanes is dealing with a profound ideological shift while it is in the process of occurring, but to Lucian the shift had receded into his cultural background, an already established ideological fact. Consequently, although both satirists attack, for instance, sophistical philosophers, their concerns and their emphases are very different.

This paper traces these ideological events and the consequent changes in emphasis in the imagery of satirists in the tradition of language and learning.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter

I. THE TRADITION IN SATIRES ON THE ABUSES OF LANGUAGE AND LEARNING ........................................... 1
   The Importance of the Word
   Greek Rationalism
   Eighteenth-Century Enlightenment

II. CLASSICAL SATIRISTS AND THEIR EMPHASES ............ 27
   Aristophanes: Clouds
   Lucian: Satirical Sketches

III. RENAISSANCE SATIRISTS ................................. 62
   Erasmus: The Praise of Folly
   Rabelais: Gargantua and Pantagruel
   Donne: Second Satire
   Jonson: The Alchemist

IV. SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY AND EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY SATIRISTS ................ 85
   Butler: Characters and Elephant on the Moon
   Shadwell: The Virtuoso
   Dryden: MacFlecknoe
   King: Dialogues of the Dead
   Buckingham: The Rehearsal
   Swift: A Tale of a Tub

V. CONCLUSION .................................................. 109

BIBLIOGRAPHY .................................................. 120
CHAPTER I

THE TRADITION IN SATIRES ON THE ABUSES OF LANGUAGE AND LEARNING

The Importance of the Word

Greek Rationalism

Eighteenth-Century Enlightenment
To a contemporary reader, one of the more perplexing aspects of Augustan satire is the preoccupation with bad writing and with the abuse of language and learning. Skilled writers such as Swift and Pope, Gay and Arbuthnot, the greatest satirists of our language, spent much of their time and energy on this topic. This concern is particularly difficult for us to understand today since bad writing in the form of the "pulps" has been with us for a long time. Casual distortion of language has become a commonplace for us, thanks to television and the advertising agencies, and learning has by now been translated into "job skills" with "quickie" diplomas available upon request.

Historically, however, men have felt differently about language and learning. The Word has had unique significance for them, and they have been alert to any indication of its abuse. The satire of language and learning is an expression of this concern, and there is a tradition of such satires from the Classical period to the eighteenth century.

The tradition of satire on the perversions of language and learning has been characterized by a recurrence of themes and, particularly, of stock images. By examining a number of satirists from different historical periods we can see how stock images introduced by Aristophanes have been adopted and developed by succeeding satirists through to Swift and we can get the sense of a fairly constant satiric tradition. It is possible to establish that the tradition exists, and to determine its main characteristics although I will not
examine the tradition exhaustively.

Swift's *A Tale of a Tub* is a useful conclusion to this paper because the satirical concern about the abuse of language and learning had reached a critical stage during the Augustan Age, when it became dramatically evident that the Classical and the Christian humanist ideals of language and learning were collapsing, a collapse that was transforming every aspect of society. To the Augustan satirists it seemed as if a civilization was coming to an end. During this period, much of the satiric attack was directed against the perversions of language and learning, as we can see from the Scriblerian endeavour. Swift's *A Tale of a Tub* is also a focal point because this satire incorporates all the stock imagery from previous satires and at the same time initiates the most prevalent and profuse attack in the eighteenth century, the attack against the corruption and commercialization of language and learning.

In every period, even though satirists who attacked the perversions of language and learning were writing within a tradition, they were still responding to the ideological context of their own period, and this response is reflected in each satirist's particular emphasis. For example, Aristophanes is dealing with a profound ideological shift while it is in the process of occurring, but to Lucian the shift had receded into his cultural background, an already established ideological fact. Consequently, although both satirists attack, for instance, sophistical philosophers, their concerns and their emphases are very different.
However, before we can begin to examine the tradition as it develops, we must try to determine why the satirists placed such importance on the sanctity of the Word.

The Classical and Christian humanist views of the Word are two distinct but related attitudes. The Classical attitude developed in two directions, in the art of rhetoric and in the conception of the Logos as the informing principle of the Word. Aristotle is a useful starting point for both, not because either began with him but because of his powerful influence on European thought.

According to Aristotle, the informing principle of all matter is the Logos, an orderly and rational force which transforms inert matter into its varying shapes. It is a creative force inherent in all things and ultimately linking God and man. The Stoics drew out the significance of the Logos even further. They saw it as the vitalizing force and the law guiding the universe, as the force from which all things developed, and called it the "Spermatic Logos." They also distinguished between the Logos as potential, unmanifested Reason, and the Logos as the Thought of God expressed in action. But before the thought of God could be expressed in action, they argued, it must be expressed in language, because only through language can men transmute the rational impulse they receive

1 Aristotle's *Physics*, Book III.

from the Logos. Walter Ong expresses this transmutation as occurring "... because the human word is uttered at the juncture where interior awareness and external event meet and where, moreover, encounter between person and person occurs at its most human depths ... 3 Thus man's rational expression became linked with the principle of the Logos, and this helps to explain the importance placed on the art and science of rhetoric.

Rhetoric in the philosophy of Aristotle is essentially the art of expressing and transmitting in language an abstract truth. No less than logic, it is a means of bringing out truth, of making people see what is true and fitting.

It is largely through Cicero, the most eminent orator of Roman civilization, that the Aristotelian emphasis on rhetoric as a branch of philosophy came into the humanist tradition. The orator, according to Cicero, is a philosopher, and his training in rhetoric cannot be separated from his training as a philosopher:

Let us assume, then, at the beginning what will become clearer hereafter, that philosophy is essential for the education of our ideal orator; not that philosophy is everything, but that it helps the orator as physical training helps the actor . . . .

Cicero emphasizes the importance of the use of language:

We must now turn to the task of portraying the


4 Cicero's Orator, Loeb Classical Library, p. 315.
perfect orator and the highest eloquence. The very word "eloquent" shows that he excels because of this one quality, that is, in the use of language, and that all other qualities are overshadowed by this. For the all-inclusive word is not "discoverer," or "arranger," or "actor," but in Greek he is called ἀργος from the word "to speak," and in Latin he is said to be "eloquent." For everyone claims for himself some part of the other qualities that go to make up an orator, but the supreme power in speaking, that is eloquence, is granted to him alone.

Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria* codified Cicero's principles by providing a comprehensive course of instruction, taking a student from infancy to the time when he became a complete orator. To these principles, however, he gave a distinct moral emphasis. The orator was to be "a good man skilled at speaking." Since eloquence served the public welfare, it must be fused with virtue, and philosophy was a component part of the rhetorical training: "Let care in words be solicitude for things."

In addition to their own period, the rhetorical ideals of Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian were to exercise great influence during the Renaissance, when they became essential criteria for the education of great and good men. Thomas Elyot's *The Governour*, published in 1531, expounded upon "the education or form of bringing up the child of a gentleman which is to have

---

5 Ibid., p. 351.
6 Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria*, Loeb Classical Library, VIII, proem.
7 Ibid., VIII, proem.
authority in a public weal." He recommends the classics as the source of morality and learning, and visualizes the "governour" as a man of personal virtue who is measured and virtuous in the classical sense. Elyot's work had a great influence, and in it he counsels:

By the time that the child do come to seventeen years of age, to the intent his courage be bridled with reason, it were needful to read unto him some works of philosophy, specially that part that may inform him unto virtuous manners, which part of philosophy is called moral. Wherefore there would be read to him, for an introduction, two the first g books of the work of Aristotle called Ethicae . . .

However, when the child is still too young to study philosophy, someone . . . studiously exercised in the art of an orator, shall first read to him somewhat of that part of logic that is called Topica, either of Cicero . . . or Agricola . . . Immediately after that, the art of Rhetoric would be semblably taught, either in Greek, out of Hermogenes, or of Quintilian in Latin, beginning at the third book, and instructing diligently the child in that part of Rhetoric, principally, which concerneth persuasion, for as much as it is most apt for consultations.

These Classical ideals, developed by Aristotle and expanded and clarified by later Classical writers, were to dominate Western culture until the eighteenth century.

There was also, however, a Christian line of development of the sanctity of the Word. Certain books of the Old Testament


9 Ibid., p. 585.

10 Ibid., p. 583.
present a principle called the Wisdom of God active in the
world. At the same time there was an ancient Hebrew idea of
the Word of God as also active in the world (the Greek word
Logos expresses a coalescence of these two principles).
St. John, in the first fourteen verses of his gospel, states
the idea of the Gospel simply and clearly:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was
with God, and the Word was God. . . . And the Word
was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld
his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the
Father,) full of grace and truth.

That is, the Logos, which is the eternal God, took flesh and
became man, in time, and the Logos is Christ.

The doctrine of the Logos had an important place in the
theology of the early Christian Church. It was the answer of
the Church fathers to various heresies of the person of Christ
which at the time seemed plausible and made Jesus a phantom, an
emanation, or a demi-god. The early Fathers identified Christ
with the Law of God, just as the Greeks had identified the Law
with the Logos:

In defending the truth of the incarnation against
those who maintained that such a doctrine implied
what was absurd and impossible, Athanasius draws
his argument from Greek philosophy, and urges the
Stoic principle of the divine immanence, as lending
rationality and probability to the conviction that
the Word became flesh and dwelt among men. "For the

11 Deut. 8:3; Jer. 5:13.
12 As in the Stoic's distinction between Logos as actual
or potential. See p.3 n.2 above.
world itself may be thought of as one great body in which God indwells; and if He is in the whole, He is also in the parts. It is no more unworthy of God that He should incarnate Himself in one man, than it is that He should dwell in the world. Since he abides in humanity, which is a part of the universe, it is not unreasonable that he should take up His abode in a man who should thus become the organ by which God acts on the universal life'.

The apologists talked about the Logos to show the pagans that Christianity was in agreement with "the best thought of the times." Thus Justin argued that Christ was the "Spermatic Logos," the Reason of God, at first immaterial in the Father's bosom, then sent forth as the spoken word for creation and revelation, as manifested in the gospel. All men are made in the image of the Logos, and "those who believe in Christ are men in whom the divine seed, which is the Logos, dwells." Thus developed the idea of reason as the divine principle in man, and the Word as an expression of that divine principle. This conception of reason rested on a rationalistic assumption. This was the conviction that an essentially rationalistic God, who created and sustained the universe for His own benevolent ends, is the legitimate object of man's supreme knowledge, and that this knowledge, attained through the discourse of reason and confirmed by revelation, constitutes his ultimate well-being.

Herschel Baker, speaking of the centrality of this ideal of reason to medieval Christianity, comments:

The great effort of scholasticism had been to achieve

14 Allen, p. 83.

a rational theology, and in the work of St. Thomas, as in its poetic redaction by Dante, we have the monument to what some have wistfully called the medieval synthesis. . . . For our purposes, the significance of the great *summae* of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries lies not in their marshalling of thousands of details, authorities, and conjectures toward the supreme end of the knowledge of God, but rather in the assumption that made such an effort possible. For by the axiom of knowledge every element in man's experience—all the data of sensation from them which constitute natural knowledge—becomes an object of cognition that in its hierarchical sweep leads ultimately to God. Thus every fact takes on, as it were, a sacramental function of attesting the glory of God.

This "effort" assured language and learning of a central position up to the Renaissance, when Christian humanism rejected the methodology of scholasticism, but reinforced its rationalistic assumptions, which Baker has referred to as "the axiom of knowledge." For Hooker, as for Socrates, knowledge is virtue:

> Laws of Reason have these marks to be known by. Such as keep them resemble most lively in their voluntary actions that very manner of working which Nature herself doth necessarily observe in the course of the whole world. The works of Nature are all behooveful, beautiful, without superfluity or defect; even so theirs, if they be framed according to that which the Law of Reason teacheth. Secondly, those Laws are investigable by Reason, without the help of Revelation supernatural and divine.

The significant contribution of Christian humanism is one of focus. Whereas medieval learning prepared men for the world to come, Christian humanism saw a Christian as living an active life here in the world, fostering and nurturing all that was good in

---


him. In order to do this, all of his faculties must be trained and put to the service of this pursuit, and all legitimate sources of knowledge must be similarly put to use. Thus Petrarch rejected the scholastic philosophy of the Middle Ages, but he revered language and learning. His models were the early Christian fathers and the Classical Latin authors. The principles of Classical rhetoric were reinforced by his *De viris illustribus*, a panegyric to Ciceronian ideals, and he reinstated the cult of the classics and popularized their imitation. Imitation of the classics became a popular ideal, and humanist rhetoric was born, with its dictionaries, its handbooks of Latin usage, its *exempla*, and its memorizing procedures. This was not, however, imitation for its own sake, but imitation leading to the reestablishment of a study which had been neglected for centuries. Nor was it antiquity for its own sake, but moral philosophy with the guidance of antiquity. Language and learning were again seen as expressions of the education of the whole man.

These, then, were the ideals reiterated again and again from Classical times until the eighteenth century, by men concerned with literature and learning as a didactic, religious, and moral force. In the late Renaissance Philip Sidney restates Aristotle's assertion of the function of rhetoric as a means of reaching truth:

> This purifying of wit, this enriching of memory, enabling of judgment, and enlarging of conceit, which commonly we call learning, under what name soever it come forth, or to what immediate end soever it be directed, the final end is to lead and draw us as high a perfection as our degenerate souls, made worse by their clay lodgings, can
be capable of. From these two sources, the Classical idea of the Logos expressed through rhetoric, and the Christian humanist conception of the divinity of the Word, came the power and sanctity of language and learning.

The Renaissance concern with emulating the classics led to the adoption of the Classical doctrine of imitation. It was the most direct way of imbibing the Classical principles that viewed art as the finest product of human excellence and writers as princes among men. The Classical doctrine of imitation developed partly as a consequence of the cumulative influence of literary practice and rhetorical and aesthetic theories. George Converse Fiske, in Lucilius and Horace, explores the origin and evolution of this theory:

. . . the general trend of ancient literary tradition, reinforced by the teaching of the rhetorical schools, and formulated by the treatises on literary criticism and rhetoric, was to regard the subject matter of an earlier master in any given genre as the common property of posterity.

Manuals of rhetoric and poetics were designed to codify for the benefit of the student the practice and theory of good usage as illustrated by the great Classical models. The basic principles of Classical imitation were, first, that in the various genres, the subject matter or theme was regarded as the common property


of posterity, and hence that independent invention was shunned. Second, within the limits of the genre, the perpetuation of which was seen as a sacred trust, originality was given ample scope by means of three principles. These were as follows: first, a reinterpretation of the material in a form inspired by the aesthetic and ethical ideals of the present, and so transformed as to give utterance to those ideals. Second, by differentiation of the various genres. Third, by the principle of improvement of the model and a "generous rivalry" with the master. Therefore, imitation of a model or borrowing from any source was never the subject of blame in antiquity, provided the imitator showed independence in the treatment of his material, and aimed at improvement in form and content. Fiske, talking particularly about satire in relation to the Classical theory of imitation, points out:

In such a genre as satire with its constant preoccupation with the spirit of the individual and of society, with its insistence upon the principles which mould character, with its frank, popular, and humorous expression of these social and moral laws, there was accumulated, so to speak, a vast mass of human and social material. In so far as human and social experience repeats itself in every age, this material had some measure of fixity. We, therefore, find in satire certain conventional themes elaborated with general, but not too rigid adherence to rhetorical schemes of exposition and even to argumentative sequences. Such schematization may even be traditional in several related genres. In the second place we find a large mass of briefly worded gnomic wisdom and of pointed and humorous anecdote, which is

---

Ibid. This is a paraphrase of Fiske's discussion, pp. 38-45.
freely drawn upon by all the satirists to furnish concrete illustration for their interpretation and commentary on contemporary life.

This accumulation of material provided a storehouse of subject matter, theme and imagery for subsequent satirists down through the eighteenth century.

Satirists of the abuses of language and learning paid particular attention to the rhetorical uses of language as an instrument of learning. Originally, the ideal was that the training of a public speaker must be an education of the whole man, and not simply a study of mere rhetorical devices. But as ends were confused with means, winning an argument became its own justification and morality and truth were ignored. This distortion of the ideal became a significant target for Classical satirists, and the emphasis in their satires points up this distortion. For instance, Aristophanes ridiculed windbag philosophers and sophists who used the devices of rhetoric to twist truth to whatever shape their interests directed. In many respects the satire on language was identified with the justification or apologia for worthy satire. Horace, for instance, analyzes and refines Lucilius' satiric approach in order to more clearly define the subject matter, themes, and moral justification of satire, and in the process what comes into focus is the recognition that the burden of communication (that is, learning and the rhetorical language which presents and interprets learning) is didactic, religious, and moral.

Fiske, p. 55.
There are two intellectual events that are of particular importance to this satirical tradition, the Greek rationalist enlightenment of the fourth century B.C. and the "new rationalism" of the eighteenth century A.D. Each resulted in a profound ideological shift in Western intellectual thought. The Greek enlightenment signaled the separation of the rational from the mythological mode of thinking. The eighteenth-century enlightenment was a movement which secularized many areas of intellectual endeavour previously thought to lie solely within the purview of the Church. These two movements are of particular importance because both rely heavily on the Word as the ultimate rational expression of man.

The new rationalist ideology of the Greeks led to a new perspective and a new concern with the means by which men might find truth. It is useful to the reader of eighteenth-century satire to understand what happened because it provides one more reason why the satire on language was so important to the Scriblerian endeavour of Swift and Pope and their contemporaries.

The pre-Socratic world view of the Greeks was that of a universe dominated by forces outside of man. There was an overwhelming sense of human helplessness in the face of divine mystery, and of the *ate* that waits on all human achievement. In this daemonic world evil was seen as a force that assaulted men from without. Enlightenment, when it came, came slowly. The Greeks gradually lost faith in this mythic and daemonic world, and new beliefs began to gain ascendancy.
This withdrawal of the daemonic had two effects. One was the ascendancy of the rational over the irrational which William Barrett describes in *Irrational Man*:

The fall of Being . . . occurred when the Greek thinker detached things as clear and distinct forms from their encompassing background, in order that they might reckon clearly with them. The terms used in Gestalt psychology--figure and ground--may be helpful here: By detaching the figure from the ground the object could be made to emerge into the daylight of human consciousness; but the sense of the ground, the enveloping background, could also be lost. The figure comes into sharper focus, that is, but the ground recedes, becomes invisible, is forgotten. The Greeks detached beings from the vast enveloping ground of Being. This act of detachment was accompanied by a momentous shift in the meaning of truth for the Greeks, a shift which Heidegger pinpoints as taking place in a single passage in Plato's *Republic*, the celebrated allegory of the cave. The quality of a-leteia, un-hiddenness, had been considered the mark of truth; but with Plato in that passage truth came to be defined, rather, as the correctness of an intellectual judgment. Truth henceforth resided in the human intellect insofar as that intellect judged truly about things. By adopting this meaning of truth as the primary and essential one, the Greeks were able to develop science, the unique and distinguishing characteristic of Western civilization.

The second effect happened coincidentally with the first. Men had to confront naked the mystery of evil, no longer as an alien thing assaulting from without, but from within, as an essential part of their own being. Many of the intellectuals of the time responded by developing a psychology that posited a rational, mechanical method of dealing with the irrational:

"Most people," says Socrates, "do not think of knowledge as a force (ίσωρηθρόν), much less a dominant

or ruling force: they think a man may often have knowledge while he is ruled by something else, at one time anger, at another pleasure or pain, sometimes love, very often fear; they really picture knowledge as a slave which is kicked about by all these other things."... Socrates ... explains away this common view by translating it into intellectual terms: the nearness of an immediate pleasure or pain leads to false judgements analogous to errors of visual perspective, a scientific moral arithmetic would correct these.

