

UNIFYING DEVICES IN A TALE OF A TUB

by

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ABSTRACT

One of the major problems for readers and students of A Tale of a Tub is its apparent lack of internal unity and coherence. Faced with a welter of seemingly contradictory and inconsistent arguments and attitudes, reader and student alike have frequently been forced to concede defeat and turn to Swift's "more profitable" works for consolation.

The purpose of the present study has been to indicate the existence, in the Tale, of numerous unifying devices, a recognition of which may enable the reader to perceive and appreciate the essential unity and coherence of an admittedly complex literary entity.

Emphasis has been primarily upon the "dramatic impact" of the Tale, and the contribution of images and themes to this impact. Classification of images and themes has been made in terms of the definitions offered in the text.

Persuasive oratory is the instrument ^{of} achievement in the Tubbian world, and it is with the motives and methods of Tubbian orators that the study is primarily concerned. The pervasive themes of the mechanical operation of the spirit and madness are among the unifying devices in the Tale.

The first seven chapters are devoted to an exploration of images, devices, and thematic developments as unifying devices. Four subsequent

chapters discuss the relationships between elements in the Tale and certain of the cultural dissensions of which these elements provide reflections. There has been no attempt at inclusiveness in the selection of representative cultural elements. Rather, in the selection of materials from Hobbes, Dryden, Wycherley, Sprat, the Cambridge Platonists, Glanvill, and Shaftesbury, the attempt has been only to indicate the major preoccupations of the age.

Where obvious similarities exist between attitudes, as they do between the attitudes of Hobbes and those of the scientific virtuosi, the emphasis is upon Swift's capacity to make fine distinctions between similar attitudes and to indicate these distinctions in his methods of attack. Conversely, the inclusion of apparently disparate "philosophies," such as those of Hobbes and Shaftesbury, is intended to demonstrate Swift's ability to comprehend in one attack a great variety of disparate attitudes.

It has been found necessary, in the interests of clarity, to include a certain amount of explanation and elaboration of materials relative to the cultural background.

The conclusion of the study is primarily concerned with the reader's reaction to the "dramatic impact" of the Tale. Certain of Swift's "satiric criteria" or norms are tentatively offered for consideration. These are such as may be readily available to the reader from a careful examination of the text and an exploration of his own reaction to the text.

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INTRODUCTION

The appearance of A Tale of a Tub and two "companion pieces" in an anonymous volume in the year 1704 was the occasion for a great deal of speculation concerning the identity of the author and the meaning of several "obscure" passages in the Tale itself. While the identity of the author has long since been established, literary speculations concerning Jonathan Swift's purpose and meaning in A Tale of a Tub continue to flourish and multiply.

In this study, the attempt has been to provide some specific contribution toward enabling the reader of the Tale to perceive and appreciate the essential unity and coherence of an admittedly complex literary entity. In accordance with this purpose, emphasis has been placed upon the internal unity of the Tale and upon the significance of its "dramatic impact" on the reader.

The classification of images and themes has been made in terms of definitions offered in the text of the Tale itself. The three major images are the "orators" of the "Tubbian world" in which the "persona" or alleged "author" of the Tale exists. These orators, in a world in which oratory or persuasion is the instrument ^{of} achievement, are the mountebank, the highwayman, and the religious zealot who occupy the three "oratorical machines" consisting of the mountebank's stage-itinerant, the highwayman's ladder or scaffold, and the religious zealot's pulpit. The two major themes of the Tale, pervading the ideas and actions of "Tubbian" orators and audience alike, are the themes of the "mechanical operation of the spirit" and "madness."

The various technical devices by means of which Swift establishes his images, elaborates upon his themes, and unifies images and themes, have been discussed and illustrated. The materials of the first seven chapters of the study are intended to provide an insight into the structure and content of A Tale of a Tub as these contribute to the progressive development of theme. The remaining four chapters are devoted to the establishment of the relationship between A Tale of a Tub and certain of the cultural dissensions of which its elements are reflections. In selecting the particular elements of the culture for the purpose of this study, there has been no attempt at inclusiveness. The factions or "philosophies" selected were chosen on the assumption that they would serve to represent only the major

preoccupations of the age and indicate not only Swift's ability to comprehend in the one attack a great variety of disparate attitudes, but also his capacity to make fine distinctions between similar attitudes and to indicate these distinctions in his methods of attack.

While the primary emphasis has been upon the unity of Swift's attack, the inclusion of a certain amount of explanation and elaboration of materials relative to the cultural background has been found necessary. Similarly, it has been found necessary to include statements of Swift's criteria, derived as far as possible from the Tale itself, in order to indicate the extent of Swift's consistency and coherence in method and attitude.

The dramatic structure of the Tale, as it is treated here, does not include either the "Apology" or the "Postscript," which did not appear until 1710. The "History of Martin" is similarly excluded from the present discussion, since it did not appear until 1720.

The conclusion of this study is devoted primarily to a consideration of the reader's reaction to the "dramatic impact" of the Tale. The criteria offered are tentative, and such as may be readily available to the reader from a careful consideration of the text and from an examination of his own reactions to arguments offered by the text.

The reaction of the reader develops to a considerable extent as a reaction to developments in his apprehension of the nature and limitations

of the ²⁸persona of the Tale. For this reason, the initial chapter which follows is devoted to a discussion of the technical uses Swift makes of his personae.

CHAPTER I

SWIFT'S USE OF THE PERSONA

One of the merits of Swift's satire is its ability to present a situation from a particular point of view, that held by a persona intimately involved in the situation. Swift's "masks" or personae constitute a host of projectors, politicians, freethinkers, atheists, madmen, virtuosi, Rosicrucians and hack writers.

Swift employs the persona to establish a dramatic situation in which certain definite principles are demonstrated in action. The persona reflects various aspects of the world created by his own attitudes. As the persona develops, the reader acquires insight into the nature of the persona's world, into the relationship between the persona's attitudes and those of his world, and into the attitudes which have served to establish the world of the persona.

Swift's persona usually serves as spokesman for a cause, with a design to inform or reform the world or a particular aspect of the world, according to some explicit system for which a practical or theoretical utility is claimed. The persona's apparent ignorance of a correct evaluation of his own response to a situation invites the laughter and contempt of the reader. Similarly, the persona's resolution or attempted

resolution of the problem arising from the dramatic situation, while consistent with the established character, invites and implies comparison with other proposed solutions for identical or similar problems. The ignorance and ineptitude of the persona invite pity, his logic invites scorn, and his mistaken but zealous irrationality provokes laughter.

Swift's personae " . . . enable the author to present philosophic questions, ideas, or a series of events from a fresh point of view. They help him to make the details of a narrative credible: we are more likely to take the word of an eye-witness than of an historian. And through the 'author's' reaction to them, events take on a new life."¹ The persona provides an atmosphere of veracity by setting up an imaginary point of view which becomes progressively more complex, thereby providing an increasing body of evidence upon which the reader bases his evaluation of, and subsequent scorn for Tubbian procedures and protestations.

The world of the persona is, however, analogous to the world of the reader, and the two worlds gradually merge. The reader becomes aware of the implications and potentialities of certain attitudes to which he subscribes and which are significant in terms of action in his own world. Swift embodies, in the concrete situation of a literary world, the disparity between the reality and the appearance, between the ideal and the practice. It is toward this unillusioned perception of reality that the satirist attempts to lead his audience.

¹ W.B. Ewald, The Masks of Jonathan Swift (Oxford, 1954), p.6.

It would be a mistake to confuse Swift's attitudes with those of his persona, whose ideas bear only an extended relationship to those of Swift. Even where Swift appears to be "speaking through" his persona, the ideas expressed must be considered within the context of the dramatic situation. While the arguments offered by the persona may frequently demonstrate the effects of irrationality and false reasoning, the persona's inability to recognize his own limitations carries the implication that the reader will perceive these limitations and scornfully reject the arguments. The reader may pity the mistaken sincerity of the virtuoso or hack writer but he refuses to condone it.

Much of the effectiveness of Swift's satire depends upon the reader's rejection of the persona's repeated attempts to re-affirm an illogical contention. The argument may be a perversion of a serious aesthetic, moral, political, or religious argument for wrong or selfish ends. Conversely, the argument may culminate in a valid conclusion based upon fallacious reasoning. The reader is frequently reminded that there are better arguments than those offered for his inspection.

Similarly, the ambiguity of many of the terms, and particularly the ambiguity of certain commendatory terms, may provide a humorous damnation of both the argument and the individual presenting the argument. The persona's condemnation of certain aspects of his own world may be offered in forms parodying those attitudes or actions which he attempts to condemn.

Swift attempts to disclose man's perversions by embodying man's irrationalities in concrete form, often in the form of a parody. A Tale of a Tub may be considered an eulogy upon irrationality by a former inmate of Bedlam, the purported "author" of the Tale.

The "author" imitates the sophistry of the proud logician in his manipulation of spurious syllogisms, in his assertions of patently false assumptions, and in his reliance upon unsupported analogy or metaphor. His arguments are frequently mere cavils, while his ineptitude in argumentation merely serves to imply the validity of the arguments which he unsuccessfully attempts to refute. His arguments are often presented in such a way that they collapse in a welter of words under the weight of their own absurdity. The earnest pretension to logic becomes comic when the strained expectation of something novel and useful is transformed into a recognition of the trite, the absurd, and the vacuous.

The ignorance, vacuity and ineptitude of the hack writer have their counterparts in the character of the bookseller, who is as ignorant of the text of the Tale as he is of the meaning of the Latin inscription on the manuscript. He seeks a dedication which will sell the book, and which will act as a harbinger of novelty and singularity, in placating and flattering terms.

Some indication of the nature of the "author" of the Tale is offered by the title page. The inscription "for the universal improvement

of mankind" readily identifies the treatise with the writings of the virtuosi of the Royal Society, while the quotation from Irenaeus identifies the "author" as a Rosicrucian. The long list of titles of other works by the same "author" to be "speedily published" establishes the "author" as a "wit," a numerologist, a hack writer, and a purveyor of "traveller's tales." The "author's" preoccupation with the abstruse and the trivial is evident in his proposal to offer a "history of ears" and a "description of the kingdom of absurdities." A proposed "panegyric upon the world" suggests an irrational and perhaps "Deistic" optimism, while a "lecture upon the dissection of human nature" indicates a preoccupation with the tenets of the "new philosophy." The proposal to publish a "defence of the rabble" is evidently intended to influence the opinion of his less cultivated readers.

In his vanity and ignorance, the "author" of A Tale of a Tub blatantly assumes his own competence to give a full account of the "learning and wisdom" of his age, in a treatise that is "hollow and dry, and empty, and noisy, and wooden, and given to Rotation . . ."¹ The Tale is a nostrum, or elixir, which will enable the reader to adapt his attitudes and actions to the social, political, philosophical, religious, and literary demands of the Tubbian world.

The "author" proposes to adapt the reader of A Tale of a Tub to the demands of the Tubbian world and seeks to persuade him into compliance with the principles of this world. The most important qualification for

¹ Jonathan Swift, A Tale of a Tub, eds. A.C. Guthkelch, 2d ed. revised, D. Nichol Smith (Oxford, 1958), p.70. All subsequent references to A Tale of a Tub are taken from this edition.

success in the Tubbian world is a complete knowledge of the arts of eloquence or oratory. The three principal "oratorical machines" in the Tubbian world are the mountebank's stage-itinerant, the zealot's pulpit, and the highwayman's ladder or scaffold. The mountebank's stage is the seminary in which the highwayman and the zealot receive their first basic instruction in the arts of proselytization. The mountebank's stage-itinerant is, therefore, the most suitable eminence from which the hack writer or literary mountebank may launch his oracular nostrum into the Tubbian atmosphere of credulity and irrationality.

CHAPTER II
THE MOUNTEBANK

The literary mountebank in A Tale of a Tub is the supposed "author," a fictitious Grub Street hack writer, the paid agent of faction, zealous, enthusiastic, devoted to contemporary literary forms, and infatuated with pedantry, obscurity, mystification, and literary speculation.

As the paid agent of faction in an age in which the purpose of literature has become that of persuasion, the "hack" is proud of his own literary profusion. "Four-score and eleven Pamphlets have I written under three Reigns, and for the Service of six and thirty Factions." (p.70). A multiplicity of adherents is the sign of the power of any particular faction, while a profusion of persuasive pamphlets on behalf of a particular faction is an index of its popularity among the "corporation of poets" in the "Tubbian world."

Profusion, weight, and volume become merits in the totality of a writer's works and in the individual work. The "modern" achieves fame by attracting the attention of numbers of readers and by indicating the extensive range of his own erudition. The structure of A Tale of a Tub, with its excessive prefatory material, its numerous digressions, and its constant reiterations suggests a parody upon the formlessness of "modern" literature.

The success of the Tale as a parody of the modern treatise depends, both from Swift's point of view and from the point of view of the persona, upon a close adherence to the original. Bullitt suggests that A Tale of a Tub, as a spectacular demonstration of irrationality and inconsistency, shows the effects of a consistent pattern in Swift's satire. " . . . Swift's literary life may be viewed as a continuing effort to display to mankind one 'piece of logic' after another which he hoped, though not without frequent despair, would 'hardly pass on the world'."¹ The contemporary methods of writing are devised to ensure the fame of their practitioners who impose upon the credulity of the reader by appealing to his passions in the attempt to influence his opinion. A Tale of a Tub, with its insistence upon the merits of modern forms demonstrated by the persona, is essentially a mountebank's nostrum or recipe for literary fame and a manual for novice proselytizers.

The "defence" of modern learning in the "Epistle Dedicatory" serves to identify the interest of the "author" with that of the apprentice modern wit to whom he addresses his instruction in the arts of exhortation while at the same time the "defence" serves to identify the persona's interests with those of the established "wits" whom he hopes to divert. The reader is indeed diverted by the spectacle of a paid hack writer in the service of the forces of political and religious stability, attempting to divert others from practising the activities of which he is an expert practitioner. The persona has been one of the wits causing a situation in which "The Wits of

¹ J.M. Bullitt, Jonathan Swift and the Anatomy of Satire (Cambridge, 1953), p.91.

the present Age being so very numerous and penetrating, it seems, the Grandees of Church and State begin to fall under horrible apprehensions, lest these Gentlemen, during the intervals of a long Peace, should find leisure to pick Holes in the weak Sides of Religion and Government." (p.39).

One of the chief functions of modern literature is to provide diversion through novelty and singularity. The image of "time" as a destructive predatory beast provides a " . . . notable distinguishing Stroke, to surprize the Reader at the Entry and kindle a Wonderful Expectation of what is to ensue." (pp. 42-43). In a rapid succession of simile, metaphor, and analogy, posterity is represented as the "ward" of time, immortality is deified as the "goddess" of modern writers, and contemporary works are described in commendatory terms chosen by Swift for their comic implications as " . . . Unhappy Infants, many of them barbarously destroyed, before they have so much as learnt their Mother-Tongue to beg for Pity." (p. 33).

The diversion provided by novelty and singularity is designed for the "universal improvement of mankind" and is offered in conformity with the contention that " . . . as Mankind is now disposed, he receives much greater Advantage from being Diverted than Instructed." (p. 124). Modern literature diverts both the author in his "few leisure hours" and the reader who must unravel the inconsistencies of modern logic offered by the "uncontrollable argument" which dwindles to a mere unsupported assertion. " . . . I can only avow in general . . . that we do abound in Learning and Wit; but to fix upon

Particulars, is a Task too slippery for my slender Abilities." (p. 35).

The criterion of modern literary excellence in a treatise is that it be " . . . replete with Discoveries equally valuable for their Novelty and Use. . ." (p. 37). The Tale is, ironically, of antiquarian interest only, having been written six years previous to its publication, despite the "author's" claim to " . . . lay hold on that great and honourable Privilege of being the Last Writer; I claim an absolute Authority in Right, as the freshest Modern, which gives me a Despotick Power over all Authors before me." (p. 130).

The novelty and singularity which divert both reader and author are the effects of invention rather than qualities of wisdom gained from experience. " . . . Memory being an Employment of the Mind upon things past, is a Faculty, for which the Learned, in our Illustrious Age, have no manner of occasion, who deal entirely with Invention. . . ." (p. 135). Modern learning consists merely of an accumulation of ideas derived from speculation upon other ideas with no reference to experience. The persona of the Tale takes a delight in the contemplation of his own oratorical excellence. He is interested only in the effects of a mediaeval scholastic logic as it ascends the heights of literary speculation. The modern preoccupation with variety at the expense of coherence is suitably expressed in the persona's unconsciously ironic praise of modern writers. " . . . 'tis manifest, 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).

It is hardly surprising that "nothing to the purpose" should be delivered by the Grub Street hack whose literary inspiration is derived from " . . . a rainy Day, a drunken Vigil, a fit of the Spleen, a course of Physick, a Sleepy Sunday, an ill run at Dice, a long Taylor's Bill, a Beggar's Purse, a factious Head, a hot Sun, costive Dyet, Want of Books, and a just Contempt for Learning." (p. 183). These conditions provide the "literary climate" in which malicious satire, persuasive factional literature, and literature that diverts without instructing may flourish.

The entire literary behaviour of the persona is essentially a demonstration of the art of "writing upon nothing." His lack of both restraint and urbanity, his repititious dulness, incoherent transitions, characteristically involved sentences, extravagant analogies, and metaphorical "flights of fancy" combine to produce a woolly, digressive, flaccid and vacuous style that is characteristic of the modern writer.

The qualities of the modern style are intended to obscure the truth in order to persuade the reader into an admiration for the complexity of the writer's understanding. Mystification and obscurity are synonymous in modern literature with the sublimity and profundity that have replaced clarity and precision as the grounds for a writer's claim to fame. " . . . where I am not understood, it shall be concluded, that something very useful and profound

is coucht underneath: And again, whatever word or Sentence is printed in a different Character, shall be judged to contain something extraordinary, either of Wit or Sublime." (pp. 46-47).

Ambitious pretension to an appearance of learning prompts the Tubbian wit to offer a vast display of corrupted erudition, including frequently incorrect classical paraphrases offered in support of his own trivial arguments. The figurative language of the "ancients" is frequently given a literal interpretation as is the language of Herodotus, Lucretius, Plutarch and others in the "Digression Concerning Criticks." The absurdity of these literal interpretations immediately becomes apparent as does the extravagance of the allegorical use of unnatural natural history to support his speculations concerning the antiquity of the "true critic."

