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The Sense of the Dialectical in Lionel Trilling's Criticism.

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THE SENSE OF THE DIALECTICAL IN LIONEL TRILLING'S CRITICISM

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
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in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of English

by

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December, 1977

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There must be beginnings and there must be endings, Trilling remarks at the ending of Sincerity and Authenticity. And as far as my relation goes to my dissertation director, Professor Donald E. Stanford, the beginning as well as the ending makes for a long and pleasant memory. Professor Stanford taught me my first course in graduate school, and he directed this dissertation. I will always remember him as a brilliant teacher, fired with an extraordinary love of literature, and motivated by a steadfast commitment to his profession. During the writing of this dissertation, he has been kind, considerate, and helpful in a manner that goes beyond expectation.

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ABSTRACT

The criticism of Lionel Trilling is complex in ideas and in argument, and it has yet to be studied in the context of a total vision. His extraordinary accomplishments both as a critic and as a prose stylist will doubtless require years of scholarly work.

It is hoped that this dissertation will constitute one small step in the direction which scholars will have to move, if they are to appreciate the genius of Trilling. The scope of this dissertation, in matters relating to what Trilling has written, has been limited to three prefaces which he wrote to his major critical books, The Liberal Imagination, The Opposing Self, and Beyond Culture, and to one single lecture, Mind in the Modern World, which he delivered in the last years of his life. The intention of this dissertation has also been limited to formulating, out of these three prefaces, four notions which Trilling holds to and which constitute his critical methodology.

A careful reading of these prefaces provides the following "givens" which make up Trilling's critical methodology. First of all, Trilling is a dialectical thinker. Reality for him resides not in the hard material substances of the world, nor in the shadowy subjectivity of the self. Yet both the world and the self are elements of reality; and when they are perceived in unity as dialectic, they can be spoken of as constituting the whole of reality, at least for man.

Secondly, the dialectic, which makes up moral, intellectual, and aesthetic reality, is achieved only through the imagination. The
imagination for Trilling is a constant and necessary perception of
the world as a unity of instinct and reason, of shadow and substance,
of self and world.

Thirdly, Trilling understands culture to be a dialectical process;
and in the romantic tradition of the nineteenth century, he finds the
most complete expression of what constitutes the self and what con­
stitutes culture. It is the self as the imagination which produces
art, science, religion, and philosophy; and as these accomplishments
flow from the imagination, they must bear the imprint of its dialectical
powers.

Fourthly, Trilling valuates ideology as the greatest perversion of
human knowledge. Should art, religion, and philosophy become devoid of
dialectic, should they become formalized as the final human truths,
they are no longer to be regarded as genuine cultural forms. They become
what Trilling calls "ideology" because they no longer contain the crea­
tivity and energy of dialectic which flows from the human imagination.
As static forms they are identified with the residues of human thought,
such things as habit and reflex which have nothing to do with dialectic.

These four formulations, it can be argued, provide a stance for
approaching any of Trilling's critical essays. To support this point,
the last chapter of this dissertation is devoted to a careful reading
of Trilling's Mind in the Modern World in the context of Trilling's
notions of the dialectical, of the imagination, of culture and of
ideology.
INTRODUCTION

The canon of Lionel Trilling is long, comprehensive, and impressive. It includes critical biography, fiction, textbooks, and criticism. The area of his work which is best known has to do with his criticism, and this includes such works as The Liberal Imagination, The Opposing Self, Beyond Culture, Sincerity and Authenticity, and Mind in the Modern World.

A cursory familiarity with any one of these books makes it evident how difficult it is to read Trilling—difficult, that is to say, in the sense that Trilling's mind is of the highest intellectual order and that everything he writes reflects a "density of thought." He is able to take ideas from historians, philosophers, anthropologists, and social scientists and embed them in his work with effortless skill. As he uses these ideas to illuminate literature, he accomplishes this without damaging the subtlety, profundity, and validity of the ideas. Moreover, Trilling is one of the last of the grand stylists. He is not intimidated by the pragmatic and egalitarian spirit of the world, and so his prose is inspired by a love of the English sentence as it was developed by Hawthorne and James. His use of the periodic sentence is accomplished with a brilliance and precision which puts to shame most critical writers of modern times.
Hence Trilling shuns the simple and the practical in pursuit of what he calls "intellectual honor." This means that as a man of letters, he seeks to find out the best of what has been written and thought, no matter how much difficulty may attend that quest. He pursues that ideal relentlessly, but with acumen, skill, and complexity which run counter to the spirit of modern civilization. And in so doing, he creates essays that are best compared to labyrinthine fugues of thought, complex, beautiful, profound, and always achieving an ultimate unity. The complex character of Trilling's thought and the consummate achievement of his style can be formidable problems for the person who wishes to write about Trilling's vision of art. The essays of Lionel Trilling do not yield easily to summary, and his critical judgments are contained in carefully developed patterns of example, qualification, paradox, and irony, and this of course makes them difficult to represent.

The limits of these difficulties aside, one can nevertheless isolate certain givens of Trilling's vision by examining the prefaces of The Liberal Imagination, The Opposing Self, and Beyond Culture. From the prefaces two important aspects of Trilling's work can be discovered: first, that his criticism is inspired by a notion of the imagination as the chief dialectical faculty of the human mind. Through this faculty, Trilling suggests, man can achieve a valuable and cogent perception of reality and of culture. The second aspect of his work, which can be uncovered in these prefaces, is that Trilling believes in the unity of the self, an ideal which originates among the Greeks and which continues to be
admired throughout the history of Western civilization. And it is for this reason that Trilling allies himself with the romantic school of poetry and criticism. He understands and approves of the chief aims of the romantic poets who sought unity of perception through the dialectic of the imagination.

But Trilling's allegiance to romanticism is not blind, and whenever romanticism moves away from the dialectic of the imagination, Trilling makes certain strictures about it; this, perhaps, is the single value of the preface of Beyond Culture, in which Trilling argues that the adversary culture of the twentieth century has grown decadent and lost the originating sense of dialectic which it inherited from the romanticism of the nineteenth century.

A careful reading of these prefaces will establish the fundamental givens of Trilling's thought, and once they are established and accepted as central categories of thought in Trilling's aesthetic and philosophical vision, much will be gained by way of a stance through which Trilling's criticism can be approached.

For instance, no single piece of criticism in Trilling's canon has evoked such controversy as Mind in the Modern World. It is a bewilderingly brilliant essay, as complex and profound as anything that has ever been written in American criticism. And yet, given Trilling's valuation of mind as dialectic along with his esteem for nineteenth century romanticism, one can find in the essay an ease and grace which is inspired by the unity of these two central ideas.
The purpose of this dissertation is therefore rooted in a desire to establish a methodology for reading Trilling's criticism. A careful reading of his prefaces, it is hoped, will provide the central ideas so necessary for a more profound understanding of Trilling's critical essays. To establish the validity and the cogency of these ideas as they can be gleaned from the prefaces, one of the chapters of this dissertation will contain an exegetical reading of *Mind in the Modern World* in light of the dialectical notion of mind.
CHAPTER I

THE SENSE OF THE DIALECTICAL

The canon of Lionel Trilling's work is long, comprehensive, and impressive. It includes critical biography, fiction, textbooks, and criticism. The area of his which is best known is, of course, his criticism, and this includes such work as *The Liberal Imagination*, *The Opposing Self*, *Beyond Culture*, *Sincerity and Authenticity*, and *Mind in the Modern World.*

A cursory familiarity with any of these works makes it evident that it is difficult to read Trilling—difficult in the sense that the work of Wallace Stevens, or George Santayana, or Sigmund Freud can be spoken of as difficult. In other words, the quality of Trilling's mind reflects the highest kind of intellectual accomplishment, and one finds in his work the most challenging quality of intellectual complexity. Everything which Trilling writes has the texture of a "density of thought." He is able to take ideas from historians, philosophers, anthropologists, and social scientists and to incorporate them in his writing with grace and seemingly effortless skill. Such ideas he uses to illuminate literature, and he accomplishes this without damaging either subtlety, profundity, and validity of the ideas or the literature to which he applies them. Moreover, Trilling is one of the last of the grand stylists. He remains aloof from the pragmatic and egalitarian spirit of the
world, which demands that prose always be simple and without ambiguity. Trilling is an accomplished prose stylist, and he loves the English sentence as it was developed by Hawthorne and James. His use of loose and periodic sentences is executed with a brilliance and precision which puts to shame most of the critical writers of the modern period.

Trilling's disdain for the simple and the practical is an aspect of what can be called "intellectual honor." As a man of letters, inspired to a great degree by the ideal of criticism put forth by Matthew Arnold, he seeks to find the best of what has been written and thought, no matter how difficult such a quest might be. He knows that this is an ideal, and like all ideas its realization is always conditioned by the frailty of intellectual effort. Yet Trilling pursues this aim with acumen and patience. And it is this very steadfastness, together with an accomplished prose style and a brilliant scholarship, which make his writings profound, rich, and labyrinthine.

These virtues, however, become obstacles for the person who wishes to say something fundamental about the criticism of Lionel Trilling. For one thing, the critical judgments which Trilling makes are subtly and obliquely presented only after a carefully and meticulously developed dialectical argument is established in his essay by way of examples, qualifications, speculations, and implications, often of a paradoxical or ironic character. Such complexity and dialectic one is always hesitant to generalize about, perhaps in fear that the brilliance of Trilling's intellectual stance will be distorted or misrepresented.
The limits of these difficulties and fears aside, there still must be formulated the certain givens or fundamentals of Trilling's critical methodology, and perhaps they are provided by Trilling himself. They are to be found in a remarkable essay entitled "Reality in America." This study, actually the first essay comprising his book The Liberal Imagination, deals with such metaphysical issues as reality and human perception. In the first section of this piece, Trilling discusses V. L. Parrington and his Main Currents in American Thought, which was once a critical history of great influence in American criticism. Trilling criticizes Parrington for having an epistemology which is simplistic. For Parrington, Trilling points out, there is a thing called "reality" which is "one," "immutable," and "irreducible," and between reality and human perception there can exist a happy and simple harmony, if, and only if, the human intellect receives such reality as an optic lens receives light, allowing it to pass through without an essential distortion or modification. Whatever disharmony exists then between reality and human perception must therefore be seen as originating in the perceiver and not "reality." Reality, for Parrington, is "always reliable, always the same, always easily to be known." So undialectical a notion of reality, Trilling rejects as a crude, materialistic monism. And whatever censures Trilling makes of Parrington are evoked by these metaphysical conceptions of reality which Trilling understands as simplistic and deterministic and incomplete. The specific weakness of Parrington's history and criticism is found in his notions of
the imagination, and of culture, and of the romantics, and Trilling makes many cogent strictures about these concepts as Parringtonformulates them. But, as far as the purposes of this dissertation go, such strictures are valuable for what they say about Trilling. In other words, the criticism which Trilling writes of Parrington reaches out beyond mere negation. As such his strictures are taken here to be affirmations of what Trilling holds about the imagination, and culture and the romantics.

One of the serious weaknesses of Parrington as a historian and as a critic is that he suffers from a lack of the sense of the dialectical. Parrington, for instance, understands culture to be a "confluence" or a "current," and, in this sense, his notion of culture is found by Trilling to be narrow and deterministic. Such a conception diminishes the significance of human intentionality in the dynamic of culture. And Trilling, in opposition to Parrington's definition, sees culture as "struggle" and "dialectic" wherein the human personality is intimately involved with societal forms and ideas. For Trilling, then, culture is "dialectic." This is a rather formal way of saying that the values of culture which exist in art, in religion, in science, and in society are achieved not through the simple registration of objects or circumstance upon the human mind. Knowledge for Trilling always bears the imprint of the self because it is a mediatory act between the self and the conditions which surround the self. Such mediation always has in it contradiction, irony, and opposition, because, between the self and the world, there is always imaginative tension.
Trilling sees Parrington's notion of the imagination as shallow and erroneous because he fails to see the sense of the dialectical as much in art as he does in culture. Parrington's attitude toward Hawthorne illustrates this point. Hawthorne, he complains, was an artist whose imagination was filled with "shadows and not the world of reality." For this reason Parrington judges Hawthorne harshly, as one who removed himself from the concrete issues of "Yankee reality," the substantial world of Samuel Sewall. Trilling praises Hawthorne for the very reason that Parrington devalues his art. "The fact is," writes Trilling, "that Hawthorne was dealing beautifully with realities, with substantial things." For Trilling, Hawthorne rejects the world of simple concrete issues and goes beyond them for the complex moral truth of the human heart. Reality is more than matter; it is the self also in its moral and aesthetic concerns. "The man," Trilling says in defense of Hawthorne and the kind of imagination he represented, "who could raise those brilliant and serious doubts about the nature and possibility of moral perfection, the man who could keep aloof the 'Yankee reality' and who could dissent from the orthodoxies of dissent and tell us so much about the nature of moral zeal, is of course dealing exactly with reality." Trilling, then, understands the imagination of Hawthorne to be of paradigmatic significance, because the power of his art resides in his sense of shadows and of matter, of the contradictory, of the dialectical. And for Trilling, the imagination is the highest cognitive power, the central mode of integrating the self, of unifying oppositions, and of creating new possibilities out of what seems absolutely causally determined.
Moreover, the life of a culture has its primal source in the artist whose imagination is constantly engendering the dialectic of vision. Culture cannot maintain its dialectic on its own. Should it lose sense of the dialectic, should it be truncated from the individuality of the selves which constitute it, it becomes a cultural form identified by Trilling as the ideological. Only the imagination, as it is actuated into a dialectical energy, can resist the narrow and constricting stasis of ideology. About this point, Trilling is quite definite, and he explains what his notion of what the artist is, against Parrington's shallow interpretation of Hawthorne’s imagination:

And in any culture there are likely to be certain artists who contain a large part of the dialectic within themselves, their meaning and power lying in their contradictions; they contain within themselves, it may be said, the very essence of the culture, and the sign of this is that they do not submit to serve the ends of any one ideological group or tendency.®

The real failing of Parrington, the causal center of his misconception of culture and of the imagination, is located in his superficial understanding of romanticism. Parrington does not understand that romanticism is "full of complicated but not wholly pointless ideas, that it involves many contrary but definable things."9 Romanticism for Parrington has to do with romance, which for him is equated with a refusal to face the hard facts of reality. What he fails to see is the dialectical sense of life which is the essential core of romanticism, the ability to perceive and tolerate and even mediate opposition and contradictions. Trilling defends romanticism as a powerful moral and intellectual tradition inspiring the great art of the nineteenth
century, and he sees in that art what Parrington obviously chose not to see: that life, culture, and the self advance, not through simple determined paths, but in the thickets of contradiction and dialectic. Trilling then recognizes, as Parrington did not, the powerful tradition and influence which constitutes romanticism, particularly American romanticism:

It is a significant circumstance of American culture, and one which is susceptible of explanation, that an unusually large proportion of its notable writers of the nineteenth century were such repositories of the dialectic of their times—they contained both the yes and the no of their culture, and by that token they were prophetic of the future.¹⁰

In the dialectical symbolism of a romantic art—as it then can be found in the writings of such authors as Hawthorne, Melville, and Henry Adams—one comes closer to the moral and historical actuality of the twentieth century than Parrington ever did, despite his rigid adherence to a hard, materialistic formulation of reality.

There are then three generalizations which can be formulated out of Trilling's criticisms with a reasonable measure of certitude: the notion that culture is a dialectical process; the concept of the imagination as a faculty of knowledge which unifies, in dialectic, the opposites and the contradictions of experience into a mediatory unity; and the recognition of the romantic achievement as something more than a period of great artistic achievement, as a period in the history of human thought when the poets, novelists, and philosophers began to perceive reality and the self as dialectic, rather than the actualization of received tradition by the self.
In the prefaces of three of Trilling's most well known works, *The Liberal Imagination*, *The Opposing Self* and *Beyond Culture*, these generalizations are elaborated upon in detail and explained as critical principles in which there is validity and cogency. For this reason, Chapters II, III, and IV of this dissertation are devoted to a careful reading and analysis of the prefaces. Chapter II is concerned with the preface of *The Liberal Imagination*; Chapter III takes up the matter of the preface to *The Opposing Self*; Chapter IV is an elucidation of the complex judgments and attitudes which Trilling makes on the preface to *Beyond Culture*. Chapter V is an exegesis of Trilling's *Mind in the Modern World*. Such an exegesis is made with heavy emphasis upon these three generalizations which are taken here to comprise Trilling's critical methodology: the notion of culture as dialectic; the concept of mind as a dialectical process; and the romantic tradition which Trilling admires for its primal and originating intention—an intention of unifying human perception and human personality by keeping it free of the ideology of either a static rationalism or a protean irrationalism.
NOTES

CHAPTER I


4 Ibid., pp. 4-10.

5 Ibid., p. 9.

6 Ibid., pp. 7-9.

7 Ibid., p. 9.

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid., p. 6.

10 Ibid., 9.
CHAPTER II
TRILLING'S CONCEPTION OF THE IMAGINATION

The preface to The Liberal Imagination is a brief yet provocative exposition of the imagination. As with much of what Trilling writes, it is difficult reading, and although it is Trilling's purpose to define his conception of the imagination, he does not actually formulate a definition until the very last paragraphs of the piece. And for this reason, one must read through the entire preface and seek out this conclusion in order to know that the entire effort of the short study is devoted to the imagination.

The development of the preface consists of a series of reflections upon circumstances, subjects, and themes, which because of the brevity of the exposition appear disparate and discontinuous. But when the preface is recollected around the conception of the imagination, which Trilling formulates in the concluding paragraphs, the various considerations, such as the political situation emergent during the years 1940-1949, the political recommendations of John Stuart Mill and the famous crisis of his early life, and the genetic relationship between feeling and thought, fall into place and achieve a marvelous unity.

Turning away from the preface for a moment, and looking at the essays which comprise the main contents of The Liberal Imagination, one finds a distinction which Trilling makes between ideology and ideas. Such a distinction is of invaluable assistance in following Trilling's thoughts as he writes of the evolution of the imagination.
in the nineteenth century, and as he persuades his readers of its continued relevance in modern times. Ideas for Trilling are "living things, inescapably connected with out wills and desires, . . . susceptible of growth . . . showing their life by their tendency to change." On the other hand, ideology "is not the product of thought; it is the habit or the ritual of showing respect for certain formulas to which, for various reasons having to do with emotional safety, we have very strong ties of whose meaning and consequences in actuality we have no clear understanding."^2

In the beginning of the preface of the *Liberal Imagination*, Trilling expresses concern about the ascendancy of liberalism in America during World War II and the years which followed it. Himself a liberal, Trilling yet regrets that "at this time liberalism is not only the dominant but even the sole intellectual tradition."^3 He is apprehensive about the fate of the conservative tradition, which, if it can be said to exist at all, defines itself not through ideas, "but only in action or in irritable mental gestures which seek to resemble ideas."^4

The imminent evil which is contained in such a circumstance has to do with the absence of opposition, a conservative opposition, which Trilling fears that in becoming devoid of intellectual energy does not merely leave liberalism unchallenged, but places before it the temptation to become apathetic and self-complacent. Trilling suggests that the triumph of liberalism may bring its decline, from a political vision of thought, feeling, and energy into another ideology.
As it turns out, Trilling sees tragic consequences for either liberalism or conservatism, in the absence of a dialectic between them. A conservatism, which does not derive its powers from ideas, suffers a terrible retrogression, because, once a movement despairs of ideas, it falls back upon more primitive modes of expression, such as force, "which it masks in ideology." Moreover, a liberalism which has no opponent will find its ideas becoming "state, habitual, and inert," and, of course, as these are the qualities of ideology, one concludes that Trilling sees liberalism as suffering a devolution as tragic as conservatism. Trilling is therefore fearful of ideology; for him it is the worst kind of cultural pathology because ideology is a response through which men seek to escape the dialectic and conditioned character of human experience.