Others, however, were never "mere" rationalists: they were deeply and imaginatively aware of the power, the wonder, and the peril of the irrational. It was this awareness that gave a powerful energy to Aristophanes' satire. He had only scorn for those whose speculations ignored the vital and irrational force in men.

Thus men brought within their compass a whole new range of knowledge and, paradoxically, a whole new concept of evil. As a consequence of this paradox a new preoccupation developed: a concern with the means by which men might find truth through learning, and an awareness on the part of some artists of the seductiveness of the irrational elements in human nature which govern so much of what we think is our thinking.

23 E. R. Dodds, The Greeks and the Irrational (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), p. 185. Dodds is quoting from Plato's Pythagorás 352BC, 356C-357E. This dialogue is directed against sophists and sophistry, the general thesis being that these men, despite their renown as teachers, had no really sound and critical views, positive or negative, to offer and were themselves at the mercy of clever dialecticians, including Socrates, should he choose to chop logic with them. Regardless of the fidelity, or lack of fidelity, to Socrates' real position, the views expressed represent intellectual attitudes current in Aristophanes' time.
The Greek temperament seemed to enjoy the paradox, for while the Greeks were pursuing the good life through rational inquiry, they were bemused with witty games that showed how easily Reason defeats itself. They had always enjoyed problem-plays, and in the earlier days such plays expounded the manifest workings-out of Divine Justice. But as externalized evil became internal, the exposition of Divine Justice was too limited a theme to entertain the witty Athenians, and they introduced complexities of plot which made the justice harder to work out until at last, in the plays of Euripides, they found a playwright whose aim was to leave the problem unsolved. Euripides was the dramatic exemplar of the innate Athenian fondness for equivocation. E. R. Dodds comments on Euripides:

> Whether the poet [Euripides] had Socrates in mind when he wrote the Medea, I do not know. But a conscious rejection of Socratic theory has been seen, I think rightly, in the famous words that he put into the mouth of Phaedra three years later. Misconduct, she says, does not depend on a failure of insight, "for plenty of people have good understanding." No, we know and recognize our good, but fail to act on the knowledge: either a kind of inertia obstructs us, or we are distracted from our purpose by "some pleasure." . . . Nor do these passages stand alone; the moral impotence of the reason is asserted more than once in fragments from lost plays.

The ambivalence of the Classical attitude toward Greek rationalism was expressed in a similar response by Christians who attached shifting values to reason and faith. But regardless of point of view, schoolman or humanist, conservative or reformer, Renaissance optimist or sceptic, the underlying
assumptions were the same. That is, that Reason was a gift of God, given to aid those who would discover virtue. This means that for many Renaissance scholars, truth is attainable only through the cautious and rigorous exercise of reason, and in consequence the world lies subject to all the perversions of reason brought about by fools and knaves.

Satirists, who like to keep a finger on the moral pulse of society, have naturally been concerned with the "perversity" of reason. The implied criterion is the ideal of wisdom as a life of active virtue, that involves practice rather more than theory—and not compartmentalized practice, but activity that includes the whole man as a single moral, religious, and sentient being. The reality is represented in the two broad themes that invariably appear in satires on learning. One is the rational man's capacity for garbled knowledge and for self-approving opinion, concomitant with his superior ability to deceive both himself and others. The other is the consequence of man's Faustian desire for all knowledge combined with a propensity for metaphysical and speculative theories and doctrines abstracted from common sense and the practicalities of everyday life. These themes appear in all satires on language and learning from the classics to the present day.

To summarize, the Greek celebration of reason represented an immense and necessary step forward, but it was also a loss, because it meant that reason was detached from the mythic, religious, poetic impulses with which it had hitherto been intrinsically connected. This separation demanded that a
constant vigilance be maintained over that other part, the evil, irrational impulses contained within us. In satire, this separation was manifested in the two themes described above, that is, the heightened ability of a rational man to deceive, and the Faustian longing for complete knowledge.

In the eighteenth century, or rather the latter part of the seventeenth century, another ideological shift occurred, in some respects almost the reverse of the Greek Socratic movement which gave sanctity to the Word. The eighteenth-century shift made the Word a marketplace commodity. This debasement of the Word was the consequence of three elements: a general secularization of knowledge, an increasing scepticism that undermined confidence in man's rational capabilities and, most important, the proliferation of bad writers and bad writing through certain technological developments in the printing press and the manufacturing of paper.

At the beginning of the seventeenth century, the word "science" still meant both knowledge--acquired by a systematic acquaintance with the assertions of authority from Aristotle down through his scholastic interpreters--and general truth, made evident by the controlling fictions of art and literature. Natural philosophy included anything from the dying stages of alchemy and astrology to the exciting and frightening new revisions of the age's sense of the universe. These revisions were being brought about by a century of global exploration and revolutionary astronomical thought, and they soon extended into other areas of knowledge. "And new philosophy calls all in
doubt," lamented John Donne in his *Anatomy of the World*, and it was not only the old maps of that world, the Ptolemaic cosmology, the macro-microcosmic relationships, the hierarchies of being in animal, vegetable, and mineral kingdoms, as well as in nations and churches whose loss he bemoaned. It was also a whole attitude towards certainty, a condition of comfort taken in demonstrations logically deduced from propositions of unquestioned authority. The new empirical attitudes toward truths about nature threatened some of that deductive security, that sense of protection which closure affords. One of the casualties of the new empiricism was the certainty of orthodox religious views. This weakening of traditional religion in the seventeenth century occurred against a background of violence and excess that lay beneath the thin veneer of civilized behaviour. Half the children borne died in infancy. The London mob, notorious for its touchiness, was always ready to burst into violence, and cock-fighting and bear and bull baiting by vicious dogs were standard rural pastimes. Drunkenness was the pastime of all classes.

The confusions engendered by the ultimately contradictory views of man's nature, the orthodox religious view and the modern secular view, which will be explained below, may help explain the frequency of neurosis and outright insanity among serious people during this period. For a period called the Age of Reason, it was a time when the irrational and the self-destructive rose dangerously near the surface.
To the active humanist intellect, compensation could lie in the expansion of wisdom, but the spreading of reason's light had not only resulted in an increasing knowledge but also in civil war and the horrors of sectarianism. Although the radicals were defeated and the Restoration government was firmly in control, many men were still haunted by the spectre of anarchy that had raged briefly during and after the Civil War, when Englishmen had been inspired to "such a desire of novelty as rose to a contempt" of the established order in church and state. This desire for, and adulation of, novelty was expressed in both religious and scientific speculation, and since magic and superstition still played a large part in popular thought, this mix produced strange and bizarre theories and visions. Interest in the sciences of alchemy and astrology was widespread during this period, not least among religious and political radicals. It is not accidental that Ralphe, Hudibras' squire, was at once a sectary and a Hermetic philosopher. Many of the advocates of these speculative theories had been voluntarily or involuntarily silenced with the establishment of the Restoration government, but theories such as the doctrine of progress and institutions such as the Royal Society were the eighteenth-century heirs to much of the enthusiasm and proselytizing spirit of these men.

The second element of the eighteenth-century ideological shift was a consequence of a particular emphasis on scepticism that developed with Montaigne and which resulted in the growing realization that man's reason was inadequate and possibly even subversive to man's good. Butler seems to have believed this; he felt that human nature encompassed three kinds of men: those who employ reason to deceive others, those who are rationally deceived by knaves or by themselves, and those natural fools and madmen whose "little wit . . . tends naturally to knavery." Nevertheless, using one's reason to discriminate between good and evil is necessary because there is a tendency in man towards degeneration, and if a man merely responds to his impulses he will be drawn into expressing this degeneration. Swift, in *Further Thoughts on Religion*, says this very clearly:

Lions, bears, elephants, and some other animals are strong and valiant, and their species never degenerate in their native soil, except they happen to be enslaved or destroyed by human fraud: But men degenerate every day, merely by the folly and perverseness, the avarice, the tyranny, the pride, the treachery, or inhumanity of their own kind.

In *A Tale of a Tub*, Swift's Hack continually responds to his impulses without the mediation of reason but, what is worse, he also writes about it. In a market flooded with printed matter there were some advantages in printing eccentricity, even that of the Hack's. For the third, and perhaps the most

---

powerful element, in this eighteenth-century change of direction was the exploitation of bad writers and bad writing:

The commercial invasion of literature was a manifestation of the changing values of an entire society. It represented, in fact, a social revolution. There was an economic boom in the 1690's, particularly between 1692 and 1695. . . . A new type of enthusiast became a feature of the scene, the economic projector, who was interested in the applied, profitable, "useful" things of life. . . . In general, England had become a progressive, commercially-minded nation, with new economic theories celebrating the new economic spirit. Of course, the secularizing process in the country had begun long before, but as the religious values receded the new values of commerce seemed to be taking their place as the motivating force in the lives of men. . . . There is nothing new about the acquisitive instinct, but now there was less pretence about its moral aspects.28

In the Christian humanist tradition, language as it expresses knowledge should be the highest expression of a rational man, and this perversion of learning and language (as it was considered to be) dismayed and disgusted many writers, and particularly Scriblerian satirists.

To summarize, the new rationalism of the eighteenth century was, like its predecessor, an immense and necessary step forward, but the new empirical attitudes toward truth about nature had reverberations beyond their immediate subject matter. Combined with these reverberations was a more sceptical assessment of man's reason. But what was perhaps the most disturbing aspect of this movement was the ease and speed with which speculative and oftentimes misguided "knowledge" was being

disseminated because of the commercial exploitation of bad
writing.

Because all satires on language and learning deal
essentially with the same theme, the perversions of learning,
it seems reasonable to conclude that these satirists have one
common perception: they perceive the gulf that lies between
the honest pursuit of truth and its abuse and obfuscation.
Yet every satirist responds to his subject with his own
individual perception, which in large part is determined by
the period in which he lives. As indicated above, this study
will examine some of the themes and imagery of the satiric
tradition of language and learning from Aristophanes to Swift's
A Tale of a Tub, in order to show the strength and pervasiveness
of this tradition. Clearly, there is a straight line from
Aristophanes to Swift, as Swift himself acknowledges in his
"Introduction" to the Tale:

To this End, the Philosopher's Way in all Ages
has been by erecting certain Edifices in the Air;
But, whatever Practice and Reputation these kind of
Structures have formerly possessed, or may still
continue in, not excepting even that of Socrates,
when he was suspended in a Basket to help Contemplation;
I think, with due Submission, they seem to labour
under two Inconveniences. First, That the Foundations
being laid too high, they have been often out of Sight,
and ever out of Hearing. Secondly, That the Materials,
being very transitory, have suffer'd much from
Inclemencies of Air, especially in these North-West
Regions.

29 Jonathan Swift, A Tale of a Tub: To Which is Added the
Battle of the Books and the Mechanical Operation of the Spirit,
ed. A.C. Guthkelch and D. Nichol Smith, 2nd ed. (Oxford:
Yet despite the similarity of theme and imagery, the significance of the satire changes considerably because of the changing periods of history.
CHAPTER II

CLASSICAL SATIRISTS AND THEIR EMPHASES

Aristophanes: Clouds

Lucian: Satirical Sketches
Aristophanes wrote *Clouds* in the fifth century B.C. and Lucian wrote his satires in the second century A.D., but each used similar themes and stock images to attack the intellectual perversions peculiar to his own period. The themes and the imagery that Aristophanes had developed still had validity in Lucian's time: philosophers still indulged in unbridled speculation to no useful end, and their protestations of other-worldliness could still shield a parasitic immorality.

Social conditions change, however, and so do intellectual fashions, and as a consequence each satirist had a different emphasis. Aristophanes was writing nearer the genesis of Greek rationalism and his concerns were different from those of Lucian, who wrote when the new rationalism was no longer an issue.

The replacement of mythological by rational thinking was a slow process, but the significance of Greek rationalism was beginning to make itself felt during the fifth century B.C. One major change that resulted from the changing Greek view was the introduction of the "new education." The "new education" answered the political and intellectual needs of the time. It provided training by rhetoricians skilled in the art of persuasion for those who aspired to political success, and it fulfilled an intellectual appetite not satisfied by the traditional forms of education. Traditional Athenian education trained boys in skills and arts useful to the community in war and peace, such as gymnastics, reading and writing, singing and playing stringed instruments, but
it did not encourage boys to think critically. The "new education" with its rhetorical techniques could do just that, but in the process of acquiring these critical skills, it was possible to assimilate them on a very superficial and mechanical level. These skills could be adopted without real understanding, reflection, or even conviction by those who wished to exploit their effectiveness.

Aristophanes straddles the gap that developed when mythological thinking was being replaced by rational thinking. On the one hand he could appreciate the significance of the new rationalism, but on the other he could see its dangers. The undiscriminating adoption of the new ideas encouraged unrestrained thought free of tradition or "common sense," and yet provided no other restraint in their place. Consequently, in Clouds, Aristophanes attacks the new education and the men who promulgated the new ideology, and accuses them of failing to provide the requisite morality to replace the traditional restraints that were being weakened or destroyed. In fact, he accuses the sophists of using their new ideology to justify and rationalize immoral behaviour.

Lucian attacks the same tendency in the philosophers he satirizes, but he does not accuse them of using a new ideology because it is no longer new. On the contrary, it had been examined and argued over until a myriad of different philosophical sects had developed, each claiming to be subtly but essentially different from all others. Philosophers were now well-entrenched professionals, even though as far as Lucian
was concerned they could still be reduced to the windbag philosophers that Aristophanes had made notorious. There was a difference in the social milieu, however; philosophy was now fashionable, and wealthy households kept philosophers as intellectual ornaments. These parasites became Lucian's favourite target, followed closely by the devotees of the various philosophical sects, who were attracted to the fashionable intellectual trappings rather than to the substance of philosophy. Lucian made use of the ironies of dramatic situation and physical perspective to add bite to his satire, and later satirists were to use both his techniques and his imagery, some of which were original to Lucian himself, and some of which were developed from the stock images and types that Aristophanes had established in *Clouds*.

Satirists are commonly more irritated by the hypocrisy than by the ideas of those they portray. Something of this character is to be discerned in Aristophanes, and *Clouds* expresses his reaction to the new rationalism of fifth-century Athens and to the sophists, the spokesmen for the new rationalism.

I have decided to use two different sources for my quotations from *Clouds*. These are: Aristophanes, *The Clouds*, translated by Alan H. Sommerstein (London: Penguin, 1975) and Aristophanes, *The Clouds*, translated by F.L. Lucas (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1967). Sommerstein's translation seems to me to convey more clearly Aristophanes' irreverent tone. Lucas' translation of those passages dealing with language and learning seem to me to illustrate more clearly the variety and apparent complexity of sophistical language. Quotations cited will give the translator's name, and then the page number. (e.g., Lucas, p. 435).
and the main proponents of the "new education" that was superseding traditional Greek education.

There is not sufficient evidence in comedy to understand the social and intellectual importance of the sophistic movement, which in fact was for several decades the most stirring element in Greek thought and life. E. R. Dodds describes the sophistic movement in this way:

...we can dimly perceive two great issues being fought out. One is the ethical question concerning the source and the validity of moral and political obligation. The other is the psychological question concerning the springs of human conduct—why do men behave as they do, and how can they be induced to behave better? ... On that issue the first generation of Sophists, in particular Protagoras, seem to have held a view whose optimism is pathetic in retrospect, but historically intelligible. "Virtue or Efficiency (aretē) could be taught:" by criticising his traditions, by modernising the Nomos which his ancestors had created and eliminating from it the last vestiges of "barbarian silliness," man could acquire a new Art of Living, and human life could be raised to new levels hitherto undreamed of.²

Aristophanes realized that the primitive instincts, described as "barbarian silliness" by the idealistic proponents of the new rationalism, were an inherent part of mankind, and that an enlightened view that did not adequately take this into account was, at the very least, misled and misleading. Thus the comedy's soberer implications reflect Aristophanes' concern with the moral dangers inherent in contemporary thought and literature. Aristophanes was no doubt a man of his times, and would have

generally subscribed to the new rationalism himself. But at the same time, he was aware of the shortcomings of an intellectual attitude that failed to take into account the irrationalities of men. The notion that the part played by the passions in determining human behaviour could be easily dismissed appalled Aristophanes. His imagery reflects the immediate popular effects rather than the necessarily slower intellectual impact of the new rationalism, an impact that resulted in an upsurge of Greek scientific knowledge. That is, he reflected not only the new enlightenment, but also the reaction against it, as it brought with it its own baggage of half-truths, distortions, and hypocrisies.

Aristophanes' Clouds introduces one of the most pervasive images in satires on learning: the windbag philosopher, completely abstracted from common sense and the practicalities of everyday life. The choice of Socrates to represent this type might be found in the appearance and behaviour of the real Socrates. His physical appearance seems to have lent itself naturally to travesty, the more so since no other philosopher was so well known to the public, and there were undoubtedly features of the comic figure which, however exaggerated, fitted Socrates far better than the sophists. Only he who had never taught for money and who liked to walk barefooted, and not one of the elegant sophists who took high fees, could be depicted as a starving pauper. But Aristophanes also holds up to derision a Socrates who never existed, and neglects some of the more obvious features, both novel and
irritating, of the historical person. This is because Socrates was also representative of a movement (the sophists) and a stock type, and it is as a type that he survives in succeeding satires. Socrates is a mask, a type, of what Cornford calls the "Learned Doctor." He has the pontifical airs of a pedant, and the intolerable conceit of superior wisdom, which, when disclosed, turns out to be either blasphemous or absurdly trivial. Through this mask the pretensions of the sophists, not of Socrates, are fully exposed. The mask, then, to which the name "Socrates" is attached is that of the pretender to more than ordinary wisdom and cleverness.

Sophists are instantly recognizable in Clouds. They are pale, dirty, unshod, and unshaven, immune to the discomforts of bedbugs and insufficient food, because they are absorbed in "higher things." Strepsiades observes that "never one of them has had his hair cut,/ Put oil upon his skin, or visited/ The bathhouse for a bath" (Lucas, p. 399-400). Ordinary people shun them. Pheidippides resists his father's pleas to become one of their pupils because he doesn't want to become one of "those stuck-up white-faced characters--like that bloody Socrates . . . . How could I ever look my cavalry friends in the eye again, with a face looking like it had been covered in chalk?" (Sommerstein, p. 116) Pheidippides, however, does finally

acquiesce to his father's pleas and delivers himself over to the sophists. Upon his return his father anxiously scans his face and then greets him with cries of rapture: "O son beloved, Oh joy, Oh joy./ What a pleasure it is to see you look so pale" (Lucas, p. 408).

In addition to a characteristic physical appearance, the slovenly, high-minded sophists have a characteristic lifestyle. They are contemptuous of common comforts, presumably so absorbed in a heady maze of abstractions that they are unaware of the filth and vermin that surrounds them, or the hunger that plagues them. The chorus counsels Strepsiades:

... how rich shall be thy blessing,  
If thou has but reflection, and recollection,  
and a persevering heart  
That does not baulk to stand or walk in the service of our art--  
If it is bold to bear the cold, nor cares if breakfast come,  
And can resign licence and wine, and the gymnasium . . .

(Lucas, p. 390)

Strepsiades accepts the challenge:

If you want to find a stubborn mind, and  
care-worn sleeplessness,  
And a stomach of thrift that can make shift to dine on herbs and cress,  
You need not fear--you'll have them here.  
No anvil's more resistant.

(Lucas, p. 390)

However, he needs all his stubborn country persistence to endure the agonies of a philosopher's bed:

Wretch that I am, I'm dying! From the bed  
The enemy creep out to exverminate me.  
All along my ribs they're preying  
Now my very lifeblood's shed.
Round my loins the things are straying,
   And my buttocks they are flaying
They will leave me dead!