The "Digression Concerning Criticks" simultaneously provides an example of the allegorical logic of the mediaeval scholar and " . . . a parody of Bentley through its collation of abstruse sources, its digressive interpolations, its display of assurance, and its erudition, which is carried down to the most absurd details."¹ The entire digression provides a demonstration of the " . . . Art of being Deep-Learned and Shallow-read. . . ." The persona claims that the utility of his Tale lies in its inclusion and "exhaustion" of " . . . all that Human Imagination can Rise or Fall to . . ." in what is intended to be " . . . a faithful Abstract drawn from the Universal Body of all Arts and Sciences. . . ." The Tale is an abstract or compendium

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Ewald, p. 16.

for the service of the "wits" whose learning is garnered from such sources. " . . . We of this Age have discovered a shorter, and more prudent Method, to become Scholars and Wits, without the fatigue of Reading or of Thinking." (pp. 144-145). In the Tubbian world, utility is synonymous with facility, and prudence is synonymous with ease and pleasure.

The utility of the Tale lies in its merit as a manual for proselytizers of all kinds including those "quacks" and charlatans devoted to the cabbalistic numerology and occult lore of the Rosicrucians. The persona himself is a cabbalistic numerologist: "Now among all the rest, the profound Number THREE is that which hath most employed my sublimest Speculations, nor ever without wonderful Delight." (p. 57.) The persona's "scientific knowledge" is the lore of the numerologist and the alchemist. Like them, he depends for his fame upon the effective use of the arts of delusion. His occult formulae are merely devices employed to suggest the profundity of insight into the "mysterious" laws of the universe demonstrated by writings of the "dark authors" and the "true illuminated" of which the societies of Grub Street and the Royal Society are comprised.

The "author" of A Tale of a Tub makes no distinction between the wisdom of the ancients and the wisdom of the modern Rosicrucians. He complains of the deficiencies in the writings of Homer who " . . . seems to have read but very superficially, either Sendivogius, Behmen or Anthroposophia Theomagica. . . ." (p. 127). The Rosicrucian preoccupation with material

and physical objects as instruments to spiritual power is equally evident in the persona's condemnation of Homer and in the proposal to assess the relative merits of Grub Street and the Royal Society in terms of the weight and volume of their respective writings.

A Tale of a Tub, by virtue of its inclusiveness and utility, has itself become a source of occult "wisdom:"

I do here humbly propose for an Experiment, that every Prince in Christendom will take seven of the deepest Scholars in his Dominions, and shut them up close for seven Years, in seven Chambers with a Command to write seven ample Commentaries on this comprehensive Discourse. I shall venture to affirm, that whatever Difference may be found in their several Conjectures, they will be all, without the least Distortion, manifestly deduceable from the Text.

(p. 185).

The self-sufficient pride of the modern literary mountebank is identical with that of the modern philosopher whose attempts to systematize all knowledge are both futile and presumptuous. "We whom the World is pleased to honour with the Title of Modern Authors, should never have been able to compass our great Design of an everlasting Remembrance, and never-dying Fame, if our Endeavours had not been so highly serviceable to the general Good of Mankind. This O Universe is the adventurous Attempt of me thy Secretary; . . ."

(p. 123). Both the Grub Street hack writer and the philosopher value fame and remembrance, the secondary consequences of writing, as symbols of their success in aspiring to goals beyond the reach of their feeble talents.

Success in the Tubbian World does not necessarily lie in the attainment of one's goal. There is the success of entertaining great and even foolish aspirations. It is the self-delusion of the mountebank that enables him to become enthusiastic about the particular system or nostrum which he advocates. It is man's confidence in the potentialities of human reason that informs the beliefs of the exponents of any system of rational theology. Similarly, it is man's confidence in his capacity to comprehend the laws of nature that informs the attempt by scientist or philosopher to include all the spiritual and material elements in the universe in a single comprehensive system.

Self-delusion thrives on praise and self-praise, both of which have become formal elements in modern literature. In the following passage, the reader discovers both a justification of self-praise and a panegyric upon praise itself.

As for the Liberty I have thought fit to take of praising myself, upon some Occasions or none; I am sure it will need no Excuse if a Multitude of great Examples be allowed sufficient Authority: For it is here to be noted, that Praise was originally a Pension paid by the World: but the Moderns, finding the Trouble and Charge too great in collecting it, have lately bought out the Fee-Simple; since which time, the Right of Presentation is wholly in ourselves.

(p. 47).

Each mountebank and charlatan in the Tubbian world strives for the favourable attention of a majority of the Tubbian audience and each must praise both

himself and his product in order to attract such attention.

The persona's confident anticipation of fame and his subservience to the desire for literary fame are expressed in a passage which suggests the identity of interests and motives in literary, theological, scientific, and philosophical proselytizers.

I hope, when this Treatise of mine shall be translated into Foreign Languages (as I may without vanity affirm that the Labour of collecting, the Faithfulness of recounting, and the great Usefulness of the Matter to the Publick, will amply deserve that Justice) that the worthy Members of the several Academies abroad, especially those of France and Italy, will favourably accept these humble Offers, for the Advancement of Universal Knowledge. I do also advertise the most Reverend Fathers the Eastern Missionaries, that I have purely for their sakes, made use of such Words and Phrases, as will admit an easie Turn into any of the Oriental Languages, especially the Chinese.

(p. 106).

The motives and interests of the persona of A Tale of a Tub, his analogical habit of mind, his pride, and his literary behaviour are all typical of the mountebank. The nostrum offered by the persona to his Tubbian contemporaries is the Tale itself.

UNDER the Stage-Itinerant are couched those Productions designed for the Pleasure and Delight of Mortal Man; such as Six-peny-worth of Wit, Westminster Drolleries, Delightful Tales, Compleat Jesters, and the like; by which the Writers of and for GRUB-STREET, have in these latter Ages so nobly triumph'd over Time. . . . It is under this Classis, I have presumed to list my present Treatise. . . .
(p. 63).

CHAPTER III

THE HIGHWAYMAN

The mountebank's stage-itinerant is the appropriate seminary for orators and proselytizers in the Tubbian world. The religious zealot prepares for his future career in the dissenter's pulpit by assimilating the mountebank's instruction in the arts of exhortation, while the highwayman prepares in similar fashion for the delivery of his final "scaffold oration." From the stage-itinerant, Tubbian orators proceed to either the pulpit or the scaffold and " . . . are sometimes preferred to the One, and sometimes to the Other, in proportion to their Deservings, there being a strict and perpetual Intercourse between all three." (pp. 59-60).

The chief characteristic of the highwayman is his propensity for the " . . . transferring of Propriety . . ." as the consequence of the " . . . confounding of Meum and Tuum. . . ." (p. 63). It is the relative crudity of his technique, with its elements of coercion, brutality, and intimidation, that offends society and leads the highwayman to the ladder or scaffold.

The highwayman reaches the summit of British poetic eloquence via the ladder, from which elevation he delivers his scaffold orations in a suitably repentant manner, for subsequent transcription in verse by acquisitive

and unscrupulous booksellers who arrange for the profitable distribution of their wares for the edification of the curious and the morbid.

The scaffold ladder is the symbol of both poetry and faction in the Tubbian world. "The Ladder is the symbol of faction because . . .
 (p.62).
 The violent and destructive consequences of faction are suitably represented by the intentional hiatus.

The highwayman in literature is the persona, the paid agent of faction, who is dependent for his income upon the existence and propagation of the literary profusion that is a symptom of a variety of dissident opinions. The literary critic, whose violent antipathies, malice, ignorance and superficiality inspire his own attacks and the retaliations of others, is the agent of faction in literature. His talents are " . . . like Hemp, which some Naturalists inform us, is bad for Suffocations. . . ." (p. 101).

The fanatic differences of opinion which inspire faction in politics, philosophy, religion, and literature are self-propagating. The greater the profusion of contending factions, the greater will be the profusion of persuasive literature devoted to proselytization. The rewards of paid literary persuasion offer incentive to an increasing horde of novice hack writers.

The purpose of a faction is to dominate the minds of men in order subsequently to impose political or religious tyranny by force upon the attainment to power in the state.

The highwayman is violent and predatory, governed by his own passions of avarice, ambition, pride and lust. The virtuoso is similarly predatory in his assault upon nature in the name of science. His ambition is to appropriate facts and to manipulate objects in order to assert the domination of nature by science. In his attempt to grasp the universe by means of his reason, the virtuoso is perhaps the most ambitious of all highwaymen.

Perhaps the most spectacular highwayman, in terms of his violence and brutality, is the monarch in quest of empire who, " . . . for the space of above thirty Years amused himself to take and lose Towns; beat Armies and be beaten; drive Princes out of their Dominions; fright Children from their Bread and Butter; burn, lay waste, plunder, dragoon, massacre Subject and Stranger, Friend and Foe, Male and Female." (p. 165). Military aggrandizement is merely the irrational amusement of monarchs inspired by their own passions. The difference between the monarch and the bully is merely one of degree. "The very same Principle that influences a Bully to break the Windows of the Whore, who has jilted him, naturally stirs up a great Prince to raise mighty Armies, and dream nothing but Sieges, Battles, and Victories." (p. 165).

Zeal, lust, ambition, avarice and pride inspire the irrational and enthusiastic activities of the highwayman, just as they inspire the fanatic contortions and militant activities of the religious zealot.

CHAPTER IV
THE RELIGIOUS ZEALOT

The close relationship and "perpetual intercourse" between pulpit, ladder and stage-itinerant is demonstrated in the activities of the brothers in the allegorical sections of the Tale. Motivated by pride, ambition, and covetousness, the three brothers

. . . quickly began to improve in the good Qualities of the Town: They Writ, and Raillyed, and Rhymed, and Sung, and Said, and said Nothing; They Drank, and Fought, and Whor'd, and Slept, and Swore, and took Snuff: They went to new Plays on the first Night, haunted the Chocolate-Houses, beat the Watch, lay on Bulks, and got Claps: They bilkt Hackney-Coachmen, ran in Debt with Shop-keepers, and lay with their Wives: They kill'd Bayliffs, kicked Fidlers down Stairs, . . .

(pp. 74-75).

The inane and repetitious activities of the brothers identify Peter, Martin, and Jack as true "moderns" or wits, and men of fashion whose vices are those of idle and elegant town "rakes."

As men of fashion, the brothers adopt the "clothes philosophy," the current fashion in secular philosophical speculation. "They worshipped a sort of Idol, who, as their Doctrine delivered, did daily create Men, by a kind of Manufactory Operation." (p. 76). The first occasion of the

departure from Christianity in its pure and primitive state is the excessive concern with secular matters.

The new idol, the tailor, employs a subaltern divinity, the goose, and presides over his "hell" or bin of scrap materials into which he frequently thrusts materials pilfered from his customers for later salvage. The "symbols" of this mercantile "philosophy" or religion are the needle and the yard, the tools of the trade. The "clothes philosophy" is essentially a mediaeval scholastic framework in which the macrocosm and the microcosm correspond to "suits of clothes."

They held the Universe to be a large Suit of Cloaths, which invests every Thing: That the Earth is invested by the Air; The Air is invested by the Stars; and the Stars are invested by the Primum Mobile. Look on this Globe of Earth, you will find it to be a very compleat and fashionable Dress. What is that which some call Land, but a fine Coat faced with Green? Or the Sea, but a Wastcoat of Water-Tabby?

(pp. 77-78).

This is a "modern" version of the "great chain of being" in which each link invests the link below, and in which there exist both geographical and social correspondences.

All the attributes of a man's character, his honesty, vanity, conscience, and religion, are external, mere items of clothing. "Is not Religion a Cloak, Honesty a Pair of Shoes, worn out in the Dirt, Self-love a Surtout, Vanity a Shirt, and Conscience a Pair of Breeches? . . ." (p. 78).

The alteration in the tone of the passage, from the narrational "they" to the rhetorical "Is it not . . . ?" serves to indicate the persona's mounting enthusiasm for this novel and singular philosophy. The "hack writer," identifies his own interests with those of the "sartorists" by the emphasis he places upon shells, rinds, coverings, ornamentation and ostentation.

The social correspondences in the "great sartorist chain of being" are those of the feudal class system. The lord mayor, judge, politician, wit and bishop are merely prescribed arrangements of clothes engaged in prescribed activities in the "Tubbian world" whose "sages" have decreed that the soul of man is the outward clothing, while the body of man is the inward clothing. For, ". . . separate these two, and you will find the Body to be only a senseless unsavory Carcass. By all which it is manifest, that the outward Dress must needs be the Soul." (p. 80).

The essence of the man and the essence of the institution is the external appearance; the essence of the religion is its formal ritual, and the essence of literature is its form. A man becomes an aristocrat simply by stating the fact. The sartorist religion is a religion of assent, in which virtue, merit, nobility, or morality are signified by the assumption of those external signs which men have consented to or agreed upon as being appropriate symbols of virtue, merit, nobility, or morality. The only significant qualities of men are those which may be observed, touched, analysed or measured.

Peter's activities as a virtuoso are based upon the assumption that any statement becomes a fact both for the person whose undeviating opinion is represented by the statement and for such persons as he may be able to convert to a belief in the validity of his statement. Bread, in the travesty upon the sacrament of transsubstantiation, becomes mutton and even the "quintessence of all meats" for Peter and for anyone willing to believe in this particular "miracle."

The zealot may act as mountebank, or highwayman according to circumstances. Peter's "bulls," as agents of coercion and intimidation, ". . . continued so extremely fond of Gold, that if Peter sent them abroad . . . they would Roar and Spit and Belch and Piss and Fart, and Snivel our Fire and keep a perpetual Coyl, till you flung them a Bit of Gold." (p, 112). Peter's attempt to assert his authority in secular matters is a manifestation of his ambition to acquire power. The futility of his ambition is apparent in the ineffectuality of his attempts to obtain pardons for condemned criminals. Coercion is effective only among those who agree to submit in the presence of apparent power.

Peter's inventions are designed to provide the appearance of power in order to manipulate opinion. To the extent that they fail, Peter is unsuccessful as a mountebank purveying a useless elixir. To the extent that Peter is successful in his attempts to intimidate or persuade, he is a successful highwayman beyond the reach of the law. When the brothers finally

abandon their attempts to interpret the will by "finding a meaning in everything but itself," they "lock it away," and substitute violence for fraud.

Peter's subsequent excommunication of Jack and Martin offers an example of the activity of the highwayman in religion. Peter " . . . and his Gang, after several Millions of Scurrilities and Curses, not very important here to repeat, by main Force, very fairly kicks them both out of Doors, and would never let them come under his Roof from that Day to this." (p. 122).

Jack's reaction is one of hatred and violence. In his passion, he shreds his coat which is

. . . either wholly rent to his Shirt; or those Places which had scaped his cruel Clutches, were still in Peter's Livery. So that he looked like a drunken Beau, half rifled by Bullies; or like a fresh Tenant of Newgate, when he has refused the Payment of Garnish; or like a discovered Shop-lifter, left to the Mercy of Exchange-Women; or like a Bawd in her old Velvet Petticoat, resigned into the secular Hands of the Mobile.

(pp. 140-141).

His zeal for reform prompts Jack to rage and violence, and he becomes both the victim of the bully and the condemned highwayman in his appearance. Aeolism provides a substitute for the clothes philosophy which Jack repudiates. In his zeal for the propagation of the new philosophy, he uses political power to intimidate his opponents. "IN all Revolutions of Government, he would make his Court for the Office of Hangman-General; and in the Exercise of that Dignity, wherein he was very dextrous, would make use of

no other Vizard than a long Prayer." (p. 195).

The doctrines of the dissenters become excuses for civil rebellion and persecution by violence. Highwayman and zealot become synonymous with mountebank in the fanatic and militant promulgation of the Aeolist philosophy "invented" by the speculative mountebank.

Aeolist philosophical tenets contend that wind, whether it arises as a vapour from the dunghill or as the tangible product of the bellows, is the source of man's inspiration. Wind is the breath of life and the divine spirit in man, to be suitably propagated by the Aeolists who " . . . affirm the Gift of BELCHING, to be the noblest Act of a Rational Creature." (p. 153). From a literal interpretation of the Biblical text " . . . Learning Puffeth Men up, . . ." the Aeolists derive the syllogism: "Words are but Wind; and Learning is nothing but Words; Ergo, Learning is nothing but Wind." (p.153).

Distorted facial grimaces and contortions are manifestations of the operation of spirit, or redundancy of wind, in the fanatic preacher. By agreement among Aeolists, these are the signs of divine inspiration, just as certain prescribed arrangements of clothes are signs of intellectual or spiritual qualities by agreement among the sartorists. Aeolism is, in effect, merely sartorism with the addition of wind, or zeal.

Aeolist emphasis upon appearances extends to the construction of Aeolist pulpits to resemble the casks in which the ancient virtuosi preserved winds. The Aeolists identify their interests with the pagans and with the

Rosicrucians by their concern for the shape of their pulpits. A further identification between the Aeolist and the mountebank is established by Jack's preoccupation with the Bible as an elixir applicable in all the trivial occasions of life.

Gentlemen, said he, I will prove this very Skin of Parchment to be Meat, Drink, and Cloth, to be the Philosopher's Stone, and the Universal Medicine. In consequence of which Raptures, he resolved to make use of it in the most necessary, as well as the most paltry Occasions of Life. He had a Way of working it into any Shape he pleased; so that it served him for a Night-cap when he went to Bed, and for an Umbrello in rainy Weather. He would lap a Piece of it about a sore Toe, or when he had Fits, burn two Inches under his Nose; or if any Thing lay heavy on his Stomach, scrape off, and swallow as much of the Powder as would lie on a silver Penny, they were all infallible Remedies.
(pp. 190-191).

Despite their antipathy toward each other, Peter and Jack share a resemblance and are often mistaken for one another. Jack's tatters resemble Peter's finery while "Their Humours and Dispositions were not only the same, but there was a close Analogy in their Shape, their Size and their Mien." (p. 199). Discussion of the remarkable similarities between the two zealots is appropriately curtailed by a hiatus in the manuscript. (p. 200). For there is really no necessity to continue the argument. A description of the activities and philosophies of Jack and Peter has indicated their resemblance in every particular, not only to each other, but to the mountebank and the highwayman as well.