No one, according to Trilling, understood better what the loss of an opposition of high intelligence could mean for a political party than John Stuart Mill. Indeed, Mill once prayed, in the manner of a serious jest, that his political partisans always be graced with enemies of powerful intelligence: "Lord, enlighten thou our enemies . . .; sharpen their wits, give acuteness to their perceptions and consecutiveness and clearness to their reasoning powers. We are in danger from their folly, not from their wisdom: their weakness is what fills us with apprehension, not their strength."7

The chief evil attendant upon a liberalism which is without opposition is its final metamorphosis from a vision of ideas into an ideology. And that is why, Trilling continues, Mill advised...
liberal partisans to read Coleridge, the archconservative of the nineteenth century, and "to become familiar with his powerful conservative mind." The quality of Coleridge's mind was marked by such subtlety and profundity that it could engender a pressing intellectual dialectic and hence counteract against the lethargy and over-confidence which frequently accompanies political and intellectual ascendency.

In the advice which Mill gives to the adherents of his political philosophy, Trilling finds a validity which was good not only in a particular political construct of the nineteenth century but which is also equally valid for modern times. A devil's advocate, such as Coleridge, is hard to come by, and Trilling understands this, but in want of such an opponent, Trilling suggests that if there is no respectable devil's party, then it falls upon one to create his own demon. Trilling emphasizes the importance of dialectic, whether it be from external opposition or from a scrutiny achieved within, because only through a constant examination and criticism of ideas can one resist the staleness, the inertia, and the habit of ideology.

Generally it is a romantic paradigm of mind which Trilling holds to. All thought originates in feeling. In other words, there is a continuum between thought and feeling. Hence Trilling writes, "Goethe says somewhere that there is no such thing as a liberal idea, that there are only liberal sentiments," and he makes it apparent that he agrees with Goethe's statement by following it with a succinct affirmation: "This is true." Yet
Trilling does not believe that feelings are the sole measure of truth, or that they cannot mislead men as much as intellect. Indeed the difficulty is that feeling can become part of ideology as much as ideas because as Trilling points out "certain sentiments consort only with certain ideas and not with others." Moreover sentiments are susceptible to the unconscious processes of mind: "What is more," Trilling says, "sentiments become ideas by a natural and imperceptible process." While this may be a "natural thing," it makes for a reciprocal complexity in human cognition, and Wordsworth understood this profoundly, Trilling suggests, when the poet wrote "'Our continued influxes of feeling are modified and directed by thoughts, which are indeed representatives of our past feeling.'" Culture, also originates in feeling: "And Charles Peguy said, 'Tout commence en mystique et finit en politique'—everything begins in sentiment and assumption and finds its issue in political action and institutions." This is a judgement with which Trilling is also in accord, but again he qualifies it: "The converse is also true: just as sentiments become ideas, ideas eventually establish themselves as sentiments." And so what Trilling emphasizes here is that in culture, as in the mental life of the individual, there is a tendency for feelings to be subsumed into ideology.

The whole issue raised in the paragraph approximates the ambiguous relationship of the self to ideas and to culture, and like Matthew Arnold, Trilling believes feeling to be the primal energy of the self which makes for freedom and creativity. But the great difficulty comes in discriminating between what these
Primal and creative energies of the self are and in deciding to what extent they are validly represented by culture and ideas in general. In *Sincerity and Authenticity*, Trilling quotes Arnold's poem, which is a brilliant rendering of the contradiction attendant upon feeling and thought:

Below the surface—stream, shallow and light,
Of what we say we feel—below the stream,
As light, of what we think we feel—there flows
With noiseless current strong, obscure and deep,
The central stream of what we feel indeed.16

Recognition of the complex dynamic between feeling and ideas, between feeling and culture has, for Trilling, greatest significance for art and politics: "if between sentiments and ideas there is a natural connection so close as to amount to a kind of identity, then the connection between literature and politics will be seen as a very immediate one."17 To grasp this intimate relationship between the two, one must accept not the narrow "but the wide sense of the word politics."18 The politics of today, essentially free of the more exclusive loyalties such as church and nation, is essentially "the politics of culture."19 Such politics Trilling defines as "the organization of human life toward some end or other, toward the modification of sentiments, which is to say the quality of human life."20 In making this point, Trilling reformulates the word "liberal," which he tells his readers "defines itself by the quality of life it envisages, by the sentiments it desires to affirm."21 Hence it is evident, that, at this point in the preface, what Trilling means by the liberal imagination is something which goes beyond particular political interests, at least in the sense of
having to do with a specific liberal tradition or party. For this reason Trilling argues that a writer of literary criticism must involve "himself with political considerations." Trilling corrects the impression that some may have that The Liberal Imagination is a collection of political essays. "These are not political essays," he tells his readers, "they are essays in literary criticism. But they assume the inevitable intimate, if not always obvious, connection between literature and politics." To take literature as a sister discipline of politics requires, Trilling continues, "no great ingenuity, nor any extravagant manipulation of the word literature," other than "beyond taking it in the large sense specified, of the word politics." There are other reasons for doing so: the careful eye with which "certain governments" hold over the matter of literature and the censorious measures which they take, if it is not consonant with their political vision, is commonplace knowledge in modern Western experience. Also those of the "New Criticism" who insist upon the autonomy of art and would resist the political interests of literary criticism, Trilling continues in advancing his argument, ignore that the writers of the last hundred and fifty years "have in one way or another turned their passions, their adverse, critical, and very intense passions, upon the condition of the polity." And ironically, in so doing, they have explored the nature of selfhood in a manner relating to the culture of politics that does "not controvert but rather support the statement about the essential commitment to politics."
In discussing these matters, such as the distinction between ideology and ideas, the necessity of dialectic in the cultural and political life of man, the complex dynamic between thought and feeling, and the natural identity between literature and politics, Trilling seems to have taken his readers far afield. But in the concluding pages of the brief preface, he turns again to Mill, whose life and work is symbolic and illuminative of the various paradoxes of culture and politics. From his earliest days Mill was brought up in a political tradition, actually a political ideology, which he was led to believe constituted his very identity. Suffering from an intense melancholic disorder, which almost brought him to suicide, Mill came to understand that his pathology was engendered by the "Liberal, Utilitarian principles of Bentham." What he learned about Utilitarianism was that, although it was founded upon generous and noble aims, it attributed too much efficacy to the intellect, which, from the point of view of Bentham, was the sole means of dealing with the world and of gaining happiness. For Trilling it is part of Mill's genius that he perceived that it was this political ideology which was crippling his emotional life and doing violence to his person:

From the famous "crisis" of his youth he had learned, although I believe he never put it in just this way, that liberalism stood in a paradoxical relation to the emotions. The paradox is that liberalism is concerned with the emotions above all else, as proof of which the word happiness stands at the very center of its thought, but in its effort to establish the emotions, or certain among them, in some sort of freedom, liberalism somehow tends to deny them in their full possibility. Dickens' *Hard Times* serves to remind us that the liberal principles upon which Mill was brought up, although extreme, were not isolated and unique, and
the principles of Mill's rearing very nearly destroyed him, as in fact they did destroy the Louisa Gradgrind of Dickens' novel. 28

The story of Mill's crisis, of how through a heroic effort of intellect and will, he regained possession of himself by reading Wordsworth and Coleridge is told by Mill himself in his autobiography. That crisis and its resolution has come to assume a classic significance for students of romantic literature. In reading Coleridge, who both as a philosopher and a poet, was opposed to the mechanical view, Mill gained more than "a private emotional advantage," 29 though that in itself was considerable since it helped him to accomplish what Louisa Gradgrind could not accomplish: the overcoming of suicidal impulses.

What Mill learned, in addition to returning to those primal sources of feeling from which he had been separated since childhood, was something about the very character of knowledge, something which he grasped as the power of Coleridge's politics and metaphysics, something which went beyond mere opposition. It was that Coleridge's metaphysics and politics "were a poet's" 30 and that being a poet's, they had a unity and comprehensiveness which bespoke "a sense of variousness and possibility." 31 As such the ideas of Coleridge contained something which Utilitarianism either lost or was actually not in possession of to begin with.

Hence Mill, in disenthraling himself from an ideology, learned something profound, not just about himself, but also about the insufficiencies of his intellectual life. He came to understand that any intellectual experience, like any political system, must
be comprehensive of variety, freedom, and possibility. Without such a basal and informing sense of perception, any ethical, political or metaphysical vision dwindles into a prosaic vision of life or becomes an ideology.

The profundity of Trilling's observations, as he finds them in Mill's life and makes of them a universal standard in conduct of mind, can be measured by the esteem which two of the greatest thinkers of the twentieth century have held for the poets. Sigmund Freud once proclaimed that it was not he, but the poets who had discovered the unconscious, and Martin Heidegger virtually shocked the philosophers by turning to the matter of the poets rather than creating what others expected he would offer the world, and that was, according to William Barrett, "a new system of metaphysics."

Contemporary liberalism, according to Trilling, has fallen to this tendency to become "prosaic." While it avowedly does not depreciate "emotion in the abstract," it moves toward a state in which "the conscious and unconscious life of liberalism are not always in accord." In the actualization of its vision, it falls into the pattern "of any other human entity," unconsciously limiting "its view of the world to what it can deal with." (For an interesting parallel between this observation and one which the distinguished psychoanalyst Eric H. Erickson has put forth in matters of religious and political ideology, see the accompanying footnote.) As a consequence it "unconsciously tends to develop theories and principles, particularly in relation to the nature of the human mind" that justify its limitations. Contemporary liberalism repeats what to Trilling is a "characteristic paradox" in any great
vision which springs from the "primal imagination" whereby exists and is established "the essence and existence" of imaginative vision. Trilling writes, "in the interest that is of its vision of a general enlargement and freedom and rational direction of human life—it drifts toward a denial of the imagination. And in the very interest of affirming its confidence in the power of mind, it inclines to constrict and make mechanical its conception of the nature of mind."

In refusing to become an Empedocles who is consumed by his own intellectual monism, and in recognizing the necessity of the imaginative life of Callicles, Mill, inspired by Coleridge, understood that every man should judiciously seek his own demon, if he is to achieve that comprehensive dialectical vision of life which emerges in the marriage of heaven and of hell. He achieves what Trilling would call "a sense of variousness and possibility" by understanding that emotion and imagination must be allowed to war with intellect:

Mill, to refer to him a last time, understood from his own experience that the imagination was properly the joint possession of the emotions and the intellect, that it was fed by the emotions, and that without it the intellect withers and dies, that without it the mind cannot work and cannot properly conceive itself. I do not know whether or not Mill had particularly in mind a sentence from the passage from Thomas Burnet's Archaeologiae Philosophicae which Coleridge quotes as the epigraph to The Ancient Mariner, the sentence in which Burnet says that a judicious belief in the existence of demons has the effect of keeping the mind from becoming "narrow, and lapsed entirely into mean thoughts," but he surely understood what Coleridge, wanted to enforce by that quaint sentence from
Burnet what is the general import of *The Ancient Mariner* apart from any more particular doctrine that exegesis may discover—that the world is a complex and unexpected and terrible place which is not always to be understood by the mind as we use it in our everyday tasks.46

Instincts and reason Mill came to understand as the constitutive element of the human psyche, and they are the elements which must be made to intermingle and be balanced by the dialectical powers of the imagination. And the imagination, so comprised, is the reconciling agency of mind which deals with the unpredictability of external circumstances, in other words, the world, and the vicissitudes of the instincts as they exist in each human personality. And the necessity of dialectic which Mill stumbled upon and which inspired him to appreciate the imagination as "the joint possession of emotions and the intellect," is also appreciated by Trilling as a valid means of approaching a world which is "complex, unexpected and terrible," a world which "is not to be understood by the mind as we use it in our everyday tasks."

In tracing so central a conception of what Trilling means by the imagination, it is perhaps inevitable that one should ask what influence Freud has had upon Trilling's conception of the imagination. While it would be rather unfair to say that Trilling is a Freudian critic, it would be accurate to say that the influence of Freud upon Trilling has been profound indeed. In one of the essays contained in *The Liberal Imagination*, Trilling writes: "The Freudian psychology is the only systematic account of the human mind which, in point of subtlety and complexity, of interest and tragic
power, deserves to stand beside the chaotic mass of psychological insights which literature has accumulated through the centuries.\textsuperscript{47} This is a strongly affirmative statement, and its relevance to the psychology of the imagination cannot be ignored.

Harold Bloom writes of the imagination and of Freud: "Imagination, as Vico understood and Freud did not, is the faculty of self-preservation, and so the proper use of Freud, for the literary critic, is not to apply Freud (or even revise Freud) as to arrive at an Oedipal interpretation of poetic history."\textsuperscript{48} Whatever the relation of the critic to Freud may be or should be, Trilling would disagree with Bloom insofar as he charges that Freud did not understand the imagination as "the faculty of self-preservation." Trilling would argue instead that Freud did not have at hand the aesthetic language to express this function of the imagination, but he understood the conception in an implicit way, much as Keats understood Freud's tripartite notion of mind.

In \textit{Freud and the Crisis of Culture}, Trilling writes of Keats:

"When he says truth is beauty, he is putting into words his enormously complex belief that the self can so develop that it may, in the intensity of art, or meditation, perceive even very painful facts with a kind of pleasure, for it is one of the striking things about Keats that he represents so boldly and accurately the development of the self, and that, when he speaks of pleasure, he may mean—to use language not his—sometimes the pleasure of the id, sometimes the pleasure of the ego, and sometimes the pleasure of the super-ego."\textsuperscript{49}

The converse, Trilling could be saying of Freud. That is, when Freud speaks of the ego as the mediating aspect of mind and when he equates the ego as the continuous dialectic achieved between
two powers of the mind—the id with its inexorable, instinctual energy and the superego constituted of the ideal and abstract notion of culture—he is articulating in different terms what Trilling and Mill define as the imagination: the union of instinct and reason, a dialectic achieved within, but not uninfluenced by the contingencies and the vicissitudes of life.

It is interesting and perhaps convenient for the purposes of this chapter that Keats should be mentioned. In the last essay of The Liberal Imagination, which is entitled "The Meaning of a Literary Idea," Trilling cites an excerpt of Keats from "Sleep and Poetry."

While it is an epigraph to the essay, it is no doubt intended to explain what Trilling means by the liberal imagination:

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. . . Though no great minist'ring reason sorts
Out the dark mysteries of human souls
To clear conceiving; yet there ever rolls
A vast idea before me, and I glean
Therefrom my liberty . . .
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That "clear conceiving" can be taken as the intellect, and the "dark mysteries of human souls" can be equated with the instincts, the feelings. The "vast idea" is the imagination, which "ever rolls" in dialectic strife and unity, which is ever changing and yet which is the means whereby the self is delivered from enslavement: enslavement to feeling, enslavement to abstractions and enslavement to self.
NOTES

CHAPTER II


2 Ibid., p. 286.

3 Ibid., p. ix.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid., p. x

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid.

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid., p. xi.

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid.

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid.

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid.


17 Trilling, The Liberal Imagination, p. xi.

18 Ibid.

19 Ibid.
20Ibid.
21Ibid.
22Ibid.
23Ibid., p. xii.
24Ibid.
25Ibid.
26Ibid.
27Ibid.
28Ibid., pp. xii-xiii.
29Ibid., p. xiii.
30Ibid.
31Ibid.
34Trilling, The Liberal Imagination, p. xiii.
35Ibid.
36Ibid.
37Ibid.
38Ibid.
40Trilling, The Liberal Imagination, p. xiii.
41Ibid.
42Ibid., p. xv.
43 Ibid., p. xii.
44 Ibid., pp. xiii-xiv.
46 Ibid., p. xiv.
47 Ibid., p. 34.
49 Trilling, Freud and the Crisis in Our Culture (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955), p. 25.
50 Trilling, The Liberal Imagination, p. 281.
CHAPTER III

THE PREFACE TO THE OPPOSING SELF: A HISTORICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL INTERPRETATION OF THE SELF AND OF CULTURE

The manner in which Lionel Trilling thinks and writes is one which does not yield easily to category or to source. The disposition of his mind is learned, analytic, synthetic, as the occasion may require, and these elements are embodied in his criticism in many ways. This manner of thinking and writing, if it can be appropriately spoken of as such, presents difficulties enough, as one seeks to describe his work, but there are even greater difficulties to be encountered, as one seeks to find a center in his thought, a stance, from which all of Trilling's criticism might be approached. One can speak of the classical humanism of T. S. Eliot or the psychological criticism of I. A. Richards, and have confidence that these terms are reasonably accurate approximations of their interests as critics. The case is somewhat different with Trilling for, while Trilling is committed to a specific paradigm of mind, his writings are free from any wish to affirm his philosophical or metaphysical commitments. Should he mention an idea of which he approves or to which he has given his approval, he does so with such spontaneity that unless the reader is motivated by an interest in Trilling's philosophical values, the idea will hardly be recognized as basic in Trilling's thought.
Yet, in spite of these difficulties, Trilling's work is dominated by an interest in the nature of the self, and this concern appears frequently enough in his writings to be considered the central motif of his thought. Once recognized as such, it becomes an invaluable touchstone for approaching his work. Trilling is fascinated with the self as personality, as will, and as consciousness, as it exists in its uniqueness, apart from society and the external world and yet in these very circumstances or conditions with which the self is always confronted.