(Lucas, p. 396)

Socrates and his followers perform no useful work. The Clouds are "the patron goddesses of the layabout," who
   ... nourish the brains of the whole tribe of sophists . . . . And the prophets and teachers of medicine and other such dirty long-haired weirdies--anyone in fact, so long as he doesn't do any useful work (Sommerstein, p. 126).

When there is nothing to eat for dinner, they are prepared to make shift with casual thieving:

   So Socrates . . . . sprinkled a little ash on the table, bent round a skewer to serve as a pair of compasses, and then... . . . he whipped somebody's coat while they were wrestling (Sommerstein, p. 119).

Consequently, Socrates can teach nothing useful.

Strepsiades, the practical countryman, tries to discover a useful application for the knowledge that Socrates is determined to impart, only to win the scorn of his teacher:

   Socrates: Now what do you want to be taught first?
      Something that you haven't been taught before.
      Come on. Words? Rhythms? Verse measures?
   Strepsiades (eagerly): Measures, yes, that's what I want to know about. Only the other day a corn-dealer cheated me with an oversized quart measure.
   Socrates (impatiently): I'm not talking about that. What measure do you consider the most attractive? Iambic trimeters? Trochaic tetrameters?
   Strepsiades: Well... . . . let me see... . . . I think I prefer the gallon.
   Socrates: The gallon? What on earth are you blethering about?
   Strepsiades: I thought you said tetrameters. That means four, doesn't it? Well, I certainly prefer four quarts to three, if that's what you wanted to know.
Socrates: Damn your quarts, you stupid peasant. Let's try rhythms, perhaps you'll understand them better.
Strepsiades: I will if they'll help me sell my corn (Sommerstein, p. 139).

But Socrates evades Strepsiades last question: "Well, my good man, why should I learn about any of these things?" (Sommerstein, p. 139). Strepsiades instinctively recognizes that learning is useless unless it is grounded in some kind of meaningful context, and that the only practical application of the philosopher's knowledge is in confounding the law and controverting justice.

The philosophers are not so clear about the meaninglessness of most of their activities as is Strepsiades. They prefer to believe that they are engaged in profound philosophical explorations. Aristophanes' Socrates is an "adept in the mysteries of the meteorsophists," (Sommerstein, p. 121) and he has all the paraphernalia appropriate to such a powerful figure: a secret society, initiation rites, and a store of esoteric wisdom available only to initiates. The sophists' esoteric wisdom is in reality entirely trivial and absurd, but it is solemnly discussed in high-flown language:

Student (as repeating a story learned by heart): Chaerephon of Sphettus once asked Socrates whether he was of the opinion that gnats produced their hum by way of the mouth or--the other end.
Strepsiades: Well, well, what did he say?
Student: "The intestinal passage of the gnat," he replied, "is very narrow, and consequently the wind is forced to go straight through to the back end. And then the arse, being a hole forming the exit from this narrow passage, groans under the force of the wind."
Strepsiades: ... I must say that's a marvellous feat of intestinology (Sommerstein, p. 118).
These virtuosos are absorbed in their own experiments, again on some absurdity of no importance:

Student: . . . It was like this: Socrates just asked Chaerophon how many of its own feet a flea could jump--do you see? because one of them had just bitten Chaerophon's eyebrow and jumped over on to Socrates' head.
Strepsiades: Well, how did he find out?
Student: He used a most elegant method. He melted some wax and put the flea's feet into it, so that when it set the flea had a stylish pair of slippers on. And then he took them off its feet and measured the distance out, like this, you see (taking a step or two, toe touching heel.)
Strepsiades: Gosh, what an intellectual brain!
(Sommerstein, p. 118)

Why is Strepsiades, with his good countryman's common sense and practicality, impressed by this man? The immediate reason is that he is completely confused by the sophists' cleverness with words. Conventional logic and understanding falter before the superficially significant language of the philosophers. When Socrates confounds Strepsiades with his arguments against the existence of Zeus, Strepsiades agrees with his teacher because he is confused; he cannot apply old values and meanings: "I cannot tell. You speak so well" (Lucas, p. 390). Strepsiades finally capitulates entirely: "Zeus is dead, and now Awhirl is the new king" (Sommerstein, p. 129).

Behind the mockery and comic insinuation stood the fact that the bonds of traditional religions and cults had slackened, and this was due, to a large extent, to the views of the modern sophists: the writers, thinkers, and teachers. The only opposition which counted was the moralistic or sceptical rationalism taught by the sophists. This is exhibited and derided in Clouds, although the ridiculous belief in Awhirl and
the new divine triad of Chaos, Clouds, and Language is primarily comic and does not give us any idea of the real situation during that important epoch in the history of human thought. Socrates' contention in Clouds that lightning could not possibly be the instrument of Zeus' justice was relevant and quite seriously meant. Behind the comic presentation we feel the underlying moral energy which gave the chief impetus to the rationalist and ethical criticism of the traditional ideas about the gods, and set human reason and wisdom on the throne of Zeus.

But in the play human reason and wisdom are the gift of the ephemeral Clouds. As they approach, Strepsiades mistakes them for "mist, dew, smoke, vapour, something like that," but Socrates points out that "from them come our intelligence, our dialectic and our reason; also our speculative genius and all our argumentative talents" (Sommerstein, p. 125). These "talents" are chiefly the arts of quibbling, hair-splitting, and logic-chopping, and Strepsiades is anxious to learn them all, as he explains to Socrates:

I want to be a real subtle thinker, like you, and be able to split the thinnest hair going, and deflate my opponent with a pointed little argument and still have another up my sleeve for my own speech. (Sommerstein, p. 125)

Socrates points out, however, that learning these talents involves first freeing oneself from the restrictions of earth-bound common sense: "Do not constrict your thoughts in a narrow circle/ Centred about yourself--let them soar to Heaven" (Lucas, p. 397).
As Socrates explains to Strepsiades after he descends from his basket in the sky:

... for accurate investigation of meteorological phenomena it is essential to get one's thoughts into a state of, er, suspension by mixing small quantities of them with air—for air, you know, is one of very similar physical constitution to thought—at least to mine (Sommerstein, p. 122).

Strepsiades can learn the art of obscure thinking by following his teacher's instructions to "subtilize your thought, Survey the whole, analyse, subdivide/ Each detail point by point" (Lucas, p. 397). But the old man is most successful when he learns the sophistical art of quibbling, as he demonstrates when he himself is able to examine his son's abilities in this art. He had, however, been given a careful lesson by Socrates:

Socrates: . . . which animals are male?
Strepsiades: Well, I know that, if I haven't gone potty. A ram, a he-goat, a bull, a jackass, a chicken—
Socrates: See what you do? You call the male and female by the same name 'chicken'.
Strepsiades: Eh?
Socrates (very slowly as to a child): You just called the male 'chicken', and you called the female 'chicken' too.
Strepsiades (after some thought): By Poseidon, so I do. What ought I to call them?
Socrates: Say 'chickeness', and the male you can call 'chicken'.

(Sommerstein, p. 140)

4 Swift was later to draw the analogy between learning and air out to its most grotesque limits in A Tale of a Tub, when he devotes his "Aeolist" Chapter to it, with its devastatingly reductive syllogism: "Words are but Wind; and Learning is nothing but Words; Ergo, Learning is nothing but Wind" (p. 153).

5 This kind of obscure thinking typified the techniques of the Schoolmen which were later satirized by Erasmus and Rabelais.
This is one of the few lessons that Strepsiades is able to master, and he is concerned that he may not be capable of the required subtle, sophistical thinking: "How can I cope with all this logic-chopping and hair-splitting? I'm an old man, I never was brainy, and now I've hardly any memory at all" (Sommerstein, p. 117). His solution is to persuade Pheidippides to take the new education, to learn "the art of speaking." That is, the "new" speaking, where language is no longer the instrument of truth and virtue, but of falsehood and corruption. For the second reason that Strepsiades is impressed with Socrates is that the philosopher not only possesses "the art of speaking" but he is able to condense all the wisdom that this art serves into a mechanical, compact system that can be mastered in a few weeks. When Pheidippides asks, "What good can anyone learn from such a set?" his father answers, "Learn! You can learn the sum of human wisdom" (Lucas, p. 400).

The doctrines of the sophists in *Clouds* were only esoteric enough to provide a certain attractive obscurity. Many of their ideas, both in the play and in the real world of the time, were well fitted to be treated superficially and thus to be popularized, and they infiltrated the minds of the people almost without their becoming aware of it. Most people knew nothing of science, and the complete blankness of Strepsiades' mind when he hears of astronomy and geometry reflects, though in comic exaggeration, the widespread ignorance of what was supposed to be an important part of the teaching of some of the sophists. The inability of Strepsiades to comprehend deep
thoughts is overcome by the student's frequent use of homely analogies to help familiarize Strepsiades with his esoteric knowledge:

Strepsiades: What on earth are these things?
Student: Well, this one's for astronomy, and that one's for geometry, and--
Strepsiades: Geometry--what's that useful for?
Student: Well-for--for--sharing out allotments of land, for example (Sommerstein, p. 120).

Or later, when talking to Socrates:

Strepsiades: But you still haven't told me what causes the thunder.
Socrates: Didn't you hear? I said that it occurs when Clouds swollen with rain collide with one another, and is caused by their density.
Strepsiades: Ha! Do you expect me to believe that?
Socrates: You yourself are living proof of it. You have no doubt at some time--say, at the Pan-Athenian Festival--had a bit too much soup for dinner?

(Strepsiades nods guiltily.)
Well, didn't that make your tummy grumble, not to say rumble?

Strepsiades: It certainly does, straight away, a terrible noise, just like thunder. Gently at first (imitates the noise) then like this (again a little louder), and when I crap, it really lets fly (tries to imitate the noise again, but finds himself breaking wind in very truth)---just like they do (indicating the Chorus).

Socrates (approvingly): Well, if a little tummy like yours (pats it) could let off a fart like that, what do you think an infinity of air can do? That's how thunder comes about.

(Sommerstein, p. 129)

Thus, the sophists exploit the Greek admiration and enjoyment of language, and promise that most tantalizing reward: an instant education taught in easy-to-learn installments.

But the most morally destructive aspect of the new education, as presented by the sophists in _Clouds_, is that it appeals to the basest instincts in men, and allows them to
justify their basest actions. Commenting on the effect of the new rationalism, E. R. Dodds reminds us:

... it would be dishonest not to recognize that the new rationalism carried with it real as well as imaginary dangers for the social order. In discarding the Inherited Conglomerate, many people discarded with it the religious restraints that had held human egotism on the leash. To men of strong moral principle—a Protagoras or a Democritus—that did not matter: their conscience was adult enough to stand up without props. It was otherwise with most of their pupils. To them, the liberation of the individual meant an unlimited freedom of self-assertion; it meant rights without duties, unless self-assertion is a duty; "what their fathers had called self-control they called an excuse for cowardice." 6

This "unlimited freedom of self-assertion" is deplored by Right when he is debating with Wrong over the new education, with its "tricks ... they're in fashion now, aren't they (to the audience) because of you idiots" (Sommerstein, p. 149). Wrong's quick rejoinder is revealing: "Idiots indeed. They're extremely intelligent." He is exploiting the same principle that Right deplored, confident that he can seduce the audience with his suggestion that they are capable of, and have the right to, arbitrate their own ideological beliefs and assert the superiority of their own knowledge and judgment.

Wrong's contention is that once Pheidippides conquers shame and asserts his right to determine his own behaviour, he will find virtue expendable, because it doesn't serve man in any pragmatic way:

Listen to all the things that virtue can't do for you,

6 Dodds, p. 191. Dodds is quoting from Thucydides 3.82.4.
my lad—all the pleasures you'll forfeit. No boys. No women. No gambling. No fancy stuff to eat. No booze. No belly laughs. Could you live without all these? I thought not. Let me turn now to—to the demands of Nature. Suppose you fall in love with a married woman—have a bit of fun—and got caught in the act. As you are now, without a tongue in your head, you're done for. But if you come and learn from me, then you can do what you like and get away with it—indulge your desires, laugh and play, have no shame. (Sommerstein, p. 156).

When Pheidippides emerges from the Thinkery he is no longer inhibited by traditional restraints or by a sense of obligation:

It's delightful to be acquainted with the wisdom of today, and be able to look down on convention. Do you know, there was a time when I thought about nothing but horses, and in those days I couldn't say three words together that made sense. But now my father has made sure that's all behind me. I'm intimate with all the new ideas and arguments, I can dance on the point of a needle. And I can prove that it's right for me to punish my father. (Sommerstein, p. 169)

The Chorus has already prepared us for this when they comment:

We're all agog to hear the other side. For if he proves it wasn't bad For him to suffocate his dad, Soon all young men will flay their elders' hide. (Sommerstein, p. 169)

Pheidippides is also aware that he can challenge the validity of the traditional laws that had hitherto held meaning for him:

But what is a law anyway? It must have been made at some time, and made by a man just like you or me; and he must have persuaded his people by argument to accept it. Why shouldn't I now make a new law allowing sons to beat their fathers in return? I'll be generous; the times we boys got hit before the law was changed, we'll renounce all claim to compensation for them (Sommerstein, p. 170).
What he cannot do with his newly learned, corrupt system is replace the traditional framework with any valid laws of his own, and the consequence is a meaningless world, devoid of values, wherein men not only controvert justice and the law, but also outrage the most sanctified bonds between human beings. It is a world devoid of morality, where Pheidippides can justify beating his father and his mother. Thus, perhaps the most pervasive image of all is that of an old tradition emptied of meaning and replaced by a distorted and nonsensical world without any sustaining values.

The sophists' cleverness with language, their "art of speaking" distorts words and ideas. Dithyrambs have "tongues askew" and declaim "nonsense Heaven-hurled." The Chorus coaxes Strepsiades to let his thoughts "twist and wriggle" as he writhes on his vermin-ridden bed. The result is a mad world. When Strepsiades explains to his son that "There is no Zeus/Rotation's cast him out and reigns instead," Pheidippides' response is "Have you come to such a pitch of craziness/That you trust these lunatics?" After Pheidippides is converted to the new ways, however, the language of the old Greek interpreters of social morality becomes emptied of meaning, and Aeschylus is now a "millstone-venting blusterer, mere jargon, noise, and yelling." Yet Aeschylus is representative of those who had traditionally served as guides to any who sought direction in proper moral conduct. The fault lies with Pheidippides; his new education has made him incapable of recognizing or extracting any moral direction, since action
informed by morality is considered to be superfluous in his new world.

The rationalist view that it was a matter only of knowing the good to pursue it was opposed by those such as Aristophanes who were aware of the strength of human passions. Aristophanes' mockery, then, was aimed at the replacement of the living gods by vague and abstract conceptions, and at a new concept of education that encouraged the celebration of the individual at the expense of traditional restraints. But this is prosaically expressed, and Aristophanes' expression was not, fortunately, so prosaic. Strepsiades provides us with a picture of the corrupting influence of philosophy:

Now let them do their very worst,
With blows torment this body of mine,
With cold or squalor, hunger or thirst--
Ay, flay my hide as a skin for wine,
As long as I leave my debts unpaid,
And rise to seem in every eye
Voluble, shameless, unafraid;
An impudent forger of every lie,
A fox, a pettifogging cheat;
Brazen to bully, smooth to wheedle,
Cunning at law for all deceit;
A twisty trimmer as sharp as a needle,
Who will do aught to eat.
If they will but win me such names as these,
They may do whatever they like with me--
Ay, if they please,
By God they may mince me to sausages,
To serve in their Refectory.

(Lucas, p. 891)

But above all, we are left with the indelible image of an outrageous, exaggerated, ridiculous Socrates, the meteorosophist/virtuoso/adept who can teach men how to logic-chop and hair-split, how to compute "how many of its own feet a flea could jump" or perform the "marvelous feat of intestinology." To put it,
again, in Strepsiades' words, "a man who knows all about gnat's guts."

Despite Aristophanes' ridicule, five centuries later windbag philosophers were not only still in evidence, they were present in even greater numbers. They were the pet hate of Lucian, a Greek satirist of the Second Century. Lucian was born about A.D. 120 at Samosata on the Euphrates, a lecturer by profession, and at the time of his death he held high office in the Imperial Treasury in Egypt. He was one of the later wits of antiquity, and he left eighty pieces, long and short, of varying excellence. Through his mind, we are able to look at the Mediterranean world of the Second Century, the Romanized, pacified, citified, luxurious, lettered, Hellenized, dissolute, Mediterranean world. The Greek enlightenment of the Fifth Century was now in its decadence, and later Greek intellectual attitudes and contemporary Roman social life, common conversation, education, and manners are reviewed for our benefit by a sophisticated and witty satirist.

The philosophers in Lucian's Greco-Roman world share many similarities with those in Aristophanes' Thinkery. They, too, are removed from the everyday world, full of deep thoughts and absorbed in their esoteric abstract theories. Their self-importance and their mystery impresses the gullible:

Pythagoras: What did I tell you? What you think is four, is actually ten—an equilateral triangle, and the oath by which we swear.
Customer: By Four, then, I swear I've never heard
anything so mysterious and holy in my life!\(^7\)

The reader has an opportunity to examine Lucian's philosophers when they are auctioned off in "Philosophers Going Cheap." Lucian's technique in this satire, as in many others, is to set up an ironic situation and, in the ensuing dialogue, allow each philosopher unknowingly to condemn himself. Only one of the seven philosophers is sold to a man who expects to be instructed in philosophy, and the buyer is presented as a gullible, impressionable fool:

Chrysippus: And are you a living creature?
Customer: I certainly thought I was.
Chrysippus: Then you're a solid body, and therefore a stone.
Customer: Oh, please don't say that! For God's sake give me some reductive analysis and turn me back into a human being! (p. 162)

Two of these philosophical "lots" are rejected outright, two are bought to perform menial labour, and two others are sold because they are freaks: Pythagoras has a golden thigh and Socrates has superhuman eyesight.

Socrates in this sketch is not literally up in a basket, but he may as well be. His "other world" is more immediate to him than the real world, and, like the sophistical world in Clouds, it has abolished traditional restraints:

Customer: ... what sort of life do you lead?
Socrates: I live in a strange Republic of my own invention, and abide by my own Laws.

Customer: Could you tell me one of them?
Socrates: The most important one is the Nationalization of Women Act, which abolished private ownership, and ensured that the Means of Reproduction were shared by all the males in the community.
Customer: Do you mean that there is no law against adultery?
Socrates: Certainly not. We've done away with all nonsense of that sort (p. 157).

The philosophers are similar to those in *Clouds* in other ways. They, too, can offer "supreme intelligence and universal knowledge" (p. 163), or the ability to "hear the music of the spheres" and "be superhuman" (p. 148).

These learned men use obscure and difficult language, but if necessary they reduce it to homely language that can be easily understood by the common people, just as the student at the Thinkery could simplify his terms for Strepsiades. In the process these men reveal the triviality or absurdity of their subjects:

Chrysippus: Why, don't you understand that some things are Preferable and others Non-Preferable?
Customer: No, I don't understand that either.
Chrysippus: That's probably because you're not used to our terminology, and have no Imaginative Grasp—whereas a serious student who has mastered Logical Theory not only knows about that, but can also explain the important distinction between a Primary and a Secondary Accident.
Customer: Oh, be a good philosopher and tell me what Primary and Secondary Accidents are. There's something so attractive about the rhythm of those words.
Chrysippus: I'll be only too glad to: Suppose someone has a gammy leg and accidentally bangs that gammy leg against a stone and cuts it open. Well, the gaminess is a Primary Accident, and to cut is a Secondary Accident. (p. 159).
Lucian does not, however, confine his attacks to the moral philosophers. In "Icaromenippus" he satirizes natural philosophers with their "utterly conflicting and contradictory" statements. On the one hand they insist on asserting that the proper approach to nature is a mechanical and mathematical one:

They measured the height of the atmosphere, the depth of the sea, and the circumference of the earth. Not content with that, by describing circles, constructing triangles on top of quadrilaterals, and inventing a complicated system of spheres, they actually claimed to measure the sky itself (p. 114-15).