CHAPTER V

THE MECHANICAL OPERATION OF THE SPIRIT

The highwayman, zealot and mountebank attain the elevation requisite to propagating their schemes in philosophy, literature, religion and politics by means of the oratorical machines appropriate to the Tubbian arts. Physical or mechanical elevation is equated with the "metaphorical" elevation of the individual into public prominence. The oratorical machines are symbolic of the "wooden," inflexible, mechanically rigid thought processes of both proselytizer and proselyte.

As a devoted servant of modern literary forms, the "author" of the Tale demonstrates the ridiculous rigidity of intellect which forces subscription to a bigotry of forms in which the orders, methods and procedures of a particular profession become ends in themselves. The "author's" insistence upon the modern literary forms occupies much of the argument in the Tale, which becomes essentially a demonstration of the modern literary "manner." The manner and the matter of the Tale coalesce to become both a demonstration and a manual of instruction for the proselytizer.

Appropriately enough, the "platform" of the literary mountebank is the "elevated" garret, synonymous with poverty and mediocrity or unrealized ambition. Modern wit is mechanical and dependent upon time, manner, and place

for its effectiveness, while modern sublimity and profundity are indicated mechanically, by means of typographical devices, without reference to sense experience. The merits of modern literature are weighed and measured, or computed arithmetically in terms of bulk and profusion. Eloquence is prolixity, the multiplication of words for their own sakes in a form without the inconvenience of content.

Modern literary inspiration is similarly mechanical and external, while the rapport between reader and author is established by correspondences between absurd postures and squalid circumstances in the lives of each. "Whatever Reader desires to have a thorow Comprehension of an Author's Thoughts, cannot take a better Method, than by putting himself into the Circumstance 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 Ideas between the Reader and the Author." (p. 44). Literary fame, the goal of the aspiring novice writer, is to be attained only by rigid adherence to form.

A Tale of a Tub is a glorification of methodology in which praise and self-praise have become transferrable properties, deeded to the "moderns" by themselves. The modern author, like the " . . . True Critick is a sort of Mechanick, set up with a Stock and Tools for his Trade, at as little Expence as a Taylor. . . ." (p. 101).

The prevailing Tubbian philosophy is that of sartorism, in which

the appearance of wit, of learning, and of power is the essence of the individual. Dissection and analysis are merely unpleasant tasks in the Tubbian world, unworthy of attention and lacking in significance. The significant activities in the Tubbian world are those directed toward maintaining an appearance of power in order to impose upon the credulity of others. Dexterity in the Tubbian world consists of an aptitude in manipulating opinion, in grasping those "handles of the senses," the ears of the audience. The Tubbian world is a world in which power, and aspirations to power, are more significant than qualities of mind.¹

In the "author's" world, the appearance of the argument is more important than the content. Arguments are designed, by their apparent utility, novelty, and singularity, to appeal to the senses. But sensory proof is ignored or rejected in the development of speculative schemes and interpretations designed to impose the rigid subjective conceptions of the "author" upon a world persuaded to honour these conceptions as truth and to respect the discoverer for his professions of ingenuity and public altruism.

The "altruism" of the "author" consists in offering, "for the universal improvement of mankind," a series of formulae, recipes, and systems, in which the muddling of the material and the spiritual is a manifestation of the modern "refinement of taste and learning."

Such refinements are analogous to refinements in the mechanical processes of cookery. "The late Refinements in Knowledge, running parallel

1

See Hobbes, Chapter X, below.

to those of Dyet in our Nation, which among Men of a judicious Taste, are drest up in various Compounds, consisting in Soups and Ollios, Fricasseees and Ragouts." (p. 143). Reduction of all experience to systems claiming universality is based upon the assumption that all knowledge, both physical and spiritual, may be reduced to a mechanical level. The virtuoso reduces all premises, including those concerned with human nature, to a materialistic level and proceeds to argue from the premises in a mechanical fashion. The rejection of the spiritual aspects of experience in the search for material explanations of life is fundamentally atheistic.

Peter attempts a similar systematization of spiritual elements and spiritual problems in his experiments with the "universal pickle" and the other mechanical contrivances of Roman Catholicism. He attempts to propagate his inflexible opinions, the products of invention watered by the vapours, by mechanical "insurance offices" and "whispering offices."

Similarly, Jack attempts to propagate the Aeolist philosophy of mechanical inspiration, by militant physical means. Jack's doctrine of predestination is remarkably similar to Hobbes' doctrine of mechanical determinism in nature.¹ The Aeolist application of the Bible to trivial purpose is a manifestation of the rigidity of thought peculiar to the mechanical operation of the spirit.

Violent action of any kind is caused, in the Tubbian world, by ascending vapours which effect a revolution in the brain. Violence in faction,

¹ See below, Chapter X.

in religious enthusiasm, and in schemes of conquest are consequences of the operation of the vapours upon the brain.

Both violence and credulity are symptoms of mental inflexibility. Sartorism, the philosophy of delusion and self-delusion, is one manifestation of inflexibility and rigidity of thought. Man is reduced to the status of a product of the tailor's artifice, and is thereby deprived of his humanity.

In a world where felicity lies in delusion, there is no advantage in an awareness of the imperfections of the system. The hack writer is justified, under such circumstances, in his assertion that " . . . I am so entirely satisfied with the whole present Procedure of Human Things, that I have been for some Years preparing Materials towards a Panegyrick upon the World. . . ." (p. 53). On the other hand, only a madman can be complacent in a world of delusion and self-delusion, and in which diversion is preferable to instruction, because advantage is synonymous with the pleasures of the senses.

CHAPTER VI

THE MADNESS THEME

The pervading theme of madness or unreason in A Tale of a Tub finds its culmination in the "Digression concerning the Original, the Use and Improvement of Madness in a Commonwealth." The inconsistency, vanity, enthusiasm and intellectual rigidity of the hack writer are aspects of irrationality or unreason, as are the pride, malice, superficiality and mental inflexibility of the religious zealot, and the violence, greed and ambition of the highwayman.

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 from their Dyet, their Education, the Prevalency of some certain Temper, together with the particular Influence of Air and Climate.

(p. 162).

True "Tubbian greatness" is synonymous with a revolution of reason, the mechanical overturning of the senses by the ascending vapours. " . . . Yet all Clouds are the same in Composition, as well as Consequences: and the Fumes issuing from a Jakes, will furnish as comely and useful a Vapor, as

Incense from an Altar." (p. 163).

True greatness in the Tubbian world is merely a matter of chance rather than skill. "Of such mighty Consequence it is, where those Exhalations fix; and of so little, from whence they proceed. The same Spirits which in their superior Progress would conquer a Kingdom, descending upon the Anus, conclude in a Fistula." (pp. 165-166). The vapours which accumulate at a particular point in the body may produce either disease or greatness. These vapours, produced by fountains of enthusiasm, are the true agents of madness. "Of such great Emolument is a Tincture of this Vapour, which the World calls Madness, that without its Help, the World would not only be deprived of those two great Blessings, Conquests and Systems, but even all Mankind would unhappily be reduced to the same Belief in Things Invisible." (p. 169).

Conquests and systems are the effects of faction and strife, and the attempts of the individual to convert the opinions of all men to conform with his own. "For what Man in the natural State, or Course of Thinking, did ever conceive it in his Power, to reduce the Notions of all Mankind, exactly to the same Length, and Breadth, and Height of his own? Yet this is the first humble and civil Design of all Innovators in the Empire of Reason." (p. 167). Tubbian greatness consists not only of a departure from the "vulgar Dictates of unrefined Reason," the general sense of men, but also of the successful conversion of others to an approval of this departure.

The only difference between the individual in Bedlam and the innovator

out of Bedlam, is the difference between success and failure in the arts of proselytization. The utility of the Tale lies in its instruction in the arts of proselytization. Only by the competent exercise of these arts is the modern wit able to evade incarceration and attain to fame instead.

Successful proselytization lies in selecting one's associates, whose mental "strings" are attuned to one's own "vibrations." "For, to speak a bold Truth, it is a fatal Miscarriage, so ill to order Affairs, as to pass for a Fool in one Company, when in another you might be treated as a Philosopher." (p. 168). Madness is merely the designation for the misapplication of great talents in the wrong company, since greatness, madness, and wit, are dependent for their designations upon time, place and person.

The distinction between madness and greatness lies in the angle at which the ascending vapour strikes the brain. The process is completely mechanical, and the effects of the vapour are entirely dependent upon angles and upon the species of brain. A discussion of the distinction between madness and greatness must end in a blank, as it does in the Tale (p. 170). In the Tubbian world, there is no distinction.

Madness and greatness are the effects of delusion, inspired by the passions.

. . . When a man's Fancy gets astride on his Reason, when Imagination is at Cuffs with the Senses, and common Understanding, as well as common Sense, is Kickt out of 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.

(p. 171)

Credulity, and the rejection of sensory evidence, is synonymous with felicity, the "perpetual possession of being well deceived." Felicity is the effect of a strong delusion, which is madness. Sartorism and Aeolism are among the strongest of delusions in the Tubbian world, and are therefore synonymous with both felicity and madness.

A Tale of a Tub is a panegyric upon superficiality, and a manual in the arts of delusion. Its merit lies in its success in making superficiality acceptable for " . . . whatever Philosopher or Projector can find out an Art to sodder and patch up the Flaws and Imperfections of Nature, will deserve much better of Mankind, and teach us a more useful Science, than that so much in present Esteem, of widening and exposing them. . . ." (p. 174). The hack writer is employed in his proper capacity to divert and persuade the wits. His "redundancy" of vapour has been properly employed. His success in the literary arts is a demonstration of the achievements possible to inmates of Bedlam whose talents are now wasted. The academy for wits is merely a proposed method for the employment of talents which might otherwise be wasted in Bedlam. Admission to both institutions may be secured through

certification by "two sufficient persons."

The proposed investigation and improvement of Bedlam is intended to serve the same purpose as that of the proposed academy of wits. The applicability of talents possessed by inmates of Bedlam is indicated by the similarities between actions of madmen and actions of dragoons, courtiers, lawyers, and surgeons in the Tubbian world. The "author" suggests that the entire institution of Bedlam be considered a society, with its particular professions and institutions, citizens and officials. The actions of citizens in Bedlam are inspired by the vapours of the Aeolist, while the citizens are distinguished from one another by the criteria of the sartorist. The "author" of the Tale is both sartorist and Aeolist, and distinguished "graduate" of Bedlam.

. . . I my self, the Author of these momentous Truths, am a Person, whose Imaginations are hard-mouth'd, and exceedingly disposed to run away with his Reason, which I have observed from long Experience, to be a very light Rider, and easily shook off; upon which Account, my Friends will never trust me alone, without a solemn Promise, to vent my Speculations in this, or the like manner, for the universal Benefit of Human Kind.

(p. 180).

Following this revelation, the Tale collapses into mere form without content, ending as it began. The final sections are the ravings of a madman, who has already performed his task in his anatomization of madness.

CHAPTER VII

SCATALOGY AND BEAST IMAGERY

The images of excrement, filth, prurience and carnality in A Tale of a Tub serve to perpetuate an already firmly established literary tradition. It has frequently been suggested that " . . . many 'obscene' motifs picked out as Swiftian may not be unique to Swift."¹ Such motifs were common in popular seventeenth-century satires upon the vanity and affectations of women. One of the most popular satires of this type, " . . . Quevedo's Visions, first published in a prose translation in 1667, ran through five editions within ten years."²

A large body of English literature was devoted to scatological attacks upon the alleged licentiousness, immorality, ignorance, and depravity of the Protestant dissenters.³ Vulgar mockeries of Puritan women, mock libraries of Puritan treatises with spurious titles suggestive of lust, hypocrisy, and perversion, and lewd mock debates uncomplimentary to the Puritan intelligence appeared at regular intervals throughout the century. The violently anti-Puritan literature of the period included vitriolic histories of fanaticism, mock Puritan sermons, purported translations of Puritan writings, lewd and spurious Calvinist recantations offering absurdly hypocritical rationalizations of Puritan vice, and alleged exposés of the

¹

I. Ehrenpreis, The Personality of Jonathan Swift (London, 1958), p. 46.

²

Ibid., p. 45.

³

C.M. Webster, "The Satiric Background of the Attack on the Puritans in Swift's A Tale of a Tub," PMLA, L (March, 1935), pp. 210-223.

various dissident sects. The hypocrisy, sedition, heresy, immorality, ignorance and vulgarity ascribed to the dissenters were profusely illustrated by images of filth, disease, and ordure.¹

With the publication in 1621 of Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy, " . . . there began a new era of satire, and especially of analysis of cause and effect in the problems of religious enthusiasm, a subject upon which Swift wrote some of his best passages."² Henry More, in his publication of Enthusiasme Triumphatus: or, a Brief Discourse of the Nature, Causes, Kinds, and Cure of Enthusiasm, asserts in 1656 that " . . . religious zeal and ecstasy are caused by natural forces, chief in importance of which is the sexual excitation to which the Puritans were supposed to be particularly prone."³ Some of the titles of these earlier Puritan satires are reminiscent of themes in A Tale of a Tub. In The Old Cloak, a satire on the hypocrisy of the Presbyterian party, the "Cloak" or disguise represents the Presbyterian doctrines. The Aeolist theme is suggested by Some small and simple Reasons . . . by Aminadab Blower, a devout Bellowsmender of Pimlico, while the allegory of the will is suggested by the Last Will and Testament of Fathers Peters. . . . "Peters" had become the prototype in anti-Puritan literature of the fanatic New England preacher.⁴

In addition to the English tradition of scatological satire, there was available to Swift the classical tradition of scatological satire which included both the comic vulgarity of Lucian and the intensely virulent

¹ C.M. Webster, "The Satiric Background," pp. 210-223.

² Ibid., p. 210.

³ Ibid., p. 214.

⁴ Ibid., pp. 217-218.

ribaldry of Juvenal.¹

Available, too, was the traditional Protestant-Christian system of symbolism in which sin and folly were equated with the "frailties of the flesh." Seventeenth-century sermons were replete with metaphors of disease, defilement, and ordure emphasizing theological concern with " . . . the spirit as the valuable redeemable part, and the flesh as representing all the natural inclinations to evil which warred against the higher powers."² Divine malediction and its consequences find symbolic representation in images of physical and mental deformity, while the corruption of man's spiritual and rational faculties by the lower elements, his passions, is suggested by images of human ordure. Frye suggests that " . . . the correspondence between Swift's descriptions and these symbols of Protestant-Christian theology is too close to have been fortuitous."³

Swift utilizes scatological motifs in a unique and complicated fashion to disgrace and diminish those eminent practitioners of vice and folly, the "moderns." Swift includes among the moderns the coffee-house wits, "Grubaeon Sages," Royal Society virtuosi, disciples of the "new philosophy," and fanatic dissenters. Enthusiasm, pride, faction, quackery, occultism, avarice, delusion, superficiality, malice, and ignorance are given names, habitations, and employments in the Tubbian world.

As the prototype of the "modern," the persona of the Tale displays all the irrationality and enthusiasm for which Swift condemned contemporary

1

R. I. Westgate and P. L. MacKendrick, "Juvenal and Swift," The Classical Journal, VII (May, 1942), pp. 468-482.

2

R. M. Frye, "Swift's Yahoo and the Christian Symbols for Sin," Journal of the History of Ideas, XV, No. 2 (April, 1954), p. 205.

3

Ibid., p. 217.

"wits." Swift's persona is obsessed with metaphors, similes and analogies of carnality, excrement, dirt, tainted odours, vile taste impressions, offensive tactile sensations, malignant poisons, nauseating visual perceptions, disgusting flatulence, and contemptible medical quackery, all suggestive of irrationality in a mind dominated by a diseased imagination. A Tale of a Tub, with its emphasis upon filth, prurience, and ordure is just the sort of treatise to be expected 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.

(p. 70).

A "complete account of the spleen" and methods of "salivation without mercury" are suitable preoccupations for the mentally and physically deformed persona, while his condemnation of Homer's failure to provide such information renders ridiculous and contemptible the modern quarrel with the "ancients."

A Tale of a Tub suggests by its title the "sweating tub" employed as a remedy for venereal disease, while the Tale itself is a typical product of "mercurial" modern wit in an age in which one of the "fashionable" symptoms of wit is affliction by the "Pox." Modern "muses," including sleep, the spleen, costive diet, poverty, hunger, illness, and physic, inspire the six-year-old

literary "decayed mackerel" offered as an "abstract of useful arts and sciences," significant primarily for its "freshness" and "novelty."

Modern treatises, however, are subject to the destructive tainted breath of "time" and the Tale is destined with them to the windows of a bawdy-house, to the inundations of a purge, or to the anonymous posterior in a malodorous "jakes." Unfortunately the posteriors of the world are just as insensible to the merits of the Tale as they are to the lashes of modern satire in an age afflicted with that "pestilential disease, the lethargy."

Lethargic modern "wits" disdain the difficult task of probing beneath the surface of things for a wisdom that may be unpleasant and unprofitable like the maggot in a cheese or the worm in a nut. Instead, the "wits" demand superficial and apparent learning, culled from the posteriors of books with a true "regard for the end," the facile acquisition of useless information from indices and abstracts.

An obsession with scatological imagery identifies the preoccupations of the wit, and indicates the substance of modern literature as the product of " . . . that highly celebrated Talent among the Modern Wits, of deducing Similitudes, Allusions, and Applications, very Surprizing, Agreeable, and Apposite, from the Pudenda of either Sex, together with their proper Uses." (p. 147). Intellectual and spiritual corruption gradually merge with physical corruption in imagery which disgraces both types of corruption by its repulsion.

Shocked and amused by the irony and vulgarity of the persona's

apparently unconscious self-condemnation, the reader scorns subsequent reiterations of ambitious, perverted and irrational modern pretensions, according them only amused contempt unmixed with any surreptitious admiration for their ingenuity. Conversational "droppings" garnered by coffee-house wits and subsequently purveyed by them are objects of scorn as is the persona's proposal to rescue his hero from the dunghill in the current tradition of romantic literature.