In broadest philosophical terms Trilling makes a distinction between the self and the world. In the uniqueness of the self he finds a power that must of necessity make it separate from anything else, from, as one says, the world. And this distinction between the self and the world cannot but remind one of the same distinction which Emerson makes in some of his essays. In fact, Emerson's distinction between the self and the world can serve as a valuable analogue of Trilling's vision, provided, of course, that the differences as well as the likenesses which exist in such a comparison are borne in mind. In "Nature," Emerson writes of the self and of its relation to the world: "Philosophically considered, the universe is composed of Nature and the Soul. Strictly speaking, therefore, all that is separate from us, all which Philosophy distinguishes as the NOT ME, that is, both nature and art, all other men and my own body, must be ranked under this same, NATURE." And what Emerson attributes to the self is to be understood as autonomy, and an autonomy of the highest order.
Similarly, Trilling, in his essay on William Dean Howells, distinguishes the self from the world, if not in the same terms, yet certainly with the same intention: "Yet it is to be seen that those conditions to which we do respond are the ones which we ourselves make, or over which we have control, which is to say conditions as they are virtually spirit, as they deny the idea of the conditioned. Somewhere in our mental constitution is the demand for life as pure spirit."² The self for Trilling, as for Emerson, is to be considered in its unconditioned aspect, in its apartness from all that does not partake in unconditioned spirit. All which is other than the self, all which Emerson establishes as the "other" and enumerates as nature, art, men, and even the physical body, Trilling also accepts as phenomena to be distinguished from the self, though he does not denominate them as Emerson does with the term "Nature," but uses the more conventional metaphysical term, the "conditioned." In fact, here, the similitude between Emerson and Trilling is such in point of specificity that Trilling associates the body with conditioned being in much the same manner as Emerson: "Certainly the power of shaping is more intimately connected with what Plato calls the 'spirited' part of man, with the will, while observation may be thought of as springing from the merely 'vegetative' part."³

Emerson and Trilling are therefore alike in their distinction between the unconditioned character of the self and the conditioned being of the world. (Trilling's terms are here preferred to those of Emerson, because they have a certain validity and clarity as conventional philosophical terms, although Emerson's distinctions are to be
admired because he defines them in a manner which is both concrete and thorough.) But Emerson and Trilling differ in their conception of what constitutes the relationship between unconditioned being and conditioned being. For Emerson, the self and the world are ultimately one, separated from each other through accident and circumstance, and certainly not through essence. What is more, for Emerson, the self has an inward power of restoring unity between the self and the world.

The opposite is the case for Trilling. The self is separated from the world in an absolute and final way, though this is not necessarily a regrettable thing, since the self needs the conditioned character of the world to define itself, to give it an identity. In his essay on Howells, Trilling shows a certain admiration for Shelley as he moved toward a precise formulation of the relationship of the unconditioned spirit of the "plastic" self to the resistant world of conditioned spirit: "But the plastic stress of spirit is of the will in the sense that it strives against resistance, against the stubborness of what Shelley called the dull, dense world—it compels 'all new successions to the forms they wear.' But Shelley's description of the act of creation suggests that the plastic will cannot possibly exercise itself without the recalcitrance of stupid literal matter."^4

This struggle, then, of the self against matter, against the conditioned being of the universe is for Trilling, as it is not for Emerson, a natural and inevitable phenomenon, even though Trilling
describes it as "man's tragic fate." It is a struggle that is not to be despised or avoided as such because it is the struggle which establishes the identity of the self. The dialectic between the unconditioned being of the self and the conditioned being of the world is the surety of human experience, and to deny it is to pervert human experience. And one of Trilling's most intense apprehensions about the life of the mind is the contemporary impulse to deprive thought of its dialectical energies:

But when we yield to our contemporary impulse to enlarge all experience, to involve it as soon as possible in history, myth, and the oneness of spirit—an impulse with which, I ought to say, I have considerable sympathy—we are in danger of making experience merely typical, formal, and representative, and thus of losing one term of the dialectic that goes on between spirit and the conditioned, which is, I suppose, what we mean when we speak of man's tragic fate. We lose, that is to say, the actuality of the conditioned, the literality of matter, the peculiar authenticity and authority of the merely denotative. To lose this is to lose not a material fact but a spiritual one, for it is a fact of spirit that it must exist in a world which requires it to engage in so dispiriting an occupation as hunting for a house. The knowledge of antagonism between spirit and the conditioned—it is Donne's, it is Pascal's, it is Tolstoi's—may in literature be a cause of great delight because it is so rare and difficult; beside it the knowledge of pure spirit is comparatively easy.

Unlike Emerson, Trilling does not seek to reconcile the self with the world; for the unconditioned essence of the self is manifested, developed, and expressed in its dialectic with the conditioned. It is not of the essence of human experience to be resolved in unity; human experience for Trilling is the constant exchange between the conditioned and the unconditioned.
Thus, what is gained from this comparison of Trilling and Emerson is a specific sense of Trilling's metaphysical conception of the self in its relation to the world. Trilling, like Emerson, is committed to the autonomous character of the self. The self, for Trilling, is not to be delivered from its uniqueness; nor does it seek to make its unconditioned character consonant with the conditioned, which it is not. The ultimate value of the self for Trilling is its ultimate resistance to all which it is not; whereas, for Emerson the ultimate value of the self resides in its potency for unity with the universe.

The comparison between Emerson and Trilling also brings into focus the difficulty of discussing Trilling's notion of the self. When writing of the self, Trilling uses a number of terms: the self is sometimes spoken of as "the modern imagination"; at other times the self is equated with the "will"; and, on other occasions, the self is described as "intentionality." The liberty with which Trilling describes the self can present problems, if one wishes to formulate a precise idea of his paradigm of the self. Hence, the phrase "unconditioned being," a term which Trilling casually uses in his discussion of the self, is to be appreciated because it is possessed of generic quality which can include various terms of Trilling's essays.

As a conventional metaphysical term, the notion of unconditioned being gives a certain stability, even it might be said, a certain specificity to his conception of the self. This stability, this
specificity is derived from a common meaning which certain philosophers have assigned to the term. But the term also has a natural and inevitable flexibility, flowing from the very nature of the concept as an abstract notion. The term can subsume a number of aspects in which the self may be unconditioned: unconditioned in its aspect as "will," unconditioned in its aspect as "imagination," unconditioned in its aspect of "intention."

As has already been suggested, the phrase "unconditioned being" is to be admired because it is comprehensive enough to include all of those external phenomena, such as culture, fate, politics, and even, as will be seen later, the unconscious mind, with which Trilling sees the self in dialectic. It should be said, however, that one does not find as much difficulty in attempting to formulate a general notion of those elements with which the self can enter into a dialectic—or at least as much trouble—as one encounters in attempting to formulate Trilling's various interpretations of the self. This is because there is perhaps not really so much a need for such a formulation; the aspect of conditioned being with which Trilling is usually, though not always, interested in is culture, although in his later criticism there is to be found an interest in the phenomena of death and fate as the conditioned. Yet the term "conditioned being," like its sister term "unconditioned being," is to be held on to, because as a philosophical construct it can provide both the flexibility and the specificity which makes for a clear and coherent discussion of the complex, dialectical manifestations of the self.
A demonstrated instance of the lucidity and grace which the terms can bring into a discussion of Trilling is to be seen in their application as dominant concepts in his work, even when it is most abstruse, as, say, his preface to *The Opposing Self*. This preface, brilliant, elegant, and profound, is an account of the notion of the self and culture as it is found in the imaginative writing of the nineteenth century, but it is also abstruse and complex, and hence very difficult to read. And without what might be called the genetic notions of unconditioned and conditioned being, the full import of the essay, its brilliant structure together with its interpretations, distinctions, comparisons, and subtleties, are hard, if not impossible to come by.

In that preface, Trilling considers the writings of certain artists, novelists, philosophers, and poets of the nineteenth century and shows how in their work, they made clear the path for the ascendency of a new conception of self, whose origin is at the end of the eighteenth century and whose nature is to be distinguished from any other self in the history of Europe. Each writer interpreted the self in different circumstances and in different aspects, yet each writer understood that this new self was possessed of a hitherto unrealized power of shaping its own destiny and the destiny of the culture in which it existed.

Throughout the preface, Trilling is concerned with the self that "emerges" at the end of the eighteenth century and which becomes the preoccupation of poets, novelists, and philosophers during the nineteenth century. That self, Trilling asserts, "is different in
kind, and, in effect, from any self that had ever before emerged.\textsuperscript{8}

It is different in kind in that its highest creative-powers of mind are attributed to the imagination, and it is different in effect as it consigns to itself an intellectual and moral authority which had hitherto been delegated to society. In this sense, the central artistic and philosophical traditions of the nineteenth century can be spoken of as revolutionary. No longer is society invested with those absolute institutional powers upon which the self was once in dependence for its intellectual and moral identity. Instead, it is society which is now made subordinate to the scrutiny and shaping power of the imagination, and it is the imagination which is now recognized as the most subliminal and sovereign aspect of self. About this self and its new attitude toward social reality, Trilling is quite definite. He states: "It is different in several notable respects, but there is one distinguishing characteristic which seems to me pre-eminently important: its intense and adverse imagination of the culture in which it has its being."\textsuperscript{9}

In writing of the self in its new relation to the communal life, Trilling uses the word "culture" rather than the more conventional term "society." The term "culture" is to be preferred, Trilling explains, because "society" is limited by a sense of what is ideal and accomplished in the social order; or to put it another way, "society" calls to mind all of those artistic and scientific accomplishments to which the community gives it unambiguous assent. On the other hand, culture is more comprehensive of the contradictory and ambiguous character of social effort, and, as such, includes "not only . . . a people's achieved works of intellect and imagination but also . . . its mere assumptions and unformulated
valuations," alongside its "habits, its manners, and its superstitions."^10

It is here, precisely here, as Trilling explains his preference for the word "culture," that he refers to matters which suggest the relevance of the phrase "conditioned being." For, to the extent that "assumptions," "unformed valuations," habits," "manners," and "superstitions" are not under the control of the conscious will, so can one speak of these things as being a measure of the conditioned aspect of the will. In this regard Trilling actually refers to the involuntary aspects of the communal life as the "unconscious portion" of culture. And, as the self, through the power of imagination, perceives this "unconscious portion" of culture, its responses maybe properly described as partaking of the "conditioned." This concept is suggested when Trilling writes: "The modern self is characterized by certain powers of indignant perception which, turned upon the unconscious portion of culture, have made it accessible to conscious thought."^11

Charles Dickens, Trilling points out, was astutely aware of this unconscious element of culture. In the novel Little Dorrit, Dickens created characters whose selves are imprisoned by this unconscious dynamic of culture. Trilling begins his observation by noting that Little Dorrit, like so many other imaginative works of the nineteenth century, is dominated by the image of the prison. This preoccupation
with the prison is not extraordinary, Trilling continues, since "the new age was signalized by the fall of a very famous prison, the Bastille," and since the memory of the Bastille reminded men not only of the gross injustices and irrationalities from which they had suffered but also of the wrongs and inequities from which they were still suffering. But what is extraordinary is that the prison came to symbolize something more than mere physical incarceration:

"But as soon as the Bastille had fallen, the image of the prison came to represent something more than the gross injustices and irrationalities. Men began to recognize the existence of prisons that were not built of stone, nor even of social restrictions and economic disabilities. They learned to see that they might be immured in some ways more frightful because it involved their own acquiescence."^{13}

What Trilling is describing here might be called the phenomenon of "a second prison," more "frightful" than what one ordinarily understands a prison to be because of the subtle and oblique conditioning of spirit brought about by the "second prison." It can be denominated thus because its architecture is not built of bricks and stones and its keepers are not endowed with the traditional powers of incarcerative authority and force.

The "second prison" is far too intangible, far too subtle a mode of incarceration for that; its powers do not flow from the architecture of a building, nor from the vigilance of wardens and keepers. It can be said to have an architecture, then its architecture is built of "mere assumption and unformulated valuations," and also of "habits,
manners, and superstitions." Its prisoners are its keepers, a circum-
stance brought about by the innate propensity of self to condition its
own being: "The newly conceived force required of each prisoner that
he sign his own lettre de cachet, for it had established its prisons in
the family life, in the professions, in the image of respectability, in
ideas of faith and duty, in (so the poets say) the very language
itself."  

Upon this hidden enigma and apparent contradiction in the human
psyche, the second prison thrived, until the poets, philosophers, and
the novelists of the nineteenth century uncovered this aspect of
conditioned existence. The uncovering of this hidden phenomenon of
mind does not lessen the dignity of the self; indeed, with the develop-
ing perception of culture as "the second prison" emerges a new conception
of self which Trilling calls "the modern self." Hence Trilling writes:
"The modern self, like Little Dorrit, was born in a prison. It assumed
its nature and fate the moment it perceived, named, and denounced its
oppressor." Nor did this newly achieved identity lessen the importance
of culture; as the modern self entered into dialectic with culture,
it infused into culture a dialectical energy which made it "living":
"And by this act it brought into being not only itself but also the idea
of culture as a living thing with a fate of its own, with the possibility,
and the necessity, of its own redemption."  

Trilling thus admires Dickens for the aesthetic rendering of
one of the adverse relations which the modern self has with "the culture
in which it has its being." That adverse relation can be broadly under-
stood as that moment of history in which the self awakens to a par-
ticular aspect in which it is conditioned. In his perception of this
view, Dickens did not merely engender more awareness of the new conception of self; he also foreshadowed what Freud would later describe as "introjection," an infantile tendency of the human psyche to incorporate authority and culture into its very being, as a young child takes food, without thought or discrimination.17

Quite naturally, as the self perceives its unconscious or unwilled affiliation with culture, it can be said to become emancipated or unconditioned. It is enabled to perceive and to reject those elements of culture to which it has given an inadvertent assent. Culture too thereby gains freedom as it receives from the unconditioned self, new forms, perceptions and energies. As the self unconditions itself from "the unconscious portion" of culture, it also unconditions culture: it delivers it from the stasis of being a merely received tradition.

Trilling then turns to Hegel and finds in his writings, in spite of their heavy, speculative character, the most complete explication of "the strange, bitter, dramatic relation between the modern self and the modern culture."18 To this end Trilling says of Hegel: "It was he who first spoke of the 'alienation' which the modern self contrives as a means for the fulfillment of its destiny, and of the pain which the self incurs because of this device of self-realization."19 Trilling finds it of credit to Hegel that he understood in a very formal way the new character of the modern self and the relationship which it would henceforth have to culture. He understood that the modern self would no longer exist in a passive relationship to society, that its new character would reflect energy and aggressiveness, will and intention.

In his understanding of the new powerful role of the modern self, Hegel was astutely aware of the complex dynamic which would henceforth
comprise culture. The modern self, with its new moral and intellectual authority, now moving in dialectic with culture, is a steward of culture. Culture will be valued as much as, and perhaps more than, ever because it is perceived as a phenomenon coming not from tradition, not from the church, nor from government, but from the creative wills of men. Hence, when Hegel speaks of the "terrible principle of culture," he is referring, Trilling implies, to the awesome responsibility which has fallen upon the modern self as it shapes and determines its own life and the life of culture as well.20

A second admirable accomplishment of Hegel, as Trilling observes, in this matter of formulating "the bitter and dramatic relationship of the self to culture," is to be found in the philosopher's understanding of the role of the imagination and of art in modern culture. Given the acclaim and recognition which the modern self in its new autonomy is now accorded, the moral notion of a community becomes only one aspect of the criterion for judging a culture, whereas before it had been the sole criterion. Style, and the personality from whence comes style, will be given much consideration in the judgment of a culture. As Trilling explains Hegel's new interpretation of the self and culture in relation to personality:

Hegel understood in a remarkable way what he believed to be a new phenomenon of culture, a kind of cultural mutation. This is the bringing into play in the moral life of a new category of judgment, the category of quality. Not merely the deed itself, he said, is now submitted to judgment, but also the personal quality of the doer of the deed. It has become not merely a question of whether the action conforms to the appropriate principle or maxim of morality, but also of the manner in which it is performed, of what it
implies about the entire nature, the being, of the agent. This is what Hegel had in mind when he instituted his elaborate distinction between "character" and "personality," the latter term having reference to what we might call the manner and style of the moral action.\textsuperscript{21}

Thus, from the point of view which Hegel formulates here, it is personality of self under the aspect of the imagination which is accorded as much a significance as the moral ideals and accomplishments of culture.

Hence, art, as one of the most intimate, the most personal expressions of the human disciplines, is given an almost sacramental importance. Hegel was profound in his understanding of the new dominion which art will assume in the moral life:

His perception of this new mode of judgment Hegel in part derived from his reading of the new literature of his day, and it was one of the things that led to his giving to art an importance quite without precedent in moral philosophy. For Hegel, art is the activity of man in which spirit expresses itself not only as utility, not only according to law, but as grace, as transcendence, as manner and style. He brought together the moral and the aesthetic judgment. He did this not in the old way of making morality the criterion of the aesthetic: on the contrary, he made the aesthetic the criterion of the moral.\textsuperscript{22}

Insofar as Trilling admires Hegel's description of the modern self and its new relationship to culture, it can be said that Trilling equates the self with the imagination. And the imagination, which Trilling calls "the spirit" in the foregoing quotation, is that aspect of the unconditioned in man which enables him to go beyond the law and assists him in his own style of selfhood.

Trilling's conception of the imagination as selfhood can be compared to that moment of manner and grace in the life of Emily Dickinson when she startled the very conventional Colonel Higginson
by greeting him with a daylily in her hand and asked him one of
the most profound questions of the law. That question, one now
understands, could not have been asked by Emily Dickinson had she not
been born in a Puritan tradition. In asking Higginson, "What is home?"
she put to him a question with which every serious person with religious
leanings inevitably is concerned. But the coyness and subtlety of the
manner in which the question was asked marked it with a manner and
style of the most intense selfhood. In asking this question of the
law, she transcended the law; she created the style and grace of her
selfhood in the cold, iron New England air.23

Trilling brings his discussion of the modern self into focus
in the final pages of the preface with a consideration of the criticism
and the poetry of Matthew Arnold. What Trilling finds remarkable in
Arnold is his ability to write about this new, complex dynamic of the
self in its relation to culture with a comprehensive simplicity. Arnold
is remarkable, Trilling contends, because he achieved a comprehensive
sense of the zeitgeist without having read Hegel, and one suspects
here that Trilling is hinting that in this case ignorance proves to
be a virtue, because Arnold's writings have a simplicity and clarity
about them free of the seductively abstract quality of Hegel's writings.

In Trilling's interest in Arnold as a critic and a poet, there is
a certain inevitability, because Arnold, more than any other Victorian
writer, was consistently and formally preoccupied with the relation of
the self to culture, and because Arnold's poetry is suffused with the
poignancy, suffering, and terror of the alienated self.
"Matthew Arnold said of literature that it was a criticism of life," Trilling tells his readers in the preface, and the statement has been a source of constant irritation to many modern critics, the most distinguished of whom is T. S. Eliot. Of Eliot's taking Arnold to task for defining literature in such a manner, there is, Trilling admits, a measure of justice, in that the definition is not without excess. In the preface to the Sacred Wood, Eliot chastises those who are in sympathy with Arnold's vision of art by observing that the statement could never be accepted by anyone who has felt the "surprise" and "elevation" of a new experience of poetry.

But Trilling concedes to Eliot only on this point, that the statement is extravagant. Having admitted this excess, he then proceeds to rescue Arnold from the charge of obtuseness to the surprise and joy of poetry. His defense of Arnold is magnificent, for he vindicates Arnold without resorting to the harsh polemic that too often characterizes the quarrels of modern literature. He turns the tables on Eliot, obliquely, by using the harsh, strictive phrases of Eliot in exposition of Arnold's intention when he extravagantly defines literature as a criticism of life. Yet Trilling's intention is no mere effort to reconcile Arnold's vision of literature with Eliot's conception of the experience of poetry. When he reassesses Arnold's definition in the light of Eliot's harsh words, Trilling wishes his readers to become aware of Arnold's profound understanding of the conditioning elements of culture which is, in short, to be associated with the notion of the "second prison." For this reason Trilling writes:

of Arnold's having called poetry a criticism of life Mr. Eliot observed that "no phrase can sound
more frigid to anyone who has felt the full surprise and elevation of a new experience of poetry." This may be true, and perhaps Arnold's phrase needed to be roughly handled because it seemed to license a dull way of reading poetry. But if now, after the passage of a good many years, we look again at the words Mr. Eliot used to discredit Arnold's phrase, we see that they actually serve to explicate and to justify it. They tell us precisely in what way Arnold thought that poetry was a criticism of life. Surprise and elevation: set the words over against Arnold's sense of our life in culture, against his sense of modern culture as a kind of prison (so he called it) and we know very well what Arnold meant.  