On the other hand the theological doctrines of these same philosophers are a mix of superstition and nonsensical fantasy:

Some identified God with a certain number, while others swore by dogs, or geese, or plane-trees. Then there was a sect that kicked out all the gods except one, to whom they handed over control of the universe. It rather upset me, I must admit, to think of gods being in such short supply. However, another sect went off to the opposite extreme, and were positively over-generous in their output of gods, whom they graded according to the degree of divinity displayed. The one who came out top received the title of God, and the rest merely got Second or Third-Class Honours. Then there were some who thought that the deity was formless and incorporeal, while others regarded it as a physical entity. There wasn't any general agreement that the gods take an interest in human affairs, for some thinkers relieved them of all responsibility, just as we exempt elderly people from civic duties--thus reducing gods to extras, and giving them only walk-on parts (p. 116).

The final irony of these conflicting views is that although in substance they are absurd, superficially they are almost convincing, because they are argued in terms of ordered,

---

8 Lucian, "Icaromenippus," in Turner's Satirical Sketches. All further references to this work appear in the text.
rational discourse. Consequently, Menippus is confused and cannot tell where the truth lies:

... I found it quite impossible to refute a theory which described a single object as both hot and cold, though I knew that thing couldn't possibly be hot and cold at the same time" (p. 116).

Menippus' confusion is never satisfactorily resolved in "Icaromenippus." Only when he consults Tiresius in "Menippus Goes to Hell" does he receive a useful response:

The best way to live is to be an ordinary human being. So give up all this metaphysical nonsense. Stop worrying about first principles and final causes, and forget all those clever arguments--they don't mean a thing. Just live in the moment and get along as best you can, trying to see the funny side of things and taking nothing very seriously (pp. 109-110).

Tiresius is voicing Lucian's own position and, for that matter, it is Aristophanes' also. Both felt that metaphysical speculation was a waste of a man's time and energies.

Lucian's philosophers are similar to Aristophanes' in physical appearance too. They are still pale, "long-haired types," "filthy creatures," and they, too, are capable of other-worldly stoicism. Diogenes' recommended training for would-be sophists sounds similar to the regime recommended to Strepsiades:

... the first stage will be to eliminate all luxuries, reduce you to poverty, and make you wear a blanket. After that I'll order plenty of hard labour, sleeping on the ground, and a diet of water and any old food that happens to come along (p. 152).

The end result is the same as that of the sophists in Clouds. The training that they receive eliminates shame so that,
released from restraints, a subject can become a moral renegade, free to exploit others in his turn. Diogenes' programme, as he says,

... is a very easy one to follow, my good man. Anyone can do it. You don't need to have any training, or go to any lectures, or any nonsense of that sort. It's a real short cut to fame. Even if you're a perfectly ordinary person, a cobbler, a fishmonger, a carpenter, or a bank clerk, there's nothing to stop you being a huge success, so long as you're shameless enough, and learn the technique of vulgar abuse (p. 153).

But even though there are many similarities to his predecessor Aristophanes, Lucian does more than merely shape stock images to fit contemporary themes. His response was necessarily different because contemporary circumstances had, naturally enough, changed, and these changes were reflected in his imagery. Since Aristophanes' time different schools of philosophy had proliferated and increased in size and number. In their development they had attracted quacks, mountebanks, astrologers, conjurors, syncophants, pimps, fortune-tellers, and dealers in magic, and during Lucian's epoch these charlatans abounded in all ranks of Greek and Roman society and preyed upon the vices and superstitions of rich and poor alike. Lucian harries this class of pretender without mercy, and he emphasizes the degeneracy and the hypocrisy of these men who pretend to a learning they do not have. These dissolute men flourished because they found gullible victims. During the decay of the old Roman religion, séances and lectures, spook-meetings and magic healings were in vogue, and they were popular because they exploited human folly; that is, that seemingly
willful belief in superstition and nonsense rather than truth and common sense.

Something of this shift in focus can be seen in Lucian's Socrates. He has a similar appearance to the "Learned Doctor" in Clouds, but his debauchery is more pronounced:

(Socrates comes down from the platform. He has a squashed nose, thick lips, pop-eyes, and a very large stomach.)

A Customer (to Socrates): Tell me, what's your special subject?
Socrates: Sexology and homosexuality.
Customer: Then you're no use to me. I want a private tutor for my son--and he happens to be rather good-looking.
Socrates (licking his lips): Private tutor to a good-looking boy? You won't find anyone better qualified for the job than I am. You see, I'm quite Platonic--it's only their minds I'm interested in. Why, even when I go to bed with them, they'll tell you nothing very terrible happens (p. 156).

Socrates' perversions are painted in broad, rough, strokes here, but the degeneration and hypocrisy of the philosophers is more subtly and perhaps more damningly presented in "The Dependent Scholar." Amid all the tangled mass and mess of hypocrisy in the Greco-Roman world, the household philosophers of the plutocrats seemed to Lucian to be the most odious examples. They were Greeks who made a living by teaching philosophy. They were educated men, sometimes highly educated, and they became the household ornaments and pet dogs of the Roman upper

classes. Lucian saw these household pets as insatiable monsters, fraudulently pretending to be philosophers and in the process perverting language and truth. These men plead poverty and necessity, but Lucian disagrees:

And now for the true reason, which you will never hear from their lips. Voluptuousness and a whole pack of desires are what induce them to force their way into great houses. The dazzling spectacle of abundant gold and silver, the joys of high feeding and luxurious living, the immediate prospect of wallowing in riches, with no man to say them nay,—these are the temptations that lure them on, and make slaves of free men; not lack of the necessaries of life, as they pretend, but lust of its superfluities, greed of its costly refinements (p. 5-6).

He then describes in detail the process of their degeneration and finishes with a contemptuous question:

... Do you count it no shame to be pitted against toadies and vulgar parasites? No shame to sit at the noisy banquets of a promiscuous and for the most part a disreputable company—a Greek among Romans, wearing the foreign garb of philosophy and stammering their tongue with a foreign accent? (p. 16)

Lucian has scarcely more respect for those who hire these parasites and the heavy sarcasm in this passage underlines his contempt:

As to the studies in which your employer professed an interest when he engaged you, they are nothing to him. Shall an ass affect the lyre? Remove from these men's minds the gold and the silver, with the cares that these involve, and what remains? Pride, luxury, sensuality, insolence, wantonness, ignorance. Consuming must be their desire, doubt it not, for the wisdom of Homer, the eloquence of Demosthenes, the sublimity of Plato! (p. 17)

Thus, we have an image of the greedy, sycophantic philosophers who are nothing more than kept animals and yet who pretend to great knowledge and virtue. Their keepers are no better, they too are greedy and self-indulgent, anxious to
acquire the reputation of being cultured. But stripped of their hypocritical veneer of respectability the patrons are revealed as savage, depraved men, and Lucian's image is clear and unforgettable:

The fact is, that these great men are for all the world like handsomely bound books. Outside are the gilt edges and the purple cover: and within? a Thyestes feasts upon his own children; and Oedipus commits incest with his mother; a Tereus woos two sisters at once. Such are these human books: their brilliancy attracts all eyes, but between the purple covers lurks many a horrid tale. Turn over the pages of any one of them, and you find a drama worthy the pen of Sophocles or Euripides: close the volume—all is gilt edge and exquisite tooling (p. 25).

Their outward appearance is a startling contrast to the chilling depravity within.

"The Dependent Scholar" closes with an indelible image of the philosopher grown old. He is a scheming, mercenary, degenerate hypocrite who planned to live as a parasite on his patron. His fate is ironic because his patron proves himself to be a copy of his sycophant, except that he is even more vicious and powerful. Consequently, it is the philosopher who is

Sucked dry ... . your prime has gone by, your bodily vigor is exhausted, you are a tattered remnant. Your master begins to look for a convenient dunghill whereon to deposit you (p. 24).

The philosopher is left with nothing to feed on but himself:

Whatever you once knew, you have unlearnt in all these years: on the other hand, you have developed a paunch like a balloon—a monster insatiable, inexorable, which has acquired a habit of asking for more, and likes not the unlearning process (p. 24).

Philosophers in Lucian's world were not so scarce that they could only be found in the homes of the wealthy, however. On the contrary, they were everywhere, a seething, chaotic mass
of men, and it is this that provides the most powerful image in Lucian's "Fishing for Phonies": the image of the proliferation of animalistic, fawning, appallingly vulgar "philosophers" who pretend to truth:

They snarl like dogs, cringe like hares, fawn like apes, rut like stags, steal like cats, and quarrel like fighting cocks. They make laughing stocks of themselves by elbowing each other out of the way to get to a rich man's door, or going to big dinner parties and crudely flattering their hosts, eating more than is good for them, and finally passing out from a surfeit of neat alcohol (p. 188).

These phoney philosophers are not peripheral members of Lucian's world; on the contrary "there's nothing to be seen for miles but beards, sticks, knapsacks, syllogisms, brazen faces, mealy mouths, greedy guts, and close fists" (p. 188). Their learned paraphernalia (that is, their syllogisms) are lumped together with their physical characteristics as part of the necessary bag of tricks for a philosopher. Individually, they would be ridiculous, absurd figures, but together they are dangerous because they are so plentiful. When Lucian calls from the top of the Acropolis and offers all responding philosophers their "unemployment benefit" he is overwhelmed by a multitude:

My goodness, look at them all pushing and shoving their way up here. It only needed those two minas to fetch them. And there are crowds more coming up the other side of the hill--and another lot streaming past the temple Asclepius--and an even larger party crossing over from the Areopagus--and some others hurrying past Talus's Tomb--and just look, they're actually putting ladders against the temple of Castor

Lucian, "Fishing for Phonies," in Turner's Satirical Sketches. All further references to this work appear in the text.
and Pollux and clambering up that way! Why, they're like a great swarm of insects buzzing towards us, or to adapt Homer,

They're pouring in from this side and from that,
Unnumbered as the leaves and flowers of Spring.
(p. 188)

When they realize that their right to the name of "philosopher" will be investigated, the multitude of false prophets rapidly disperses.

These men flourished because they exploited the weaknesses in human nature, and Lucian's technique for examining these weaknesses is perhaps his most significant contribution to satire. This technique was his use of perspective, both actual physical perspective, as when Menippus surveys the activities of men from out in space, or the more telling oblique comment expressed through the use of the third person point of view and the dramatic situation itself.

We have an example of his use of physical perspective in "Icaromenippus," when Menippus, his vision sharpened and focussed by Empedocles, matter-of-factly provides a chilling vignette of human activities as he relates his observations:

... human actions were clearly visible to me... I saw Ptolemy going to bed with his sister, Agathocles planning to murder his father, Antiochus the First making a secret signal to his stepmother, Stratonice, Alexander of Pherae being killed by his wife, Antigonus having an affair with his daughter-in-law, and Attalus being poisoned by his son. Elsewhere I saw Arsaces cutting his pretty little wife's throat, and the eunuch Arbaces drawing a sword to kill Arsaces. Spatinus the Mede was being dragged feet-first out of a dinner-party by his own bodyguard, after having his skull smashed in with a golden cup. The same sort of thing was happening in the palaces of Libya, Scythia, and Thrace, where people were equally busy committing adultery, murder, high treason, theft, and perjury, going in constant fear of their lives, and being informed on by their nearest and dearest... As for the rest--but there's no point in trying to tell you about all the people I saw burgling houses, lending money, going to law, and begging. It's enough to say that it was a spectacle of infinite variety.
(p. 121)
This "infinite variety" conveys not only the scope of human folly and evil, but also its pervasiveness. Menippus likens the human colony to an ant-hill, "a degrading comparison" he admits, but a realistic one. It is a comparison that Erasmus and Swift adapted in their own works, centuries later, just as they borrowed the detached objectivity of the dramatic situation which makes the spectacle so devastating.

To write about human weaknesses is to write about human follies and irrationalities, and these had another dimension which intrigued Lucian: man's apparent obliviousness to the fact of death. Lucian understood the dramatic possibilities of death too, and in "Charon Sees Life" he exploits them to the fullest. Charon, who knows nothing whatever about the conditions of human existence, is consequently mystified and exasperated by mankind's refusal to come to grips with unexpected, unwelcome, omnipresent Death. The only thing Charon knows is Death—namely, that all men die. Yet Hermes shows him scene after scene where men ignore its inevitable coming, until Charon's dismay prompts his comment:

Do you think it would be a good idea, while we're up here, for me to shout out some advice to them as loud as I possibly can—tell them to stop wasting their energy, and live with the thought of death perpetually in their minds?  

(p. 93)

But Hermes' response shows the futility of any attempt to dispel the illusions of men:

My dear chap, don't you realize how impenetrable they are? Why, you could take a drill to them, but you still wouldn't get through to their consciousness. Ignorance and delusion

11 Lucian, "Charon Sees Life," in Turner's Satirical Sketches. All further references to this work appear in the text.
have given them the treatment that Odysseus gave his crew—bunded up their ears with wax, for fear they should listen to the Sirens (p. 93).

This stubborn refusal to confront the reality of death is a symptom of a general malaise among men, a malaise that interested satirists concerned with language and learning. Men who ignore death ignore the overwhelming evidence of common sense experience. They know that death is arbitrary and inevitable, and yet they persist in conducting themselves as though they were going to live forever. Hermes hints at the reason: "You see, ignorance performs the same function up here as Lethe does down below . . ." (p. 93). Again, Erasmus and Swift were to pursue this theme in their satire. Erasmus was to write a paradoxical praise of this folly precisely because it insulates men from the truth, or, as it metamorphoses into Pauline folly, reveals divine knowledge to men. Lucian's emphasis, however, is on the fact that such folly exists, rather than on the reason for its existence.

This stubborn ignorance can be applied more specifically to learning in other sketches, where Lucian again uses dramatic irony to point out man's fascination with the irrational. In "Hermotimus, or the Rival Philosophies," Lucian's Lycinus tells Hermotimus:

Hermotimus, I cannot show what truth is, so well as wise people like you and your professor, but one thing I do know about it, and that is that it is not pleasant to the ear; falsehood is far more esteemed; it is prettier, and therefore pleasanter; while Truth, conscious of its purity, blurs out downright remarks, and offends people.

Lucian, "Hermotimus, or the Rival Philosophies," in Fowler's Works, p. 70, underlining mine. All further references to this work appear in the text.
But men who pretend to learning will believe anything, no matter how fantastic or unbelievable the story might be, and no matter how much it contradicts the dictates of common sense. Men do this because they have fallen into the delusion that haunts so many savants, the delusion of supposing that man can attain truth by some instantaneous, chop-logic process without ever committing himself to the fallible engine of his personality. They are trapped by their own delusion, and instead of rising above the vagaries of irrational passions, they become ensnared by them. One satire that clearly focuses on this delusion is "The Pathological Liar." This is a dialogue on magic cures, ghosts, second-sight, raising the dead, and enchantments and superstitions of all kinds. But the title covers more than ghosts and magic. It goes to the bottom of the subject; it explains the curious vitality and wilfulness of men who, if unable to believe in these false superstitions, will believe in something else that is equally false. They do this because they are pretending to a knowledge they do not have.

Tychiades, the narrator, after noting that many men, otherwise sensible and remarkable for their intelligence, have somehow become infected with this plague and are lovers of lying, describes a recent visit to the house of a rich invalid friend, Everates, who is a victim of quacks and second-sighters, magic cures, divinations and necromancies. The victim sits surrounded by marble statues, bronzes, and rare curiosities as well as by toadies and familiars who feed his passion for lies. Preposterous stories are told, and as the superstitious tales accumulate, Tychiades'...

13 Lucian, "The Pathological Liar," in Turner's Satirical Sketches. All further references to this work appear in the text.
dismay mounts. As each new visitor appears, Tychiades expects a sudden return to common sense:

We were now joined by Arignotus the Pythagorean, a gentleman of imposing appearance with very long hair. You must know him—he's got a tremendous reputation for wisdom. They call him the Holy Man. As soon as I saw him, I breathed a sigh of relief.

'Here comes a pair of scissors,' I thought, 'to snip through their tissue of lies. He'll soon shut them up, if they start talking any more nonsense' (p. 212).

But Arignotus disappoints Tychiades; he launches into a story about a haunted house even more preposterous than those already told. Tychiades' disgust is obvious: "I'm disappointed in you, Arignotus," I said, "You were our only hope as a champion of truth, and all we get is a lot of hot air" (p. 214).

The company is at first incredulous, and then alarmed as Tychiades tries to persuade them to try "truth and common sense." Finally they are actively hostile and accuse him of having no "scientific curiosity." But the dramatic situation demonstrates that their "truth" cannot be shown to correspond to any nameable or thinkable reality. It is, instead, a tissue of superstition and nonsense, and this would be instantly apparent if Everates and his guests could apply Tychiades' "truth and common-sense." It is through the dramatic perspective that Lucian provides that we are able to see clearly what the characters, mired in their subjectivity, cannot perceive.

Lucian's interest in the irrational was more analytical than Aristophanes', and his technique was ideally suited to his interest because it provided the necessary distancing and perspective. But both Aristophanes and Lucian understood that metaphysical speculation abstracted from common sense reality was not just absurd, but immoral. The windbag
philosopher, with his casuistry and chop-logic, pretends to a learning he does not have, and his perversions are revealed to us by the words he uses, words which indicate the gulf that lies between the honest use of language and learning, and its abuse and obfuscation.
CHAPTER III

RENAISSANCE SATIRISTS

Erasmus: The Praise of Folly
Rabelais: Gargantua and Pantagruel
Donne: Second Satire
Jonson: The Alchemist
Lucian provided a storehouse of images and techniques for succeeding satirists, particularly in the Renaissance. The professional philosophers whom Lucian hounded so unmercifully were the ancestors and the congener of the whole doctorate class of succeeding generations, such as Rabelais' Men of the Law and the Doctors of Letters at the Sorbonne and Erasmus' Schoolmen. All three satirists perceive a world run by folly twisting words and knowledge out of their rational, common sense patterns into hair-splitting casuistry and chop logic, measuring, mechanizing, abstracting the fullness of human experience into dry, shrivelled deformities for the benefit of fools. Most of the Lucianic devices, such as the "lying historian" who is the putative author of the True History, Menippus looking down in judgment upon the world, the speaker who condemns himself with every word he utters, may be found in Erasmus and Rabelais. But the Renaissance satirists use the Lucianic heritage with a different emphasis, a Christian humanist emphasis. Within this new context Erasmus dwells on the paradoxical relationship between happiness and folly. Rabelais explores the ambiguity of language.

Erasmus (1475-1536) in The Praise of Folly borrows almost intact Lucian's "Icaromenippus" image, and is very explicit about his debt:

... if a man like Menippus of old could look down from the moon and behold those innumerable rufflings of mankind, he would think he saw a swarm of flies and gnats quarreling among themselves, fighting, laying traps for one another, snatching, playing, wantoning, growing up, falling, and dying. Nor is it to be believed what stir, what broils, this little creature raises, and yet in how short a time it comes to nothing itself; while sometimes war, other times pestilence, sweeps off many thousands of them together.