The Tale is itself a "literary dunghill" and an appropriate symbol of literary zeal and excess, exuding its noxious "inspirational vapours" for the inspiration of increasing hordes of novice wits and writers. Inspiration in the Tubbian world is synonymous with the vapours of altar and dunghill. Aeolist zeal is inspired by and synonymous with vapours from bellows, intestines and dunghill. Peter's madness is produced by incense from his own altar or by violent reaction against Aeolist "inspiration," while the Aeolist's inspiration may be a similar violent reaction against Peter's incense. Violent antipathies and fanatic affirmations in religion differ only slightly and in unimportant ways from violent antipathies and fanatic affirmations in literary criticism and modern science. "True critics" admiring, tasting, and measuring literary ordure, paddle in their literary filth with a discrimination equal to that shown by virtuosi experimenting upon human ordure and madmen sleeping in their own filthy excrement upon the floors of Bedlam.

Jack, the dogmatic Aeolist, exhibits all the irrationality of Bedlam in his rejection of assistance to remedy his condition. Upon one occasion, unable " . . . to call to mind, with that Suddenness the Occasion required, an Authentick Phrase for demanding the Way to the Backside; he chose rather as the more prudent Course, to incur the Penalty in such Cases usually annexed. Neither was it possible for the united Rhetorick of Mankind to prevail with him to make himself clean again." (p. 191). As a true proselytizer, he subsequently attempts to reduce the persons and understandings of others to his own disreputable level. " . . . And whenever Curiosity attracted Strangers to laugh, or to listen; he would of a sudden, with one Hand out with his Gear, and piss full in their Eyes, and with the other all to bespatter them with Mud." (p. 195).

Jack's tattered appearance is that of the drunken beau, the Newgate criminal, discovered shoplifter, and despised bawd. Proselytizer, petty criminal, highwayman, wit, madman and bawd are victims of their own folly, vice, ambition, avarice and pride. In his choice of similes, the literary zealot indicates his sartorist preoccupations, while emphasizing similarities in both disreputability of appearance and depravity of mind shared by all enthusiasts and zealots. That Peter's interests coincide with those of the criminal and the spiteful tattered Aeolist, is indicated by his persistent offers of pardon to criminals indiscriminately whether they stand condemned for " . . . Murder, Sodomy, Rape, Sacrilege, Incest, Treason, or Blasphemy. . . ." (p.113)

Madness, vice, folly, popery, and "true Tubbian Greatness" are alike in their origins and manifestations. A redundancy of vapour arises from the lower faculties to water the imagination and overturn the brain. The flatulence and eructation of the Aeolist may be either symptoms of zeal bred of disease or symptoms of mechanical infusion of spirit by means of bellows applied to the breech. Replenished supplies of spirit are subsequently expended in oral or anal effluviiums of wind in the delivery of Aeolist "mysteries," which

. . . were frequently managed and directed by Female Officers, whose Organs were understood to be better disposed for the Admission of those Oracular Gusts, as entering and passing up thro' a Receptacle of greater Capacity, and causing also a Pruriency by the Way, such as with due Management, hath been refined from a Carnal, into a Spiritual Extasie . . . this Custom of Female Priests is kept up still in certain refined Colleges of our Modern Aeolists, who are agreed to receive their Inspiration, derived thro' the Receptacle aforesaid, like their Ancestors, the Sibyls.

(p. 157).

Physiological speculation, "airy" philosophy, antiquarian pedantry, prurience, zeal, pagan superstition and carnality are combined in the imagery of this mild panegyric upon Aeolist concepts of the mechanical operation of the spirit. Virtuosi, philosophers, literary mountebanks, pedants, and Puritans are united in disgrace.

Speculative ambition of any kind merely drives the speculator further into the depths of matter, to a concern with husks and harlots, carnality, and

tainted tangible wind. Ambitious modern wits embrace with equal ardor new fashions in philosophy, vice, and venereal disease. The misapplication of fecund imaginations culminates in complete muddling of the spiritual, intellectual and material.

Peter's "infallible" prescriptive remedy for worms is essentially an injunction against Aeolist excesses, to " . . . by no means break Wind at both Ends together, without manifest Occasion . . ." in order that the worms may finally " . . . void insensibly by perspiration, ascending thro' the Brain, . . ." (p. 107) in the true Aeolist manner. There is essentially no difference between the fanaticism of Peter and that of Jack, and even their methods are similar. Peter's chicanery reaches its culmination in the invention of the "whispering office" designed for the ease of " . . . Physicians, Midwives, small Politicians, Friends fallen out, Repeating Poets, Lovers Happy or in Despair, Bawds, Privy-Counsellors, Pages, Parasites and Buffoons; In short, of all such as are in Danger of bursting with too much Wind." (p. 108). Swift disgraces both the mountebank whose speculations have led to the depths of matter and the credulous audience to whom the mountebank appeals with his mechanical device.

The "furniture" of the whispering office consists of the head of an ass from the ears of which, by virtue of inherent medical and spiritual faculties " . . . immediate Benefit, either by Eructation, or Expiration, or Evomition, . . ." (p. 108) is afforded the whisperer. In the Tubbian world,

delusion is felicity, offered in this instance by Peter to self-deluded confessors. Delusion is also madness, and the primary principle of sartorism. Peter is virtuoso, mountebank, highwayman, sartorist, and zealot employing the techniques of Aeolism to frighten, delude and persuade his audience.

It is perhaps significant that the merit of the confession resides in the "ears" of its "furniture." Swift's persona displays a prodigious interest in ears as the visible symbols of Puritan male virility corresponding in their prominence to prominence of sexual vigour in the possessor. The ass, too, is notorious for the prominence of its ears. Peter and Jack are united and disgraced by their interest in ears, as the symbols of both spiritual and sexual attraction.

Tragic as the spectacle of human delusion may be, it also has its ridiculous aspects. There is a delicate comic irony in the persona's development of the mediaeval concept of macrocosm and microcosm. Trees, by analogy, display the excellence of creation in their appearance. The persona offers connotations of the stern schoolmaster and the reluctant school-boy in an ecstatic appraisal of the "clothing" displayed by the birch. " . . . And what a fine Doublet of white Satin is worn by the Birch. . . ." (p. 78). Swift's comic playfulness is evident in the persona's unconsciously pompous parody of rhetorical comparisons so prevalent in contemporary sermons. Religion is a "cloak" and honesty a "pair of shoes."

Humour rapidly turns to intense indignation and disgust in the tone suggested by a description of " . . . Conscience, a Pair of Breeches, which, tho' a Cover for Lewdness as well as Nastiness, is easily slipt down for the Service of both." (p. 78). Swift offers a juxtaposition and fusion of the comic and the intense, of laughter and scornful indignation, to evoke a derisive contempt for the objects of his attack.

Similarly, derisive contempt for all kinds of experiments in dissection, analysis, and systematization is evoked by descriptions of foolish attempts to "dissect human nature" which entirely miss the point in the effort to reduce non-material qualities to measurable quantities.

. . . I have some Time since, with a World of Pains and Art, dissected the Carcass of Humane Nature, and read many useful Lectures upon the several Parts, both Containing and Contained; till at last it smelt so strong, I could preserve it no longer. Upon which, I have been at a great Expence to fit up all the Bones with exact Contexture, and in due Symmetry; so that I am ready to shew a very compleat Anatomy thereof to all curious Gentlemen and others.

(p. 123).

Dissections of political, philosophical, economic, religious and social institutions culminate, like the dissection of living matter, in destruction, putrefaction, and stench. Only desiccated bones, mechanically articulated, and rigidly ordered, remain to suggest or indicate previously existing organisms. Mechanistic philosophies, in seeking to reduce the human essence

to measurable motion and material, destroy that essence and offer only intellectually and spiritually arid, useless, and mechanically rigid syntheses.

Swift's pejorative judgment upon dissection by amoral ratiocination is embodied in images of flaying and dissection in which progressive degrees of exploration merely uncover progressive degrees of nastiness. Literary dissection of the Tubbian world uncovers progressive degrees of intellectual, moral and spiritual nastiness, just as the sartorist's superficiality when penetrated reveals only the unsavoury human carcass. Dissection of the Aeolist divulges prurient tainted wind and the maggots of moral corruption from which the inward light is emitted. Disease, passions, zeal and enthusiasm, mechanically agitated produce the mechanistic determinism of the philosopher and the doctrine of election by predetermination. Doctrines of determinism merely sanction the descent of their fanatic adherents into the depths of the filthy kennels of materialism, atheism and madness.

Degradation of scriptural interpretation to the level of ascertaining material uses for scripture in trivial occasions of life is one symptom of Aeolist irrationality culminating in concepts of scripture as a nostrum or salve designed to remedy material and medical misfortunes, without reference to the spiritual functions of scripture. Spite, hatred, avarice, ambition, zeal, gluttony, sloth, and other manifestations of uncontrolled passion are evident in the behaviour of magistrates, actors, theatre audiences, booksellers

and factious modern wits. Peter's lewd speech and actions share their origins with the military designs of the aggressive monarch and the vices of the wits, in a redundancy of passion, or vapours. Literary deformity and disease manifests itself in scatological imagery which occupies so much of the interest of the "author" of A Tale of a Tub. The inclusion of Rosicrucian motifs, fanatic religious practices, absurd experiments in dissection, and foolish philosophical speculations suggests a community of enthusiasm shared by foolish aspirants in literature and society. Swift devitalizes the persons, activities, and attitudes of all men who aspire foolishly, or engage in vicious or depraved actions suitably disgraced by scatological imagery in A Tale of a Tub.

Foolish aspirations are forms of madness or of abuses of man's reason which are more culpable than bestial deficiencies of reason. The beast imagery of A Tale of a Tub provides a series of devastating metaphors designed to diminish and devitalize inordinate pretensions. Certain animals, insects, birds and plants have acquired traditional comic or unpleasant human associations which serve to distinguish them from and render them inferior to others of their own kind. Survival in traditional Protestant-Christian symbolism of connotations of pollution, traceable to dietary proscriptions in the ancient Levitical code, renders odious the images of certain animals.¹

Worms and dust, as traditional Biblical symbols of decay and dissolution, appropriately represent the absurd preoccupations of pedants,

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Frye, p. 216.

critics, and antiquarians. Malice, ignorance, and folly are faults of modern critics suitably identified with and objectified in flies, spittle, noxious weeds, serpent's venom, vomit, and the bitter gall of ass's flesh. Intractable and obstinate, the ass is an effective symbol for mental rigidity and spiritual immobility in both implacable critic and dogmatic zealot. In addition, the intractability of the ass has further symbolic value in representing persistent manifestations of man's apparently innate tendency to faction, pride, and vice. The animal comparison serves to embody Swift's derision, disgust, and contempt for contemporary theories of human perfectibility.

Human potentialities for depravity rather than perfectibility are evident in the degeneration of modern criticism to mere application of malignant ratsbane to modern "literary vermin." Ideally, modern critics should possess at least a limited discretion which would dictate their self-destruction by methods similar to those used upon literary vermin. Identification with noxious vermin diminishes literary and physical stature of both author and critic, in order that the reader's altered perspective shall preclude even limited admiration for the critic's malicious ingenuity, or coercive power. Small vermin are petty nuisances, noxious and repellent, impotent to inflict harm or perpetrate evil.

Beast imagery in A Tale of a Tub is frequently comic rather than repellent or disgusting. Elevation to animate status of the goose-necked tailor's iron and exaltation of the goose to the status of a subaltern

sartorist deity whose demands are satisfied by deprivations upon lice which prey in turn upon man are both ingenious and amusing. Man becomes the lowest link in the sartorist "great chain of being" in which lice become martyred intercessors, sacrificed in the interests of the goose as subaltern divinity. Sartorist theological precepts which demand the sacrifice of human gore to the louse, thereby satisfying indirectly the sacrificial demands of the goose in the economic interest of the tailor, provide both comic correspondences to scholastic systems of microcosm and macrocosm and what resembles a travesty upon Roman Catholic religious practices.

Both mediaeval scholastic forms of logic and beast imagery are singularly appropriate to a treatise offered by a persona with a predilection for analogical and allegorical forms and a manifest enthusiasm for obscurity, mystification and singularity. The persona's delight in his own literary "perfection" is entirely consistent with his perception of contemporary "Tubbians" in terms of their bestiality. Vanity and ambition demand his elevation and exaltation above his contemporaries and audience. Physical elevation in a garret, with its connotations of poverty and starvation, corresponds to literary elevation by means of distorted and twisted logic. Dark and winding passages must be traversed to attain either eminence. Eminence of either kind consists only in elevation relative to one's audience. Diminution of the audience through bestial comparison debases audience and mountebank alike, while simultaneously suggesting the mountebank's impotence

to attain even the limited heights occupied by his contemporaries. Literary speculation culminates in the ascent to the garret and the simultaneous descent into depths of literary obscurity. Literary and social obscurity serve as incentives to ambition which is satisfied only by achievement of power by means of persuasion or coercion. But coercion is effective only if supported by the appearance of power. To acquire this appearance of power, the proselytizer must employ the arts of exhortation and impose upon the credulity of his audience. Delusion and self-delusion are forms of irrationality, one of the symptoms of which is inconsistency. The inconsistency of modern logic supports the appearance of power suggested by obscurity and mystification. Paradoxically, inconsistency is one of the most significant unifying devices in the Tale.

Systematization and promulgation of the arts of inconsistency for the preservation of "modern learning" are the purposes of the proposed academy of wits. Because control of reason by passion is both source and effect of enthusiasm and inconsistency, paederastic arts receive priority in the proposed curriculum. Once the wit becomes proficient in the arts of passion and vice, he is qualified to practise additional modern arts, including blasphemy, foppery, gaming and whoring.

Proposals to erect an academy of wits are actually redundant in both Tubbian and real worlds in which the Royal Society has already become the seminary of zeal, quackery, atheism, speculative philosophy and superstition.

Similar seminaries are represented in the Tubbian world by legal societies, mercantile institutions, the court, coffee-houses, and theological institutions all devoted to promulgation and preservation of the various Tubbian arts. Tubbian academies are functioning demonstrations of the use and improvement of madness in a commonwealth in which Bedlam is an anachronism. Tubbian men act like beasts in a world in which matter and motion have assumed supreme significance. The most profound depths of Tubbian "sublime" are the lowest depths of matter, suitably symbolized by images of human excrement, of which the entire literary dunghill that is A Tale of a Tub is the most cogent example. Tubbian concepts of motion consist of zealous, if aimless, agitation of the ordure that is the substance of the Tale.

There is a unity of nastiness in the Tubbian world which is rendered endurable only by sartorist superficiality and the achievement of felicity through self-delusion or credulity. But the doctrine of felicity through self-delusion is more than a theoretical doctrine applicable only to the literary world of the Tale. It is the practical and functioning philosophy of the real world for which the Tubbian world, with its filth, prurience, and irrationality is the analogue.

CHAPTER VIII

THE "MODERN" AUTHORS IN A TALE OF A TUB

The alacrity with which the reader detects the analogical correspondences between elements of the Tubbian world and elements of the "real" world is an indication of, and warning against, his susceptibility to the analogical habit of mind. The success of the literary mountebank's appeal to the passions is to a great extent dependent upon his ability to beguile the reader into the analogical state of mind which renders acceptable and even commendable the substitution of analogical description for rational analysis.

The literary mountebank is both the cause and the effect of periods of violent economic, political, religious, and philosophical dissension. Under such conditions, the "mechanical" production of persuasive literature is both profitable and respectable. In the years preceding the publication of A Tale of a Tub, political and religious factions became more and more dependent for their power and even for their existence upon the formulation of favourable public opinion.

The paid political writers soon attempted to supplement their incomes by producing satire suited to the broad public taste. Ned Ward's London Spy (1700) and Tom Brown's Amusements, Serious and Comical (1700)

offer humorous portraits of "low life" with the ostensible but somewhat dubious intent to reform by ridicule.

Daniel Defoe, a political hack writer and satirist, employed his satire on behalf of the dissenters against the "High Church" Anglicans. The Shortest Way with Dissenters appeared in 1702, while the combined political-religious satire, The True-Born Englishman appeared in 1701. The close union of political and religious positions is evident in Defoe's Enquiry into the Occasional Conformity of Dissenters which appeared in 1698. The pamphlet is an exhortation to the dissenters against their occasional participation in the rites of the Anglican communion for the purpose of becoming eligible for civil office.

The profusion of factional literature was further increased by the publication of arguments offered by the great variety of dissident sects concerning disputes over minute differences in ritual and dogma. When these sects were not engaged in the villification of each other, they were frequently occupied with attacks upon the new materialistic philosophy or upon the new philosophical systems of rational theology.

The Anglican clergy were engaged in writing, or in causing to be written, replies to the attacking dissenters and denunciations of atheistic materialism, Roman Catholicism, and Calvinism.

The virtuosi of the Royal Society contributed to this multiplicity of political, religious, and philosophical opinion with their frequent

dissertations upon the merits of some new speculation upon sympathetic medicine or upon the scientific significance of some attempted systematization of factual knowledge.

In "literary" circles, as opposed to "journalistic" circles, the protagonists of the "moderns" based their claims to superiority of modern learning over ancient learning on the utility of the scientific method in giving man mastery over the forces of nature. The protagonists of the "ancients" derided such claims on the grounds that the modern learning contributes nothing to the intellectual development of the individual.

Much of the literary criticism of the period was based upon values derived from either the excessive veneration of the wisdom of the ancients or from immoderate adulation of the learning of the moderns. The literary critic, each with his vociferous pretension to critical infallibility, attacked the hosts of novice scribblers, apprentice critics and fellow critics, who retaliated with their own attacks.

Much of the persuasive literature of the period was ostensibly directed toward the edification and instruction of increasing numbers of barely literate readers. This new audience, and the hack writers eager to pander to its tastes, lacked definite literary traditions. The art of writing consequently degenerated to become the art of persuasion through exhortation on behalf of particular systems of political, religious, and philosophical thought.