It is here, just here, as Trilling refers to what has been called "the second prison," by which is meant the notion of culture as psychic imprisonment, that Trilling speaks of the "right condition of self." What Arnold understands to be "the right condition of self" has to do with those experiences possessed of the freedom and creativity of the unconditioned:

The "frigidity" of his phrase could not have been wholly lost on Arnold himself. When he said that poetry was criticism—which in any ordinary meaning it so obviously isn't—he meant to shock us. He meant to say that in our modern situation the surprise and elevation of poetry can serve to bring some notion of what is the right condition of self—in general, and not merely when it is having the experience of poetry. He was proposing to us the idea that our culture is hostile to surprise and elevation, and to the freedom they imply.  

Here the suggestion is that poetry, or some imaginative endeavor such as poetry, can engender in the self an awareness of its unconditioned character and can help the self to distinguish between mere habit in culture and conscious choice. And all of this, of course, parallels what the philosopher Hegel understand about the modern self and culture.
This, then, is what Trilling means when he suggests that Arnold said much the same thing that Hegel did about the modern self, but that he said it in a much "simpler" way. Arnold, like Hegel, understood how a culture, or at least a certain aspect of culture, could imprison the soul, and he also saw the sacramental role which the imagination henceforth must play in order to give the moral life the possibility and spontaneity it must have, if it is to be genuine human experience.

As far as what one might call the conclusion "proper" of the preface goes, it is not Arnold the critic in whom Trilling shows interest, but Arnold the poet. Of all Matthew Arnold's poetry, it is "The Scholar Gypsy" which Trilling singles out as the most significant of Arnold's poems, at least from the point of view of a critic interested in the modern self. In this connection, Trilling writes of the poem: "And yet there isn't, I think, a more comprehensive and comprehensible delineation of the modern self in its relation to the culture than that which Matthew Arnold makes in his elegy for his own lost youth."27

The myth of the Scholar Gypsy is derived from a folk legend, interesting in its own right. The Scholar Gypsy, a student at Oxford in the fifteenth century, left the university before the completion of his studies because of hard financial circumstances. This premature ending of the Scholar Gypsy's student days at Oxford, Trilling does not perceive as tragic since he took with him a sense of joy and a vision of the whole life which he never lost as his fellow students later did. Though his peers are fortunate in being able to complete
their studies, they are unfortunate in that the very fulfillment of their scholarship brings them into a life where they are no longer able to nourish the joy, spontaneity, and vision of their student days.

The Scholar Gypsy, prevented from completing his studies and consequently excluded from one of the conventional stations of culture, nevertheless keeps what others have lost: a youthful enthusiasm, an energetic and visionary pursuit of the whole life of the imagination, unattenuated by duty of a conventional kind. Thus, in his loss, the Scholar Gypsy gains, as he travels still, in Arnold's time and by implication forever, among untrodden paths, among unorthodox men, in pursuit of truth. The bars of the second prison will never circumscribe his existence, for he has escaped the conditions of mere duty, mere assumption in culture.

The Scholar Gypsy escapes, Trilling tells his readers, the fate of Wordsworth's free-ranging boy upon whom the shades of the prison are about to fall "like a weight. / Heavy as frost and deep almost as life." But he gains also, like Whitman's Paumanok boy, "The boy ecstatic," that intensity of selfhood which is "the hardest basic fact, and only entrance to all facts." Hence, the Scholar Gypsy gains his identity in the enduring life of the imagination even though he is alienated from the unconscious "portion of culture." The Scholar Gypsy is, as Trilling interprets him, "imagination, impulse, pleasure: he is what every writer of the modern period conceives, the experience of art projected into the actuality and totality of life as the ideal form of the moral life. His existence is intended to
disturb us and to make us dissatisfied with our habitual life in
culture, whose nature his existence defines."\(^{28}\) As the embodiment
of the imagination and of art, activities of the self which can never
be mere duty, mere assumption, and mere habit, the Scholar Gypsy
symbolizes the new relation between the self and culture, in which the
self is affirmed through its "contrived alienation" and assumes not
only a destiny of its own, but the destiny of culture as well.

But "The Scholar Gypsy" is also to be appreciated for a reason
other than its "comprehensive delineation of the modern self in its
relation to culture." Another aspect of the poem to which Trilling
calls attention is seen in its actuality as literary tradition and as
legacy. In his intense veneration for Arnold, William Butler Yeats
visited Oxford with the expressed purpose of making a pilgrimage to the
ford where, in Arnold's poem, the Scholar Gypsy was once seen.
Trilling quotes from a letter of Yeats in which that pilgrimage is
described, and he thus provides historical evidence, of a most charm­
ing kind, that Yeats upheld an almost religious reverence for the
vision of self put forth in "the Scholar Gypsy." In so doing, there
is to be seen, after all of the charm of the letter is put aside, a
profound act of acceptance, a receiving of legacy, all of which makes
for the continuity and growth of literary tradition.

Thus the self which emerges at the end of the eighteenth century
and which gains its ascendancy in the nineteenth century goes on to
survive in the twentieth century, in the interests and affections of
William Butler Yeats. And of Yeats' interest in "The Scholar Gypsy,"
Trilling makes this observation for those who would understand modern culture and the modern self: "The poem, of course, is a prefiguration of Yeats' whole career; it gives us the terms of his long quarrel with the culture, which, more than anything else, made his passion and his selfhood. Such quarrels with the culture we recognize as the necessity of not only the self but of culture." 29

The preface is closed with an affirmation that the self of the late eighteenth century is the modern imagination:

I have dealt in these essays with more novelists than poets, but of course the novelists in their own way of particularity and circumstantiality are no less committed than the poets to the modern imagination of autonomy and delight, of surprise and elevation, of selves conceived in opposition to the general culture. This imagination makes, I believe, a new idea in the world. It is an idea in the world, not in literature alone. If these essays have a unity, it is because they take notice of this idea, and of course of its vicissitudes, modulations, and negations. 30

And there one has it, the center, the stance of Trilling's criticism. The self which Trilling is most interested in is the imagination. It is the imagination as a manifestation of the unconditioned nature of the self, but it is also the imagination as it exists in the dialectics of art and culture. The importance which Trilling assigns to the self as imagination and as the dialectical source of culture is indisputable. It is this conception of the self with which this dissertation will be most concerned—the self as the imagination and as the dialectic between the conditioned and the unconditioned.
NOTES

CHAPTER III


3 Ibid., p. 97.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid., p. 93.


7 Trilling, The Opposing Self, pp. ix-xv.

8 Ibid., p. ix.

9 Ibid., pp. ix-x.

10 Ibid., p. 10.

11 Ibid., p. x.

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid.

14 Ibid., pp. x-xi.

15 Ibid., p. xi.

16 Ibid.


18 Trilling, The Opposing Self, p. xi.

19 Ibid.
20 Ibid.

21 Ibid., pp. xi-xii.

22 Ibid., p. xii.


24 Trilling, *The Opposing Self*, p. xii.

25 Ibid.

26 Ibid., p. xiii.

27 Ibid.

28 Ibid., pp. xiii-xiv.

29 Ibid., p. xiv.

30 Ibid., pp. xiv-xv.
CHAPTER IV

THE PREFACE TO BEYOND CULTURE: A STUDY OF CULTURE WITH AND WITHOUT DIALECTIC

In the preface to The Liberal Imagination, Trilling formulates his definition of the imagination. Through the imagination, the inward and outward worlds meet in dialectic. The imagination synthesizes and enriches human experience by making it comprehensive of both the world of human desire and the world in all of its actualities, its vicissitudes, and its complexities. The imagination is the shaping power of the self and derives its identity from a willed dialectic between instinct and reason. As the imagination draws its energies and individuating powers from the desires and feelings of the self, it counterpoises them upon the abstract domain of the self which exists in tradition, culture, and past experiences. Out of this struggle between thoughts, perceptions, feelings, and emotions emerges a dialectic which reveals the dignity of selfhood and the mystery of the human person.

Trilling writes again of the imagination in the preface to The Opposing Self; but, in this instance, he studies the imagination in its historical and philosophical development. Here, he recognizes not only the debt which modern culture owes to the romantic artist...
and certain philosophers of the nineteenth century in making men aware of the autonomy of the self, but he also writes admiringly of those Romantics who attributed authority and responsibility to the imagination as the faculty of grace and self-determination, of creativity and liberty, of political and social destiny.

This concept of the self—in its autonomy, in its imaginative and dialectic powers—is found in the writings of the poets, novelists, and philosophers of the nineteenth century, all of whom revealed in their work an adverse awareness of their society. Unhappy with the unconscious influence and coercion which society exercises upon the individual, they grew indignant with the culture in which they were situated, and they called for a separation of the self from society. The separation of the self from societal forms and the consequential relegation of culture to a secondary role marks an achievement of monumental importance in the history of man. Henceforth, the self is understood to be the primal source of culture, and, as such, the validity of a culture is measured by selfhood. Such a development made for one of the greatest and most productive epochs of literary achievement, and Trilling sees the adverse spirit of the nineteenth and early twentieth century as its inspiriting source.

In the preface to *Beyond Culture*, Trilling studies the fate of the adversary spirit—which is here taken to mean the cultural movement of the nineteenth and early twentieth century as it is expressed in the art and thought of such writers as Keats, Wordsworth, Arnold, Mill, and Freud as well as in the continuance beyond the first quarter of the twentieth century. His purpose in doing this goes beyond giving
an account of later development of the adversary spirit. He is also interested in understanding culture in its relationship to the self, which is now, as a consequence of nineteenth century thought, considered to be the primal and originating source of culture.

Trilling now speaks of the adversary spirit as the adversary culture, and this term is used to include both the earlier and later development of the culture. The aim of the adversary culture, in both its early and later days, remains the same. It has to do with the liberation of the individual from the tyranny of his culture and the recognition and acceptance of the autonomy of the self. He would have his readers understand that the earlier adversary culture is marked by a distinct originality whereas he judges the later to be of a more derivative and imitative character:

What I am calling the modern period had its beginning in the latter part of the eighteenth century and its apogee in the first quarter of the twentieth century. We continue the direction it took. The former energy of origination is very much diminished, but we still do continue the direction: the conscious commitment to it is definitive of the artistic and intellectual culture of our time. It is a belief still pre-eminently honored that a primary function of art and thought is to liberate the individual from the tyranny of his culture in the environmental sense and to permit him to stand beyond it in an autonomy of perception and judgment.¹

In the early days, the adversary culture, particularly as it manifested itself in art, was possessed of a powerful dialectic in which individuals of artistic and philosophical genius struggled against the tyranny of culture in pursuit of the liberation of the self. A catalogue of significant figures in the early adversary culture—such
as Wordsworth, Keats, Flaubert, Hegel, Arnold, Mill, and Freud—bears powerful witness to the success of the movement in terms of trailblazing creativity and profound originality. But, as the adversary culture continues beyond the first quarter of the twentieth century and as it grows in number and organization, it becomes dispossessed of its energy of origination, its creative and dialectical tension, its elements of actual adversary will and imagination. A roll call of the adversary culture today may account for the presence of many gifted individuals, but it will not contain poets like Keats and Wordsworth, critics like Arnold, philosophers like Mill and Hegel, and students of the mind like Freud. The dialectical currents of the adversary culture are attenuated, and the adversary culture has assumed the traits of what it was once opposed to: the unconsciousness and habits of ideology.

This adversary culture, then, has about it the qualities of an ideology, yet it is important to realize that Trilling is spare in his use of the word throughout the preface—only later, in his concluding paragraphs, does he state unequivocally his fear that the adversary culture is on its way to becoming an ideology. His hesitancy to use the term is, no doubt, explained by his great esteem and his implied confidence that the values of the adversary movement, though now embedded in an ideology, are nevertheless possessed of great relevance for the life of the mind and of culture.

The transformation of the adversary culture into a species of thought which is narrow and static in its character cannot be said
to have happened suddenly, nor can it be said to occur without anticipation. Indeed, it can even be viewed as a phenomenon which is marked by a certain inevitability and even naturalness; although, Trilling, deeply aware of this leaning, cautions his readers about accepting this as a rationale in the study of ideas, lest they accept ideology as something inescapable. Perhaps one point which he makes in a rather casual way, but which bears great relevance to the contemporary situation, is that the intention of the adversary culture—if one can conceive of culture as being possessed of an intention, and Trilling clearly does—has remained essentially unaltered, even though it is embedded in a narrow and static culture form at its present time. Circumstances, and not any intrinsic insufficiency of character nor any error in primal intention, make for the difference between the early and later adversary culture.

The circumstances to which Trilling refers here are explained as having to do with what presumably might be called the dynamics of the "group." Indeed, here the term "group" is a matrix concept, and, as such, the key to understanding the preface as a whole. The adversary culture, as with any cultural movement, achieves its influence and its identity through the dynamics of the group. However, the group which is found in earlier stages of the adversary culture is quite different from the group which Trilling speaks of as now representing the adversary influence.

The group which Trilling describes Keats as being associated with in The Opposing Self was small and spirited, and it was made up of a few brilliant men who, except for a certain unity achieved through
common political sympathies, were quite individual in their notions of philosophy and of art. Other shared interests sustained the identity of this group (one of which was their belief in the autonomy of self), but these other common bonds should be understood as emerging spontaneously in the dialectic of their art and their personalities.2

In no way is this group similar to the "populous group" which Trilling describes as emerging between the first quarter of the twentieth century and the present. The character of this group, for one thing, is such that its members take for granted the idea of the adversary culture; moreover, as a "populous" group there is more "coherence," over and against whatever internal conflicts it might have, so that Trilling thinks of it "as a class," with "common interests and presuppositions" and the kind of efficiency attributed to an institution.3

Hence, the adversary group now has about it the quality of a class, and Trilling argues that "the present position of the university . . . tells us much about this new state of affairs."4 From this point of view, one can perceive the class structure of the adversary group by tracing how it now advances itself by enlisting the aid of the most conservative of institutions—the university. The intimacy between the adversary group of these later days and the university is such that, when Dr. Clark Kerr, former president of UCLA, conceives of the day when the university "shall provide a commodious place" for "pure creative effort," not only does his prophecy prove itself belated, but also the expressions of fear which his statements evoke from those most concerned about the autonomy of art are, in view of the actualities
of the times, embarrassing anachronisms. Trilling observes that both the prophecy and the fears are out of joint with time:

No one who knows how things now really stand is afraid of the university. Dr. Kerr’s prophecy is but a reasonable projection into the future of a condition already established and regarded with satisfaction by those who might be thought to be most jealous for the freedom of art and thought.

In former times, the university "figured as the citadel of conservatism, even of reaction." It was an institution of a kind which resisted the conduct and the style of the changing world, until they proved to be of enduring value. It might be said of the university that there was once something of a monastic character to it—not in the pejorative sense of the word, but in its honorific connotations. The university was once resistant to the world, even to brilliant and valid innovations until they had established themselves to be of substance and of value. In an almost formal way, a young man who chose the academic life as his profession was thought of as "having given up the fight." He was, so to speak, removing himself from the immediate interests of culture, from, as the religious would say, the world. "It was known," Trilling writes,

that behind what used to be called its walls and in its ivory towers reality was alternately ignored and traduced. The young man who committed himself to an academic career was understood to have announced his premature surrender.

Today, such a choice leaves no such impression since the relationship between the university and the world is one of accord and harmony. The young man who accepts an academic position is no longer considered unw worldly. "Now," Trilling writes,

it is scarcely possible for him to be so intransigent
that the university cannot be thought the proper field for his undertakings. Between the university and reality there now exists the happiest, most intimate relation.9

The evidence of this new and intimate relationship between the university and the adversary culture is detected by a certain kind of criticism coming from within the university itself. This critical process can be identified in part by its power and its acceleration as well as by its ability to bring about rapid changes in opinion. The process is marked by the kind of activity which the university in former days would have eschewed. Mr. Harold Rosenberg, Trilling writes, has made a study of this phenomenon and singled out the singular effects of such criticism. Trilling describes Rosenberg's findings in a manner that is almost humorous, although for Trilling its ultimate significance is not to be taken lightly:

Objects that at once moment are not to be thought of as deserving inclusion in the category of art are at another moment firmly established in the category; criticism can also reverse this process, and our most cherished works of art (Mr. Rosenberg gives as examples the paintings of Michelangelo, Vermeer, Goya, and Cezanne) can, if an "extreme ideology" so decides, be made "not art" and may even come to seem "creatures of darkness."10

The process, in itself, according to Trilling, is not new; taste for the past two hundred years has "increasingly come under the control of criticism." But the acceleration of this process is a symptom of what is new about this critical process, adroitly formulated by Rosenberg as the "making and unmaking of art." And what is actually unprecedented is the agency, the central instrumentality through which the adversary group exerts its influence. Art is "made and unmade" in
the "hands of university art departments and agencies which derive from them, museums and publications," all of which carry out the intention of the adversary culture in the activity of the group.\footnote{11}

The university, in its new circumstances, has become a measure and a symbol of to what extent the effort of the adversary culture has been successful in its conquest of "its old antagonist, the middle class." And, while its victory has not been absolute, its gains have been impressive. It may not dominate the middle class; but, as Trilling observes, "it has detached a considerable force from the main body of the enemy and has captivated its allegiance."\footnote{12}

The transformation of the adversary culture is brought about by circumstances such as the one having to do with the university, and Trilling makes this point quite clear when he writes:

I cite the changed character of the university as but an example, although a particularly striking one, of the new circumstances in which the adversary culture of art and thought now exists.\footnote{13}

These circumstances are engendered by those involved in the adversary culture and, hence, whatever evil attends those circumstances should be spoken as a moral one, as literally being "of the will." This is, no doubt, why Trilling writes: "The change has come about, we may say, through the efforts of the adversary culture itself."\footnote{14}

Therefore, from Trilling's point of view, the early adversary spirit, which inspired the art and the literature of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, has become part of a class struggle. As the adversary culture succeeds in detaching a considerable force from the middle class, it takes on the characteristics of a class—the kind of class to which, in its earlier days, it was in such strong
opposition. As it assumes the structure of a class, as it becomes a group with the characteristics of a class, Trilling observes of it, that, as in any other class, it has developed characteristic habitual responses to the stimuli of its environment.¹⁶

To some degree, this whole phenomenon is predetermined by a certain inevitability which can be found in the patterns of history: vision seems always to resolve itself in reconciliation and synthesis; yet toward this development of the adversary culture, as it now assumes the structure of a class, Trilling maintains an ambivalent attitude:

The situation calls for at least a little irony. Given the legend of the free creative spirit at war with the bourgeoisie, it isn't possible to be wholly grave as we note, say, the passion that contemporary wealth feels for contemporary painting. But not more than a little irony is appropriate. For how else are civilizations ever formed save by reconciliations that were once unimaginable, save by syntheses that can be read as paradoxes? It is often true that the success of a social or cultural enterprise compromises the virtues that claimed our loyalty in its heroic, hopeless beginning, but there is a kind of vulgarity in the easy assumption that this is so always and necessarily.¹⁷

Therefore, despite the inevitability of a vision becoming a class and increasing into numbers, these developments, Trilling says, must still be resisted on the grounds that the easy acceptance of them caters to the human inclination for intellectual sloth.