1 Erasmus, The Praise of Folly, translated by John Wilson (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1972), p. 83. All further references to this work appear in the text. This image was later adapted by Swift
The "new" Menippus sees little that is different from that of the "old" Menippus. Both find a plentiful supply of Aristophanes' sophistical philosophers, still unkempt and dishevelled, as we see again in Erasmus:

"Divines are half starved, naturalists out of heart, astrologers laughed at, and logicians slighted; only the physician is worth all the rest. And among them too, the more unlearned, impudent, or unadvised he is, the more he is esteemed, even among princes. For physic, especially as it is now professed by most men, is nothing but a branch of flattery, no less than rhetoric. Next them, the second place is given to our law-drivers, if not the first, whose profession, though I say it myself, most men laugh at as the ass of philosophy; yet there's scarce any business, either so great or so small, but is managed by these asses. These purchase their great lordships, while in the meantime the divine, having run through the whole body of divinity, sits gnawing a radish and is in continual warfare with lice and fleas."

Erasmus, in *The Praise of Folly*, systematically sets out to show a world of folly peopled by lawyers, sophists, divines, rhetoricians, and courtiers. Lucian's natural philosophers in "Icaromenippus" had insisted that the proper approach to nature was a mechanical one:

"They measured the height of the atmosphere, the depth of the sea, and the circumference of the earth. Not content with that, by describing circles, constructing triangles on top of quadrilaterals, and inventing a complicated system of 3 spheres, they actually claimed to measure the sky itself."

In the second book of *Gulliver's Travels*, when the King of Brobdingnag concludes that the society described by Gulliver constitutes the "most pernicious Race of little odious Vermin that Nature ever suffered to crawl upon the Surface of the Earth."

2 Ibid., p. 53-54. See also Lucian, "Philosophers Going Cheap," in Turner's *Satirical Sketches* for similar descriptions of the various types of philosophers.

The philosophers in *The Praise of Folly* have a similar approach:

... how pleasantly do they dote while they frame in their heads innumerable worlds; measure out the sun, the moon, the stars, nay and heaven itself, as it were, with a pair of compasses; lay down the causes of lightning, winds, eclipses, and other the like inexplicable matters; and this too without the least doubting, as if they were Nature's secretaries, or dropped down among us from the council of the gods ... (pp. 91-92).

Lucian's Menippus had discovered that his "scientists" were completely abstracted from the everyday world:

... I picked out a few scientists, who, to judge from the grimness of their expressions, the paleness of their faces, and the luxuriance of their beards were at the very top of their profession—and it was obvious enough from the way they talked that their knowledge of astronomy was quite out of this world.

Similarly, "Nature's secretaries" in *The Praise of Folly* are oblivious to everyday reality, so that "they neither know themselves, nor perceive a ditch or block that lies in their way" (p. 92).

Erasmus' indictment continues as he shows lawyers, logicians, and sophists entirely preoccupied with trivia. Lawyers "daily roll Sisyphus his stone," logicians and sophists "hack and hew one another about a matter of nothing" (p. 92). But his most severe strictures are against a Renaissance variation of the traditional sophist, the hair-splitting theologians. Lucian had complained of the "torturous arguments" of the philosophers ("these revolting characters"), who pursued nothingness into infinite regions. But the centuries intervening between Lucian and Erasmus had seen generations of Schoolmen whose sole vocation seemed to be the minute diffusion of abstractions, especially theological abstractions, into even airier and more minute abstractions. At a time when the Church

perceived itself to be in grave peril, its authority under attack, it must have seemed to Erasmus that now, more than ever before, a Christian who lived a life of Christian virtue acted as a more powerful witness than all the cavilling, sophistic churchmen with their hairsplitting and their pretensions to a higher knowledge not accessible to lesser mortals. Consequently, he presents contemporary theologians as men who obscure understanding under the guise of exegesis:

... they explicate the most hidden mysteries according to their own fancy—as how the world was first made; how original sin is derived to posterity; in what manner, how much room, and how long time Christ lay in the Virgin's womb; how accidents subsist in the Eucharist without their subject. ... whether there was any instant of time in the generation of the Second Person; whether there be more than one filiation in Christ; whether it be a possible proposition that God the Father Hates the Son; or whether it was possible that Christ could have taken upon Him the likeness of a woman, or of the devil, or of an ass, or of a stone, or of a gourd; and then how that gourd should have preached, wrought miracles, or been hung on the cross; and what Peter had consecrated if he had administered the Sacrament at that time the body of Christ hung upon the cross; or whether at the same time he might be said to be man; whether after the Resurrection there will be any eating and drinking, since we are so much afraid of hunger and thirst in this world. There are infinite of these subtle trifles. ... (p. 94).

Erasmus shows how far these theologians have slid from the ideal Pauline simplicity. He throws their pious pettifoggery into relief, pointing out the logical absurdity and the moral outrageousness of their pronouncements:

... as 'tis a lesser crime to kill a thousand men than to set a stitch on a poor man's shoe on the Sabbath day; and that a man should choose rather that the whole world with all food and raiment, as they say, should perish, then tell a lie, though never so inconsiderable (p. 95).

The sheer volume of their material is stupendous and overwhelming, and Erasmus' use of catalogues visually establishes the ponderous power of their pedantry, where words and chop logic smother common sense and reality:

Here they erect their theological crests and beat into the people's ears those magnificent titles of illustrious doctors,
subtle doctors, seraphic doctors, cherubin doctors, holy doctors, unquestionable doctors, and the like; and then throw abroad among the ignorant people syllogisms, majors, minors, conclusions, corollaries, suppositions, and those so weak and foolish that they are below pedantry. There remains yet the fifth act in which one would think they should show their mastery. And here they bring in some foolish insipid fable out of Speculum historiale or Gesta romanorum and expound it allegorically, tropologically, and anagogically.

(p. 110)

Erasmus' description of another kind of pedant provides the prototype for Swift's Hack in A Tale of a Tub, a variation of Lucian's self-exposing writer: the hack writer who puts down the first thing that comes into his head, "well knowing that the vainer those trifles are, the higher esteem they will have with the greater number." He is a plagiarist, and for this, too, he is "applauded by the common people, pointed at in a crowd" (p. 89). The hack may borrow the names of more famous and eminent writers. In short, hack writers build upon nothing, praising each other's works and contributing to the growing mountain of empty words:

. . . [they] praise one another with reciprocal epistles, verses, and encomiums; fools their fellow fools, and dunces their brother dunces. This, in another's opinion, is an absolute Alcaeus; and the other, in his, a very Calimachus. He looks upon Tully as nothing to the other, and the other again pronounces him more learned than Plato. And sometimes too they pick out their antagonist and think to raise themselves a fame by writing one against the other; while the giddy multitude are so long divided to whether of the two they shall determine the victory, till each goes off conqueror, and as if he had done some great action, fancies himself a triumph (p. 90).

5 Pope alludes to this same practice in The Dunciad, Book II, 11. 119-120:
Curl stretches after Gay, but Gay is gone,
He grasps an empty Joseph for a John.
Erasmus' development of the traditional bad poet with his bad writing needed only one element, the commercial instinct, to complete the type of Swift's Hack in the Tale.

Erasmus' theologians and bad writers, so systematically and thoroughly analyzed by Folly, share two qualities, they are self-deceived and they deceive others. They deceive others because they can "turn black into white, blow hot and cold with the same breath, and carry a far different meaning in their breasts from what they feign with their tongue" (p. 59). They are self-deceived because they live under the delusion that things are as they appear and, until they are disillusioned at the Last Judgment, "they are happy in their hopes, and for this also they are beholding to me [Folly] " (p. 106).

Folly at first is all-inclusive, as when she imperceptibly incorporates all the vitality and courage of life within herself: "without me there is no living" (p. 44). To live is to be foolish, that is, self-deceived:

In fine, that wise man whoever he be, if he intends to have children, must have recourse to me. But tell me, I beseech you, what man is that would submit his neck to the noose of wedlock, if, as wise men should, he did but first truly weigh the inconvenience of the thing? Or what woman is there would ever go to it did she seriously consider either the peril of child-bearing or the trouble of bringing them up? So then if you owe your beings to wedlock, you owe that wedlock to this my follower, Madness; and what you owe to me I have already told you.

6 Ibid., p. 16. This same sentiment is echoed by Swift in his Thoughts on Religion:

Although reason were intended by providence to govern our passions, yet it seems that, in two points of the greatest moment to the being and continuance of the world, God hath intended our passions to prevail over reason. The first is, the propagation of our species, since no wise man ever married from the dictates of reason. The other is, the love of life, which, from the dictates of reason,
Folly and happiness are equated: "But what is more foolish than those, or rather more happy . . ." (p. 68), and later, "there's no man can live pleasantly unless he be initiated to my rites and have me propitious to him" (p. 124).

Knowledge can be attained only at great cost, as shown by the scholar who laboured years for the approval of a few men: "For so great is the obscurity and variety of human affairs that nothing can be clearly known, as it is truly said by our academics, the least insolent of all the philosophers; or if it could, it would but obstruct the pleasure of life" (p. 75). The argument is later turned to Folly's advantage when she demonstrates that the illusion is all, and that knowing the reality does not improve matters:

For suppose a man were eating rotten stockfish, the very smell of which would choke another, and yet believed it a dish for the gods, what difference is there as to his happiness? . . . . Whereas on the contrary, if another's stomach should turn at a sturgeon, wherein, I pray, is he happier than the other? If a man have a crooked, ill-favoured wife, and yet in his eye may stand in competition with Venus, is it not the same as if she were truly beautiful?

(p. 76)

Moreover, "the fools have the advantage: first, in that their happiness costs them least, that is to say, only some small persuasion; next, they enjoy it in common" (p. 77). The "small persuasion" is transformed later by Swift into a "Strong Delusion":

But when a Man's Fancy gets astride his Reason, when Imagination is at Cuffs with the Senses, and common Understanding, as well as common Sense, is Kickt out of every man would despise, and wish it at an end, or that it never had a beginning.

Doors; the first Proselyte he makes, is Himself, and when that is once compass'd, the Difficulty is not so great in bringing over others; A strong Delusion always operating from without, as vigorously as from within.

The paradoxical value of delusion in The Praise of Folly is developed in a complex of images suggested by the Silenus:

For first 'tis evident that all human things, like Alcibiades' Sileni or rural gods, carry a double face, but not the least alike; so that what at first sight seems to be death, if you view it narrowly may prove to be life; and so the contrary. What appears beautiful may chance to be deformed; what wealthy, a very beggar; what infamous, praise-worthy; what learned, a dunce; what lusty, feeble; what jocund, sad; what noble, base; what lucky, unfortunate; what friendly, an enemy; and what healthful, noisome. In short, view the inside of these Sileni, and you'll find them quite other than they appear. . . (p. 43).

This image stands for the difference between what is and what should be, or between what is and what pretends to be. And implicit in the paradoxical nature of the image is a critique of language as a means of expressing reality. Rabelais' use of this same image, as we shall see later in this chapter, allows him to examine the content and the function of language.

Erasmus, and Swift after him, use the Silenus image to suggest that perhaps underneath the ugly and the stupid exterior what is discovered may be just as ugly and just as stupid. If there is no distinction between the odious appearance and the substance, then Folly serves a useful function; she can allow man "the Possession of being well-deceived."

Satirists have always been concerned with the human pretence to a moral integrity that mankind is either unwilling or unable to attain. Lucian had compared the dependent philosopher's decadent patron to a book, lavishly decorated on the outside but revealing a vicious depravity within.
The same is true of courtiers in The Praise of Folly:

The court lords . . . are contented to wear about them gold, jewels, purple, and those other marks of virtue and wisdom . . . But if you look into their manner of life you'll find them mere sots: they live a life of idleness and dissipation (p. 115).

This attention to surface rather than substance also preoccupies the scholar. The theologians of Erasmus' day miss the profundity of truth in their close attention to the detail of the text, as Folly ironically observes:

[The apostles] worshipped, 'tis true, but in spirit, following herein no other than that of the Gospel, "God is a Spirit, and they that worship, must worship him in spirit and truth;" yet it does not appear it was at that time revealed to them that an image sketched on the wall with a coal was to be worshiped with the same worship as Christ Himself, if at least the two forefingers be stretched out, the hair long and uncut, and have three rays about the crown of his head. For who can conceive these things, unless he has spent at least six and thirty years in the philosophical and supercelestial whims of Aristotle and the Schoolmen? (p. 97)

Erasmus keeps to the traditional types and themes of satires on learning and, as we have seen, he is indebted to Lucian for many of his images and techniques, which he then infuses with a Christian content, particularly when he expresses his scorn for the supposedly elect who are more devoted to the letter than to the spirit of their calling. But

8 Lucian had made the same complaint in "Hermotimus, or the Rival Philosophies," in Fowler's Works, vol. 2, p. 86:

Virtue is manifested, of course, in action, in doing what is just and wise and manly; but you--and when I say you, I mean the most advanced philosophers--you do not seek these things and ensue them, but spend the greater part of your life conning over miserable sentences and demonstrations and problems; it is the man who does best at these that you hail a glorious victor... . . You pay no attention to the fruit--which consists in action--, but are extremely busy with the husks . . . .
Erasmus, in his turn, was to provide a legacy for the satirists who followed him. Rabelais acknowledged his debt to Erasmus, and Swift was to develop his hack writer from the prototype provided primarily by Erasmus. In addition, Swift was to make full use of Erasmus' emphasis on the paradoxical relationship between happiness and folly and the focus on man's attention to surface rather than substance in learning and morality.

François Rabelais (1495?-1553), another great satirist of the Renaissance, was contemporary with Erasmus (1465-1536). Erasmus published *The Praise of Folly* in 1509 and Rabelais' first work, *Pantagruel*, was written in 1532. Rabelais corresponded with Erasmus, admired him, and borrowed from his works, but his examination of the perversions of language and learning was quite different both from Erasmus or from any of the other satirists who preceded him.

The understanding of Classical satirists seemed to be that the abuse of learning led to the abuse of language, and therefore that if you remedied the first, the second would automatically take care of itself. Lucian objected to men living a parasitical existence based on their pretense to learning, pointing out that as a result such men spoke with a "stammering tongue" a language of philosophy which they did not really know. Aristophanes fought against an intellectual approach which did not adequately take into account human psychology, and heaped scorn on the distorted and distorting "new art of speaking" that resulted.

Rabelais examines this cause and effect relationship between learning and language, and in the process emphasizes that each is independently vulnerable to abuse, without necessary reference to the other. In addition, Rabelais questions the efficacy of language as the transmitter of knowledge (true or false)--or of experience and sensation too, for that
matter. Much of the imagery of the book demonstrates the ambiguous nature of language or the problem of maintaining a common understanding through words:

It's nonsense [says Pantagruel] to say that we have a natural language; languages arise from arbitrary conventions and the needs of peoples. Words, as the dialecticians say, have meanings not by nature, but at choice.

This interest in the radical ambiguity of language arises out of an attitude central to Rabelais, an attitude epitomized in the Silenus image with its tantalizing promise of hidden richness. In describing this attitude, Erich Auerbach says:

I consider it a mistake to probe Rabelais' hidden meaning—that is, the marrow of the bone—for some definite and clearly outlined doctrine; the thing which lies concealed in his work, yet which is conveyed in a thousand ways, is an intellectual attitude, which he himself calls Pantagruelism; a grasp of life which comprehends the spiritual and the sensual simultaneously, which allows none of life's possibilities to escape.

Rabelais' imagery is the result of the multiplicity of his perspective, which draws the reader out of his conventional world with its single-visioned view of life into the many-sided facets of experience, all bombarding him at the same time. Late medieval works were confined within a definite frame; socially, geographically, cosmologically, religiously, and ethically, they present but one aspect of things at a time. Where they have to deal with a multiplicity of things medieval scholars

---


attempt to work them into the definite frame of a general order.\textsuperscript{11} Rabelais' reaction against scholastic order arose from his impatience with men who knew so much and yet were so little inspired by their knowledge. His quarrel with monasticism was that it had preserved knowledge which it no longer had the power to use. He detested dullness and pedantry, the academic tendency to prefer the forms to the substance.

The significance of Rabelais' imagery is that, rather than defining and in a sense limiting the purview of language and learning, it tends to push against the limits, thus forcing a radical shift in perspective upon the reader. To accomplish this change of perspective, Rabelais gives his readers an avalanche of detail, thus insisting upon the complexity of his work, and at the same time he indicates on his title page that he is an "abstractor of quintessence." As Auerbach points out about Rabelais, what he attacks is "thickheadedness, inability to adjust, [and] one-track arrogance which blinds a man to the complexity of the real situation."\textsuperscript{12} In short, Rabelais is attacking the dunce. He does so by drawing our attention to the contingency and ambiguity of language, and by showing how it can therefore be easily distorted or misused by narrow, inflexible minds.

Although we are reminded of the contingency of language throughout Gargantua and Pantagruel, this contingency is the primary focus of the Third Book. In this Book, Panurge attempts to foretell the future and to


\textsuperscript{12} Auerback, p. 275.
receive conclusive advice on whether or not he should marry and, if he
should marry, on whether or not he will be cuckolded. He sets out to seek
answers from all the sources of human knowledge, accepted or esoteric:
dice, dreams, a sibyl, a deaf-mute, a poet, a scientist, a theologian, a
physician, a sceptic philosopher, a judge, and a fool. Each of the
answers he receives is open to conflicting interpretation. The nature of
these consultations creates a sense of ambivalence and suspension. Nothing
is set down definitely. If an attempt is made to isolate or define an
idea, an opposite reasoning which completely destroys the preceding
argument is also presented. The Socratic method, not the question at hand,
triumphs throughout the Third Book, and the composite image is that of
the arch-philosopher who can use language any way he wishes to support any
thesis whatsoever.

The ambiguity of language is particularly obvious in Panurge's
consultation with Wordspinner, whose words are interpreted in four
different ways. When Pantagruel explains that "Panurge is protesting
against these conflicting and contradictory answers," the reply is scarcely
more illuminating:

'I believe that I understand, though,' said Gargantua. 'This
answer is like the one given by an ancient philosopher, when
asked whether he had a certain woman, whose name they gave him
as his wife. "I have her," he answered, "but she hasn't got
me. I possess her, but I'm not possessed by her."' . . .

'So,' said Rondibilis, 'let us put it as neuter in
medicine and a mean in philosophy: going to both extremes
and avoiding both extremes, and by division of time, swinging
now to one extreme, now to the other.'

'The Holy Apostle seems to me to have put it more
plainly,' said Hippothadeus, 'when he said: "Let those that
are married be as if they were not married; those who have
wives be as if they had no wives."'

'I interpret having and not having a wife in this way,' said Pantagruel, 'that to have a wife is to have her for the
purpose for which Nature created her, that is for the aid,
pleasure, and society of man. Not to have her means not to
be tied to her apron-strings; not for her sake to debase the
unique and supreme love that a man owes to God . . .' (p. 385-86).

It is characteristic of Rabelais that when Panurge is furthest from the truth he is also furthest removed from sensual apprehension:

'You talk like a book,' replied Panurge. 'But I feel as if I were at the bottom of the dark well where Heraclitus says truth is hidden. I can't see a thing, I hear nothing, I feel my senses all numbed, and I very much wonder whether I'm not bewitched' (p. 386).

What should be a fertile exchange of information and sensation becomes a mechanical game that numbs the mind and the senses of the protagonists. In addition, because of their redundancy, the words lose expressive value and the dialogue no longer has its usual purpose of question and answer.