In such circumstances, it is scarcely surprising that mercenary authors and obscure poets sought wealth and literary prestige through attempts to attract wealthy patrons by means of adulatory prefaces and dedications. Numbers of these vain and ignorant writers attempted to impose upon the credulity of the reader with inaccurate translations or paraphrases of reputable foreign works and venerated classical writings. Surreptitious editions of popular contemporary materials contributed to the incomes of both the unscrupulous bookseller and the hack author whom he employed. The avarice of the bookseller and the poverty, ignorance, vanity and greed of the obscure hack writer are amusingly dramatized in the "Bookseller's" descriptive account of his quest among the garrets for the interpretation of an inscription on the manuscript of A Tale of a Tub and for a dedication appropriate to this inscription.¹

The "Bookseller" offers both an unconsciously ironic comment upon the contemporary "commonwealth of literature" and an inadvertent refutation of the "author's" pretension to "modernity" in his message to the reader.

If I should go about to tell the Reader,
by what Accident, I became Master of
these Papers, it would, in this un-
believing Age, pass for little more
than the Cant, or Jargon of the Trade.
I, therefore, gladly spare both him
and my self so unnecessary a Trouble.
There yet remains a difficult Question,
why I publish'd them no sooner. I
forbore upon two Accounts: First,
because I thought I had better Work
upon my Hands; and Secondly, because
I was not without some Hope of hearing
from the Author, and receiving his
Directions. But I have been lately

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Swift, p. 24.

alarm'd with Intelligence of a Surrep-
titious Copy, which a certain great
Wit had new polish'd, or as our present
Writers express themselves, fitted to
the Humor of the Age; as they have
already done, with great Felicity, to
Don Quixot, Boccacini, la Bruyere
and other Authors.¹

The "Bookseller" is both mountebank and highwayman. His affected sincerity forces him to acknowledge the prevalence of the "jargon of the trade" and to affirm the probity of his motives in awaiting the "directions" of the "author." But his anticipation of a "surreptitious copy" provides an incentive to repudiate his literary scruples in order to protect his investment. His ignorance of literary history is apparent in his inclusion of "Don Quixot" with "other authors." The "Bookseller's" simulated naivety in describing a literary plagiarist as a "great wit" and in describing the modern "translations" in terms of "great felicity" is actually a demonstration of his professional tact in economic matters.

The same sort of professional tact informs the persona's panegyric upon the "moderns" in the "Dedication to Prince Posterity." The literary mountebank proposes to establish the existence of modern learning and erudition by the reiteration of unsupported attestations to the profusion of modern literature and the multiplicity of modern writers. In addition, the persona attempts by his fulsome praise to identify his own interests with those of his readers. The panegyric upon multiplicity and profusion is entirely sincere in terms of the persona's preoccupations. A profusion of

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Swift, pp. 28-29.

argumentative and persuasive literature is an indication of the existence of a multiplicity of factions aspiring to manipulate public opinion and willing to employ hack writers for this purpose. A multiplicity of established "Grubaeon Sages" offers the persona a multiplicity of sources from which to "pirate" his literary "ornaments." Vast numbers of novice scribblers constitute a potential market for A Tale of a Tub with its instruction in the arts of proselytization.

Panegyric and flattery are two of the most important elements in the technique of the literary mountebank for the pacification of those supreme arbiters of modern "taste," the critics. The persona flatters the critics in the terms with which they are particularly infatuated. He indulges in the most abstruse collations of antiquarian sources, and infers the most ridiculous meanings from obscure and trivial statements. The "Digression Concerning Criticks" provides a cogent demonstration of the extremes to which a preoccupation with pedantry and a misguided zeal for the wisdom of antiquity may be pursued. The digression is a remarkable and amusing demonstration of the attempt by a mountebank to pacify a malicious and ignorant rabble of highwaymen.

It soon becomes evident that A Tale of a Tub, as a manual for proselytizers, is primarily a demonstration of a literary method, rather than a source of the sort of wisdom that is applicable to the conduct of life. The Tale is a diversion from life, offered for the diversion of the wits by

an "author" who has been maliciously maltreated by "time" and who retaliates in the hope of redress, with a treatise described as " . . . the Fruits of a very few leisure Hours, stollen from the short Intervals of a World of Business, and of an Employment quite alien from such Amusements as this. (p.30). Not only does the persona suggest, by means of the prescribed form, that he is a gentleman dilettante but he also indicates that A Tale of a Tub is a diversion both for the author and for the reader.

The diversion of the reader is the purpose of a large proportion of modern literature both in the Tubbian world and in the "real" world. The satiric works of Tom Brown, Ned Ward, and others are intended for the amusement of their readers. These writers, in emulation of Samuel Butler and in imitation of Hudibras, frequently succeeded only in making bad taste amusing. Such satire pleases the reader by virtue of its generality. Because it provides the apprentice writer with a direct and easy path to literary fame, modern satire is deserving of the persona's praise. However, because it amuses without provoking retaliation, the satire directed against vice in the abstract, rather than against particular vices of specific individuals, contributes nothing to the augmentation of literary dissension, and thereby deprives the hack writer of potential employment and income.

The inconsistency of the persona's simultaneous condemnation and panegyric in his "expatiation" upon the subject of satire is typical of the sort of modern logic that finds its expression in the synchronous affirmation

and denial of a proposition. "The never-dying Works of these illustrious Persons, Your Governour, Sir, has devoted to unavoidable Death. . . ." (p.33). The inconsistency of the proposition is a particular reflection of the inconsistency involved in the general practice of the political hack writer, who may be actively employed in writing pamphlets for two or more opposing factions at the same time.

The superficiality of any persuasive literature is a necessary consequence of its function in promulgating opinions by inciting the passions and anaesthetizing the reason. The mountebank's appeal is directed to the reader's demand for novelty and singularity, rather than to his discrimination. The proselytizer merely discovers and utilizes novel, agreeable and surprising analogies for familiar concepts. The literary technique of presenting the trite and the familiar in new and surprising ways is the persona's definition of "wit." The Tale offers a plethora of illustrations of the superficial wit of the "Grubaeon Sages," who

. . . 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 filled their Imaginations
with the outward Lustre, as neither to
regard or consider, the Person or the
Parts of the Owner within.

(p. 66).

The analogy provides both a definition of modern wit and an illustration of the definition in practice. If one may be allowed to extend the analogy, it is entirely probable that the literary highwayman will be disappointed in his efforts to discover and appropriate anything of value in the literary coach.

A careful examination of the style and structure of A Tale of a Tub discloses the presence of continual repetition and reiteration, in strange and distorted ways, of what is basically a panegyric upon superficiality, bigotry, inconsistency, singularity, facility, zeal, speculative analysis and mechanical systematization.

In these terms, the modern preoccupation with literary form to the exclusion of content becomes understandable. The reader responds to novelty and singularity, rather than to logical argumentation, and any sort of incomprehensibility is permissible in conjunction with the fashionably curious literary form. Perhaps a quotation from Wycherley's Preface to the edition of his Miscellany Poems (1704) may serve to indicate the extremes to which the concept of wit as singularity frequently led.

. . . and the Folly of the most
stupid Brutes, as that of the most
Brutal Men, is distinguish'd, by
their making more a Stir, or more Noise,
than others of a more Noble, and
Useful Kind; as the Monkey is more Active,
than the Man, (his nearest Likeness) as he
is more Mischievous and Ridiculous; who,
like the Ambitious, Active, Rising,

Proud Man, is always Climbing, tho' the
 Higher he goes, the more he shows his
 Breech, to his Shame, and Hazard of
 Falling; so, the Humane Ape's Pride,
 and Busie, Impertinent Industry, expose
 him to more Danger, or Shame, as they
 are more, and the Higher he rises by them; . . .¹

Even the most feeble manifestations of wit were regarded by some of Wycherley's contemporaries as indications of a "sublimity" and fertility of mind too sacred to be confined in an orderly framework or sacrificed to the demands of a harmonious literary design.

As a consequence of its association with the bizarre in literature, wit had acquired connotations of affectation and ingenuity. The acquisition of these connotations served to associate the term "wit" in some minds with the term "enthusiasm" which denoted any divergence from accepted standards of conduct. Enthusiasm, due to its irrationality, was a state of mind to be avoided in the interests of decorum. The enthusiast, in literature and in life, was fanatic in his militant insistence upon the validity of his own opinions. His means of promulgating these opinions were those of both the highwayman and the mountebank, the appeal to the passions, the lure of personal advantage, the simulation of impartiality, the evocation of sympathy, the stimulation of fear, and the incitement to curiosity. The practitioners of the literary technique of "wit" were suspected of hypocrisy and cynicism. Pride, too, was associated with both wit and enthusiasm, since pride was essentially that quality of a man's mind that impelled him to foolish aspirations.

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W. Wycherley, "Preface to the Miscellany Poems," The Complete Works of William Wycherley, ed. Montague Summers (Soho, 1924), III, p. 10.

Although the dramatists of the Restoration period and of immediately subsequent years were vociferous in their denunciations of pride, and insistent in their affirmations of serious moral intentions, the art of the dramatist appeared to be so closely associated with professions of irreligion and with the practice or portrayal of vice, that many men considered the existence of the theatre to be a threat to decency and to morality.

Although dramatists and critics alike agreed that moral instruction, through social criticism, was the aim of literature, and that comedy was a corrective of vices and follies, undoubtedly laughter or entertainment, and not moral improvement, was the true objective of Restoration comedy. The manners of the court were highly corrupt, and the comedy that the court patronized was unblushing, hard, cynical, and immoral.¹

The court patronage of bad farces may be an indication of a general cultural degeneracy,² although it may be maintained that, while cynicism implies the loss of an illusion, it need not imply the absence of a moral criterion.

On the other hand, the protagonist of the Restoration comedy is frequently the prototype of the amorous "rake" whose assaults upon hypocrisy and affectation often give the impression that "honour" is merely another label attached to the practice of persistent affectation.

The effect of this implied and frequently overt disparagement of the concept of "honour" is to render suspect even the most sincere pretensions

¹ A.C. Baugh et al., eds. A Literary History of England (New York, 1948), p. 763.

² Aubrey L. Williams, Pope's Dunciad: A Study of its Meaning (Baton Rouge, 1958), p. 14.

to merit or virtue. The social assumption upon which the majority of Restoration comedy is based is that there exists, or should exist, an explicit pattern of conduct for every station in life. Adherence to the pattern constitutes "decorum," while aberrations from the pattern constitute "affectation," which may be regarded as comic. The themes of the plays were most frequently those of conflicts in the fashionable world between men and women, youth and age, honesty and hypocrisy. The male characters were often predatory and licentious, intent upon the seduction of vain women whose primary concept of morality was that of fashionable "discretion." The affectations of the effeminate "fop" frequently provided much of the comic effect in such comedies.¹

One consequence of the emphasis upon manners in Restoration comedy was the association of the term "wit" with satire, floridity, quibbles, conversational trifles, banter, and fashionable repartee. The dramatists, with their apparent cynicism and despite their elegant derision of hypocrisy, appeared to elevate the profane, the impure, the absurd, the dishonourable and the immoral. "Because wit, having become fashionable, began to appear as the natural ally of the scoffer, undermining religion and morals, it seemed to constitute a menace to society--a menace that must be understood if one is to feel the force of Swift's digressions on wit in the Tale of a Tub (1704)."²

Swift's direct attack upon the theatre is offered in terms of the persona's mild panegyric upon the utility of theatrical architecture.

1

Thomas H. Fujimura, The Restoration Comedy of Wit (Princeton, 1952), passim.

2

E.N. Hooker, "Pope on Wit: The Essay on Criticism," Eighteenth-Century English Literature: Modern Essays in Criticism, ed. James L. Clifford (New York, 1959), p. 46.

I confess, there is something yet more refined in the Contrivance and Structure of our Modern Theatres. For, First; the Pit is sunk below the Stage with due regard to the Institutions above-deduced; that whatever weighty Matter shall be delivered thence (whether it be Lead or Gold) may fall plum into the Jaws of certain Criticks (as I think they are called) which stand ready open to devour them. Then, the Boxes are built round, and raised to a Level with the Scene, in deference to the Ladies, because, That large Portion of Wit laid out in raising Prurientes and Proturbances, is observ'd to run much upon a Line, and ever in a Circle. The whining Passions, and little starved Conceits, are gently wafted up by their own extreme Levity, to the middle Region, and there fix and are frozen by the frigid Understanding of the Inhabitants.

(p. 61).

The architecture of the theatre is designed to take full advantage of the "mechanical" propensities of the language in which the dramatists present their offerings. The dramatic concepts, and the reaction of the audience to these concepts, are rigid and mechanical as well as prurient and superficial. The suggestion that words have "weight" is subsequently amplified in the "author's" discussion of Aeolism as the Tubbian metaphor for Calvinism. To modern critics are allotted the accommodations appropriate to their exalted status in the world of Tubbian literature. The ladies of the Tubbian world also enjoy preferential treatment in accordance with their particular propensities. The apparently pejorative terms in which the persona describes the nature and effects of the dramatic performance are pejorative only in the real world. In the Tubbian world, such terms are commendatory in nature,

serving to enhance the argument by their ingenuity and aptness.

A less direct attack upon the effects of the theatre is offered in the long catalogue describing the actions of the three brothers in the allegorical "history" of religion. " . . . They went to new Plays on the first Night. . . ." The theatre, with its witty immorality, plays a distinct role in distracting its audience from the observance of the Christian moral precepts. The actors themselves were frequently guilty of a vain ostentation in dress as they strutted to and from the theatre. The association of the theatre with the philosophy of sartorism is almost too obvious to require amplification. The audience has only to observe the apparel of the actor to determine the station in life of the character being portrayed. The patronization of the theatre by the king and the nobility had as its frequent consequence the elevation of individual actors to states of respectable affluence and social prestige. The encouragement thereby offered to the foolish aspirations of actors, their servants, and the writers catering to the tastes of the public served to inspire ostentation and presumption. It is the artistic and critical irresponsibility engendered by this imposition of wrong standards and wrong attitudes that Swift attacks in A Tale of a Tub.

The cynicism and opportunism of the dramatists is essentially a reflection of the degeneration of public taste and presumably of the deterioration of manners and morals consequent upon and concomitant with such degeneration. Dryden comments upon the dramatist's predicament in his

"Prologue to the University of Oxford" (1684) :

Though Actors cannot much of learning boast,
Of all who want it, we admire it most:
We love the praises of a learned pit,
As we remotely are allied to wit.
We speak our poet's wit, and trade in ore,
Like those who touch upon the golden shore;
Betwixt our judges can distinction make,
Discern how much and why our poems take;
Mark if the fools, or men of sense, rejoice;
Whether the applause be only sound or voice.¹

The intensity of Dryden's disillusionment is evident in the "Prologue to Aureng-Zebe" (1675) : "Our author by experience finds it true, / 'Tis much more hard to please himself than you; / And out of no feigned modesty, this day, / Damns his laborious trifle of a play; . . ." (p. 374).

The prototype of the moderns in A Tale of a Tub is, of course, the persona, who in many ways exhibits the qualities of Dryden, his counterpart in the real world. Both are obsessed with the merits of long and tedious prefaces, and both are concerned with the popularity of their works rather than with intrinsic artistic merit. Dryden had become notorious for the habitual variety and multiplication of prefatory dedications, arguments, justifications, explanations, and examples. Swift showed no hesitation in parodying Dryden's style and methods in A Tale of a Tub. Perhaps the following selection of passages from Dryden's "Preface to the Fables" (1700) may serve to illustrate the extent to which Dryden may be identified with the "author" of the Tale: " . . . I could please myself with enlarging on this subject, but am forced to defer it to a fitter time." (p. 691).

1

John Dryden, The Poetical Works of John Dryden (London: Aldine Series), III, 94. All excerpts from Dryden taken from this edition.

" . . . I am, and always have been, studious to promote the honour of my native country. . . ." (p. 181). "The continual agitations of the spirits must needs be a weakening of any constitution, especially in age; and many pauses are required for refreshment betwixt the heats; . . ." (p. 185).

I will hope the best that they . . . [his papers] . . . be not condemned; but if they should, I have the excuse of an old gentleman who, mounting on horseback before some ladies, when I was present, got up somewhat heavily, but desired of the fair spectators, that they would count fourscore and eight before they judged him. By the mercy of God, I am already come within twenty years of his number; a cripple in my limbs, but what decays are in my mind the reader must determine.

.
I will not trouble my reader with the shortness of time in which I writ it, or the several intervals of sickness. They who think too well of their own performances are apt to boast in their prefaces how little time their works have cost them, and what other business of more importance interfered; . . .

(pp. 182-183).

The frequent references to Dryden and the persistent stylistic parodies of his works in A Tale of a Tub are extremely useful contributions to the unity of Swift's Tale. Dryden was a famous "wit" worthy of emulation by novice scribblers. He was a respected member of the Royal Society, and a worthy representative of modern scientific thought in the Tubbian world and in the real world. Dryden had written with equal facility an elegy on Cromwell, a celebration of the Restoration, an anti-Catholic satire, a pro-Catholic fable and several political satires.

In his prologues and prefaces, Dryden often includes statements of his literary theories. He is, therefore, representative of the modern critic, of whom Bentley and Wotton are also representative. The pedantry and dulness of the critics are parodied in the history of criticism of the "Digression Concerning Criticks," while the attempt by the critic to read mystery into what is plain and intelligible is parodied both in the "digression" and in subsequent "statements of literary theory," of which the persona seems inordinately fond. Many of the "occult" formulae of the Tale are intended to demonstrate the concern of the modern critic with the singular sources of information and with the enormous collections of factual trivia with which both the critic and the scientist are infatuated. A further demonstration of the obtuseness, redundancy, triviality and absurdity of the pedantic modern critic is offered in Wotton's notes which were appended to later editions of A Tale of a Tub.

While Swift appears to attack specific literary infirmities in A Tale of a Tub, the real object of his animus is the habit of mind which initiates and condones abuses in literature. On the one hand, the analogical habit of mind is productive of fanciful speculation, superficial literary ornamentation, and meaningless oratory. On the other hand, arid pedantry and tedious obscurity are the products of the "empirical" habit of mind with its demand for factual evidence and corroborative detail.

Additional factors in the deterioration of modern literature are

the demands that literature should offer moral instruction or diversion or scientific information. An accession to such demands degrades literature to the status of servility, in the interests of theology, science, political faction, philosophy, and perhaps social criticism. Enthusiasm begets literary arrogance which contributes to the perversion of moral ideas and to the decadence of literary traditions.