Trilling seems to suggest that this is particularly true of the adversary culture, because, once it begins to advance itself as a class, a peculiar ambiguity follows it, relative to its central ideal which has to do with the autonomy of the self. As the most powerful creative movement of the nineteenth century, the adversary culture wrought a turbulent dialectic out of which the self is accorded
an authority over the cultural forms of not just nineteenth century
tradition, but, by extension, any tradition as well. Yet, it would
seem that in its ascendancy as a "populous group," so organized as
to be thought of as a class, the subtle and fine spiritual temper
of the adversary culture has become changed into a tradition with
its own intolerance and prejudices.

It is here, just here, that Trilling makes quite clear what
his purpose is in Beyond Culture, when he writes, in reference to the
essays of the book, that

we cannot count upon the adversary culture to sustain
us in such efforts toward autonomy of perception and
judgment as we might be impelled to make, that an
adversary culture of art and thought, when it becomes
well established, shares something of the character of the
larger culture to which it was—to which it still
is—adversary, and that it generates its own assumptions
and preconceptions, and contrives its own sanctions to
protect them.18

Trilling puts his discussion into good order by considering two
kinds of interrogation which are associated with the adversary move­
ment culture. The early adversary movement was inspired by a very
profound question which generated or prompted its creative and pioneer­
ing spirit. The artists, the poets, and the philosophers of the early
adversary culture constantly asked themselves, "Is it true? Is it true
for me?"19 This is not an easy question to ask, and the answer which
each individual arrives at may well be the preliminary to a monumental
accomplishment of art or philosophy but only after he experiences
the pain, anguish, and isolation of finding out what is true for him.
But, as the adversary culture grows in numbers and in power, it inevitably
displaces this question by another one, which Trilling calls "the
characteristic question of our adversary culture," meaning, of course,
contemporary adversary culture. This question is formulated as "Is
it true? Is it true for us?" It is a question which is asked, not by
one person, but by a number of persons, and by implication the kind
of persons whose interests have to do with a class. Trilling is not
unsympathetic to the motives behind such a question, and he says of
it: "This is a good question too, it has its particular social virtues,
but it does not yield the same results as the first question, and it
may even make it harder for anyone to ask the first question." And
here the ambivalence of Trilling toward the adversary culture, and
indeed toward culture in general, achieves focus. Trilling appreciates
and accepts the necessity and inevitability of a concern for the communal
good, for the "us" of civilization which human beings, as citizens of
culture, must inevitably take up as their responsibility, but he also
realizes that the very character of this communal good is not sympathetic
to the subtler and more complex expression of the self in its individuat-
ing and creative moments. The first question Trilling assigns exclu-
sively to the interests of the genius, the thinker, the originator,
whereas the second question belongs to the theoreticians and technicians.

The distinctive contrast between the accomplishments of Freud
and the assimilation of his insights into the practical and therapeutic
science of the psychiatrists represents and specifies the difference
between the force of the first question and that of the second:

The difference between the force of the two questions
is suggested by the latter part of my essay on Freud.
The second question is asked by the group of psychiatrists to whom I refer; it serves an unquestionably useful purpose. The first question was asked by Freud himself. Consequently, Trilling is resigned to the inevitability that the adversary genius of Freud must become the matter of theoreticians and technicians for purposes of the common good, yet he holds to a wist of regret that this should be so. Perhaps his tolerance is inspired by the constancy of purpose of both Freud and his disciples, for truth remains a steadfast interest for both Freud and the psychiatrists who follow him.

Yet, when Trilling considers the relationship of art to the adversary culture, in the aspect "of the assumptions and preconceptions of the adversary culture by reason of the dominant part that is played in it by art," Trilling shows anything but tolerance. Art, particularly as it is inspired by the adversary intention to keep men free of assumption and of habit, should never assume the character of an ideology. Moreover, what Trilling finds most culpable about modern art—and it will be seen that he is referring to modern art as it defines itself as one of those infamous "groups"—is that its present aims are far removed from anything resembling the quest for truth. Indeed, Trilling reveals a disdain almost platonic in character, and his strictures against modern art are surprising even to Trilling himself:

Several of the essays touch on the especial difficulty of making oneself aware of the assumptions and preconceptions of the adversary culture by reason of the dominant part that is played in it by art. My sense of this difficulty leads me to approach a view which will seem disastrous to many readers and which, indeed, rather surprises me. This is the view that
art does not always tell the truth or the best kind of truth and does not always point out the right way, that it can even generate falsehood and habituate us to it, and that, on frequent occasions, it might well be subject, in the interests of autonomy, to the scrutiny of the rational intellect. The history of this faculty scarcely assures us that it is exempt from the influences of the cultures in which it has sought its development, but at the present juncture its informing purpose of standing beyond culture, even an adversary one, may be of use.24

The intimate relationship of art to the imagination, as contrasted to the relationship of science to the imagination, is the grounds for demanding the very highest standards of art, even when art advances its vision through the group. Although Trilling recognizes that artists may sometimes identify themselves as a group, he would look long and hard upon such a group who asks the question, "It is true? Is it true for us?"

By Trilling's standards, such a group of artists could, though not necessarily, lose sense of that much treasured "I" of the great interrogation, "It is true? Is it true for me?" and that would mean that the dialectical powers of art are endangered by the habits and the unconsciousness of ideology. But an even more hazardous evil attendant upon the formation of an artistic group is the possibility of losing interest in the kind of truth which both questions formulate as the end of the individual and the group. Such a development, Trilling sees as tragic and intolerable. And, in the later development of adversary art, where rationality is conspicuously denied a place in the dialectic of artistic efforts, this is precisely the case: the notion of truth is in fact being dismissed or ignored as a necessary element in human experience.

This tragic absence, Trilling illustrates, by studying two relatively new meanings of the word "experience." To this end, Trilling quotes Lawrence in a statement he made about art: "'The world doesn't fear a new idea. It
can pigeonhole any idea. But it can't pigeonhole a new experience."

Of this statement, Trilling observes that it now "has canonical authority
in our adversary culture," but he also notes that the statement "does
indeed tell us much of what that culture, in its great days, intended in
the way of liberation, in the way of autonomy." Trilling deliberately
juxtaposes Lawrence's criterion of experience with the notion of experience
which those committed to the adversary culture derive from him.

The experience which Lawrence sought and had, Trilling under­
stands to be good, imaginative, dialectical, and judicious. As such, they
involved a thoughtful and often painful rejection of a cold and assuming
rationalism which was disjoining of body and soul. The suffering, the
agony, and the discipline of Lawrence's experiences are identified by
Trilling with the kind of dialectic between mind and emotion which con­
stitutes the mystery of selfhood. Such experiences occur only when the
person who undergoes them asks of himself that profound question of the
early adversary spirit. "Is it true? Is it true for me?" and these
experiences, so Trilling would argue, were whole experiences, engaging
Lawrence's entire selfhood; they were filled with a profound energy of
though and choice which was the consequence of an astute knowledge of the
self and the external world:

By an experience Lawrence meant, of course, an
experience of art, and, we may suppose, of such
art as derives from an experience of life. Lawrence's
saying suggests that the experience speaks, as no idea
ever can, to the full actuality of the person who
exposes himself to it, requiring him to respond in an
active way; by that response he is confirmed in his
sense of personal being and its powers, and in the
possibility of autonomy.26

Yet, the truth achieved from such experiences, according to Trilling,
was not intended to become a universal norm of conduct: "If Lawrence's statement is true, surely its truth pertains to a situation in which the artist is alone and in which his audience is small and made up of isolated individuals."^27

For the artist "alone" and a "small group of isolated individuals," Lawrence presented a dialectic in resistance to the particular cultural abstraction and values of his day. This is the truth of his experience; this is what was true for him. It is certainly true for the multitude of groups who use the rhetoric of Lawrence's statement but misunderstand its central meaning. Lawrence had new experiences which, in the circumstances of his day, required that he affirm the actuality of the instinctual and the affective life of the self and, given his situation, there was an undeniable validity to the indignation and rage he expressed against the unconscious portion of culture. In the adversary culture today, it would seem that such a direction has been isolated in such a way as to suggest that the non-rational aspects of human personality are now taken as the norm of human experience. This penchant for the nonrational, Trilling identifies as an ideology, a commitment to a protean irrationalism as narrow and destructive as the static rationalism of the eighteenth century against which the adversary spirit was conceived by the artists and poets of the nineteenth century. As intellect was once given intertemperate precedence over emotions in the eighteenth century, "sex, violence, madness, and art itself" are now assigned a similarly excessive significance of "ideational and ideological status."^28

As Lawrence's adherents increased in number, and the isolated few who constituted his audience became the many of classes, the letter
of his vision and not his spirit became the paradigm of "experience." It was "new experiences" which Lawrence wished for men to have, and not his experiences. Trilling is in accord with Rosenberg's contention that the painting of contemporary culture suffers from an implied lack of originality: "Thus, is the process of making and unmaking art that Rosenberg describes, it is plain that experiences of painting, even of a very intense kind, submit quite docilely to being pigeonholed." This group of whom Rosenberg writes are, in Trilling's view, representative of the many "groups" avowedly committed to the adversary culture who organize themselves "around an experience that constitutes an effective pigeonhole, with the result that the demarcation between experience and idea that Lawrence took for granted as clear and certain is now hard to discern."

Trilling ends the preface to Beyond Culture with a recommendation which focuses upon the present weakness of the adversary culture:

In our adversary culture such experience as is represented in an proposed by art moves toward becoming an idea, even an ideology, as witness the present ideational and ideological status of sex, violence, madness, and art itself. If in this situation the rational intellect comes into play, it may be found that it works in the interest of experience. Here what Trilling suggests is that the adversary culture is too much dominated by the particular aims with which the adversary spirit began and not with the general overriding intention of the movement as a philosophical position. While Trilling, it is important to understand, holds fast to the originating spirit of the adversary culture, he still has confidence in the adversary intention, as it is understood, not in its contemporary development, but as it is found in its earlier manifestations. Indeed, Trilling wishes to
reaffirm the central spirit of the adversary movement, which has, as its chief end, a self, liberated in autonomy and freedom. He wishes for a strong and creative sense which can stand within and beyond culture. Such selfhood does not preclude culture or the continuity of culture, as culture is the medium through which selfhood moves and expresses itself. What Trilling seeks is a strong and creative self which can stand within and beyond culture.

Selfhood, understood as dialectic, particularly in its manifestations of the imagination, must, of necessity, resist the kind of perdurability associated with a class. As the imagination is a mediating power, moving between instincts and reason, between the needs and perception of the human person and the communal interests of culture, it can never rest in the finalities of convention and tradition.
CHAPTER IV


3Trilling, *Beyond Culture*, p. xiii.

4Ibid.

5Ibid., p. xiv.

6Ibid.

7Ibid.

8Ibid.

9Ibid.

10Ibid., pp. xiv-xv.

11Ibid., p. xv.

12Ibid.

13Ibid.

14Ibid.

15Ibid., pp. xv-xvi.

16Ibid., P. xvi.

17Ibid., p. xv.

18Ibid., p. xvi.

19Ibid.

20Ibid.
21 Ibid.
22 Ibid.
23 Ibid.
24 Ibid., pp. xvi-xvii.
25 Ibid., p. xvii.
26 Ibid.
27 Ibid.
28 Ibid., p. xviii.
29 Ibid., p. xvii.
30 Ibid.
31 Ibid., p. xviii.
CHAPTER V

AN EXEGESIS OF MIND IN THE MODERN WORLD IN THE LIGHT OF TRILLING'S CONCEPTION OF DIALECTIC

In 1972, the annual Thomas Jefferson Lecture in the Humanities was inaugurated in Washington, D. C., and Lionel Trilling was accorded the honor of delivering the first lecture. The dominant concern of this lecture is what Trilling describes as "a falling off in mind's vital confidence in itself" which is now occurring "within the intellectual life of the nation, and not of our nation alone." And throughout the lecture, as Trilling surveys "the fortunes of mind" not only in the present but also in certain moments in the history of the West, he is constantly reminding his audience that much of the difficulty of the intellectual life is the consequence of either too much trust in the intellect or too much trust in the emotions. In eighteenth century rationalism, Trilling finds a fruitless and static faith in mind, and, in the protean irrationalism which is becoming the hallmark of contemporary culture, he uncovers too little faith in mind and too much trust in emotion. Ostensibly, what Trilling would argue for is the kind of integrity of personality which is found in the "whole man," who is dominated neither by intellect nor by feeling. And against those who now no longer accept intellect as an efficacious means of

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perceiving and understanding the world, Trilling stands steadfast, insisting, as he has always insisted, that the intellectual process can never be complete unless it establishes itself as a dialectic between thought and feeling, abstraction and intuition.

The lecture is beautifully written in the most aristocratic kind of prose, and every sentence bears the impress of Trilling's mind, which is of the highest intellectual order. In regard to the structure of the essay, one is reminded of a Ciceronian oration, for each of the four sections corresponds to the various parts denominated by Cicero as constituting an oration. Hence, each section corresponds in sequence of parts to the exordium, the narratio, the confirmatio, and the peroratio of the Ciceronian oration.

The exordium, which has as its function the introduction of a "subject," begins with a discussion of H. G. Wells and his posthumously published work, Mind at the End of Its Tether, which he wrote in 1946, the last year of his life. In that curious little work, Wells renounces the notion of mind to which he had given an absolute assent during the major part of his life. In all of his writings, exclusive of this essay, there is to be found an unconditioned belief in the efficacy of intellect as the means of delivering man from his harmful illusions and prejudices and as the means of bringing about felicity into his world. But after World War II, Wells reversed this position because the horrible experiences of the war bore unyielding evidence that man persists in his own illusions and prejudices, despite the intellectual emancipations which he had inherited from such thinkers as Darwin, Freud, Marx, and Einstein. Moreover, science, as one of...
the most intense manifestations of intellect, had provided the weapons which nourished the brutality and violence of war.

Trilling goes on to observe that this little book of Wells's, filled with so many harsh strictures about science and mind, gained little attention when it was posthumously published in 1946. In that year, there had no doubt been a chastening of the optimism of men toward science and mind, but the expectation still persisted that "mind would play a beneficent part in human experience."\(^4\) According to Trilling, the stringent criticisms of mind which Wells made were dismissed as the melancholy testament of an old and sick man, and nothing more than that, so that the "little book made no place for itself in the intellectual life of the quarter century after it appeared."\(^5\)

Today the situation is different. What was once the unheard jeremiad of Wells is now being transformed into a commonplace attitude in contemporary culture, and tragic disillusionment with mind, which seemed once the singular experience of Wells, is on its way to becoming the tragic experience of modern man:

Yet now, in this year of 1972, as I say the title of Wells's book, *Mind at the End of Its Tether*, there will, I think, be some among us, and perhaps many, who will hear it with the sense that it has a chill appositeness to our present time. Of those who entertain an apprehension about the future of mind, there may be those who do so on Wells's absolute ground, that the tasks which are now imposed upon mind are beyond its inherent capabilities. Some will locate the cause of their anxiety in the paradoxes about the nature of mind which seem to be proposed by mind itself through the realization of its powers. Others are made uneasy by what they discern of a complex tendency of our culture to impugn and devalue the very concept of mind. Whichever way the foreboding points, I venture to believe that there will be no difficulty in understanding how it might happen that, as I first
contemplated speaking under the bright aegis of the name and spirit of Thomas Jefferson, there should have arisen out of the depths of memory the dark portent of Wells's phrase. 6

The allusion which Trilling makes to Jefferson is not without anticipation, since, as Trilling is speaking under the bright aegis of Thomas Jefferson, a gesture of homage is most certainly appropriate. Yet in Trilling's choice of the word "aegis" something far more significant than mere homage is suggested. An "aegis" has certain mythological associations, which, say, one recalls of the "aegis" of Britomart or Gawain. And as critics have pointed out, such shields take one beyond mere heraldry, for the artists have often endued the "aegis" with the chief spiritual ideas of their culture. 7 Hence, Trilling, in alluding to the "bright aegis of the name and spirit of Thomas Jefferson," is emphasizing the cultural power and significance of Jefferson's life and ideas as they have become the received tradition of American culture and, most significantly, as they can be shown to have a relevance to the situation of mind in the modern world.

Jefferson is introduced into the lecture as a man whose personal temperament, class tradition, and political views are so distinct from those of Wells that one can hardly see the two men as sharing anything apart from generic humanity. Yet despite their great differences in historical, social, and cultural circumstance, Wells and Jefferson "were at one in the firm confidence they placed in mind... Historically speaking, they stood in the same line." 8

Trilling pays much attention to the tradition which inspired Thomas Jefferson, and he emphasizes that Jefferson, like Wells, derived the substance of his attitude toward mind from the Renaissance,
"that what mind might encompass of knowledge of the physical universe has a direct bearing upon the quality of human existence, and also in its certitude that mind can, and should, be decisive in political life."\(^9\) Such is the Renaissance conception of mind, with its emphasis upon the practical power of the mind, and it is this concept of mind which became the foundation of the intellectual life of the eighteenth century.

And Thomas Jefferson, who "assented to this master belief of his time"\(^1^0\) with much enthusiasm and made this notion of mind the standard of the very conduct of his life, brought this tradition into American culture with such force that it can be spoken of as being represented by the "bright aegis of Thomas Jefferson." And yet, of the relation between the accomplishments of Jefferson's life and the philosophy which inspired it, Trilling makes a rather curious observation:

> When we consider the enthusiasm with which Jefferson assented to this master belief of his time and the assiduity with which he implemented it in the conduct of his own life, it is possible to make too much of his own mental endowment and by doing so to obscure one of the most important significances he has for us.\(^1^1\)

The suggestion is bewildering and jarring, and one responds to it by wondering how is it possible not to make too much of the author of the Declaration of Independence, the founder of the University of Virginia, and the architect of Monticello.

These accomplishments of Jefferson are part of the knowledge of most schoolboys, and they loom in the minds of many Americans as evidence that Jefferson possessed titanic qualities of mind. Yet Trilling warns that one should not make too much of them. Trilling argues that if one wishes to call Jefferson a genius, he should qualify the word:
Thus, if we apply to him the word *genius*, we ought to use it, as he did, in the quiet, unassertive sense that prevailed in the eighteenth century, to mean distinguished ability, rather than in the sense it later came to have, that of a unique power, an originating power, which puts the person who possesses it into a class apart.\(^{12}\)

And Jefferson, Trilling points out, did not possess a "unique originating power." Though he was fascinated with philosophy and though many learned books have been written on the philosophy of Jefferson, he was not "in the modern sense of the word, a genius of speculative thought."\(^{13}\) He did not give "new answers to old questions,"\(^{14}\) as say, Kant did, or "propose questions never asked before,"\(^{15}\) as did Schopenhauer. Jefferson's acumen in philosophy is limited to the mimetic and the pragmatic: "He possessed himself of the ideas of the philosophical originators of his own time and of the past; he chose among these ideas and made use of them."\(^{16}\)

Trilling emphasizes the mimetic and pragmatic character of Jefferson's accomplishments not because he wishes to diminish their importance by seeing them as the achievements of a man of "distinguished ability" rather than "originating genius," but rather because he wishes his readers to understand that Jefferson shaped and determined his work and his life around the eighteenth century philosophy of mind in which reason is interpreted as a human faculty making for a natural equality among men.\(^{17}\) Jefferson cultivated his talents, not to become one in the company of aristocratic genius, but rather to make use of his mind and his ideas in a manner which could be emulated by any man who wishes to cultivate his mind.