Another way in which Rabelais empties words of expressive value is by giving us long comically grotesque and utterly gratuitous lists and catalogues which have almost no perceptible meaning. Sometimes these grow out of the narrative situation, sometimes they may be simply a volume of words with little or no reference to anything outside themselves. These lists lay bare the contingency of language, indicating that the mere aggregate of words in themselves suggests a meaning that may not exist. But always with Rabelais the words themselves impress us with their sheer corporeal vitality and exuberance, with or without meaning. Bridlegoose's speech is an instance of this exuberance, giving the form of profound meaning, yet communicating senile drivel mixed with accidentally ironic wisdom, a torrent of legal terminology, wonderful anecdotes all presented in an immense cascade of words in which every obvious and absurd opinion is supported by a welter of comical quotations from Roman law and the glossarists. Rabelais' copiousness, his mix of styles and genre, and the overflowing energy of his writing, breaks down the cramped, doctrinaire attitudes of the Schoolmen and transforms rigidity of mind into the
immense range and fertility of Pantagruelism. What was on one level incomprehensible thus becomes a metaphoric means of exploding the mind into new perceptions, and is at once a comment on the limitations of expression and a standard by which these should be judged.

Because language is inherently ambiguous, it is easy to distort it in such a way as to make it impossible to develop any common understanding of the abstract knowledge available to men through language. One example is the frequent use of professional jargon, as in lawyer's talk. Thus, the lawsuit over which Pantagruel presides is incomprehensible to any layman, even though it is arbitrated in simple one or two syllable words.

Rabelais does not abandon the customary satiric attacks on the abuses of language and learning. On the contrary, his work is filled with images of men as pedants and logic-choppers, men who use words and learning to trick and profit from their brothers.

The obscurity of scholarly and legal jargon suffers some of Rabelais' worst scorn and best satire. Men use cryptic language to mask the triviality of their subject:

I could have a panier painted to show that I am much pained, and a mustard-pot to stand for the tardiness of my heart. A piss-pot will denote an officer; the bottom of my breeches, a jar full of wind; my codpiece, a lance in rest; and a dog's turd (estront de chien), the first lance within (tronc de ceans), wherein lies the love of my lady (p. 58).

Sophists use hard words and pedantry to confound their listeners, because they are really speaking nonsense:

We transfretate the Sequana at the dilucule and crepuscule; we deambulate through the compites and quadrives of the urb; we despumate the Latin verbocination and, as verisimile amorabunds, we capatate the benevolence of the omnijugal, omniform, and omnigenous feminine sex. At certain intervals we invisitate the lupanars, and in venerean ecstasy we inculcate our vertres into the penitissim recesses of the pudenda of these amicabilissime meretricules (p. 184).
The fondness of scholars for the commentaries and glosses considered a necessary part of learning is parodied in the description of Gargantua's education by the sophists:

After this the sophist read him De modis significandi with the commentaries of Bang-breeze, Scallywag, Claptrap, Gualehaul, John the Calf, Copper-coin, Flowery-tongue, and a number of others . . . (p. 70).

Although Rabelais does not forget the traditional targets of satiric attack, he sooner or later reminds us of his own particular emphasis: the difficulty of giving rational expression to what man perceives with an inexact and ambiguous verbal language.

Rabelais' attack on the abuse of learning is informed by the same intellectual attitude that underlies his examination of language, the attitude that Auerbach has described above as "a grasp of life . . . which allows none of life's possibilities to escape." As a result, the image that emerges in the recounting of Gargantua's education is that of a man who participates to his utmost ability in all aspects of human life. Gargantua is the true representative of the "universal man" of the Renaissance. He wants to know theoretically or have first-hand knowledge of everything.

There is a sense in which the whole educational enterprise recounted here is a magnificent, unsurpassable game, a game infinitely more engrossing than all the childish contrivances interminably listed before in an account of Gargantua's previous education by the sophists. It is a game sweet and delicious: "so sweet, easy, and pleasant as it went on that it was more like a king's recreation than a student's plan of study" (p. 93). Gargantua's regime is engrossing because the conception of education that dictates it is bound up with a conception of human life as it should be lived. The activity of the young Gargantua testifies not only to the
goodness of knowledge, but also to the goodness of life and the living human creature. The strenuous density of his daily calendar indicates a world dense with actions that are proper to man and delightful to perform.

In spite of its rigour, Gargantua's schedule is not inflexible or mechanical; it is as elastic as the body's own capacities; it leaves alternatives open at every point and contains nothing to offend the philosophy of a Friar John: "I never subject myself to hours; hours were made for man, and not man for hours" (p. 128).

Gargantua's schedule allows him to take advantage of the manifold variety of experience and apply it to his learning, because the larger goal of this method is the training of all the human faculties and the development of all the capacities, physical and pragmatic as well as intellectual and academic. The student and his tutor Ponocrates "gaily exercise their bodies as they had previously exercised their minds" (p. 87). Ponocrates is at pains not merely to train the body as well as the mind, but a body which contains the mind and is indivisible from it, a body whose well-being is necessary for the mind to function at all.

This characteristic inclusiveness combines with the exuberance and vitality that runs through Rabelais' satire to give us a glimpse of a new, sometimes frightening world. Rabelais is not content to observe the eccentricities of deviation from the solid centre of experience and convention. He does not command the assurance of the theologian, fortified by rational wisdom and an authorized ethic. He writes rather from the fringe of nonsense, and probes at the abyss of lunacy that underlies our rational constructions. Panurge is the incarnation of the universal perversity in things. Rabelais is powerful and disturbing because he portrays human life as radically irrational, vitally unhinged, sublimely grotesque. He knows
that to be alive is to be paradoxical and finally incomprehensible.

Two other satirists of this period should be mentioned briefly. Ben Jonson and John Donne both attack in their satire a value that was beginning to emerge as a significant motivating force in men's affairs. These writers share Rabelais' concern with the mechanical short-cuts to learning, but they also attack man's growing desire for the worldly goods of fame and riches.

In Jonson's *The Alchemist*, three knaves bilk a succession of willing dupes, all of whom hope to receive something for nothing. The means is alchemy, which is the central metaphor in the play. Alvin Kernan effectively describes the significance of alchemy in Jonson's plays:

> In a very real sense, life in all of Jonson's plays is viewed as a process of alchemy, the transmutation of base matter into gold; and each of the characters is an alchemist attempting to transform himself by means of his particular "philosopher's stone" into some form higher up on the scale of being than the point at which he began. The lady who paints, the young man who dresses himself in silks and feathers, the pedant who pretends to vast amounts of learning, the fool who seems to know all the great men in the world, the amorous fop who sighs after his lady and writes her sugared sonnets, all these are alchemists trying by various means to transmute their base metal into the gold of beauty, learning, sophistication, love. And although their particular "stones" or "elixirs"—cosmetics, books, a grave demeanor—may vary, in the final analysis the ultimate "stone" of all the fools is language.

The use of alchemy and the occult as a means of transforming learning into riches is a theme of Jonson's that is repeated in Butler and Swift. But in each case it is the skillful use of language that permits one to use all the advantages of hypocrisy to profit from these measures while keeping a pure conscience. All the language in the play is meant to transform the foolish and vicious into the "rich and strange," or the sleazy, dishonest.

---

ventures into decent and honourable conduct. When Subtle finds it necessary to prove his alchemical powers to Ananias and Tribulation Wholesome, he offers to counterfeit money for them. The Anabaptists in The Alchemist are a criminal lot who insist on describing the stolen goods they deal in as "widows and orphan's goods," and they hide their depravity under an unctuous piety expressed in Puritan vocabulary. When Subtle can assure them that what he is about to do is "no coyning, sir": "It is but casting", they are relieved at having found a suitable linguistic euphemism for their criminal activity.

An equivalent expedient must also be found for conduct so that rogues need not be inhibited by admitting to any kind of restraint. Mammon has the idea that he can be as sensual and self-indulgent as he likes, so long as his agent, Subtle, is pure in heart:

Mammon: ... My shirts
   I'll have of taffeta-sarsnet, soft and light
   As cobwebs; and for all my other raiment,
   It shall be such, as might provoke the Persian,
   Were he to teach the world riot, anew.
   My gloves of fishes' and birds' skins, perfum'd
   With gums of paradise, and eastern air--

Surly: And do you think to have the stone, with this?
Mammon: No, I do think t' have all this, with the stone.
Surly: Why, I have heard, he must be homo frugi,
   A pious, holy and religious man,
   One free of mortal sin, a very Virgin.
Mammon: That makes it, sir, he is so. But I buy it.
   My venture brings it me. He, honest wretch,
   A notable, superstitious, good soul,
   Has worn his knees bare, and his slippers bald,
   With prayer and fasting for it: and, sir, let him
   Do it alone for me, still. Here he comes, •
   Not a profane word afore him: 'tis poison.

More specifically, Jonson often uses the language of business and

commerce to explore the divergence between pretense and reality. Subtle, Face, and Doll repeatedly refer to themselves as a business enterprise—"the venture tripartite" (I.i.135)—for which there exists a formal agreement between the parties—"the instrument drawn up between us" (V.iv.81). To them, the language of commerce provides the facade of a business enterprise to their scheme for gulling money and riches from their victims, and they have a business agreement to that effect.

The imagery and language of commerce was being used more and more in satire, as commerce came more and more to occupy the forefront of affairs. When it was used in satires on the perversions of language and learning, the emphasis was naturally on mis-use. Consequently, the use of the imagery of prostitution to denote selling something priceless for gain became linked into the growing tendency to attach a monetary value to things which had previously transcended the province of commerce.

The imagery of prostitution had traditionally been used in satires on learning. Juvenal uses this imagery in his Second Satire when he refers to the homosexuals as prostitutes because they trade on their supposed knowledge of philosophy to insinuate themselves into Roman households so they can practice their seductive arts on their victims. Prostitution imagery is also a pervasive device in John Donne's Second Satire but Donne ties the imagery more directly to the theme of business and commercial interests. He attacks the treachery and deceit of men who are motivated by a craving for wealth and power. He uses the imagery of prostitution to build up gradually the accusation that those who use their abilities to exploit others for gain "are worse than whores, since whores sell the viler and worse parts of their body, but lawyers the nobler and
better, forsooth the mouth and the tongue."\textsuperscript{15}

Donne's target, the lawyer Coscus, is a former poet, and so Donne is able to attack poets who are frauds and spiritual prostitutes as well. Lawyer Coscus bilks his clients much as the "venture tripartite" bilked theirs. As a former poet he was one of a company of bad writers who wrote flatteringly of Lords for the sake of advancement or because it was the fashionable thing to do. When he becomes a lawyer, he has more scope because he can trade on his position and profession to exploit his victims:

When sicke with Poetrie,' and possest with muse
Thou wast, and mad, I hop'd; but men which chuse
Law practise for meere gaine, bold soule, repute
Worse than imbrothel'd strumpets prostitute.

(11.61-64)

The remainder of the satire is a monologue on the theme that the corrupt lawyer is worse than "carted whores" who lie to judges to save themselves, for the corrupt lawyer consistently and convincingly lies in order to achieve personal success. Furthermore, he thrives on the existence of sin with a selfish delight, because it is grist to his gainful mill. Encouraging his clients in their vices, the corrupt lawyer manages to defend them and gain their property for himself.

Lust for great secular wealth and power is the prime temptation for men such as Coscus, and he harnesses to that lust all of his ability and his knowledge, and uses them to exploit others. Although Donne ends by advocating simple moderation: "None starve, none surfet," it is a small

weak voice, because the strongest image in the satire is that of the man who has prostituted his soul, all that which ought to be his greatest adornment, his honour and his knowledge, for gain. The element of selling knowledge for gain, of selling the efforts of one's artistic creation for money instead of pursuing the interests of truth and wisdom was anathema to the Christian humanists, and from Rabelais to the Scriblerians it becomes an increasingly dominant element in the satire.
CHAPTER IV

SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY AND EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY SATIRISTS

Butler:  Characters and Elephant on the Moon
Shadwell:  The Virtuoso
Dryden:  MacFlecknoe
King:  Dialogues of the Dead
Buckingham:  The Rehearsal
Swift:  A Tale of a Tub
The Greek celebration of reason and the humanist's celebration of man entered its long decline at the close of the Renaissance, assisted by an emerging sceptical tradition. The seminal work of this tradition is Montaigne's *Apology for Raymond Sebond*. Montaigne attacks the venerable notion of man's supremacy as a rational creature crowning a universe rationally conceived and sustained. His avowed intent is clearly stated:

... to crush and tread under foot human pride and arrogance, to make them sensible of the inanity, the vanity and insignificance of man; to wrest out of their fists the miserable weapons of their reason; to make them bow the head and bite the dust under the authority and reverence of the divine majesty.

Butler wrote his satires in the context of this tradition. Except for *Hudibras*, most of his writing was not published until long after he died, though it is almost certain they were known in manuscript long before this. In Butler's Common-place Book he records his belief that human nature encompasses three kinds of men: those who employ reason to deceive others; those who are rationally deceived by knaves or by themselves; and those natural fools and madmen whose "little wit... tends naturally to knavery." Man's reason is both a legacy and a consequence of his Fall; therefore, it is not only his redemption but also his punishment.

It is a punishment because the "indulgences" of man, that is, his propensity for "the setting of false values upon some little things" is

---

3 Ibid., p. 457.
the cause of strife in learning, theology, and law. Men deliberately confound truth and falsehood, in the process preying upon each other and themselves and bringing about their own punishment:

The Cheat is a Kind of a just Judgment, sent into this World to punish the Confidence and Curiosity of Ignorance, that out of a natural Inclination to Error, will tempt its own Punishment, and help to abuse itself.

This collusive interdependence between dupe and cheat is inherent in the conventions and institutions that have been constructed by society. It seems clear from his writings that Butler is interested in social analysis as well as moral portraits, even in his Characters.

Butler's method in Characters is reductive. Although he appears to be primarily interested in describing a multiplicity of types, what his characters in fact reveal is the persistence of one or two motives of folly or villainy inherent in almost every variety of human nature. Specifically these motivations are man's insatiable appetite for self-deception and his ingenuity in the use of reason to devise the means of deceiving others. The actions resulting from these motives are successful because under certain conditions they have become socially acceptable. In "A Cheat," Butler writes, "All the greater Sort of Cheats, being allowed by Authority, have lost their Names (as Judges, when they are called to the Bench, are no more stiled Lawyers) and left the Title to the meaner only, and the unallowed" (p. 171). Butler is more interested in what he terms the "Callings"--the inherent aptitudes or ruling passions--than in the "Professions" of his characters, and the difference constitutes their

---

satiric situation. In the character of "A Cheat," "Fraud and Treachery are his Calling, though his Profession be the strictest Integrity and Truth" (p. 171). The satirist's imagery illustrates the thesis that all extremes are ultimately identical, as in "A Philosopher" and "A Mathematician." The mathematician, beginning in "Nonsense . . . ends in Sense, and the other (the philosopher) quite contrary begins in Sense and ends in Nonsense" (p. 119).

Butler's "Hermetic Philosopher" gives us the stock type of the philosopher distilled. He is Aristophanes' philosopher with all the accretions of misguided learning picked up in his progress through the centuries. He is replete with all manner of lore and schemes from alchemists, Rosicrucians, astrologers, and virtuosos:

They have fine devices to make counterfeit Maggots of Lute-Strings, translate Agues into Dogs, or fright them away with Spiders; to cure the Tooth-ach or sore Eyes with Medicines laid to the Imagination; kill Rats and Warts with Rhimes; quote Moles on any Part of the Body by an Index in the Face; discover lost Maidenheads; pimp with Figures, Charms, and Characters; cut Noses out of Buttocks with Taliacotius; blow the Philosophers Fire with Words of pure Wind, and draw the glorify'd Spirit of the Elixir not out of gross Matter, but the pure incorporeal Hope and Faith of the Credulous, which is the best and the most rational Way of Multiplication; for a small Dose so prepared and projected upon the dullest Metal, converts it presently into Gold already coined. (p. 147-8)

Butler's tendency to repeat images imparts a broader sense of unity to the entire collection of characters than might first appear. The significant patterns emerge only in broad perspective. Man is a beast--or worse--the characters say collectively; or man, the rational animal, is a flattering fiction, in reality, he is an automaton; or men are never what they appear to be; all practice some form of deception.

Butler's denigration of human reason says a great deal about how man learns. Butler's characters pretend to a learning they do not have
because they pretend to a reason that they do not possess, a reason that would help them practice a virtuous life.

There are two other patterns of imagery in Butler that should be mentioned briefly. The first is his use of mechanical imagery. Butler adopted the new scientific interest in motion to explain the processes of deception and called these processes the "Mechanics of Cheat." Hence, deception is a problem in mechanics: the knave is "an Engineer of Treachery, Fraud, and Perfidiousness," learning "how to manage Matters of great Weight with very little Force, by the Advantage of his trepanning Screws." (p. 214).

The second pattern is illustrative of a growing tendency that had been slowly gathering momentum. The growing prosperity of the merchant class was beginning to be an observable factor in Butler's time. Retail shops were becoming a familiar part of the urban scene. Shopkeepers were, of course, much lower in social standing than the great merchant traders, yet they were capable of great social mobility. Their newly gained literacy led to a decided thirst for the arts. As beneficiaries of the cultural explosion, they came to epitomize nouveau-riche values in their extravagant spending and pompous affectation. Addison denounced shopkeepers as "positively the greatest fops in the kingdom." But he also uses commerce a metaphor: the "Small Poet" as Haberdasher ... with a very small Stock, and no Credit" (p. 82); the lawyer as "Retailer of Justice, that uses false Lights, false Weights, and false Measures" (p. 111); and the astrologer as "Retailer

of Destiny, and petty Chapman to the Planets" (p. 110). In these
instances the brand of commerce was for Butler not a social, but an
ethical, stigma, and this imagery was to come into increasing use as the
commercial spirit became more and more pronounced.

Butler, and Swift after him, was critical of the impracticalities of
modern science, its exhibitionism, and its apparent refusal to direct
its own efforts by common sense standards of value. The obvious joke
of The Elephant in the Moon, Butler's satire on the Royal Society, is
that science makes mountains out of molehills: the virtuosos of a
"Learn'd Society" make a lunar elephant out of a mouse. But more
interesting than the theme of scientific error in the poem is Butler's
concern with the general ethical issue of man's attitude toward false­
hood and truth. The poem presents two "discoveries": an elephant on the
moon, and a mouse in a telescope. The first discovery is anticipated;
the end of a long sequence of circular reasonings, and deductions from
invalid assumptions. Sensitive to the public ridicule of their past
experiments, the virtuosos seize upon the notion of a lunar war as the
means of improving the image of the society. No longer, says the chief
spokesman for the group,

... shall our ablest Virtuosos
Prove Arguments for Coffee-houses;

Nor shall our past Misfortunes more
Be charg'd upon the ancient Score:

This one Discovery's enough,
To take all former Scandals off. (11.205-26).

Poetical Remains, ed. Robert Thyer (London: Joseph Booker, 1827). All
further references to this work appear in the text.
The second discovery (that of the mouse, or truth) is resisted and is reasoned against by the members of the Society. At one point, it is suggested that "the Cause of th' Elephant, or Mouse" be decided by ballot, that the virtuosos "find, or make, the Truth by Votes" (l. 475). When an earlier observation casts some doubt upon the existence of the elephant, each virtuoso is "Resolv'd . . . to make [the discovery] good . . . And rather his own Eyes condemn,/ Than question what h' had seen with them" (ll. 257-60). But what had the virtuosos seen? The elephant is not a perception at all; it is a rational invention, a "speculation." Thus one of Butler's virtuosos triumphantly concludes that the existence of "Elephants . . . in the Moon/ Though we had now discover'd none,/ Is easily made manifest" (ll. 145-47).