Perhaps the intensity of Swift's indignation may be explained and partially excused by the acceptance of the assumption that Swift viewed dulness, not as a static condition, but as an expanding and malicious force, devitalizing literature, theology, morality and government.

CHAPTER IX

THE ROYAL SOCIETY AND THE TUBBIAN "ACADEMY"

The deterioration of literary standards was in part a consequence of the rapidly evolving concept of the function of wit as that of providing instruction through diversion. Wit became synonymous with delight, pleasure, novelty, and singularity while wisdom became synonymous with the necessary, the useful, and the advantageous. The dictum that the function of literature was to instruct by pleasing took on new and sinister implications. Literature was rapidly becoming servile and didactic, devoted only to making palatable the truths discovered by science and philosophy.¹ The attack on imaginative literature was conducted both by the "righteous" and by the "rational."

. . . no one at the time could have forgotten that outburst of hostilities in 1698-1700, in which the righteous had beset the wits--and had driven them to cover . . . the attack had been overtly against specific forms of wit, the facetious varieties which played with sex and trifled with religion and morality. . . . In an age when the utilitarian and scientific movement had grown to giant size, an art which pleased by confounding truth and deceiving men was bound to be viewed with hostility. All wit came under attack.²

The popularity of Newton's synthesis of mathematical rationalism is reflected in its influence upon the changes in literary style. Imaginative literature was in the process of being reformed on the analogy of the "new

1

S.L. Bethell, The Cultural Revolution of the Seventeenth Century (London, 1951), p. 111.

2

E.N. Hooker, "Pope on Wit," p. 44.

thought," and the status and function of poetry consequently suffered a decline.¹ The emphasis was upon simplicity of style in prose, which appealed to the understanding, as distinguished from the eloquence of poetry, which appealed to the emotions. The proposed "spartan simplicity" in prose style frequently deteriorated into barren, rational dissertations, filled with odd facts, dull inventories, and "crabbed dialectic."²

The attempts of the virtuosi to stabilize and "purify" the language were championed by Bishop Sprat, the President of the Royal Society, in his proposal to erect an academy for the perfection of the English language.

. . . If we observe well the English Language; we shall find, that it seems at this time more then others, to require some such aid, to bring it to its last perfection. The Truth is, it has been hitherto a little too carelessly handled; and I think, has had less labor spent about its polishing, then it deserves.

.
If some sober and judicious Men, would take the whole Mass of our Language into their hands, as they find it, and would set a mark on the ill Words; correct those, which are to be retain'd; admit and establish the good; and make some emendations in the Accent, and Grammar: I dare pronounce, that our Speech would quickly arrive at as much plenty, as it is capable to receive; and at the greatest smoothness, which its derivation from the rough German will allow it.³

A remarkably similar proposal is offered by the persona of A Tale of a Tub, whose projected "Academy of Wits" includes a "spelling school." The prurience of the proposed curriculum effectively disgraces Sprat's proposal, while the bewildering display of modern "logic" in the Tale suggests that

¹ Bethell, p. 111.

² Aubrey L. Williams, p. 108.

³ Thomas Sprat, History of the Royal Society, eds. J.I.Cope and H.W.Jones (London, 1959), pp. 41-42.

the prose style of the scientists tends more frequently to obscurity than to clarity or simplicity.

The "word-mongering" of the virtuosi is symptomatic of the scientist's concern with things rather than with the communication of knowledge. The proposal to "purify" is essentially a proposal to impoverish the language by repudiating the language of connotation and emphasizing the language of denotation. This exclusive concern with things, and with the language which refers exclusively to things, leads to a despiritualization of the universe. In their preoccupation with the material world of objects, many of the virtuosi appeared intent upon setting up the concept of a carefully systematized mechanical universe, from which were excluded all theological concepts of an actively benevolent deity.

The immediate consequences of this presumptuous attempt to systematize nature are the impoverishment of man's concept of the universe and an evasion of factual sensory knowledge. "It was a skeletal universe; scientific crows and philosophical vultures had picked it to the bone. It was colourless and noiseless. The only real qualities of objects were extension and mass: secondary qualities were subjective, and one avoided them or hastened to explain them in other terms."¹ The pride of the virtuosi impelled them to misuse and pervert nature in their foolish aspirations to reduce the universe to the status of a machine, comprehensible in its workings and amenable to manipulation by the instruments of science.

¹

Bethell, pp. 38-39.

The substitution, by the virtuosi, of the predatory desire to possess and control nature, for the more appropriate desire to indulge in appreciative contemplation of nature as evidence of a benevolent deity, is ridiculed by Swift in A Tale of a Tub. The persona's attempt to "dissect" and preserve human nature culminates in the futile "articulation" of its "skeleton," from which the essence has long since departed. The contention that words are " . . . Bodies of much Weight and Gravity, as it is manifest from those deep Impressions they make and leave upon us, . . ." (p. 60) is the argument of the virtuoso attempting to explain the facts of experience in terms of a rigid subjective concept of the measurable material nature of all things. It is the contention that "words have weight" which inspires the mountebank to seek a "superior position of place" on his elevated "stage-itinerant" in order to ensure the greatest possible distribution of his "weighty" verbal materials. The "learned Aeolist" ascends his pulpit to deliver his "oratory" for the same reason. Similarly, the highwayman voluntarily suppresses his inherent tendency to eloquent protestations of abject repentance pending his final involuntary elevation to the heights of the "oratorical machine" appropriate to his merits, the scaffold. The rigidity of the persona's literal interpretation of the figurative statement, and the rigidity with which the various Tubbian individuals attempt to apply this literal interpretation, are indications of the habit of mind designated as the "mechanical operation of the spirit," or alternatively,

the "converting imagination," which disposes men " . . . to reduce all Things into Types; who can make Shadows, no thanks to the Sun; and then mold them into Substances, no thanks to Philosophy; whose peculiar Talent lies in fixing Tropes and Allegories to the Letter, and refining what is Literal into Figure and Mystery." (p. 190).

The "converting imagination" serves a dual function. It simultaneously systematizes by classification, and mystifies by subtle over-refinements of reasoning. The "converting imagination" is merely another label for the "clothes philosophy," which becomes something new and wonderful merely by its restatement in another form. The "clothes philosophy" is an amplification of the statement that men judge one another by superficial appearances. Society arbitrarily assigns certain values to particular prescribed arrangements of clothes. A judge in his robes of office commands respect in accordance with a prearranged social agreement, while the bawd in her old velvet petticoat invites social ostracism also according to prearranged agreement. The virtuosi of the Royal Society have agreed to reduce the universe to a system of matter in motion. Certain aspects of experience offer resistance to this sort of systematization, but the virtuoso persists in assigning inappropriate labels to these aspects of experience, or attempts to evade the problem, by assigning priority to those qualities of experience which conform to the scientific system of measurable matter and motion. Matter and motion in the universe become significant by general agreement,

while the immaterial aspects of experience become insignificant by general agreement among the virtuosi.

The influence of the "converting imagination" upon human attitudes and actions is both powerful and extensive. The aimless and apparently ludicrous activities of the scientific virtuosi produce contemptible and vicious results. Scientific elimination of the supernatural from the universe has the effect of eliminating the supernatural in religion. Man's pride in his own rational powers inspires him to inordinate enthusiasm for his own logical creations. Enthusiasm inspires the propagation of ideas and opinions by persuasion, with a consequent deterioration of literary standards. Thus words become things to be manipulated for selfish purposes.

The conversion of one aspect of experience to another by the allocation of labels is not confined to the virtuoso. The Aeolist designates "eructation" as the noblest art of man, and subsequently pays homage to his own designation in his senseless sermons. Peter ascribes to bread and water the virtues of meat and wine, in the allegorical representation of the "mysteries" of transsubstantiation. Designation of experiential facts by labels representing only subjective perceptions may be either absurd or vicious. When the allotted label represents merely the subjective attitude of a single individual, it may be ridiculed as ignorance or folly. If the label is sufficiently absurd, and if the attitude it represents is sufficiently distorted, the individual's consequent aberrations from accepted patterns

of behaviour are termed "madness." But this term itself merely signifies a general agreement concerning designations to be allotted to particular attitudes, qualities, or actions. The evaluation or assessment of such designations is similarly determined by general agreement.

The implications of the argument are of great significance in the conduct of human affairs. The foolish individual, if he is sufficiently persuasive, may achieve greatness. The madman, if he shows sufficient dexterity in the arts of proselytization, may create a powerful faction in science, philosophy, religion, or politics. Public acceptance of the madman's attitude, whether occasioned by public fear or by susceptibility to persuasion, dictates the alteration of previous designations or labels. Since madness is no longer considered an appropriate label for the tenets of the leader of a faction, the label is changed by agreement to "political greatness," or to "religious inspiration."

The scientific greatness of the virtuoso lies in his manipulation of matter for the "benefit of mankind." However, the manipulation of matter is appropriate to both the inmate of Bedlam paddling in his own ordure and to the virtuoso experimenting on the digestive tracts of animals. Extremes of amoral ratiocination and drooling irrationality differ only in the degree to which they are accorded public approval or disapproval. The "author" of A Tale of a Tub is a former inmate of Bedlam, agitating the literary ordure of his treatise in the names of science and philosophy. As a "modern,"

the persona has achieved the distinction he lacked while a "madman" in Bedlam. His attitudes and behaviour remain inconsistent, prurient, and irrational, but they now command public approval for their novelty, singularity, utility, and modernity.

One of the primary characteristics of the modern virtuoso is his concern with matter and motion as the constituent elements of the universe. It is this concern with matter and motion which informs the "occultism" or "Rosicrucianism" of the persona in A Tale of a Tub. The virtuosi of the Royal Society attempted to reform man's concepts of a combined material and spiritual universe by the postulation of theories of knowledge in which the actions of the mind were explained in terms of their analogical correspondences to the actions of matter in motion. Many of the physiological experiments of the virtuosi were directed toward obtaining confirmation of the existence of these theoretical correspondences.

The tracing of correspondences or parallels between objects, systems, qualities, and processes arises from the exercise of a habit of analogical thought. The habit is characteristic of the thought of the mediaeval scholastics, the alchemists, and the philosophers. Peter, Jack, and Martin interpret the "will" of the allegory in analogical terms. The "Grubaeon fables" are repositories of wisdom disguised as metaphor and allegory. A Tale of a Tub, with its subordinate analogies, is an analogical history of religion and an analogical description of society.

One of the consequences of the exercise of this habit of thought is a failure to discriminate between subjects appropriate and inappropriate to analogical treatment. A more specific failure or ineffectiveness occurs when the analogy becomes absurd due to an extreme disparity in the nature of the two things to be compared.

Perhaps the most cogent examples of the extremes to which the tracing of analogical parallels may be pursued are offered in the meaningless and frequently incomprehensible occult formulae and instructions offered by the persona.

I desire of those whom the Learned
among Posterity will appoint for
commentators upon this Elaborate
Treatise; that they will proceed
with great Caution upon certain dark
Points, wherein all who are not
Vere adepti, may be in Danger to
form rash and hasty Conclusions,
especially in some mysterious
Paragraphs, where certain Arcana
are joined for brevity sake, which
in the Operation must be divided.
And, I am certain, that future
Sons of Art, will return large
Thanks to my Memory, for so grateful,
so useful an Innuendo.

(p. 114).

The passage offers a remarkable demonstration of eloquence without sense and vanity without justification.

Many of the numerous occult formulae and garbled metaphysical speculations in A Tale of a Tub actually appear to parody the dissertations

frequently published under the sponsorship of the Royal Society. Bishop Sprat's insistence upon the modesty of the intellectual requirements appropriate to the conduct of scientific experimentation encouraged the pretensions of an unusual number of imposters, charlatans, and mountebanks.

" . . . if we cannot have sufficient Choice of those that are skill'd in all Divine and Human Things (which was the ancient Definition of a Philosopher) it suffices, if many of them be plain, diligent, and laborious Observers: . . .¹

Sprat's liberality and tolerance had immediate and unfortunate consequences.

"The removal of the bars of learning and intellectual competence let loose a crowd of astrologers, empirics, magicians, alchemists, Rosicrucians, and a host of others who defy name and classification, all eager to pursue a path that seemed to lead to money, respectability, and fame!"² The literary effusions of these individuals contributed to the popularity and fecundity of bad art. The respectable members of the Royal Society, including Bishop Sprat, recognized and deplored the consequences. " . . . By all these we have been already deluded; even by those whom I last named, who ought most of all to abhor Falsehood; of whom yet many have multiplied upon us infinite Stories and false Miracles, without any regard to Conscience or Truth."³ Satiric attacks upon the virtuosi of the Royal Society were prevalent and popular. Tom Brown, Shadwell, Ward, Samuel Butler and Joseph Hall helped to establish a literary tradition of satire directed against the virtuoso and the Royal Society. On occasion, the wits who satirized the

1

Sprat, p. 72.

2

R.F. Jones, "The Background of the Attack on Science in the Age of Pope," Eighteenth Century English Literature, ed. J.L. Clifford (New York, 1959), p.82.

3

Sprat, pp. 73-74.

virtuosi were of that party themselves. John Arbuthnot, a member of the Royal Society, collaborated in writing the Scriblerus Memoirs, an early eighteenth-century attack upon false learning and futile scientific speculation.

Numerous popular satires were written " . . . at the expense of irresponsible theorizers and system-makers in natural philosophy; and this sort of satire was as highly acceptable to most members of the Royal Society as it was to the wits and poets."¹ Although Swift admired and respected individual members of the Royal Society, for example John Arbuthnot, he was perhaps more aware of the corruptions of the new experimental learning than of its merits. He probably felt that the new secular knowledge was destined to contribute very little to the guidance of man's thoughts and actions toward a life of virtue or morality. In addition, it had become apparent that the need to view the universe as an entity governed by laws of reason analogous to those of human reason had merely provoked the formulation of obscure and frequently misleading theories. Finally, Swift was well aware that even partial and superficial explanations, to the extent that they satisfy the curiosity or the need of the individual, lead to familiarity and even contempt for the thing explained. Swift undoubtedly considered such familiarity and contempt concerning the system of the universe to be precursors of vice and pride, inconsistent with Christian humility.

¹
George R. Potter, "Swift and Natural Science," PQ, XX (April 1941), pp. 110-111.

CHAPTER X

A TALE OF A TUB AND LEVIATHAN

The materialistic preoccupations of the virtuosi had been inspired to a great extent, by the philosophy of Thomas Hobbes. In Leviathan [1651], Hobbes claimed to have " . . . set forth the nature of Man, (whose Pride and other Passions have compelled him to submit himselfe to Government) . . ."¹ A primary tenet of the Hobbesian philosophy is the affirmation of the material nature of all things.

The World, (I mean not the Earth onely, that denominates the Lovers of it Worldly Men, but the Universe, that is, the whole masse of all things that are) is Corporeall, that is to say, Body; and hath the dimensions of Magnitude, namely, Length, Breadth, and Depth: also every part of Body, is likewise Body, and hath the like dimensions; and consequently every part of the Universe, is Body; and that which is not Body, is no part of the Universe: And because the Universe is All, that which is no part of it, is Nothing; and consequently no where.

(pp. 367-368).

The theory of knowledge offered by Hobbes is a theory of the operation of matter upon sense to produce motion within the body, of which there are two kinds, "vital" motions and "voluntary" motions. The "vital" motions are those of the blood, of excretion, and of all the other fluids and

1

T. Hobbes, Leviathan (London, 1953), p. 170. All citations from Leviathan are taken from this source.

processes of the body. (p. 23). The "voluntary" motions, on the other hand, depend upon the imagination which Hobbes defines as " . . . the first internall beginning of all Voluntary Motion." (p. 23). But the imagination " . . . is nothing but decaying sense; . . ." (p. 3). All the actions of men are the ultimate consequences of "endeavour" inspired by the imagination which is the product or "motion" consequent upon the impingement of external matter upon the sense. Endeavour is defined by Hobbes as "appetite" toward something or "aversion" from something. "These small beginnings of Motion, within the body of Man, before they appear in walking, speaking, striking and other visible actions are commonly called ENDEAVOUR." (p. 23).

Concepts of mechanical determinism logically derived from such basic assumptions dominated much of the scientific and philosophical thought of the final half of the seventeenth century.

Swift attempts, in A Tale of a Tub, to disgrace the attitudes and actions of the philosophers and virtuosi whose theories of mechanical determinism had exerted such a debilitating influence upon theological claims to moral and religious authority over the actions of men. The occult formulae of the Tale offer extreme examples of the muddling of the material and the spiritual in the attempt to acquire control over the forces of nature. It is only logical to assume that, if there exists in the universe nothing but matter, those things formerly considered spiritual or immaterial must be material. If matter in motion has the ability to influence the mind of man

through impingement upon the senses, it is logically valid to assume that certain arrangements of matter or certain processes involving matter will affect the human mind in definite and predictable ways. Greatness in the Tubbian world is a consequence of the individual's dexterity in the manipulation of men's minds or opinions, in creating appetites and aversions. Consequently, the manipulation of the spiritual by means of the material is one of the most significant of all Tubbian arts and sciences.

Swift manipulates the concept of the "mechanical operation of the spirit" in a number of ways for satiric effect. The Aeolists act on the assumption that the physical manipulation of tangible wind is synonymous with the manipulation of "spiritual" forces. Peter offers his "nostrums" for spiritual ailments on the assumption that matter in motion is capable of influencing the "supernatural" elements in the universe. The sartorist contends that the essence of man resides in his clothes because other men are influenced by the external materials in prescribed arrangements. These arrangements are significant because the concepts men acquire are merely extensions of the ordered impingement of materials upon the sense. " . . . there is no conception in a man's mind which hath not at first, totally, or by parts, been begotten upon the organs of Sense. . . ." (p. 3).

The sartorist philosophy is employed against Hobbes in a number of ways. The definition offered by Hobbes in Leviathan, whereby he distinguishes between factual knowledge and the knowledge of science is one

of the immediate objects of attack in A Tale of a Tub. The utility claimed for the Tale is analogous to the utility claimed for modern science.