The seriousness of Jefferson in his desire that the conduct of his intellectual life could be imitated by every citizen of the
Republic can be seen in his *Notes on the State of Virginia*, in which he sets forth his ideas on popular education. Here, Trilling tells his readers that by examining "one detail" of this plan, one gains a clear perspective of what Jefferson "expected—of the American people by way of intellect." That "one detail" has to do with Jefferson's recommendation that children, in the earliest of three stages of schooling, should be required to memorize "the substantive matter" of Greek, Roman, and American history.

This recommendation today might seem to many as a mere mechanical exercise of memory which is superficial in its effect upon the intellectual life, but Jefferson saw the study of history as something rich and profound and nourishing in the development of the public mind; and early familiarity with history would generate a democracy constituted of a knowing and judging citizenry. It is a democracy of reasoning minds, not an aristocracy of genius, which Jefferson is most interested in, and Jefferson urges that children study history early in their education in order to initiate an intellectual process which creates a specific bond between men and the society in which they live. This point Trilling is scrupulously intent upon emphasizing, and he quotes Jefferson's description of what good results can be expected as following from the study of history:

> Consider what he understands to follow in the way of intellectual process: "History by apprising them of the past will enable them to judge the future; it will avail them of the experiences of other times and nations; it will qualify them as judges of the actions and designs of men . . . ."20

The knowledge of the past, of the follies and the wisdoms of other governments and other people, will make each citizen a wise judge of his own government.
The recommendation that children be taught history early in their education speaks for the whole vision of democracy which Jefferson believed could be achieved through the judicious use of mind. As Trilling explains:

Jefferson hoped that most of the children who were to receive the instruction he envisaged would become farmers or be engaged in occupations connected with agriculture, and its seemed to him natural and right that men in this walk of life should have had their memories stored with "the useful facts of the past" against the day when, as citizens responsible for their own happiness, they would bring them to bear upon the events of their own time and place.21

This is the pastoral democracy which Jefferson conceives of, except that its inhabitants are no naive Adams and Eves, but citizens who must study and struggle with the present by deliberately bringing the memory of the past upon it in order to shape their own destiny and happiness. Through the use of their minds, the citizens of the Republic were to create a dialectic which would make for social equality: "The facts of the past," Trilling writes, "were useful because they gave rise to ideas, and in ideas Jefferson perceived a power which would countervail the power of property and thus make for social equality in the Republic."22

These recommendations which Jefferson makes in Notes on the State of Virginia can be taken as representative of the whole of his legacy to the American people. That legacy was received by educators with a great deal of seriousness, and the study of history, until recently, has been given considerable emphasis in the curriculum of elementary education. Today, the study of history is no longer accorded the significance and value which it was formerly given in the curriculum, and to the extent that educators show a conspicuous lack of interest
in history, one can conclude that Jefferson's vision of mind has fallen into disfavor. This devaluation of history, then, Trilling understands to be the consequence of "contemporary pedagogic theory," and Trilling observes this of educators who reject not only Jefferson's valuation of history but also the model of mind implicit in that valuation:

Scarce anybody nowadays will judge Jefferson's plan to be beyond debate. Our contemporary pedagogic theory will be distressed by the idea of storing what it would call the mere memories of children with what it would call mere facts and, at that, facts about the conduct of the alien race of adults in far distant times and places, having nothing to do with the desires and instincts of children.

The development and the education of the child, as it is suggested here, foreshadows the protean view of mind which is becoming ascendant in modern culture. In a society in which emotions and feeling are given precedence over abstractions and thought, the study of history is given little value. This is because of the character of history. History, quite naturally, makes men aware of the limits of human experience and to the extent that it engenders a practical as well as an abstract sense of morality and establishes the necessity of such virtues as discipline, deliberation, and self-restraint, it is understood as a discipline which heightens human consciousness and which calls for, if not the sacrifice of human pleasure, then the subordination of instincts to transcendent human purpose.

Another ground upon which the study of history is now devalued is a philosophical one. Modern philosophical thought has accentuated the subjective aspects of human knowledge, and it tends to censor traditional bodies of knowledge, such as the humanities, because they are disciplines too close, too intimately connected with the self in
in its subjective, partial, and individual manifestations. This philosophical milieu has caused some historian to look askance upon history because of its dependence upon memory and the narrative point of view, both of which contain elements associated with subjectivity:

And searching questions are sure to be raised about the present state of the subject which Jefferson makes pre-eminent in elementary education. It will be asked, for instance, whether his view of history was not, as compared with ours, a naive one. He did, of course, understand that history might be biased, that party-interest might obscure or distort the facts. But he did not doubt that the facts were to be known and that the narrative of them, which they themselves would dictate to any honest mind, would be the truth and, as such, unitary and canonical. This belief the historiography of our day teaches us to regard with skepticism.25

That the study of history should be understood as something distant from the actualities of life, such as instincts and feelings, or that history itself should be faulted as a subject so circumscribed by its own subjectivity as to be devoid of practical influence in the affairs of men are notions which Trilling does not regard as valid. In fact, Trilling admires Jefferson's conception of history as one of the great disciplines of mind. Out of a tradition which values "the sense of the past," Trilling finds the explanation of the great minds of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It is an illustrious catalogue of genius that Trilling makes, and he sees each genius creating and shaping his destiny as he conceives it through the intense imagination of the past:

It can be said of Jefferson that his sense of the past was definitive of his intellectual life. From earliest youth into his old age the intense imagination of the past gave impetus to his mind—as, of course, it gave impetus to all the shaping minds of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Voltaire, Diderot, Rousseau, Goethe, Hegel, Darwin, Marx, Freud—all were rooted in their sense of the past,
from which derived the force with which they addressed themselves to the present.26

It is this "sense of the past" which Trilling suggests shaped the direction and development of genius in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Indeed the powerful humanitarian spirit, which is one of the distinguishing qualities of these geniuses of the eighteenth centuries, can be thought of as flowing from a profound understanding of history. And since their work mirrors a realistic understanding of human instincts and its vicissitudes, along with a vision of political reality, valuable for its democratic character, Trilling renders it inconceivable that the shaping influence of history upon such genius, then and by implication now, should be censored for distorting truth or for being insensitive to human needs. Such genius Trilling interprets as being of the highest order, each genius in his own way representing the thought, struggle, and creation inspired by a dialectical sense of the past, and each thinker unyieldingly committed to the noble motive of bringing some happiness into a world of woe through the shaping power of mind.

Hence, Trilling thinks it a good thing that history should be studied, and he sees a genetic relationship between history and the progress of mind:

The efflorescence of mind in the two centuries before our own seems so closely bound up with the vivid imagination of the past that we are led to conclude that the urgent recollection of what man has already done and undergone in pursuit of his destiny is a necessary condition of comprehending and intending mind.27

While Trilling doubtless would not argue that the study of history can engender the kind of citizenry which Jefferson thought would bring
equality to the Republic, Trilling obviously recognizes that the accomplished knowledge of history encourages a dialectic of mind which makes for complete human experience. To what extent or through what dynamic the "intense imagination of the past" stirred the profoundest kind of speculation in Voltaire, Diderot, Rousseau, Hegel, Marx, Darwin, and Freud, Trilling does not say, but it is a certainty that he finds advantage in studying man from a historical perspective.

As one looks back on what Trilling includes in his exordium, he might justifiably have the experience of confusion. Many subjects and themes are contained therein: the formal renunciation of mind which Wells made in Mind at the End of Its Tether, a comparison of the person of Wells with that of Jefferson, the various traditions of minds coming from classical and modern times, Jefferson's valuation of history and his subsequent identification of general intelligence with the study of history, and the decline of that Jeffersonian conception of history in modern pedagogy. Yet Trilling implicates these subjects and themes with a single motif, "the loss of confidence in mind" in contemporary culture. And, if the exordium is to be appreciated in its unity, these subjects and themes must be taken as variations related to this single motif of contemporary disenchantment with mind. Aristotle has pointed out that in every exordium there is an element of poetry. And the poetry of this exordium is no doubt experienced in the fugal unity of its rhetoric, which has the magic and beauty of music.

And of course, when one mentions a fugue, one must also understand the inevitability of dialectic, experienced here in the juxtaposition of one variation against the other. If the metaphor of the fugue makes one
appreciative of the unity of Trilling's lecture, the conception of dialectic
is invaluable as a touchstone which enables the reader to follow and under­
stand Trilling's labyrinthine arguments, in their completeness and their brilliancy, even though Trilling, in unique contradistinction to his usual mode of exposition, does not mention the term "dialectic" once in the entire lecture.

The narratio, the second part of the Ciceronian oration, has
as its function the formal presentation of the case, and this aim calls for
a circumspect attitude upon the speaker who draws together facts, observations, and authoritative sources of knowledge to support a charge or a claim. In other words, what is casually suggested as "the subject" of the exordium becomes, by way of formal presentation and achieved focus, the case of the narratio. It is not without anticipation, once the reader is convinced that Trilling is following the order of the Ciceronian oration, that the formality and circumspection of the second part of Mind in the Modern World is the consequence of Trilling's intention to demonstrate that in recent times the conception of mind to which H. G. Wells and Thomas Jefferson gave their allegiance and shaped their lives, is now being rejected by men of great esteem and authority as a tradition and a style of life no longer appropriate or valuable to human purposes.

Until the eighteenth century the relationship of mind to society is quite unambiguous and is not, as Trilling puts it, an "issue." The questions of what mind is, and what constitutes its nature, and how far its influence extends in the shaping of human destiny come later in that period of history of Europe between the Puritan Revolution and the yet more drastic Revolution at the end of the eighteenth century. Until this time, mind, no
matter how admirable and promising or brilliant a development it achieves within a culture, is still subordinate to the purposes of the church and state. But in the span between the Puritan and French Revolutions the ascendancy of mind in human affairs is such that the intellectual life of these times can be equated with the actual character of the culture. It is important to understand here that the democracy emerging out of these revolutions does more than diminish the power of the king and the church. In the place of the authority of king and clergy, democracy substitutes mind which henceforth men will look toward in confidence and in trust.

The Puritans, inheriting from the Renaissance a zeal for inquiry and debate and interest in Hebrew texts, formulated their notion of government from the kinds of intellectual efforts that the Renaissance disciplines inspired. They did not rely upon kingly authority, nor church tradition in the formulation of the commonwealth. Although their conclusions about theology and government could be rigid and absolutistic as any monarch or church, the Puritans arrived at their dogmas only after they had thought and argued profoundly about their relations to "the Word." The inherent dynamics between mind and democracy are best elucidated by Professor Michael Walzer. In his book *The Revolution of Saints*, Trilling finds an insightful account of the relationship between mind and democracy as it was initiated by the Puritan clergymen of seventeenth century England. In a sense they foreshadow the intelligentsia who would wield such powerful influence in future democracies because they were "the first of a class of men who bring ideas, publicly expressed, to bear upon the nature of the polity, making it a question for debate how society should be constructed."29 It is this new liaison between mind and government in
which the conduct of the mind is to become the new criterion of the political state. As Trilling expresses it later in his lecture: "Plato, when he undertook to say what the right conduct of mind should be, found the paradigm in the just society. We reverse that procedure, finding the paradigm of a just society in the right conduct of mind."  

The actual secularization of reason—meaning here the recognition of mind as an autonomous spiritual faculty—is achieved during the French Revolution. In the period of the French Revolution, reason is equated with the universal concept of spiritual reality, and it is no longer thought of as being in the service of a particular religious or political persuasion.

The architectonic of reason for Trilling is a conjoining of reason and emotions in dialectic; it is this kind of union which characterizes the complete intellectual experience. Trilling's conception of reason has the same quality about it as Milton's conception of the moral life. It must not be "fugitive and cloistered" or "unexercised and unbreathed" but must partake of the race and struggle. As he describes therefore the further development of mind during the French Revolution, it becomes evident that he has his reservations about an unconditioned faith in intellect, at least the kind of optimistic and unmodulated faith which French revolutionaries had in mind. This impression Trilling makes upon his readers as he concludes his survey with this statement about the eighteenth century notion of mind: "An early consequence of this new expectation of mind was that it gave rise to a certain coarseness of intellectual procedure—to what we call, with some adverse force, rationalism."
What Trilling holds in disdain of eighteenth century rationalism is the exclusive value which it places upon intellect and its rather superficial dismissal of the imagination as something secondary. The rationalists, holding to the Cartesian notion of the world as *res extensa*, thought that the intellect should formulate and develop itself with the actuality and regularity which it saw in the world. Rationalism denies the dialectical character of human perception; it understands the mind to be capable of abstract laws and principles, and it attributes to these cognitions and unconditional validity.

As against this eighteenth century mechanistic notion of mind, in which there can be no dialectic of ideas and feelings, Trilling turns his discussion to the romantic vision of mind. This vision of mind he describes with sympathy and approbation partially because of its effort to "correct the theory of mind which had become dominant in the eighteenth century."\(^{33}\) The romantics believed in the kind of growth and development that comes through the dialectical perceptions of the self. As Trilling expresses it: "To the principle of the machine the antagonists of rationalism opposed the principle of the organism, the view that man and his institutions are not designed and contrived but have their autonomous existence through the inherent laws of their growth and development."\(^{34}\)

Romanticism, then, is not only to be understood as a tradition which is defined by its opposition to mechanistic rationalism. Its purposes are also reconciliatory; it wishes to include the human imagination and the cognitive powers of mind within a single experience. Indeed, for Trilling, the deepest and most salutary aspect of romanticism resides in the intention of the artist to make cognitions and feeling
one. Imagination and intellect are "integral to any right conception of mind." 35

How insistent the romantic poets were upon the matter can be found in Wordsworth's "great autobiographical poem," of which Trilling observes:

... The Prelude gives the classic account of the damage done to the mind of the individual, to its powers of cognition no less than its vital force, by the scientistic conception of mind that prevailed among the intellectuals at the time of the French Revolution. The explanatory subtitle of the poem is "The Growth of the Poet's Mind"— for Wordsworth, the poet's mind was the normative mind of man. It grew, he said, not through the strengthening of its powers of analysis and abstraction but through the development of feeling, imagination, and will. 36

Wordsworth's way of conceiving mind, for Trilling, reaches far beyond the mere interests of poetry and can be taken as illustrative of the "normative mind." When Wordsworth portrays the mind as growth, as a dialectically achieved balance between reason and feeling, he is giving his reader a model of mind quite different from the vision of mind upheld by the eighteenth century philosophers. And Trilling, quite sympathetic to Wordsworth's conception of mind as dialectical unity, reveals in part his own intellectual posture. Of Wordsworth's resistance to the constricting views of eighteenth century mechanistic thought and of his vision of mind as a dynamic between self and the world, between intuition and reason, Trilling writes approvingly.

Romanticism is depicted by Trilling as a "corrective" to a vision of mind succinctly described by Pascal as "the spirit of geometry." 37 In alluding to Pascal, Trilling is emphasizing the philosophical significance inherent in Romanticism in general, and
he also is underscoring what profound business Wordsworth was about in his poetry and in his criticism. In holding to "the spirit of geometry," the eighteenth-century philosophers overlooked another aspect of mind which Pascal calls "the acute or subtle spirit," an aspect of mind complementary to the "spirit of geometry," or the rational aspect of mind. The "acute or subtle spirit" represents the elements of will, feeling, and imagination, all of which constituted, for the romantics, a central part of the human psyche. As Wordsworth wished to comprehend both aspects of mind into a single experience, Trilling interprets the central concern of the poet's work with the restoration of mind and feeling. This division which Wordsworth sought to correct is often referred to as the Cartesian split, the unhappy division between mind and feeling, which was the consequence of the ascendancy of rationalism.

Interestingly, though often thought otherwise, this division is not a problem peculiar to modern times. The metaphysical enigma of objective and subjective knowledge, Ernest Cassirer writes in his Essay on Man, has been the preoccupation of philosophers, theologians, and poets throughout the entire history of the West. Of these two views of knowledge, each containing two different epistemologies, he writes: "The struggle between these two conflicting views has lasted for many centuries, and at the beginning of the modern era— at the time of the Renaissance and in the seventeenth century— we still feel its full strength." In referring to the distinction which Pascal makes between the spirit of geometry and "the acute or subtle spirit," Trilling seizes upon a phrase which recapitulates the history of this profound philosophical dichotomy,
and he relates that dichotomy to Wordsworth's intentions as a poet and as a critic.

Hence, in Wordsworth's desire to integrate "feeling, imagination, and will" with the cognitive process of the human psyche, Trilling depicts Wordsworth as a poet who took upon himself a problem of great philosophical import, and one with which the philosophers, poets, and theologians who were his predecessors were much concerned. The Greeks sought to understand the disparity between the world of ideals and the world of the senses; Augustine spent his life studying the relationship between reason and faith; and Wordsworth addressed himself to the relationship between intellect and feelings. The terms of each of these conflicts, of course, were different, yet at the heart of the matter lay an intense desire on the part of all these men to find unity between two orders of knowledge.

A careful reading of Wordsworth's work indicates that the science of his time, as a particular species of objective thinking and a powerful form of eighteenth century rationalism, constitutes only part of the threat to the unity of the human spirit. This is not to diminish the validity of Wordsworth's concern about the ascendancy of science. Indeed, the apprehension about science which Wordsworth showed survives to this day, and it can account for much of the alienation which modern man suffers from himself, from others, and from the world.

Yet never did Wordsworth wish to destroy or devalue the accomplishments of science. Indeed, as a student of mathematics, he found much to admire in science and he was convinced that science, taken here to represent the cognitive processes of mind, should be encompassed in
common experience. Hence, in writing that "Wordsworth's attitude toward science has a peculiar pertinence to . . . the situation of mind in our culture," Trilling is stressing Wordsworth's wish to reconcile science with the imagination, feelings, and will over and against what he is usually remembered for, and that is his opposition to mechanistic rationalism.

One of the best remembered things about Wordsworth is the antagonism to science he expressed, but it is scarcely less characteristic of his thought that he did not consent to see the poetic mind and the scientific mind as being in final opposition to each other. On the contrary, he asserted that there was a natural affinity between them. "Poetry," he said, "is the impassioned expression which is on the countenance of all science," and he predicted that the day would come when the discoveries of scientists would be "as proper objects of the Poet's art as any which can be employed." There was, however, one condition which he said must prevail before this happy state of affairs could come about—that the substance of science should become familiar to those who are not scientists.