Satires on the Royal Society and its "new science" were commonplace in the eighteenth century, and they were, again, a response to the secularization that was occurring, for although the eighteenth century was a period of scientific enlightenment, it was also a period of pseudo-science, charlatanism, and quackery. The progressive separation of science and religion in this period helped to create some of the conditions favourable to charlatanism. Scientific investigation left many unanswered questions and gaps that could be answered and filled by imagination and fiction. To draw the line between science and pseudo-science was difficult even for scientists and it was even more so for uncritical laymen. Under such conditions the transition from what was strange to what was marvelous was easy and imperceptible. Without realizing that the real world had been left behind, one was soon surrounded by the fantastic. Where it was not possible to verify assertions, analogies and similarities were exploited. Among the semi-educated, the phenomena
of electricity, magnetism, and gases seemed to endow nature with forces which were not far from the older occult doctrines of astrology, alchemy, divination, the intervention of spirits, and the like. To a considerable extent, the latter were still a part of the popular culture of the eighteenth century. It was therefore enough to accept new marvels without any real understanding and to assume that it would be possible to achieve the impossible for anyone who knew the magic secrets. An easy acceptance of dubious "proofs" was especially true in the eighteenth century, when the obscurity of causal relationships was even greater than it is today. Such a situation opened the door to all kinds of irrational and often fraudulent enterprises. In addition to the murky no-man's land where charlatanism flourished, there was the fact that science, or what people thought of as science, had become fashionable--it was à la mode. Fashionable gentlemen scientists, or "virtuosos," prided themselves on their familiarity with the newest experiments, but satirists derided them for their pedantry and the practical uselessness of their studies. Their self-regarding seriousness seemed grotesquely disproportionate to the trivial and vulgar objects of some of their enquiries, and consequently all the old stock images about windbag philosophers who built something out of nothing were dragged out of the closet again. The dramatist Thomas Shadwell wrote a play called The Virtuoso, which was presented in 1676, in which he satirizes the Royal Society and contemporary science.

The term virtuoso had come into use earlier in the century, originally applied to an "antiquarian" who interested himself in such antiquities as statues, inscriptions, and coins. The word might be used as a compliment or disparagement, suggesting a connoisseur or a mere dabbler. Sir Nicholas Gimcrack, the virtuoso in Shadwell's play, is a collector, and from the point of view of his nieces at least, a collector of worthless objects:

One who has broken his brains about the nature of maggots, who has studied these twenty years to find out the several sorts of spiders and never cares for understanding mankind.

(I.i.11-13)

"Virtuoso" as Shadwell uses the term involves much more than merely collecting. In the comedy it denotes scientists in general, and the Royal Society in particular. The scientific interest of Sir Nicholas Gimcrack may be divided broadly into three groups. A few of them look back to Galileo's discoveries of the true nature of the universe. Most interesting to lay imagination was his report on the moon. During the ensuing years astronomers charted moon-maps, pioneers attempted to solve problems of human flight, and literary imagination ran riot in moon-voyages, serious, fanciful, and satiric. Naturally, Sir Nicholas has spent many years compiling a book of geography for the world in the moon (I.ii.242-243). Naturally, also, he is so far advanced in the art


9 Shadwell's technique anticipates that of Swift in the Third Book of Gulliver's Travels, in which the Grand Academy of Logado is also a satire upon the experimenters in the Royal Society. For the most part, each writer merely related an actual experiment which sounded absurd to the layman and occasionally Swift combined two real experiments into an absurdity.
of flying that he "can already outfly that ponderous animal call'd a bustard" (II.ii.30-31).

The enthusiasm of Sir Nicholas for the microscope contributes to the interest he shares with other virtuosos in lice and other insects (III.iii.1-24), and his profound knowledge of ants, spiders, and tarantulas, including the spider Nick whom he has trained as other men train dogs (III.iii.69-101). Gimcrack's niece Clarinda complains of his extravagant passion for trivia:

He has spent two thousand pounds in microscopes to find out the nature of eels in vinegar, mites in a cheese, and the blue of plums which he has subtly found out to be living creatures (I.ii.7-10).

The third group of scientific experiments and hypotheses that interests Gimcrack have to do with the air-pump. Gimcrack aspired to be "the Universal Philosopher" and spent much of his time in weighing air and conducting experiments on respiration (II.ii.96-105). As other men of quality had their wine cellars, so Sir Nicholas has his cellars of bottles of air, in which some scenes of the comedy are played.

Of all the scientific satire, the scene that remains most comic is an early one in which Sir Nicholas is "discovered" in his laboratory. It illustrates the basic criticism made by laymen of science, a criticism underlying most of the rest. Sir Nicholas is lying on his laboratory table, learning to swim, by imitating the motions of a frog in a bowl. His swimming master and his toady stand by admiringly. In answer to Longvil's inquiry whether he has tried to swim in water, Gimcrack replies, "Never, sir. I hate the water." "What, then," asks Longvil, "is the use of swimming?" "I content myself," says Gimcrack, "with the speculative part of swimming: I care not for the practic. I
seldom bring anything to use; 'tis not my way. Knowledge is my ultimate end" (II.ii.73-86).

At the end of the play, when he is threatened by an angry crowd of weavers who think he has made an automatic loom that will leave them without work, the great Virtuoso makes a complete and ignominious confession. Never in all his life has he invented anything of use, not even an "engine" with which to pare cheese (V.iii.76-78).

Nothing could have been more objectionable to men with a humanist cast of mind, whose emphasis was always on moral and philosophic standards as they can be applied to life, than to see learning reduced to an end in itself, and it was in such matters that the rift between science and the humanities openly appeared. Behind it all was something more than an itch for carping or the exhilaration of witty burlesque. Men educated in the older tradition of learning were genuinely repelled by the growing pedantry of the times. "Dullness" was their word for it, and "dullness" denoted a preoccupation with the mechanics of learning rather than a celebration of man as the vital product of his education.

Two years after The Virtuoso, in 1778, John Dryden wrote MacFlecknoe, a satiric poem that made bad poetry, bad criticism, and bad taste synonymous with dullness. Lucian's society had been overrun with pseudo-philosophers, and Dryden adopts the same technique when he shows society overrun with dunces:

Heavens bless my Son, from Ireland let him reign
To farr Barbadoes on the Western main;
Of his Dominion may no end be known,
And greater than his Father's be his Throne.
Beyond loves Kingdom let him stretch his Pen;
He paus'd, and all the people cry'd Amen.

The dunces' ideas are not frightening, their numbers are. Dryden uses imagery that suggests the Second Coming, and the implications of this imagery suggest that MacFlecknoe's ascendancy is a longed-for culmination of events. The quality of the dunces' power is suggested by the central metaphor: the contrast between light and dark that gives us images of obscurity, mists, and fogs and suggests the overwhelming, paralyzing power of the dunces, as opposed to the rapidly receding clarity and light of the Ancients.\(^1\)

William King, one of the Queen Anne wits, also wrote a number of satirical sketches on pedantry in 1698. He acknowledged his debt to Lucian by calling them The Dialogues of the Dead.\(^2\) In these Dialogues he satirizes the contemporary scholar, Richard Bentley, under the name of Bentivoglio. For the most part these Dialogues are directed against contemporary pedantry, and although they are the outcome of a contemporary controversy that raged at the time, the imagery is traditional. They are peopled with windbag philosophers who pretend to a learning they do not have. The philosopher in "Impudence: or, the Sophist," must plagiarize to compensate for his lack of real learning.


\(^2\) This same theme was developed in 1743 by Alexander Pope in The Dunciad.

He is a brash, arrogant Modern ("it was always my humour to plume myself with borrowed feathers."), who justifies his plagiarism by pointing out that "Bentivoglio took whole passages from Nevelet and Vizzanius" (p. 39). King attacks the more Modern innovations of pedantry in the Fifth Dialogue, in which Bentivoglio recommends the use of Dictionaries and Compendiums rather than original works. When it is pointed out that dictionaries merely list words, but that "the joining them is the art our dictionaries will never teach a man," the pedant responds with some surprise: "So then, you would have a man put words together properly to make sense of them. Very fine. How then could I or my friend Bentivoglio be authors?" (p. 52).

King takes aim at the antiquarian in A Journey to London, a parody on travel journals popular at this time. The antiquarian, as he himself proudly announces, is "a Virtuoso." The Virtuoso meets a fellow collector during his peregrinations around London and they exchange information on old coins and a collection of playthings and rattles, until finally they part, after exchanging "Dissertations" on "The Remarkable Thickness and Thinness of Mufflers . . ." (p. 20). The antiquarians' preoccupation with these trivialities is ridiculous and amusing, but King's emphasis points up the irrational self-indulgence and indolence of these men who have a mania for collecting what can only be regarded as useless junk.

All these satires of the period testify to the passing of the Christian humanist tradition. The satirists discussed believed that the purpose of man's actions was moral and religious and that learning for its own sake was immoral unless it had some practical virtuous application. Similarly, art intended solely to entertain or for gain was a travesty. Reason had dwindled from a moral perception to mathematical preciseness.
The consequent new natural philosophy with its counterpart in economics, coupled with the decline of tradition led to a new individualism, to an increasingly dominant middle class, and to new aesthetic tastes with a new breed of writer to pander to them. One of the earliest satires against the spectacular for its own sake, the mark of the new writing, was Buckingham's *The Rehearsal*. The play began as a satire on Dryden's heroic tragedy, but soon left Dryden far behind just as Dryden universalized Shadwell in *MacFlecknoe*. Bayes, the hero of *The Rehearsal*, is a modern writer of heroic tragedies which have captured the public imagination. His name, aside from its explicit reference to Dryden as "Old Bayes," the poet laureate, is an adaptation of Virgil's bad poet Bavius. Bayes has managed to transform his "art" into a sensation-packed sequence of events entirely lacking any real coherence or purpose. The creative process has been reduced at his hands to a mechanical system of three rules. The first is the "Rule of Transversion; or *Regula Duplex*: changing Verse into Prose, or Prose into Verse . . ." (I.i.96). His second he calls the "Rule of Record" by which he means eavesdropping. His third rule is a "rule for invention" which is plagiarism. Just as Jonson's characters had euphemisms for all their immoral schemes, Bayes has euphemistic terms for his immoral mechanical writing. If he were asked what moral function his writing serves he would have dismissed the question as irrelevant. Art, to Bayes and other hack writers, serves no didactic purpose; titillation is all, and the more surprising and

---

spectacular the better:

Bayes: . . . for my part, I prefer that one quality of singly beating of whole Armies above all your moral virtues put together, I gad (IV.1.110).

This concern with effect is the modern hack writer's chief preoccupation. Bayes remarks:

. . . the chief Art in Poetry is to elevate your expectation and then bring you off some extraordinary way (IV.1.216).

In this respect, Bayes is the progenitor of the Grub Street Hack in Jonathan Swift's A Tale of a Tub: " . . . as Mankind is now disposed," the Hack points out, "he receives much greater Advantage by being Diverted than Instructed . . . ."¹⁴

In A Tale of a Tub, Jonathan Swift wrote what was to be the first of a series of satires concerned with the Grub Street abuse of language and learning. In "A Letter to a Young Poet," Swift gives us a succinct image of Grub Street. He is discussing literary life in Dublin:

Seriously then, I have many Years lamented the want of a Grub-Street in this our large and polite City, unless the whole may be called one. And this I have accounted an unpardonable Defect in our Constitution, ever since I had any Opinions I could call my own. Every one knows, Grub-street is a Market for Small-Ware in WIT, and as necessary considering the usual Purgings of the Human Brain, as the Nose is upon a Man's Face . . . . And truly this Defect has been attended with unspeakable inconveniences; for not to mention the Prejudice done to the Common-wealth of Letters, I am of the opinion we suffer in our Health by it: I believe our corrupted Air, and frequent thick Fogs are in a great measure owing to the common exposal of our Wit, and that with good Management, our Poetical Vapours might be carried off in a Common Drain, and fall into one Quarter of the Town, without infecting the whole, as the Case is at present, to the

great Offence of our Nobility, and the Gentry, and Others of nice Noses.

Grub Street, the market for the "purgings of the Brain," is a metaphor that incorporates all the images that have been evoked throughout the satiric tradition on language and learning, but it also provides a new focus: the commercial spirit. Grub Street was a market for a new commodity: the offal of the human intellect, blown up to monstrous proportions of size and weight and passed off as the product of profound learning.

This commercial spirit is endemic in the Tale, so that the Hack, a product of Grub Street himself, takes it for granted, and automatically sets about devising "long Digression[s] unsought for," and "forty or fifty Pages of Preface and Dedication" (p. 131). As he very sensibly points out, "the Society of Writers would quickly be reduced to a very inconsiderable Number, if Men were put upon making Books, with the fatal Confinement of delivering nothing beyond what is to the Purpose" (p. 144).

Swift, as a Christian and a humanist, assumed that ethics and expression were closely allied. When a man has himself in order, his writing will naturally reflect his internal clarity and coherence. Good writing thus becomes an index of moral virtue, and the moral squalor of Swift's Hack is exhibited in the language that he uses and by a corresponding structural and stylistic incoherence. His incoherent style is obvious when, in order to follow the thread of the argument in the Tale, the reader must consult footnotes that supplement, qualify,

parallel, digress, or elucidate, and marginalia that conducts its own
dialogue with the text. The Hack prides himself on his capacity for
sheer miscellaneousness; he is a connoisseur of the worthless.

Bad writers had been endemic during the lifetimes of earlier
satirists. Now, however, the universality of the new commercial spirit
that Butler had complained of became linked with the dissemination of
learning, and the result was the monstrous birth of the Modern Dunce.
Dryden's imagery of the Second Coming of the Anti-Christ twenty years
earlier in MacFlecknoe had hinted at the same thing, but in the Tale
the composite of images that make up Grub Street conveys in a complete
sense the new evil let loose upon the world. The direction that this
evil takes in the Tale is that of the irrational enthusiast indulged
and allowed to run riot; the resulting product is packaged and sold
to an eager public. The exuberance and the vitality that Rabelais had
used to test the boundaries of referential meaning, and thus the
rational, Swift has harnessed to his Hack, so that he can attack from the
opposite side, and expose the Grub Street exploitation of the irrational.
The Hack's imagination is continually running away with him so that
every action of his mind inevitably leads him into some irrationality, for
what the Hack believes to be disembodied spirituality is really a
misleading and unproductive delusion. Butler, in Elephant on the Moon,
had pointed out that the illusory discovery of the virtuosos was the
product of purely subjective speculation, and the Hack's delusion are a
product of the same subjectivity:

... the Question is only this; Whether Things that have
Place in the Imagination, may not as properly be said to
Exist, as those that are seated in the Memory; which may be
justly held in the Affirmative. ... (p. 172).
The Hack rationalizes this view by pointing out that all great actions have proceeded out of madness:

For, if we take a Survey of the greatest Actions that have been performed in the World, under the Influence of Single Men; which are, The Establishment of New Empires by Conquest; The Advance and Progress of New Schemes in Philosophy; and the contriving, as well as the propagating of New Religions; We shall find the Authors of them all, to have been Persons, whose natural Reason hath admitted great Revolutions . . . (p. 162).

The Hack himself admits to "overturned Intellectuals" which do not in the least impair his abilities.

The sterility and the squalor of the "Modern" mind is at the centre of Grub Street, and it is given expression, not by the sacred Word, but by a debased language devoid of meaning. The unlimited indulgence of the Hack's mind and the meaninglessness of his "Comprehensive Discourse" are evident when he suggests that seven "of the deepest Scholars" will each produce fundamentally different interpretations of the Tale he has written. These differing interpretations are "manifestly deduceable" from the text only because the text is so vague and general that virtually anything could be read into it. There is no proliferation of knowledge because the original text is sterile and non-productive. It is so "comprehensive" that it is meaningless.

The "Modern" mind is primarily an eighteenth-century phenomenon, characterized by its ability to be "Deep-learned and Shallow-read." This learning requires the use of "large Indexes and little Compendiums . . . To this End, tho' Authors need be little consulted, yet Criticks, and Commentators, and Lexicons carefully must" (pp. 147-148). The Modern is a composite of the virtuoso and the antiquarian. That is, he spends his time collecting curious and useless bits of information and, from this
miscellaneous collection he draws certain conclusions that are not only useless but meaningless.

In "A Digression in Praise of Digressions," the Hack proudly presents "the noblest Branch of Modern Wit or Invention" by pointing out the newest talent of "Modern" authors:

What I mean, is that highly celebrated Talent among the Modern Wits, of deducing Similitudes, Allusions, and Applications, very Surprising, Agreeable, and Apposite, from the Pudenda of either Sex, together with their proper Uses. And truly, having observed how little Invention bears any Vogue, besides what is derived into these Channels, I have sometimes had a Thought, That the happy Genius of our Age and Country, was prophetically held forth by that antient typical Description of the Indian Pygmies; whose Stature did not exceed above two Foot; Sed quorum pudenda crassa, & ad talos usque pertingentia*. Now, I have been very curious to inspect the late Productions, wherein the Beauties of this kind have most prominently appeared. And altho' this Vein hath bled so freely, and all Endeavours have been used in the Power of Human Breath, to dilate, extend, and keep it open: Like the Scythians, who had a Custom, and an Instrument, to blow up the Privities of their Mares, that they might yield the more Milk; Yet I am under an Apprehension, it is near growing dry, and past all Recovery; And that either some new Fonde of Wit should, if possible, be provided, or else that we must e'en be content with Repetition here, as well as upon all other Occasions.

(p. 147)

To the Hack, all things "Modern" are superior to "the Remains . . . left us by the Antients" (p. 146). His contention is simply that his "noblest Branch" owes nothing to earlier periods of intellectual achievement, but is completely self-generated in the best "Modern" manner. However, he represents the achievements of modern learning as embodied in the gross physical image of the deformity of the Pygmies. Thus, in the process of himself "deducing Similitudes," he establishes the small-body, large-genitalia image of the pygmies, "whose Stature did not exceed above two Foot; Sed quorum pudenda crassa, & ad talos usque pertingentia," as a

*But whose genitals were thick and reached all the way to their ankles.
suitable type of his own intellectual pursuits.

Similar to this pygmy-type of modern genius is the image of the Scythian mares. With their artificially inflated "privities," they are typical of the "Modern" scholarship of which the Hack boasts so proudly. They too are blown up with air, or nothing. Yet everything unnaturally enlarged will eventually collapse: thus the small body of Modern learning with its swollen appendages is essentially temporary, constantly in danger of running dry of newly invented matter.

Like Butler's "Hermetic Philosopher," the Grub Street Hack compensates for the lack of substance in his works by hinting that he has a ready fund of deep meanings and profound occult wisdom that is available only to the "true illuminated." Like Socrates in his basket (The Clouds) he is suspended in air, above the realities of life. His inspiration is of the same Wind which sustained Aristophanes' sophists, but with an occult accretion:

Their Gods were the four Winds, whom they worshipped, as the Spirits that pervade and enliven the Universe, and as those from whom alone all Inspiration can properly be said to proceed (p. 154).

The inhabitants of Grub Street are similar to earlier satiric targets in other ways. Lucian's multitude of philosophers, quarrelling among themselves as they stormed the Acropolis are now the "Multitude of Writers, whereof the whole Multitude of Writers most reasonably complains" (p. 45). The Hack, like the philosophers in Clouds or Diogenes in Fishing for Phonies, has endured hardships, presumably in the service of his "learning:

Whatever Reader desires to have a thorow Comprehension of an Author's Thoughts, cannot take a better Method, than by putting himself into the Circumstances and Postures of Life, that the Writer was in, upon every important Passage as it
flow'd from his Pen; For this will introduce a Parity and strict Correspondence of Idea's between the Reader and the Author. . . . the shrewdest Pieces of his Treatise were conceived in Bed, in a Garret: At other times (for a Reason best known to my self) I thought fit to sharpen my Invention with Hunger; and in general, the whole work was begun, continued, and ended, under a long Course of Physick, and a great want of Money. (p. 44).