And whereas Sense and Memory are but knowledge of Fact, which is a thing past, and irrevocable; Science is the knowledge of Consequences, and dependence of one fact upon another: by which, out of what we can presently do, we know how to do something else when we will, or the like, another time: Because when we see how anything comes about, upon what causes, and by what manner; when the like causes come into our power, we see how to make it produce the like effects.

(p. 21).

Proselytization is the particular science in which the "author" is adept, and it is for the instruction of the novice proselytizer that he offers his Tale, with its numerous "demonstrations" and illustrations. Hobbes condemns mountebank authors who demonstrate " . . . in their speeches, a regard to the common Passions, and opinions of men, in deducing their reasons: and make use of Similitudes, Metaphors, Examples, and other tooles of Oratory, to perswade their Hearers of the Utility, Honour, or Justice of following their advise." (p. 135). But if "science" is merely a knowledge of cause and effect, and if "power" over circumstances is the goal of science, then the mountebank's appeal to the passions in the attempt to control men's actions is entitled to approval in the name of "modern science."

Similarly, if the contention that it is the "form" of an argument which determines its effectiveness, is valid, the mountebank is justified in

his insistence upon the merits of prescribed literary forms. Literary form is a species of "etiquette" or "fashion" in literature. "Forme is Power; because being a promise of Good, it recommendeth men to the favour of women and strangers." (p. 43). The typographical methods by means of which the persona recommends his own treatise to those readers seeking "wit" and the "sublime" are "promises of good" as are the "modern" literary forms of self-praise.

The robes of office are the signs of power in the state, and it is the respect that these signs of power demand from the observer that is termed "civil honour." "Honourable is whatsoever possession, action, or quality, is an argument and signe of Power. And therefore To be Honoured, loved, or feared of many, is Honourable; as arguments of Power." (p. 46). The sartorist argument contends that the essence of man is in his external appearance, in that by which we evaluate him or assess his character. Honour, virtue, sincerity, and all the other qualities of a man are not intrinsic to the individual, but exist only as concepts of the observer, whose concepts originate in sense. "The Value or Worth of a man, is as of all other things, his Price; that is to say, so much as would be given for the use of his Power: and therefore is not absolute; but a thing dependent upon the need and judgment of another." (p. 44). The tailor, as the creative Deity of sartorism, daily creates men by giving form to the "uninformed Mass, or Substance." But the form, the suit of clothes, is merely a set of complex

notions impressed upon matter by the observer.

. . . those Beings which the World calls improperly Suits of Cloaths, are in Reality the most refined Species of Animals, or to proceed higher, that they are Rational Creatures, or Men. For, is it not manifest, that They live, and move, and talk, and perform all other Offices of Human Life? Are not Beauty, and Wit, and Mien, and Breeding, their inseparable Proprieties? In short, we see nothing but them, hear nothing but them.

(pp. 78-79).

In the Tubbian world, clothes are the "signs" of certain human qualities to which are assigned certain definite values. But fashions in clothing are subject to change, and consequently the values assigned to particular arrangements of clothes are subject to change. Human values are relative to prevailing "fashions" of thought. "Nor does it alter the case of Honour, whether an action (so it be great and difficult, and consequently a signe of much power,) be just or unjust: for Honour consisteth onely in the opinion of Power." (p. 47).

The indication of "true Tubbian greatness" is violent action which is an indication of power in the aggressive monarch. The actions of both Jack and Peter are violent, as are the actions of the "wits" in their attacks upon church and state and in their "literary attacks" upon each other. On the other hand, the inmate of Bedlam is equally violent in his own irrational

actions. The rationality or irrationality of an action is merely a matter of opinion. Under such circumstances, the most violent and abusive tyranny becomes honourable, whether it be the political tyranny of an individual or faction, or whether it be the tyranny of the literary critic. The highwayman is both powerful and honourable until he is apprehended, or deposed in some other way.

Vice, too, becomes honourable under the proper circumstances, because " . . . Covetousness of great Riches, and ambition of great Honours, are Honourable; as signes of power to obtain them. . . ." (pp. 46-47).

Hobbes comments upon the literary abuse of words, which he defines as "madness," " . . . and that is, when men speak such words, as put together, have in them no signification at all; but are fallen upon by some, through misunderstanding of the words they have received, and repeat by rote; by others, from intention to deceive by obscurity." (p. 40). Swift, through his persona, distorts the arguments of Leviathan until they appear to contradict each other. Modern "eloquence" consists merely of typographical signs and prescribed literary forms designated by the author as indications of profundity and wisdom. Modern literature is deliberately obscure, because obscurity has become a sign of modern eloquence, which is " . . . power; because it is seeming Prudence. . . ." (p. 43).

The "author" of the Tale demonstrates his "wit" in such a manner that " . . . a man is rather astonied and dazzled with the variety of discourse

upon it, than informed of the course he ought to take." (p. 138). The Tale is essentially a demonstration of "a celerity of imagination" or rapid succession of one thought after another, which constitutes Hobbes' definition of natural wit. (p. 33).

Hobbes asserts that the difference between wit and stupidity is caused by differences in the passions due to differences in bodily constitutions. He amplifies this contention through the statement that "The Passions that most of all cause the differences of Wit, are principally, the more or lesse Desire of Power, of Riches, of Knowledge, and of Honour. All of which may be reduced to the first, that is Desire of Power. For Riches, Knowledge and Honour are but severall sorts of Power." (p. 35). The human activities which lead to honour are governed by the passions which lead to power. But an excess of passion, which may be defined as "zeal," is madness. " . . . to have stronger, and more vehement Passions for any thing, than is ordinarily seen in others, is that which men call MADNESSE." (p. 36).

But it is zeal that inspires the mountebank, the highwayman, and the religious zealot to the actions which constitute "true Tubbian greatness," and Hobbesian "greatness." "The Greatest of humane Powers, is that which is compounded of the Powers of most men united by consent, in one person, Naturall or Civill . . . such as is the Power of a Faction, or of divers factions leagued." (p. 43).

The achievement of "true Tubbian greatness" is frequently an indication of the individual's dexterity in imposing upon the credulity of others.

Consequently, the "author" is lavish in his praises for credulity.

IN the Proportion that Credulity is
a more peaceful Possession of the
Mind, than Curiosity, so far
preferable is that Wisdom, which
converses about the Surface, to
that pretended Philosophy which
enters into the Depth of Things,
and then comes gravely back with
Informations and Discoveries, that
in the inside they are good for
nothing.

TT.(p. 173).

Hobbes, on the other hand, contends that credulity is an indication of ignorance and is the cause of falsehood. "And Credulity, because men love to be hearkened unto in company, disposeth them to lying: so that Ignorance it selfe without Malice, is able to make a man both to believe lyes, and tell them; and sometimes also to invent them." (p. 53). The definition of happiness in A Tale of a Tub is that of " . . . the sublime and refined Point of Felicity, called, the Possession of being well deceived; The Serene Peaceful State of being a Fool among Knaves." (p. 174).

If these various statements are considered, it becomes apparent that Hobbes and the persona provide entirely disparate evaluations of "credulity." If, however, a further selection from Leviathan is considered in the context provided here, Hobbes appears to contradict himself. He contends that desire of fame is not vain " . . . because men have a present delight therein, from the foresight of it, and of the benefit that may redound thereby to their posterity: which though they now see not, yet they imagine;

and any thing that is pleasure in the sense, the same also is pleasure in the imagination." (p. 50). The passage implies that anticipation of fame is valuable because it is agreeable. One of the tenets of sartorism declares that what is agreeable is advantageous.

Further quotation from Leviathan provides a comment both upon the Tubbian concept of felicity as credulity and upon the philosophic concept of God. "Curiosity, or love of the knowledge of causes, draws a man from the consideration of the effect, to seek the cause; and again, the cause of that cause; till of necessity he must come to this thought at last, that there is some cause, whereof there is no former cause, but is eternall; which is it men call God." (p. 53). Curiosity, both in the Tubbian world and in the real world, is both unrewarding and laborious. The philosopher, when he becomes weary, says "God." But God no longer intervenes in human affairs, is "good for nothing" in utilitarian terms.

In similar fashion, Swift derides Hobbes' account of his failure to discover " . . . the Existence of an Incorporeall Soule, Separated from the Body. . . ." (p. 369). "Besides, said they, separate these two, and you will find the Body to be only a senseless unsavory Carcass. By all which it is manifest, that the outward Dress must needs be the Soul." (TT. p. 80).

Many of the arguments of Leviathan are based upon the assumption that all men's actions are inspired by their passions.

. . . the voluntary actions, and inclinations of all men, tend, not onely to the procuring, but also to the assuring of a contented life; and differ onely in the way; which ariseth partly from a diversity of passions, in divers men; and partly from the difference of the knowledge, or opinion each one has of the causes, which produce the effect desired.

(p. 49).

Hobbes advocates political tyranny as a solution to the problem of political instability caused by dissenting factions. Swift, in A Tale of a Tub, ridicules not only the conclusion, but also the assumptions on which the argument is based.

A Tale of a Tub is, in many ways, a metaphor for Leviathan. In his introduction, Hobbes describes the Leviathan as a triumph of art in imitation of nature. The commonwealth is an "artificial man," in which the offices and functions of the state are analogous to the sinews, nerves, intellect, memory, and other attributes of the "natural" man. The world of the sartorist is a similar world of macrocosm and microcosm in which the "artificial man" is the product of the tailor's manual dexterity. The various individuals of the Tale are governed by their passions, and it is only through the "social contract" of public opinion that values are established. The "arts and sciences" of the Tubbian commonwealth are those by which the practitioner is enabled to achieve pleasure, position, and power. Both A Tale of a Tub and Leviathan offer to describe the condition of society as

it exists, and to describe the principles and practices of the society in terms of their origins and present utility. In both treatises, the emphasis is upon the maintenance of social stability, although for widely disparate reasons.

CHAPTER XI

RATIONAL THEOLOGY IN THE TUBBIAN WORLD

In a period when the unity of morality and religion depended to a great extent upon theories of knowledge which included the doctrine of innate ideas, the popularity of the new materialistic theory of knowledge was the occasion for great consternation among theologians. "For many men of the period, natural law required a natural conscience to enable men to recognize the laws laid down by God. Without a natural conscience supplied by God with the ability of leading men towards good and away from evil, there would be no sure foundation for morality."¹ The very existence of the Christian doctrine of salvation through redemption was dependent upon the concept of original sin, or the tendency in man toward depravity.

The theory of innate ideas received much of its support from the historical evidence which appeared to indicate the persistence and consistent recurrence of ideas and groups of ideas to which men accorded universal assent. The exponents of theories of innate ideas maintained that this historical evidence indicated the existence in the universe of an absolute scale of moral and spiritual values. Among those who attempted to suggest methods of speculative thought appropriate to the discovery and elucidation of an absolute scale of universal moral and spiritual values was Lord Herbert

1John W. Yolton, John Locke and the Way of Ideas (London, 1956), p. 31.

of Cherbury, whose protest against the methodology of the scholastics and whose proposed methodology for the pursuit of moral and spiritual truth, appeared in the Latin treatise, De Veritate, in 1624.¹ Many of the "stoical common notions" of Lord Herbert appear in similar and only slightly altered form in the subsequent writings of the Cambridge Platonists or "Latitudinarians" and in the various "deistic" philosophies including that of Shaftesbury.

The Cambridge Platonists contended that the spiritual is simply the "purest and highest form of the rational" and consequently the most rational man is the most virtuous man. Men should be concerned with living the "good life" here and now. Despite their professions of orthodoxy in religious matters, the Cambridge Platonists are consistent in their attitude toward the established church as a means to spiritual truth; the rites of the church are secondary to reason. Consequently the "tone" of their writings is primarily secular and rational.

The charitable or "latitudinarian" attitude of the Cambridge Platonists toward dogma and ritual is based on the contention that dogmatism is a restriction upon innate reason and an obstacle to the individual's rational perception of divine truth. But the toleration of widely disparate dogmas and rituals is an invitation to faction in a world already divided by dissention.

An additional problem is posed by the tendency of the individual

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Lord Herbert of Cherbury, De Religione Laici, ed. and trans. H.R.Hutcheson (New Haven, 1944), pp. 28-29.

to equate his own reason with "divine reason." The confidence of each man in the validity of his own conclusions as "universal truths" can only lead to enthusiasm and faction.

In the attempt to evade this particular difficulty, John Smith attempts to classify the gradations of prophecy in what is essentially a natural history of a supernatural process.¹ The "author" of A Tale of a Tub performs essentially the same function in his history of the origins and practices of the Aeolists.

The Cambridge Platonists, in their preoccupation with the "life of virtue," sought sanction for a regimen consisting of the life of unimpassioned reason, in the writings of the pagan philosophers. The concept of man's innate divine rationality is essentially a repudiation of Christian doctrines and a sanction of paganism. Both the Cambridge Platonists and the Deists proclaimed the superiority of the ancients in the realms of moral conduct based on reason, and both groups relegated the function of the Gospel to that of confirming truths previously discovered by reason or "divine intuition."²

The persistent attempts of rational theologians to offer pagan substantiation for a reasonable point of view are frequently ridiculed in A Tale of a Tub. " 'Tis well known among the Learned, that the Virtuoso's of former Ages, had a Contrivance for carrying and preserving Winds in Casks or Barrels, which was of great Assistance upon long Sea Voyages; and the

¹ Basil Willey, The Seventeenth-Century Background (Garden City, N.Y., 1933), p. 154.

² Ibid., p. 142.

loss of so useful an Art at present, is very much to be lamented. . . ."

(p. 155). With admirable literary "compression" Swift suggests the identity between the Puritan demand for an active faith and the rational theologian's demand for an active philosophy. He suggests, too, the pagan preoccupations of the Cambridge Platonists and unites these by association to the atheistic materialism of the virtuoso and the mechanical "inspiration" of the Puritan Aeolist.

Swift also unites, with remarkable dexterity, the mechanism of the modern virtuoso, the "divine reason" of the rational theologian, the superstition of the Rosicrucian, and the enthusiasm of the Puritan.

. . . Man is in highest Perfection of all created Things, as having by the great Bounty of Philosophers, been endued with three distinct Anima's or Winds, to which the Sage Aeolists, with much Liberality, have added a fourth of equal Necessity, as well as Ornament with the other three; by this quartum Principium, taking in the four Corners of the World; which gave Occasion to that Renowned Cabbalist, Bumbastus, of placing the Body of Man, in due position to the four Cardinal Points.
(pp. 151-152).

The philosophers have "endued" man with three anima, or winds, after the fashion of the Aeolist who adds a fourth by mechanical infusion. Swift suggests that philosophers, including rational theologians, see in man only those characteristics with which they have themselves endowed him. Man is perfect, only because the philosophers consider him to be so. But the

sartorist, too, considers man perfect, because it is advantageous to do so. The philosophers act like sartorists, while the Aeolist attempts to improve upon philosophy, and all three act like Rosicrucians in their muddling of the material and the spiritual.

The mechanistic philosopher and the rational theologian appear to represent the two most extreme attempts of man to employ his reason for widely disparate purposes. Upon closer inspection, however, it becomes evident that the rational abstractions of the theologian are remarkably similar to the rational abstractions of the scientist or philosopher. In both cases, excessive reliance upon reason may conclude in the advocacy of a logical absurdity. In their attempts to demonstrate the compatibility of science and religion, the Cambridge Platonists employed the empirical methods of the new science. Henry More sought verifiable evidence of ghosts, apparitions, miracles, and witchcraft in order to prove the existence of " . . . spirituality in nature."¹ In similar fashion, Joseph Glanvill, an " . . . ardent propagandist of the new philosophy . . ." sought to free the philosophers from the imputation of atheism by gathering all available data on the existence of "spirits" in nature.² More was primarily interested in proving the existence of "evil spirits" in order to demonstrate by logic the potential existence of "good spirits" and Deity.

The attempt to collect such evidence is ridiculed in A Tale of a Tub.

¹ Ernst Cassirer, The Platonic Renaissance in England, trans. J.P. Pettegrove (Toronto, 1953), p. 131.

² Jones, p. 78.

. . . For it is with Men, whose Imaginations are lifted up very high, after the same Rate, as with those, whose Bodies are so; that, as they are delighted with the Advantage of a nearer Contemplation upwards, so they are equally terrified with the dismal Prospect of the Precipice below. Thus, in the Choice of a Devil, it hath been the usual Method of Mankind, to single out some Being; either in Act, or in Vision, which was in most Antipathy to the God they had framed.

(pp. 158-159).

The Aeolist argument is a direct inversion of More's effort to prove the existence of God by obtaining evidence of the existence of the devil. But the Aeolist practice and Peter's practice differ only in detail. It is the passion of fear, based upon foolish speculation, which informs the activity of each. Fear and speculation are both instinctive, and both operate as direct consequences of "mechanical" elevation. The various arguments concerning the location, origin, and nature of the soul are similarly derided in the absurd arguments of the sartorist "professors," " . . . that the Soul was the outward, and the Body the inward Cloathing; that the latter was ex traduce; but the former of daily Creation and Circumfusion." (p. 79).

The writings of the Cambridge Platonists show the influence of the scholastic form of argumentation and demonstration in a mingling of scriptural, Platonic, Neo-platonic and metaphysical terms. The archaic style, which consists of a mingling of allegorical and metaphorical elements

with poetic images and parables, distorts even the new and original thoughts offered by the Cambridge Platonists. The presence of parodies of such stylistic elements in A Tale of a Tub may be merely coincidental, although the inclusion in the Tale of distortions of the arguments employed by the rational theologians militates against mere coincidence.

Much of the confidence in reason shown by both the "Latitudinarians" and the Deists is a direct consequence of the apparently successful attempt by Descartes to limit the extent to which theories of mechanism could penetrate realms of the intellect.¹ Swift, through his "author," derides and ridicules the self-sufficient pride of man in the potentialities of his own reason. "Cartesius reckoned to see before he died, the Sentiments of all Philosophers, like so many lesser Stars in his Romantick System, rapt and drawn within his own Vortex." (p. 167). Man's confidence in the validity of novel and elaborate philosophical systems derived by reason and expressed in sets of rational abstractions is merely another form of pride.