It is unity of perception which Wordsworth seeks, and that unity of knowledge can be brought about by the poet, who as the "normative man" can perceive a "natural affinity," a dialectic, between science and passion.

That condition has never come about; indeed, science, growing at an accelerating rate into ever more complex bodies of specialized knowledge, has become even more separated from the understanding of the layman. Hence the vision of mind, which emerges in the late eighteenth century and which created such anxiety among the romantic poets, still engenders disunity in the intellectual life, despite Wordsworth's brilliant efforts to reconstruct a more comprehensive vision of human knowledge. The "operative conceptions" of human knowledge remain unintelligible to most people, and the discoveries of science engage no emotion nor stir.
the imaginations of the poets. Yet Trilling is not so much saddened by the widening gap between science and the layman as he is disturbed by the loss of the desire for unity between science and emotion. Moreover, the modern poets do not suffer in the least from the anxiety which Wordsworth experienced over the schisms between the imagination and the discoveries of science. With telling brevity, Trilling observes of this situation: "Our poets are indifferent to them."42

The consequence of the loss of the Jeffersonian ideal, a notion of dialectical intelligence achieved through the study of science and the humanities, has been sad for both the layman and the scientists. The majority of educated men, unable to understand modern science, find "their intellectual self-esteem" wounded by their own ignorance to such a degree that they "all agree to be silent"43 about it. Such silent humiliation, of course, is accompanied by a tragic and despairing sense of the inefficacy of mind in dealing with the daily experience of life.

If the dialectic, which comes from a general knowledge and intelligence, is denied the educated citizenry as a consequence of their being disjoined from a knowledge of science, the scientists, circumscribed in the abstruse matter of their own discipline, suffer a similar kind of fate. According to Trilling, they lack a sense of the conditioned, the attentiveness to the particulars and circumstances of existence, something which Milton speaks of in Paradise Lost as "prime Wisdom."

Of the plight of the scientists, Trilling writes:

But surely, it might be said, when it comes to the actual living of life this exclusion from science is not of decisive consequence. When Adam in Paradise Lost says that he wants to understand the mysteries of the cosmos, the archangel Raphael tells him not to puzzle his head over these abstruse matters and assures him
that the "prime Wisdom" is to know "that which before us lies in daily life." The good sense of the angelic advice is confirmed when we consider that our scientific friends and colleagues do not seem any further advanced in the prime Wisdom than any of the rest of us. They see no more clearly than we do what lies before us in daily life.44

A profound observation, indeed, Trilling makes here, for no matter how much the scientists may know about the complex operations of the universe, when it comes to the actual living of life as conditioned creatures, they have demonstrated no moral acumen or taught the laity any ethical truth commensurate with the dignity and power which society accords them for their achievement within their discipline. They wander in mazes, closed to most men, wonderful mazes in which they make brilliant discoveries, and they are admired for what they find there. But should they be called upon to give a unified account of things, they offer no penetrating insights or great philosophical illuminations. They are as impoverished in the general intelligence of things as are all men.

But these failings would be of little consolation to those who are not scientists, or those who are in "the contemporary disciplines which address themselves to the affairs of daily life." In the case of the latter, these disciplines too have circumscribed their own fields and separated themselves from the general intelligence of dialectic and energy which sustains an enlightened society. In illustration of this point, Trilling singles out the development of economics in the past century and a half. When John Stuart Mill published his Principles of Political Economy in 1848, the book was "at once a great popular success," going through thirty-two editions subsequent to its original publications. The controversy it created in the literary world cannot
but win admiration. Dickens, for instance, so hated the work that he wrote *Hard Times*, a novel which seeks to demonstrate "how deplorable were the human implications of Mill's view." And then there was Ruskin, who was so upset by the book, that he wrote his monumental essays on the relation between art and economics. His essays evoked more controversy, for when Ruskin published his essays in Thackeray's *Cornhill Magazine*, the subscribers became so outraged at Ruskin that they threatened to cancel their subscriptions. Such, says Trilling, was the effect of Mill's treatise: "That is to say, Mill's treatise entered into the general culture of its time; it was an object of the general intellect of the nation." Today there is no such book written about economics which can bring up the dialectical energy of thought and culture achievement as Mill's *Principles of Political Economy*. Contemporary economics has become specialized to the point that it places the subject matter "at a hopeless distance from the layman."45

Other social disciplines have followed the same pattern. History has been described already by Trilling as falling into a "deteriorating status." Philosophy, traditionally addressed to the purpose of making men think clearly, "has become a technical subject for specialists and no longer consents to accommodate the interest and effort of any reasonably strong intelligence." In the case of literature, Trilling continues, there was a development which was quite different from the situation in economics, history, or philosophy. Some decades ago, certain scholars of literature decided "that literary works are not so readily accessible to the understanding as at first they might look to be." With this assumption in mind, they proceeded to devise "elaborate and sophisticated methods" for a comprehension of literary works. But these
methods brought effects which were quite opposite to the intentions of well-meaning teachers of literature. Though they hoped that their methods would deepen the study of literature and elucidate its meaning for the ordinary readers, they actually transformed their discipline into "an esoteric subject available only to expert knowledge." The failings of these scholars brought complaints from literary critics who noted that "the hyperactivity of criticism and scholarship had come to stand as a barrier between the ordinary reader and the literary work." This criticism was constructive and salutary, Trilling observes, because it aimed at the faults and "did not question the usefulness of literary study," nor "the faith in the inherent instructive power which had long characterized American higher education." And, for a moment, it seemed that a dialectical exchange of thought had emancipated literature from the confusion and inaccessibility which had characterized other disciplines.

But when Professor Louis Kampf as president of the Modern Language Association gave his presidential address in 1971, something of a wound to the self-esteem of teachers of literature can be said to have taken place. In that speech Kampf "assured" his audience "that the teaching of literature in American colleges is now virtually at its end, having lost all rational justification." Kampf argues that the teaching of literature in America, as it is inspired by Matthew Arnold, is "a diversion and a spectacle" originating in the impractical world of aesthetics. As Trilling sees it, Kampf dismisses literature as archaic and useless because "it has no possible bearing upon the matters which
must be the chief or only objects of concern, the anomalies and injustices of American life."\(^48\)

Now, the "wound" which Kampf gives might have been suffered in "silent humiliation" by his colleagues, but Trilling's response to Kampf, filled as it is with irony and innuendo, contains a number of dialectical suggestions, which in no way suggests silence and humiliation. No sooner does Trilling refer to Kampf's allusion to Matthew Arnold's conception of literature than one anticipates a crushing answer from the critic who has explicated so beautifully and profoundly Arnold's notion of literature as a "criticism of life."\(^49\) But Trilling is far too patrician, far too magnanimous a man, to strike back with ungenerous criticism. Indeed, all Trilling says in this connection is that Kampf paid no attention to

that influence in the part of Arnold's theory of literature where it truly resides, in the continuing force of the famous characterization of literature as "a criticism of life" and in Arnold's definition of criticism as the effort "to see the object as in itself it really is," the objects upon which it directs itself being not literature alone but also ideas in general and most especially ideas about society.\(^50\)

In other words, Trilling suggests that Kampf has not apprehended what Arnold has insisted literature must always be: energetic, dialectical, paradoxical. It must be possessed of these attributes because they are the very stuff of human experience, at least in its finest and highly developed moments. If the artist is to capture this sense of experience in completeness, he must remove himself from needs and interests, whether they come from his own psyche or the particular group to which he allies himself. What Kampf interprets as "aesthetic" and "ultimate remove" in literature is what Arnold calls "disinterestedness."\(^51\)
In Kampf's allusion to Matthew Arnold, Trilling shows that Kampf has, to say the least, been rather careless in understanding the complexity and variability of what Arnold defines as literature. Trilling does not dwell upon the insufficiencies of Kampf's understanding of Arnold. Instead he confronts Kampf's other charge that literature is divorced from social reality and politics by examining it in the light of what Kampf seems to value most: the immediacy of political experience. Trilling does this by formulating a rhetorical question which is intended to uncover a contradictory omission in Kampf's charge. "Why," Trilling asks with dialectical aplomb, "if the dereliction of literature from seriousness is this absolute, the totalitarian countries are so fearful of it Professor Kampf does not tell us."52

After suggesting that there are certain unresolved aspects in Kampf's charges, Trilling, at least for a moment, seems lighthearted when he points to matters about which Kampf is not vague at all:

He is prepared, however, to name the exact moment when, after generations during which teachers were animated by their faith in the educative powers of literature, they came at last to understand that theirs was a commitment to a corrupting frivolity—the year was 1968, the occasion was the campus uprisings, which, in Professor Kampf's view, at long last forced social and political reality upon the consciousness of students and teachers alike. Since 1968, Professor Kampf says, "the young go into the profession with dread; the old can scarcely wait for retirement; and those of the middle years yearn for sabbaticals."53

If there is any spectacle and diversion to be associated with literature, it is surely here when, as the president of one of the most distinguished organizations of literary scholars, Kampf tells those who spend lifetimes studying Shakespeare, Milton, Emerson, Twain, Dickinson that "theirs is a commitment to a corrupting frivolity."
But no matter how sanguine a dismissal of literature and how theatrical a rejection of his profession Kampf makes, Trilling is quick to remind his audience that beneath all of Kampf's flamboyance, there is an intense despair born of the fatal split in knowledge caused by eighteenth century rationalism. He is quite back to his sober tone when he ends the second part of *Mind in the Modern World* by underscoring the symbolic implications of Kampf's speech:

He speaks as the elected chief officer of the professional association of teachers of literature: in his estimate of the morale of his constituency there must be some quantum of truth. We can therefore say that in our time the mind of a significant part of a once proud profession has come to the end of its tether.54

In making this statement, Trilling wishes to connect that despair of mind which was so singular a thing in the case of Wells with certain developments in the academic world of contemporary culture. Knowledge, having been disjoined by the autonomy given to science in the eighteenth century, is disconnected and disunified. Each discipline seems to have been "wounded" by the ascendant superiority accorded to science. Many of the social disciplines and the humanities have suffered further intellectual disgrace, because scholars have emulated the specialized techniques of science. But what they actually have achieved is an *ersatz* dignity and often an arrogance not unlike that of mechanistic science.

In the third part of *Mind in the Modern World*, Trilling observes that his efforts in former sections have been devoted to circumstances which account for "an uneasiness" which "has come into our relation to mind." But now he suggests a more penetrating account of disenchantment with mind can be gained by considering the phenomenon as "something other
than a response to particular alienating circumstance," as perhaps "the expression of an attitude toward mind which is more nearly autonomous, and adverse judgment passed upon mind in its very essence."\textsuperscript{55}

Hence, it is apparent that Trilling is inviting his readers into a deeper and more complex consideration of the moral and psychological causality which underlies the growing disenchantment with mind in contemporary culture. These new lines of investigation to which Trilling now addresses himself change the perspective of his speech, and the reader henceforth considers the plight of mind in the modern world in a manner quite different from the historical or descriptive delineation of the problem. Indeed, as it turns out, Trilling now directs his attention to the moral, the psychological, and the metaphysical aspects of human experience.

The new emphasis which Trilling places upon "attitude" as a manifestation of autonomy, adversity, and judgement indicates the measure of moral assent which is contained in the loss of confidence in mind. This is not unanticipated, at least for those readers who have been following the lecture as a Ciceronian oration; traditionally the third part of the oration can be likened to a climax, for it is at this point that the speaker represents his own evaluations, judgements, and arguments as they pertain to the issues which have been raised in the exordium and the narratio of the speech. In short, the confirmatio contains the speaker's "case," as it is sometimes said.

The argument which Trilling presents is long and detailed, and it is very difficult to summarize. For one thing, the scepticism about mind, which he understands to be the expression of an attitude, quite
naturally brings into his discussion matters of politics and metaphysics. Although Trilling seeks out and explores disillusionment with mind in the light of moral causality, he does not abandon those long and telling summaries of historical events, those descriptions of contemporary situations, which, as has been seen, he handles with such adroitness for other purposes. But here, more than any other place in the lecture, Trilling goes beyond the surface of circumstances in quest of human attitudes, and he seeks to establish the degree to which such attitudes can be considered, if not the source of circumstances, then perhaps the explanation of their continued existence. Hence the comments, observations and paradoxes which he now makes of these historical events and contemporary circumstances can be taken as judgments. What Trilling wishes his reader to understand is that the adversary proceeding against mind is not so much determination of circumstance as it is the expression of a willed dissatisfaction with mind.

The "adversary proceeding" against mind, Trilling suggests, can be understood as an aspect of the political development in contemporary culture: "It is a commonplace of our day to speak of crises of authority, and the glibness with which we use the phrase does not derogate from the salient actuality of what it denotes. One such crisis of authority, we might suppose, is taking place in relation to mind." This adverse attitude toward mind is, then, actually an aspect of a new species of democracy. As part of a new political philosophy, intensely egalitarian in its vision of life, the adversary attitude rejects mind as a human power which works against the best interests of democracy.

Mind, from this point of view, is represented as "having two maleficent effects" upon society, and the specificity and formality
of the charge indicates the degree of deliberation and thought contained in this attitude toward mind. One such charge is that mind inevitably engenders authority which interferes with the growth of social equality. The other charge has to do with the effect of mind upon personality. Here the very discipline and cultivation of mind is understood to bring about a deformation of personality.

Trilling does not deny that mind engenders authority, nor does he underestimate the agitating powers of intellect. He would differ, of course, on the values and the interpretation which certain political philosophers find in these aspects of mind. One of the central points which Trilling establishes quite early in his confirmation is that "a chief characteristic of mind is the claims which it makes, or which are made for it, to a very high authority indeed." As Trilling sees it, mind, assisting in the emancipative processes of democracy, evolves and grows strong with the democratic government it creates, and the powers of mind, now freed to create a dialectic of any kind, become aggressive.

This evolving authority of mind, according to Trilling, begins in early history, particularly among the Greeks, and can be traced in the political development of the nineteenth century. Originally the powers of mind were equated with divinity itself. The Greeks, perceiving an analogy between mind and authority, associated mind with class position. Plato, for example, attributed to mind a superiority over all other activities, and so in the question of authority, he argues that it belongs to men of mind, or "the Philosopher-Kings." Aristotle, more sympathetic to democracy than Plato, saw mind as an activity
appropriate to the aristocracy. According to him, "the right development of individual mind" can occur "only in men of high rank."59

In the nineteenth century, when democratic notions of government were displacing the old monarchic states, mind is still associated with authority, in spite of the fact that intellect was one of the chief instrumentalities of democracy. However, the authority which is now associated with mind is not static authority, such as once possessed by king and bishop, but a more mobile authority, achieved through dint of aggressive thought and will. Henceforth, whosoever develops the powers of mind and makes strenuous and heroic efforts to understand himself and the world is accorded the kind of admiration, prestige, and command which makes for authority.

In the metaphysical matter of what constitutes the essence of mind, Trilling sees the adversary proceeding as being quite correct in its interpretation of the native powers of mind. Its egalitarian zeal then has not been an obstacle to a correct understanding of mind in its historical and metaphysical development. And to a limited degree, Trilling finds a certain cogency in its argument; as mind does engender authority and as it does make great demands of human time and human energy, it might well be thought of as an aberration, disruptive of Edenic quietude.

About the conscious attitudes and rationalized aspects of the adversary proceeding, Trilling reserves his judgment until a later stage in the confirmatio when he uncovers the insufficiency of the movement in its manifest attitude. At this point, he is more interested in the covert aspect of the movement, the aspect of the ideology which one might describe as almost unconscious. Of this
approach much is to be said because it treats the adversary proceeding as a psychological phenomenon. For if revolutions are sublimated transformations of phantasy, as Fred Weinstein and Gerald Platt argue in *The Wish to be Free*, then it behooves the thoughtful and responsible critic to decide whether these subliminal wishes are creative or destructive human attitudes.

In a very subtle way, Trilling makes use of this methodology when he speaks of that "certain voice" of the late nineteenth century which in its protest against mind anticipates the adversary proceeding. That voice came from no revolutionary manifesto, but from an "enchanting romance," written by William Morris and entitled *News from Nowhere*. In that romance Morris describes a society of perfect felicity, but he argues that before such felicity can be achieved, two ideals, quite similar to the aims of the adversary proceeding, must be realized:

Two ideals were to be realized in Morris's utopia: one was equality; the other was rest, the cessation of all anxious effort. To this end Morris excluded science, philosophy, and high art from his community. His happy people occupy themselves with what he had elsewhere called the "lesser arts," those modest enterprises of the hand which produce useful and decorative objects of daily life.

This vision of "unvexed life" in *News from Nowhere* charmed its readers for eighty years, but its attitude toward mind made it impossible for anyone to take the book seriously. Such is not the case today, because the attitude which Morris assumed toward mind has gained enough popular assent as to constitute a revolution: "We in our time will be less disposed to condescend to the book which eight decades ago stated the case against mind that is now being openly litigated in our culture."
The delightful fantasy of Morris has now been transformed into a powerful social movement.
In his imagining of such utopian democracy, Morris reveals an unambiguous wish for an Edenic world, where man may live a passive, untroubled, unconditioned life. To this end he eschews the dialectical energies of mind because he fears "the aggressivity of comprehension and control which highly developed mind directs upon the world" and the "competitiveness and self-aggrandizement" following people in their pursuit of the life of reason. And similarly he fears the authority of mind as it expresses itself in genius, because with genius comes one of the most authoritative manifestations of mind:

He wanted no geniuses to distress their less notable fellows by their pre-eminent ability to tell the truth or be interesting, and to shine brighter than the general run of mankind, requiring our submission to the authority of their brilliance, disturbing us with novel ideas and difficult tastes, perhaps tempting some few to emulate them by giving up rest in order to live laborious days and incur the pains of mental fight.

The voice of the intellect, then, for Morris is not gentle, and it has no place in his paradise. In describing the particular hostility which Morris holds against genius, Trilling speaks of the "laborious days" and "mental fight" which genius requires of itself and activates in other less gifted men, and which is the source of disturbance to that treasured rest of the new utopia. Much as the phrases may sound like Trilling, for they ring with the clarity and sonority of his style, they are not of his making. They are taken from Milton's "Lycidas" and Blake's "Stanzas from Milton"; they are, in short, allusions, but Trilling does not choose them for mere rhetorical effect. Their use is intended to specify the kind of genius which Morris wishes to exile from his world, and the two poets to which Trilling alludes in illustration of this point are possessed of such significance that the mere mention
of their names symbolizes what Morris wishes to remove himself from.

Morris wishes to free himself of that received tradition of
democracy, which Milton and Blake, the two great visionaries of liberty,
represent in their writings and in their lives as the continuous and
achieved dialectic of mind. In this there is irony, for while Blake
and Milton may be singled out as men possessed of the most aggressive
and authoritarian kind of genius, no two poets better understood how
deply entrenched is the desire of the heart for felicity, Milton con­
ceiving it as Paradise, Blake mythologizing it as Eden.