But to the spuriousness of the scholar and writer, Swift adds an element of corruption; as when the Hack describes the "True Criticks" of the age:

Amongst the rest . . . there is a Serpent that wants Teeth, and consequently cannot bite, but if its Vomit (to which it is much addicted) happens to fall upon any Thing, a certain Rottenness or Corruption ensues: These Serpents are generally found among the Mountains where Jewels grow, and they frequently emit a poisonous Juice whereof, whoever drinks, that Person's Brains flie out of his Nostrils. (p. 100).

If one looks closely at any image in the Tale one discovers the rot and corruption that underlie Grub Street. The Hack, who writes as a consequence of "... a drunken Vigil . . . an ill Run at Dice . . . and a just Contempt of Learning" (p. 183) does not recognize this corruption because he himself is indigenous to the Grub Street world.

Swift borrows the images that both Rabelais and Erasmus had used to suggest ambiguity, images such as the Iliad in a Nut-shell, the Silenus box, and the maggoty cheese. If we examine Swift's use of these images, however, we can see that the emphasis differs. Rabelais and Erasmus were intent on illustrating the paradoxical relationship between superficiality and substance. Swift's Hack thinks he is suggesting the same paradoxical relationship, but he is ironically undercut by his own platitudes, and by his extravagantly ridiculous and unilluminating figures, the effect of which makes wisdom appear, not a hidden treasure, but a revolting or distasteful surprise, if it is there at all:
But the greatest Maim given to that general reception, which the Writings of our Society have formerly received, (next to the transitory State of all sublunary Things,) hath been a superficial Vein among many Readers of the present Age, who will by no means be persuaded to inspect beyond the Surface and Rind of Things; whereas, Wisdom is a Fox, who after long hunting, will at last cost you the Pains to dig out; 'Tis a Cheese, which by how much the richer, has the thicker, the homlier and the courser Coat; and whereof to a judicious Palate, the Maggots are the best. 'Tis a Sack-Posset, wherein the deeper you go, you will find it the sweeter. Wisdom is a Hen, whose Cackling we must value and consider, because it is attended with an Egg; But then, lastly, 'tis a Nut, which unless you chuse with Judgment, may cost you a Tooth, and pay you with nothing but a Worm. In consequence of these momentous Truths, the Grubean Sages have always chosen to convey their Precepts and their Arts, shut up within the Vehicles of Types and Fables, which having been perhaps more careful and curious in adorning, than was altogether necessary, it has fared with these Vehicles after the usual Fate of Coaches over-finely painted and gilt; that the transitory Gazers have so dazzled their Eyes, and fill'd their Imaginations with the outward Lustre, as neither to regard or consider, the Person or the Parts of the Owner within. A Misfortune we undergo with somewhat less Reluctancy, because it has been common to us with Pythagoras, AESop, Socrates, and other of our Predecessors (p. 66).

The Hack is saying that an obstinate refusal on the part of readers to look beneath the "Surface and Rind" constitutes a great handicap to the public acceptance of the deep meanings and "momentous Truths" contained in Modern writings. But underneath, these writings are more absurd than on top. The Hack thinks he has presented a paradox; in fact, he has not. Instead, the absurdity and the lack of substance is more than ever clearly demonstrated.

Nevertheless, Grub Street works do have a value. Not the traditional didactic and morally instructive value, but a value as a commodity. On Grub Street everything is for sale except principles and morality, which have no value, and no place, here. This means that hack writers can turn their talents and their coats to any service. The Hack explains that his "Quill" has been
worn to the Pith in the Service of the State, in Pro's and Con's upon Popish Plots, and Meal-Tubs, and Exclusion Bills, and Passive Obedience, and Addresses of Lives and Fortunes; and Prerogative, and Property, and Liberty of Conscience, and Letters to a Friend: From an Understanding and a Conscience, thread-bare and ragged with perpetual turning; From a Head broken in a hundred places, by the Malignants of the opposite Factions, and from a Body spent with Poxes ill cured, by trusting to Bawds and Surgeons, who, (as it afterwards appeared) were profess'd Enemies to Me and the Government, and revenged their Party's Quarrel upon my Nose and Shins. Four-score and eleven Pamphlets have I written under three Reigns, and for the Service of six and thirty Factions (p. 70).

In spite of these hardships, the Hack is accustomed to his craft, and satisfied with his work:

I am also happy, that Fate has flung me into so blessed an Age for the mutual Felicity of Booksellers and Authors, whom I may safely affirm to be at this Day the two only satisfied Parties in England (p. 182).

The Bookseller should be content; he has just sold out a second edition of some "Thing." Both the Bookseller and the Hack writer are matter-of-factly concerned with only the commercial aspects of their trade, and they do not, of course, share the ironic perspective of the reader. After consulting his Almanak, and considering "the Bulk and the Subject" of the Hack's treatise, the Bookseller concludes that "it would never take, but after a long Vacation, and then only, in case it should happen to be a hard year for Turnips" (p. 207). Together they discuss what could be "turned to Account" this month:

At length we agreed upon this Expedient; That when a Customer comes for one of these, and desires in Confidence to know the Author; he will tell him very privately, as a Friend, naming which ever of the Wits shall happen to be that Week in the Vogue; and if Durfy's last Play should be in Course, I have as like he may be the Person as Congreve (p. 207).

The bulk and the subject, the right price to the right person, the fashion of the day; all these are expedient to the trade. Honesty, integrity, and learning are not; they cannot be "turned to Account."
Hack writing enables men, with little learning or morality to commend them, to set themselves up as the artists of the age. The "Evacuations" of their learning are expressed in the mad language of delusions, occult nonsense, chop-logic, and sophistical speculation. Moreover, because their products are in demand as a popular commodity, hack writing extends its operations into what were previously the strongholds of the traditional culture--religion, art, and philosophy. Everyman could walk around with a "little Compendium" of culture in his hand and pass as a man of learning and consequently it becomes more and more difficult to distinguish secondhand learning from the real thing. The success of the booksellers and authors of Grub Street, a success grounded in a technique that relied on "the Assistance of Artificial Mediums, false Lights, refracted Angles, Varnish, and Tinsel" (p. 172) fostered a whole attitude and style of life which subsisted purely on externals. What lies beyond the externals is in danger of dwindling to a shadow and a ghost.

Jonathan Swift fought a losing battle against the perversions of language and learning that attended the eighteenth-century ideological shift, just as Aristophanes had fought a losing battle against the abuses of language and learning during the Greek ideological shift. Evidently the battle between Ancients and Moderns is fought over and over again. The historical period changes, and with it the satirist's emphasis, but the imagery and the themes remain the same.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION
To some degree, satires on language and learning from Classical times into the eighteenth century have been a reaction to two main assumptions of rationalist ideologies. First, everything is ultimately knowable, and in their search for knowledge men can discern and make use of some underlying order. Second, if men know the good, they will pursue it.

Philosophies do not spring forth fully mature; they are organic things that grow and change. If there ever were such a thing as "pure" rationalism, it would have taken pride in settling all questions before the bar of reason and interpreting all human behaviour in terms of rational self-interest, and the belief that virtue consisted essentially in a technique of rational living. Plato's earliest writings, such as Protagoras and the Gorgias with their frank utilitarianism and their Socrates who is still no more than life size, come closest to this hypothetical attitude. Plato's later writings, such as the Cratylus modified this position when he cross-fertilized the tradition of Greek rationalism with magico-religious ideas and transformed the meaning of rationalism by giving it a metaphysical extension.

Christianity inherited and assimilated the dichotomy between the rational and the supra-rational: reason and faith. In his great symbol

1 William Barret, in Irrational Man makes this comment about the historical contexts of the Christian and the classical world:
Again and again, at the beginning of Christianity, St. Paul tells us that the faith he preaches is foolishness to the Greeks, for they demand "wisdom"--which of course to the Greek meant rational philosophy and not religious faith. But the historical fact that Christianity arose in a world which already knew about reason through the Greeks distinguishes Christian faith from the Hebraic faith of the Old Testament (p. 81).
of the two cities Augustine enunciated that basic Christian dualism which gives meaning to all its dichotomies of earth and heaven, nature and grace, man and God, the relative and the absolute, time and eternity. Augustine also distinguished between the two different kinds of knowledge. The first was associated with nature, man, reason and truth; the second with Christianity, grace, God, faith, and goodness. It was the great achievement of Aquinas (and of the Schoolmen in general) to attempt a workable synthesis of the two, allocating to reason the things proper to reason, to faith the things proper to faith, and reconciling the two under the providence of God. And in terms of human psychology, Aquinas sought to identify goodness with truth, the object of reason, and he asserted the uses of human reason in arriving at an intelligible view of God's creation.

The ideological shift that developed in the eighteenth century as a result of the new rationalism in effect destroyed Aquinas' reconciliation between the two kinds of knowledge, although few of the devout rationalistic proponents could perceive it. The shift was destructive because it replaced a providential God with an indifferent one, and it separated virtue from knowledge.

Regardless of the stresses and strains of the ideological shifts in the fifth century B.C. and the eighteenth century A.D., the importance of language and learning remained a constant. In fact, from the Greeks to the eighteenth-century Augustans there was an increased awareness of language as the rational expression of men, and Christian humanists would have said that language was an expression of both the divine and the rational parts in men. Similarly, learning also takes on increased importance as the avenue not only to virtue, but also to God.
Consequently, we have seen develop a satiric tradition attacking the abuses of language and learning; a tradition that uses recurring stock images and themes but that changes its emphasis depending upon the differing ideological context.

Aristophanes wrote in a period when the Greek mythic attitudes had not quite been replaced by the new rationalism, and his imagery reflects his ambivalent response to the new intellectual fashion. To illustrate the arrogance and the absurdity of the new philosophers, Aristophanes adopted or developed images that would express the dangers and the triviality of their thought. His windbag philosopher appeals to the undisciplined passions of men, particularly to their self-interest and greed, while pretending to feed their intellectual appetite by creating a glorious edifice built on air. This pompous, pedantic philosopher has pumped himself up with the wind of importance but nothing else of substance, and he exploits those credulous or venal enough to be attracted to his "wisdom." But it is neither the nobility of his wisdom nor the clarity of his language that wins popularity for his "new education," it is the appeal of the new learning to the basest instincts of greed, an appeal voiced in casuistic chop-logic.

By Lucian's time, the original sophists had multiplied and divided into their different schools, each intent on its own particular interpretation of ideas. They were a burgeoning population because they had a ready fund of human folly to exploit. Lucian's world is a teeming anthill of foolish and misguided and diabolical activity, all seen in ironic perspective so that we can perceive for ourselves the distance between what we are and what we profess to be. The windbag philosopher is still the same, there is just more of him, and he has been assimilated
into a society now comfortable with his sophistical ideas. The undisciplined and unprincipled learning of the few has now become the gospel of the many.

In the centuries intervening between the Classical satirists and the Renaissance, Western intellectual thought was primarily concerned with consolidation and assimilation. Medieval scholars succeeded in putting a tight box around classical learning through analysis and exegesis of the apostles and the early Christian fathers. By the sixteenth century, the Schoolmen had become mired in the accretions of years of exegesis—so much so that it rendered them incapable of any but the narrowest of visions. This moribund scholasticism is the target of early Renaissance satirists such as Rabelais and Erasmus who, through their imagery, dwell on the myopic vision of scholasticism. Rabelais and Erasmus, each in his own way, express the early Renaissance emphasis on a complexity, diversity, and contradiction not amenable to Scholastic systemization. Instead of limiting his view to one essential aspect of a subject, a Renaissance writer is more likely to explore all of its aspects, especially if they are contradictory, and to open up as many different perspectives as possible. This exploratory approach explains why, rather than symmetry, order, and balance, he will prefer paradox, enigma, argument, antithesis, and ambiguity. Erasmus, by using the paradox, could surround his readers with a continuum of madness and folly, ironically inviting them to choose from a variety ranging from the dessicated introversions of the theologian to the Pauline simplicity that leads them to God. Out of this paradox Erasmus could caution men to look closely at the choice they make. They must be aware that attention to the surface rather than substance in learning and morality is self-
deceiving and limiting, and that the transient happiness they cultivate is at the cost of a much greater happiness which lies within their grasp.

Rabelais explodes the introverted world of the medieval intellectual by pushing against the limitations of language and education. The imagery of the world of Pantagruel owes part of its vitality to the words that give it being, words which insist upon their own colour and texture and their mediating position between the fiction and the reader. Rabelais is incessantly assaulting and belabouring his language, twisting it out of shape and then moulding it into new forms. The word, which is the instrument of the medieval scholar's narrow, literal, logical mind becomes in Rabelais' hands the weapon that undermines their systems and exposes their unconscious servitudes. Yet even in the midst of all the antirational verbal exuberance, the word remains for Rabelais the instrument of penetrating thought and lucid reflection.

The education of Gargantua is at once a humanist's vision of what ought to constitute the learning of a man, and an exposé of conventional education. Janotus, a doctor of the Sorbonne, although that name never appears in the text, is representative of conventional higher education, and his searing, self-incriminating diatribe against his colleagues reveals the moral night of his institution:

"Reason!" exclaimed Janotus, "we use none of that here. You wretched, worthless traitors, there isn't a more depraved bunch than you on the whole face of the earth, as well I know. Don't try a false limp in front of a cripple. I've had a share in your villainies. God's spleen! I'll inform the king of the manifold abuses that are planned and carried out by you, with your own hands. The leprosy strike me if he doesn't have you all burnt alive as buggers, traitors, heretics and seducers, enemies of God and all virtue."

2 Rabelais, Gargantua and Pantagruel, p. 80.
Set against this bleak little world, the activity of the young Gargantua testifies not only to the goodness of knowledge but also of life and the living human creature. Thus Rabelais' imagery reveals a noble and expansive mode of human life in sharp contrast to the medieval Christian mode, enlarging the horizons of the mind and the artistic imagination, giving man a new flexibility, a liberty, a dignity that could not be realized within the medieval framework.

With Ben Jonson we turn from the ambiguity of language to the more traditional target of the misuse of language. The characters of *The Alchemist* all use language as a means of concealing the true nature of their actions. Whatever villainy they commit is enveloped in sophistical euphemisms, a willing deception that all the characters accept, even the Puritan dupes, because they are accustomed to the abuse of language in every other aspect of their lives. They do not need to be taught how to abuse language; they already know how.

Jonson's imagery points up the misuse of language; Donne's centres on the misuse of learning. Donne also assumes the Christian humanist conception of learning, that is, relating learning to an active rather than to a contemplative life which is measured in moral and religious terms. He condemns Coscus because he sells his learning instead of using it to live the good life. It is this betrayal of Coscus' invaluable gifts that makes more meaningful Donne's use of the imagery of prostitution.

If the transition from a sacramental to a secular view of nature had its beginning in the sixteenth century, with the questions of men like Erasmus and Rabelais, the seventeenth century was really the pivotal epoch in the shift. The sceptical tradition bore satirical fruit in this
century, and Samuel Butler wrote within the context of this tradition. His *Characters* illustrate his sceptical view of man's reason. Butler was never able to ascribe any positive function to man's rational faculty. But Butler's emphasis in his satires, and for that matter, the emphasis of Jonson and Donne in theirs, was also a response to the moral implication of an increasing secularization. Secularization was in turn a product of the new rationalism, the discoveries of astronomers, and Bacon's reevaluation of knowledge and the introduction of the inductive method.

The widening breach between the sacred and the secular had become an established fact by the eighteenth century, and as a result satirists began to look closely at the secular domain and to point to the moral implications of the separation or, as Butler neatly distinguishes it, the difference between a man's "Profession" and his "Calling." This meant a rigorous examination of such secular concerns as science, politics, and money-making, all of which had become isolated from religion and consequently from moral considerations.

Pedantricity came under attack by William King with his satiric portrait of the Modern, who is a variation on the philosopher absorbed in trivial abstractions to the exclusion of those practicalities which ought to concern any man of common sense. To the image of the philosopher the Modern adds the associations of fashion, of being *à la mode*, which is linked to the scientific doctrine of progress. It was King who pointed out that the Modern was "in a ditch by choice," a succinct metaphor pointing

---

3 And in the eighteenth century with its numerous satires against mankind in imitation of Boileau's *Eighth Satire*. 
up the kind of moral choice open to the eighteenth-century intellectual.

There were many satires on the new science in general and the Royal Society in particular in the latter part of the seventeenth century. The Virtuoso is representative of the type, and in this play Shadwell ridicules the virtuoso's scientific interest in knowledge for its own sake rather than its useful application. This last charge was perhaps the most serious laid at the door of the Royal Society, although in Elephant on the Moon Samuel Butler was to add another equally grave: the virtuosos would even falsify and subvert truth in the interest of self-esteem and their eagerness for the notoriety that would be theirs should a sensational discovery be announced.

But it is the secularized concern with money making that increasingly concerns the satirists. During the seventeenth century the acquisitive urges still hid behind religious and political outworks, but by the eighteenth century it was too clear that what both individuals and states were after was the material spoils of the world, now lying readier for exploitation than ever before. This commercial spirit was not directed solely at the outside world; it had application close to home as well. The rapid expansion of trade and commerce was accompanied by a new sensibility which attached positive values to the aggressive transaction of business, and accounted for the appearance of a new phenomenon, the economic projector.

Attitudes towards economics changed, and now, in the satirist's view, virtually anything could be bought and sold. Jonathan Swift managed to capture the essence of the new shift in the metaphor of Grub Street. Grub Street is represented as both the commercial and the artistic hub of the city, and it is an appalling prospect that Swift lays out before
us. The perennial acquisitive impulse has taken on a new dimension; it
is now subverting the moral and religious functions of the artist. Donne's
Coscus had sold out, but he was still only a lawyer. He had been a poet,
but a failed poet, and recognized as a failed poet. But Grub Street is
populated with failed writers who present themselves as artists of the
age.

Buckingham's Bayes is a good example of the acclaim that a charlatan
can command. His dramatic "artistry" consists of stringing together a
sequence of secondhand theatrical effects, and the product is a
commodity shrewdly constructed to appeal to the lowest common denominator
of his audience. Johnson and Smith may sneer at Bayes, and call him a
philistine masquerading as an artist, but Bayes is "acclaimed by country
and by city wits." He has been very careful to write "for Reputation,"
and he has been successful. 4

Similarly, in the Grub Street world, the artist has sold out. His
art is another commodity on the market, and he is reduced to a hack,
churning out whatever is in vogue regardless of whether or not it has
any intrinsic value. Grub Street productions will not withstand close
scrutiny, nor need they do so. It is much easier, as borne out by Bayes,
to lower the standards and values of the society than to maintain an
artistic sensibility informed by moral standards. Swift's Hack and his
fellows adjust standards by transforming themselves into Modern "Critics,"
who set themselves up as literary and artistic arbiters and then declare
the Modern way to be the definitive artistic sensibility of the times.

4 Pope was to delineate the necessary ingredients of works written
for such "Reputation" in Peri Bathous: or the Art of Sinking in Poetry.
Swift's Grub Street metaphor captures the destructive essence of the eighteenth-century shift because it manages to incorporate all the elements that profoundly disturbed men in the eighteenth century who still worked within the Christian humanist tradition. Grub Street, with its Moderns, Critics, Virtuosos, Projectors, and Hacks, all inflamed by zeal, inflated by wind, and illuminated with esoteric knowledge, was at the service of the highest bidder. This destructive influence spiralled out into the whole society. The Grub Street writers assumed the name, but not the virtues, of learning, piety, nobility, and artistic sensibility, creating a confusion that makes these virtues all the more remote and inaccessible. The result is a rapid degeneration of moral values and ultimately moral standards. Swift uses Rabelais' exuberance and vitality with terrifying effect, to paint a world gone mad, a world that aspires, not to truth and virtue, but to "what will best go off in a Dry Year." The writers and philosophers of this world had created a new kingdom for themselves, a kingdom of dunces in which all things had been shrivelled into commodities for the market place.
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources


Secondary Sources