Swift apparently distrusted man's reason and was sceptical of any philosophical system which failed to take into account the limitations to which such reason was subject. "In Swift's day amity existed only between reason and a certain radical simplification of truth which left out much that he believed essential for the maintaining of Christian values and of that respect for morality which only the authority of revealed religion could inculcate."² The "divine reason" is no longer an element in man's

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W.R. Sorley, A History of English Philosophy (Cambridge, 1951), p. 79.

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Kathleen Williams, Jonathan Swift and the Age of Compromise (Lawrence, Kansas, 1958), pp. 31-32.

nature and the deistic assumption of man's innate capacity to perceive divine truth is perhaps more dangerous than atheism because it leads to pride that blinds man to his own limitations. The life of pure reason is not only irrelevant to man but also distracting to his search for the guidance to salvation offered only by revealed religion.

One of the most voluble exponents of the philosophy of deism was the third Earl of Shaftesbury, whose letters and papers gave impetus to the deistic movement of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Shaftesbury's optimism led him to believe that God's plan for the universe was evident in the mutual dependence, order, symmetry, unity, regularity, and coherence of the whole of nature. "All things stand together or exist together by one necessity, one reason, one law: therefore there is one nature of all things, or common to all. Nothing is out of the whole, nor nothing happens but according to the laws of the whole."¹

The deistic attitude that all is well with the world if man only perceives the order and harmony in the orderly scheme of nature is reflected in the doctrine of Tubbian felicity as the "possession of being well deceived." In similar fashion, Swift rejects the "universal rule of reason" suggested by the deists as the ultimate goal of man, whose "natural affection" directs him toward the life of virtue. The man " . . . who is in that higher degree rational, and can consider the good of the whole, and consider himself as related to the whole, must withal consider himself as under an obligation to

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The Life, Unpublished Letters, and Philosophical Regimen of Anthony, Earl of Shaftesbury, ed. B. Rand (London, 1900), p. 17. All references to Shaftesbury are taken from this source.

the interest and good of the whole, preferably to the interest of his private species: and this is the ground of a new and superior affection." (p. 4). The "universal rule of reason" is merely another novel discovery of the philosophical mountebank whose dissection of human nature has yielded " . . . My New Help of Smatterers, or the Art of being Deep-learned, and Shallow-read. A curious Invention about Mouse-Traps. An Universal Rule of Reason, or Every Man his own Carver; Together with a most useful Engine for catching of Owls." (p. 130). Shaftesbury's suggestion that the order in nature is a sign of the great "plan" or harmony of the universe is reflected in the "author's" offer to write a "panegyric upon the world," with a sequel or "second part" devoted to a defence of "the proceedings of the rabble." (pp. 53-54). Similarly, the scholastic form of reasoning employed by Shaftesbury to describe the orderly system of nature in which man is the "microcosm," is reflected in the scholastic form of the sartorist argument concerning the macrocosm and microcosm.

Shaftesbury offered the platonic notion that all vice is merely error, to be eradicated by shaming the individual from vicious practices. Shaftesbury's concept of satire as the instrument of moral rehabilitation was merely the logical result of a substitution of satire and ridicule for the exhortations of theology. Shaftesbury offers his argument in an irritating tone of smug self-complacency. "Grant but this, that all vice is error; that all pursue their good and cannot but do so; that there is no good but a good mind, and no ill but an ill one: immediately all is right." (p. 30).

Shaftesbury's system merely substitutes a benevolent rational determinism for the Hobbesian mechanistic determinism in the universe and the Puritan doctrine of determinism by "divine election." The "author's" observations upon the pleasure offered by the generalizations of modern satire, which everyone applies to the conduct of his neighbour, (p. 52) are effective arguments against the deist proposal to reform man by appealing exclusively to his reason through satire. The deist attempts to substitute social "pressure" for theological precept. This attempt leads to an elegant rational piety embodied in a system of "manners" similar to the systems of "decorum" advocated by the Whig satirists Addison and Steele.

The optimism of the deist is based upon the credulous assumption of man's perfectibility in the appropriate environment, which must be conducive to man's exercise of the innate "divine reason." The allegorical sections of A Tale of a Tub offer demonstrations only of the abuses of reason in the history of religious fanaticism. The "irrationality" of the "modern forms of logic" in A Tale of a Tub is sufficient evidence of man's tendency toward degradation rather than toward spiritual elevation through the use of reason.

Many of the methods by which Swift ridicules the rational theology of the Cambridge Platonists in A Tale of a Tub are equally applicable to his derision of the rational theology of the deist philosophers. The tendency of rational theology to effect a separation of morality and

theology is destructive of the personal relationship between man and God advocated by Christian theology. God becomes merely another rational abstraction while morality becomes the code of conduct prescribed by social "decorum" and rational piety. At best, systems of rational theology merely provide substitutes for religion. At worst, such systems lead to moral anarchy through liberation of man from his fear of divine retribution and anticipation of divine rewards. Freedom of religious speculation leads to the anarchy of freedom of religious belief and freedom of moral action. Such anarchy leads in turn to faction and eventually to tyranny in the names of religion and morality.

CHAPTER XII

CONCLUSION

In his attack upon the various solutions offered by a variety of enthusiasts for the problems of a society in a state of political, moral, philosophical and religious dislocation, Swift ridicules both the assumptions and the logical processes of his opponents. His attack is not only upon the specific arguments of the enthusiasts, but also upon the process of logic itself.

"It is this attitude towards systematic logic, also, that informs Swift's recurrent attacks upon the false logic of 'strong reasoners,' the 'false reasoning' of atheists, the 'impudent sophistry and false logic' of . . . Deism, the spurious refinements of the 'logician' who 'might possibly put a case that would serve for an exception,' the illogical logic of wits 'who upon a thorough examination of causes and effects, and by the mere force of natural abilities, without the least tincture of learning . . . made a discovery that there was no God.¹

While the overt attack is upon the Rosicrucian, the scientist, the pandering sycophant, the philosopher, the fop, the fanatic and the tyrant, it is evident that these "typical" individuals and a host of others are concrete embodiments in a dramatic situation of specific attitudes or habits of mind. The "modern" is an extremist or "enthusiast" on behalf of some party, system, or opinion. Enthusiasm is a "habit of mind" confined to no one time,

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Bullitt, p. 70.

place or person. The "ancients" were afflicted with their own peculiar species of "moderns" just as posterity will undoubtedly be afflicted with its particular species of "moderns." The chief characteristic of the "modern" in all ages is the "analogical habit of mind" which impels the individual to consider his world and his experience exclusively in terms of some subjective system to which actions and knowledge must conform. The self-interest of the "modern" dictates his attempts to convert the opinions of others into conformity with his particular system. Zeal, pride, avarice, and ambition initiate and sustain the foolish aspirations of the proselytizer to manipulate the thinking of his contemporaries until their reasoning becomes analogous to his. The misuse of words, of classical wisdom, of reason, and of the facts of human experience is a consequence of the perversion of all of these to the purposes of exhortation by means of which the fanatic "modern" manipulates opinion.

Swift's intense awareness of the human tendency to abuse reason for selfish purposes leads to an attitude often termed anti-intellectual or anti-rational. " . . . There is in his doctrine, furthermore, a large admixture of what may be called anti-rationalism--the insistence, that is, upon man's fundamental irrationality."¹ The evidence offered by the "quasi-historical" sections of A Tale of a Tub appears to support the contention that Swift's "anti-rationalism" led him to adopt a "negative philosophy of history" which repudiated any postulation of man's perfectibility through the use of his reason alone.

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Ricardo Quintana, The Mind and Art of Jonathan Swift (London, 1953), p. 51.

Similarly, Swift apparently repudiates the stoic or Neo-stoic doctrine of morality based upon a life of unimpassioned reason. Such a life is irrelevant to man simply because it is inconsistent with man's nature as a mixture of the reason and the passions. Man's reason is fallible and his passions are powerful, and in the predicament occasioned by the demands of both passion and reason, Swift recognizes man's need for some form of moral and spiritual guidance. This type of guidance is available in revealed religion, the orthodox doctrine of Christianity. Attempts to impose additional systems of moral and spiritual guidance based upon reason are redundant, distracting and futile.

But even the precepts of Christianity may be perverted and degraded by lust, ambition, ignorance, superficiality and pride. The brothers of the allegory in A Tale of a Tub succumb to the demands of fashionable new systems of ritual and doctrine. The damage to the original theological system of primitive Christianity is irreparable. Martin, the Anglican, is faced with a choice between the Calvinist's passionate, and therefore irrational, repudiation of orthodox tradition in its entirety, and the Roman Catholic's equally passionate retention of all the traditional accretions. Martin chooses to compromise. He retains only those accretions necessary to sustain the traditional authority of the church and avoids both Peter's decadence and Jack's dissipation.

Martin's choice of the way of compromise is dictated by

considerations of the human need for moral and religious precepts supported by an institutional authority that commands respect for the principles upon which it is based. He gently admonishes the Calvinist for his violence and mildly proclaims a doctrine of tolerance based upon Christian charity and benevolence. Martin rejects the zeal and fanatic austerity of the Puritan while he simultaneously repudiates the "papist's" predatory ambitions to religious and secular supremacy.

The institutional criterion in religion, as it is expressed in the character of Martin, is remarkably similar to the social-political-philosophical criterion represented by Lord Sommers, to whom the Tale is dedicated by the "bookseller."

I expected, indeed, to have heard of your
 Lordship's Bravery, at the Head of an Army;
 Of your undaunted Courage, in mounting a
 Breach, or scaling a Wall; Or, to have had
 your Pedigree trac'd in a Lineal Descent
 from the House of Austria; Or, of your
 wonderful Talent at Dress and Dancing;
 Or, your Profound Knowledge in Algebra,
Metaphysicks, and the Oriental Tongues.
 But to ply the World with an old beaten
 Story of your Wit, and Eloquence, and
 Learning, and Wisdom, and Justice, and
 Politeness, and Candor, and Evenness of
 Temper in all Scenes of Life; Of that
 great Discernment in Discovering, and
 Readiness in Favouring deserving Men;
 with forty other common Topicks:
 I confess, I have neither Conscience,
 nor Countenance to do it.

(pp. 25-26).

The disparity between the novel, violent, singular, superficial, illusory,

and pedantic qualifications demanded by the dedicator and the meritorious qualifications universally ascribed to Lord Sommers renders ludicrous the demands of the one and exalts the merits of the other. Swift obviously assumes the reader's capacity to perceive the disparity and to pass judgment upon it.

The criterion of "literary taste" is offered in the same manner by the "author" in his "Digression Concerning Criticks." The original critics among the "ancients" were

. . . such Persons as invented or drew up Rules for themselves and the World, by observing which, a careful Reader might be able to pronounce upon the productions of the Learned, form his Taste to a true Relish of the Sublime and the Admirable, and divide every Beauty of Matter or of Style from the Corruption that Apes it: In their common perusal of Books, singling out the Errors and Defects, the Nauseous, the Fulsome, the Dull, and the Impertinent, with the Caution of a Man that walks thro' Edenborough Streets in a Morning, who is indeed as careful as he can, to watch diligently, and spy out the Filth in his Way, not that he is curious to observe the Colour and Complexion of the Ordure, or take its Dimensions, much less to be padling in, or tasting it: but only with a Design to come out as cleanly as he may.

(pp. 92-93).

The "modern" critic performs an entirely different function in the literary world of the Tale. The disparity between the "author's" definition of the ancient critic's concept of literary taste and the definition of modern literary taste, implied by his prurient analogy offers a comment upon both

the modern critics and the writers who pander to their arrogance.

Swift's criteria in A Tale of a Tub are deliberately few, for " . . . as Health is but one Thing, and has always been the same, whereas Diseases are by Thousands, besides new and daily Additions; So, all the Virtues that have ever been in Mankind, are to be counted upon a few Fingers, but his Follies and Vices are innumerable, and Time adds hourly to the Heap." (p. 50). Those critics who see in such sentiments only the desperate and intense pessimism so often attributed to Swift would do well to consider carefully the evidence that may be offered to corroborate an affirmation of Swift's fundamental optimism.

Swift repudiated theories of man's perfectibility through reason simply because they were unrealistic. The hope of perfection, if unrealized, frequently degenerates into disillusionment at the human failure to conform to unattainable and idealistic expectations. Swift had few illusions concerning the human capacity for leading a virtuous life. But he did have certain standards derived from observation of the individuals he admired and respected. Men could reasonably be expected to reach certain stages of moral and spiritual maturity, if provided with the opportunities to do so. But the instruments of delusion, the mountebanks, offered obstacles to the individual's progress toward maturity. The unthinking acceptance of prevalent values and opinions precluded subsequent moral and spiritual development, and the individual signified the cessation of his progress by

his adherence to the superficial doctrines of sartorism. Conversely, fanatic enthusiasm distorted the judgment, and the cessation of progress was signified by the individual's militant zeal. Coercion in political or religious matters was the instrument of the highwayman, who hindered the individual's progress toward political or religious maturity by inspiring him with a fear of the personal consequences of constructive action. A variety of religious institutions distracted the individual with perplexing doubts and questionings. The only solution to the problems presented by social instability, political faction, and literary competition for the attention of men was a re-affirmation of moral, religious, political, social and philosophical values sanctioned by Christian and humanistic traditions. Swift's satires bring into juxtaposition with these traditional values, the values to which the "moderns" subscribe. In the subsequent process of contrast and comparison, Swift puts his opponents as much in the wrong as possible.

Swift most frequently allows his opponents to condemn themselves by their own arguments, suitably distorted for the purpose by the persona, or "mask," established by Swift as the representative of a particular system or attitude in a dramatic situation. The dramatic situation in A Tale of a Tub consists of the conflict between the wits and the institutions of church and state. The Tale has been commissioned by the officials of church and state to provide diversion for the wits, pending the formulation and

application of more effective methods to ensure a more complete and permanent solution to the problem of political and religious instability in the commonwealth.

As the Tale develops, the reader becomes aware of the attitudes of the "author", of the attitudes of his opponents, and of the reader's own attitude toward analogous circumstances in the real world. The "author's" persistent muddling of the material and the spiritual is a form of quackery familiar to the inhabitants of both worlds. The Aeolist's pretensions to "inspiration" are similarly familiar to the historian and the observer of both worlds. The superficiality of the sartorist and the "author's" delusion of felicity are the consequences, in both the Tubbian and the real world, of an apathetic acceptance of doctrines that are agreeable, fashionable, facile, and expedient. The reader becomes increasingly cognizant of the existence and methods in his own world of the mountebank, the highwayman, and the zealot.

As a consequence of his new and clarified perception of the significance of events and attitudes in his own world, the reader perceives in the various proselytizers clamouring for his attention, the various symptoms of the mechanical operation of the spirit. Rigidity of opinion, inflexibility of thought processes, speculation bred of a diseased imagination, vanity, credulity, arrogance, avarice, and all the other indications of the government of the reason by the passions that constitutes the mechanical operation

of the spirit become recognizable and repugnant. The reader detects in his own attitudes and actions those of the ready proselyte. He recognizes in his fear of political reprisal, the instinctive and mechanical operation of the spirit of expediency in the interests of physical and mental ease. Similarly, the reader becomes aware of those foolish aspirations which impel him to seek public approval, wealth, tranquillity of mind, sensual gratification or some other illusory advantage claimed by the mountebank on behalf of a particular opinion, system, party, or sect. The new insight into the rigid processes of the mountebank's spirit which culminate in the charlatan's infatuation with his own "nostrum" and zeal for its rapid propagation, is accompanied by the reader's new insight into the rigidity of his own mental processes which would previously have culminated in his own infatuation with the proffered "nostrum."

Man's new awareness of his own limitations is sufficient justification for a subsequent distrust of the rational abstractions proclaimed as "universal truths" by zealous philosophers and scientific speculators. The affirmation of human dignity by virtue of human reason is suspect. Extremes of rationalism and extremes of superstitious ignorance are the consequences of identical habits of thought. Elimination of spiritual elements from the universe of the scientist is a logical extension of the philosophy of material mechanism. The Rosicrucian confusion of material and spiritual processes is similarly a logical extension of the philosophy of

material mechanism. The Roman Catholic insistence upon the validity of transsubstantiation and the efficacy of material substances in the invocation of divine assistance has its foundation in the assumptions shared by the Rosicrucian and the Calvinist. Fanatics, fops, virtuosi, and hack writers are both victims of, and advocates for the mechanical operation of the spirit by which they are united in a community of identity.

The participants and propagators concerned with the turbulent controversies of the age represent the divergent extremes to which the same mental process operating upon identical basic assumptions may lead. The factor which determines the ultimate nature of the particular extreme is the bias or prejudice of the speculator. The reader's recognition that extremes of faction are merely extremes of opinion, without any reference to the validity or rationality of the basic assumption or of the process of reasoning, compels him to reject the controversy.

A Tale of a Tub is an instruction manual in the arts of controversy, and is itself the agent of faction. Consequently, the "author's" assertion that he is trying the modern experiment of "writing upon nothing" is literally true. Extremes of faction engage in disputes which consist only of the constant repetition in new and singular forms of arguments in justification of opinions. The arguments are "nothing" simply because they are only words employed to support opinions unconformable to the facts of experience.

The reader's apprehension of the fundamental irrationality of faction and his perception of the abuses of reason occasioned by the mechanical operation of the spirit prompt him to reject the arguments of the "author," in whose preoccupation with the bigotry of form and in whose obsession with prurient imagery the reader recognizes the manifestations of the mechanical operation of the spirit. The "author's" admission of his own madness hardly comes as a surprise, but rather as confirmation of an already strong suspicion. Once the "author" has confirmed his insanity, there is really no point in reading the remainder of the Tale. He has said all there is to say about himself and about the world he has created. The final sections of the Tale are merely concessions to the modern literary form, which is literally "form without content," a particular species of madness.

But the reader still must deal with his own world, and with the various inhabitants of that world who insist upon dabbling in the ordure of mechanical materialism, literary speculation, religious fanaticism, and political faction. He may return to the state of felicity recommended by the "author" of the Tale as the "perpetual possession of being well deceived," or he may attempt to retrieve and apply in action those values suggested by Swift's criteria. The sartorist definition of felicity has already been disgraced, so there is really no alternative.

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