Yet Milton and Blake understood felicity as an achievement which
comes only after the struggle and dialectic of mind. Moreover, for
both poets the tangled experiences of this world of matter, of time
and space, and of good and evil make impossible the achievement of a
state of rest as Morris would have it in this world. The very anxiety
and suffering of thought which Morris sees as doing violence to the
self and to humanity is identified by Milton and by Blake as the highest
kind of moral and creative freedom. Such suffering Milton interprets
as an aspect of the "happy fall," and he would argue that it consti­
tutes a new dignity in man, achieved through his "fall" from the child­
like Adam of the early days of Paradise to the anguished Job who shapes
his faith through profound questionings and sublime affirmations.
Similarly, Blake conceives of Eden not as innocence alone, but as
innocence conjoined to the experience of thought and pain, the con­
sequences of which come in a moment of Edenic ecstasy.

In contrast to this, what Morris wishes for is a world of un­
conditioned felicity in which nothing is required of men. Such a
vision, once unmasked, can be seen as having its origins in an undying narcissism\(^{68}\) and narcissism is the universal temptation which every man is expected to renounce. But Morris, within the limits of his romance, finds no humiliation in yielding to that wish as he makes attractive a utopia of embryonic bliss, free of the differentiating power of mind and its anxious perception of the world as a dialectic between the unconditioned and the conditioned.

Trilling allows the weakness of this vision to speak for itself. It is a foolish and destructive wish for the kind of unconditioned absolutism which, in addition to denying the dialectical character of reality, diminishes the dignity of being human, of having personality, of making moral choices, of being isolate in thoughtful reflection, and of being possessed of distinction.

Trilling therefore considers William Morris's *News from Nowhere* to be a document of great cultural significance. Its publication foreshadows the transformation which democracy undergoes in contemporary culture. That transformation can be understood in the contrast of the democracy of the nineteenth century with the new ascending species of democracy now found in contemporary culture. Whereas in the nineteenth century democracy made considerable gain through a series of dialectics between mind and the old authoritarian traditions, the democracy of the twentieth century is inspired by a vision of felicity in which mind is devalued because of its disruptive and dialectical powers.

In suggesting a genetic relationship between the adversary proceeding and the vision of the "unvexed life" in *News from Nowhere*, Trilling is not making a psychoanalytic exploration which reduces this social phenomenon to mere impulse. He is rather placing a fundamental
question before his readers, one which has to do with primal human motives. As Trilling understands it, the issue is what men want, really want, apart from what they think they want, or what they claim to want.

Certainly the citizens of contemporary culture do not seem interested in the kind of freedom for which men like Voltaire, Jefferson, Mill, and Freud fought so hard. Indeed, it can be argued that no sooner had men achieved the right to think out and shape their destinies than they regretted the victory which placed upon them the heavy burden and responsibility attendant upon the life of reason. They perhaps realized that thought does not come easily; it requires the effort, the time, and the sacrifice of "laborious nights." Moreover in a society of emancipated minds, where ideas abound in dialectical strife, intellectual identity cannot be established through the leisurely conduct of mind. There must be aggression, or "mental fight to command the attention of others to one intellectual authority.

Trilling puts aside, at least for a while, this not very flattering aspect of human nature as it can be observed in the distortion of a humanitarian ideal, in the disguised use of an abstraction for a rather primitive human desire. Trilling here shifts his attention to the two charges which he formerly identified as constituting the adversary proceeding against mind. He examines the adversary proceeding in the aspect of its consciously defined aims, and whenever possible he acknowledges whatever cogency there exists in the argument of the movement, in spite of his implied misgivings about the validity of this new cultural phenomenon.

He approaches the first charge, that mind makes for inequality,
as a philosophical construct, and, of course, this brings into
discussion the question of the validity of the first charge, first
as an abstraction and then as an idea developed in the dialectic of
human experience and of history. He begins by discussing a basal
notion which the first charge presupposes: if mind can be accused of
making for inequality, then conversely one must be able to conceive
of a state of existence in which there is equality, and in which mind
plays a definitive part in actualizing that equality. Jefferson made
such a speculation, and significantly he conceived of the relationship
between equality and mind as one which was quite opposite to the stated
charge of the adversary position:

That mind could be thought to make a principle of
inequality would once have bewildered any man of good
will and advanced views. Jefferson thought that it was
virtually of the essence of mind that it pointed toward
equality, and his system of education had the specific
goal of countervailing the power of property by the
power of ideas, which he assumed to be accessible to
all men equally.89

But it is precisely here in the claim that mind makes for equality
that the difficulties and complexities of the issues of equality begin.
In holding that "it was virtually of the essence of mind that it pointed
toward equality," and that mind contains the power of "countervailing
property," Jefferson formulated a metaphysical conception of mind which
he thought would implement the unconditioned progress of democracy.
This opposition between mind and property which he found in the circum-
stances of his time is quite naturally the consequence of his particular
situation, and not necessarily a dichotomy which can define the meta-
physical conception of mind or property. Trilling shows the insuffi-
ciency of the Jeffersonian conception of mind by establishing an analogy

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supplying a paradoxical sense of mind, which makes it seem extravagant to hold, as Jefferson did, that mind in its essence points toward equality:

Yet we must see that whatever inherent antagonism there may be between ideas and property, they are not in all respects dissimilar. Between ideas and one form of property, money, there is actually a close analogy to be drawn. At a certain point in history money began to play a part in society which can be thought of as ideational—in England in the late Renaissance, in a society in which the aristocratic land-owning class was prepotent, money had a disintegrating effect upon the nation's class structure and hence upon its moral and intellectual assumptions. . . . It was the ever-growing power of money that proposed and propagated equality as a social ideal. And then, to carry the analogy further, it can be said of ideas that they are, like money, a mobile and mobilizing form of property. They are, to be sure, accessible to all and held in common, but as they come to have power in the world, it is plain that a peculiar power or, at the least, status accrues to the individuals who first conceive them, or organize them, or make them public. Men of ideas, perhaps even more rapidly than men of money, move toward equality with men of birth. Voltaire, Rousseau, and Diderot appear on the eighteenth-century scene as sovereign princes of intellect.

What the contradictions and paradoxes of Jefferson's formulation indicate is that any abstractions such as these must be qualified by the experience of circumstances and of history. Taken as a philosophical formula, independent of the dialectic of history, Jefferson's conception is an interesting speculation, but it is only that. And, of course, if it holds that Jefferson's ideas are sufficient only in the world of abstractions, it follows that any statement derived upon the same basal abstraction is subject to the same criticism.

The achieved social status of Voltaire, Rousseau, and Diderot does not make for, Trilling points out, the kind of equality which "Jefferson meant when he spoke of ideas as making for equality, nor was it what the French Revolution meant when it emblazoned the word on its banners."
Jefferson and the French revolutionaries held to the notion of equality as an abstraction, an unconditioned ideal of equity among men. But the conditioned equality of Voltaire, Rousseau, and Diderot was "all that established society was ready for." It was an equality which Napoleon approved of, when he proclaimed his maxim, "Careers open to talents," and for post-revolutionary France, it was "a quite significant, even a bold, definition of social equality." In England, such a conception of conditioned equality brought great progress to democracy, and Alexis de Tocqueville, "the great historian of the modern ideal of equality and its developing force in the world," admired England over his native France for the success with which the country realized the egalitarian ideal. There, as a man of humble birth rose from "simple origins to wealth, status, and influence through his talents and efforts alone, beholden to no one," so also could a man of mind "follow the same course." The extraordinary examples of Michael Faraday, Thomas Carlyle, and Charles Dickens became paradigms of nineteenth century democracy. And as their legend of glory became known, even ordinary men were allowed to have careers in society.  

Hence, England established a powerful social dialectic of democracy in which mind in its aggressive and authoritarian energies played a dominant role. People understood that this was not equality, the equality which Jefferson and the French revolutionaries aspired after, but that "it was equality of opportunity," or conditioned equality. It was an equality admired by Tocqueville because "it seemed so effectual a means of preventing the revolutions which plagued France." And for Carlyle and Ruskin, the great stewards of nineteenth century democracy, such equality was a satisfactory resolution. Never in all "their
impassioned demands for social justice" did they criticize the practical conception of equality which was accommodating so many and working so well in England.\textsuperscript{72} It becomes evident then that the great democracies of the nineteenth century achieved an equality which, because of its conditioned character, would not be acceptable to either Jefferson, who understood mind to make for an absolute equality, or to those of the adversary proceeding who see mind as an impediment to absolute equality. But the great social reformers were content with that limited equality which mind enabled men to gain in European society. It was only at the end of the nineteenth century that men once again became interested in the intense egalitarianism of Jefferson and revolutionary France.

In 1876, it was Matthew Arnold, of all people, who complained in a lecture before the Royal Institute of the low status to which the notion of equality had fallen. And like Jefferson, "he saw the cause of equality as being best served by the improvement and spread of the education available to the lower-middle and working classes." Yet the English resisted this idea, and it is only recently that Arnold's idea "has become an avowed national purpose."\textsuperscript{73}

In America, where the conception of an unconditioned equality has not encountered as much resistance, higher education inspired by the Jeffersonian notion of equality "has spread among the population at an ever-accelerating rate," and the nation has found this flourishing of education among the population reassuring "of its commitment to equality," except, of course, until the past decade.\textsuperscript{74}

But if one examines what has happened to the university in the past few years, one can perceive that a new impulse for unconditioned
equality emerging in American culture is now bringing confusion into contemporary life, and one can also understand how, under the influence of the adversary proceeding, the university, once a brilliant embodiment of the kind of dialectical democracy found in the nineteenth century, is becoming the political instrumentality of a group who are not so much interested in equality as they are in actualizing a philosophy of intellectual nihilism.

The university in America has always been an institution which has followed the spirit of the dialectical democracy of nineteenth century Britain. To a limited degree, it has always provided a "successful means of upward social mobility," while at the same time it remained loyal to the transcendent purposes of mind. Of the once esteemed traditions of the American universities, Trilling writes,

> Everyone was perfectly aware of their being a way to social advancement, but much of the complex interest they had for the American people, much of the esteem and even affection in which they were held, derived from the purposes of general enlightenment and humanization which they claimed, from their conceiving themselves to be in the service of disinterested mind.

But this tradition of the university, in which an individual achieves respect, admiration, and authority through his intellectual accomplishments, is now considered an aberration of democracy. "Indeed, in some quarters, it has given place to a view which holds that higher education is one of the citadels of social privilege." The consequences of this view are that the whole idea of the intellectual life in the university is now subordinated to the unconditioned idea of equality. The university, formerly an institution comprehending in complex dialectic both the social and intellectual ambitions of men, is now being transformed into a agency of democracy which has for its
purpose the single aim of bringing a formal equality to people. Of the plight of the universities, Trilling observes sadly:

They may still claim, though they do so ever, less often and less firmly, that they are in the service of those ideals which are announced by the Latin mottoes on their corporate seals, ideals of "light" and "truth," but it is increasingly believed that their real duty is to enable as many people as possible to pass from a lower to a higher position in society.78

For Trilling there is no denying that there exists an inequality in the universities, although he understands that inequality as something emerging from circumstance rather than malicious human intention. "If higher education," he tells his readers, "is, among other things, an institutionalized means of upward social movement, it must be recognized that many members of our society are debarred from its process by reason of an ever more galling circumstance of their disadvantaged position, a limited acculturation and an early schooling of extreme inadequacy."79 So it is not so much the charge itself which is disturbing to Trilling, but something external to the charge; it is the conduct of those who seek to resolve the problem. And, as it turns out, it is the federal government, which falls under the critical gaze of Trilling. Under the auspices of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, the government has sought to correct the supposed inequity which many believe to be inherent in the traditions of the universities. Trilling objects in particular to a directive issued by this governmental agency in which it was decided "that institutions of higher education which receive government funds shall move at once toward bringing a statistically adequate representation on their faculties of ethnic minority groups."80 Though Trilling endorses the directive in its "general and ideal goal," he does not write approvingly of the policy by which this aim is to be
accomplished. That policy, he points out, is addressed to the achievement of an immediate and adequate representation of minorities without the least concern for its effect upon "standards of excellence of the academic profession."

Hence, the great dialectic of the university, which was once the matrix of intellectual accomplishments and of a limited social mobility, is now being dissolved in favor of certain popular values of sociological import. The universities, having been accused of failing in "their equalizing function, are now being transformed into agencies of "social accreditation." Their continued existence and their formal justification as institutions is now "wholly defined by the function in which they have been said to fail." The new direction which they have been virtually ordered to take is toward the pursuit of unconditional equality, and they are commissioned to achieve this goal even to the extent of rejecting their former allegiance to "light" and "truth" for their newly defined function.

The extremity of this policy, Trilling fears, will bring "serious adverse consequences," which "will be felt not within the academic community alone, but within the cultural life of our society as a whole, not least, we may be sure, by that part of it to which the disadvantaged ethnic groups will themselves look for sustenance." Of course, one knows precisely what Trilling is saying here, if one remembers how strongly he has emphasized the need for "prime Wisdom" in the actual living of life. A society by devaluing the general intelligence which obtains from the dialectical pursuit of "truth" and "light" deprives all of its citizens of the sense of a whole existence, of integrity of human purpose. Hence, Trilling interprets the strong measures taken
to bring an egalitarian state within the academic community as self-defeating, when of course that state of equity is achieved through the sacrifice of intellectual standards. As a university is a place where the general intelligence should be able to grow and prosper, any effort which lessens the intensity of that life ultimately affects the intelligence of the communal good.

In dealing with the first charge of the adversary proceeding, Trilling therefore makes an effort to recognize whatever cogent elements are contained within the position. Trilling does not deny that the university fosters an intellectual life out of which comes, as Thoreau would say, "a natural and irresistible aristocracy in every society," more influential upon mankind than "kings and emperors." But given the inevitability of distinction which naturally follows from intellectual accomplishment of this kind, Trilling sees whatever other class distinction said to exist within the university as something which is engendered by external causes, as social and cultural circumstance. And though he acknowledges that some social measures should be taken to correct the evils attendant upon such inequality, he urges his audience to look hard and long at the changes which are now being implemented in the university for the redressal of inequality:

Yet if we consider some of the assumptions on which the effort of redress has so far been made by our society through its government, we must see that they constitute telling evidence of that uneasy or ambivalent or actually disaffected relation to mind which has come to mark our culture. Trilling's efforts henceforth will be seen in "his unmasking," as it might be said, of what actually lies beneath the surface of these new political actions. What he uncovers there is not at all flattering, and yet it cannot be said to be unanticipated.
The suggestion that a political ideology may be disguise for another human motive has come up before in the discussion which Trilling makes of William Morris's *News from Nowhere*. There it was pointed out that the avowed interest which Morris showed was in actuality only a nominal interest. Indeed when one examines very closely what he required for his utopia, it could be argued that his society, which in no way tolerated the life of the mind, was rooted in a covert wish to escape responsibility, pain, authority, and aggression attendant upon the life of mind. Given the validity of this interpretation, it follows that whenever a society is possessed of a strong egalitarian impulse, there often can be said to exist, not far behind, a strong and unyielding hostility to mind.

Hence in the egalitarian spirit which is found in such directives as those of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Trilling finds adverse attitudes toward mind. And as the university is "a hierarchy of persons" who carry out "the enterprises of mind" and who "in the instutionalized training of the mind" make judgment upon others in degree of proficiency and accomplishment," it becomes a matter of inevitability that such an institution will be looked upon by those of the egalitarian persuasion as an archaic and vestigial survival of the old dialectical democracy of the nineteenth century.

The fate of the university in contemporary culture is symbolic and illuminative of what underlies the egalitarian impulse of the adversary proceeding. As the university is singled out from so many institutions in American culture to be the subject of a powerful and shaping impulse of egalitarianism, it becomes evident that the traditional academic standards are being changed not for the achievement of a perfect equality
but rather for the extirpation of mind. The aggression and authority of mind, which once characterized a series of brilliant dialectics in nineteenth century democracy, is now being renounced in favor of a democracy whose citizens are no longer made anxious by the sacrifice and discipline required in the life of mind.

In the attitudes of those who are in the academic profession, Trilling finds the most telling evidence that men have become tired of the demands which mind makes upon their energies in the aggressive expression of ideas. The intellectuals of the universities no longer wish to shape their own thoughts and visions upon a world of social circumstance and intractable matter. They offer no resistance to the overzealous agencies of government who have invaded their once sovereign ground. Under the pressure of popular opinion which calls for them to abolish their once treasured academic traditions and standards of excellence, they are passive, silent, and even worse, indifferent. As Trilling observes:

The diminished morale which marks the academic profession in its official existence is, we may suppose, of a piece with the growing intellectual recessiveness of college and university faculties, their reluctance to formulate any coherent theory for higher education, to discover what its best purposes are, and to try to realize them through the requirements of the curriculum. And no observation of the decline in academic confidence can leave out of account the effect of a tendency which of recent years has established itself within the academic community, among teachers as well as students, the ideological trend which rejects and seeks to discredit the very concept of mind. This adversary position is now highly developed and its influence is of considerable extent. 87

Trilling finds the first charge of the adversary proceeding to be rooted in a misunderstood ambiguity. In charging that mind makes for inequality, those of the adversary proceeding fail to distinguish
between the abstract order of ideas and the existential order. In other words, the ideal of equality is of an abstract character and as such is formulated solely as an unconditioned vision of life. But as men seek to make that idea practical, to individuate it, it quite inevitably falls short of its original essence. It becomes conditioned by circumstance, by personality, by the very dialectic of existence, an inescapable part of human fate, an inexplicable given of existence. Moreover, the human mind, even in its most democratic and emancipatory moments, advances itself through the distinguished efforts of individual men and hence quite naturally disruptive of the felicity which an egalitarian society seeks.

Another difficulty which Trilling finds in this same charge has also to do with the character of abstract ideas. One of the chief dangers of such an unconditioned formulation as "mind makes for inequality" is its malleability as a political emotion. Frequently an idea of this kind can become a rationale for a hidden, even unconscious, motive or at least a motive which is vaguely experienced within the human psyche. While the abstract and theoretical formulations of egalitarian democracy are not without validity, Trilling finds behind the idea of a world of perfect equality a profound desire to escape the painful powers of mind.

Trilling then discontinues his discussion of the first charge upon which mind is impeached and turns his attention to the other major criticism of mind held by the adversary proceeding. That charge, it will be recalled, accuses the mind of having a deforming effect upon the human person. The charge has a certain specificity and formality about it, since, as Trilling points out, its strictures are represented by the pejorative phrase "the myth of objective consciousness," a term
coined by Theodore Roszak. The myth of objective consciousness, Trilling explains, "is held to be pre-eminently responsible for the dehumanizing tendency of our culture. It is said that objectivity has come to control and pervert our mental life through the agency of technology, which has established as a model of mental process in general the quite special psychology implicit in the method of science." It is science, then, and the methods of science which generate the hostility, which occasions the second charge of the adversary proceeding against mind.

This charge against mind is confirmed in two very negative effects which science has actually wrought in human life. And interestingly, these two effects, as they are used to support the charge that mind deforms human personality, are identical with those of the romantics, "except that they are more extreme." The first effect of "objective consciousness" is its constricting influence upon human perception. Here the method of science devalues the autonomy of an object by preventing it from being apprehended in its "full integral being." From the point of view, any object, human beings included, is to be perceived only in "abstract and quantifiable terms."90

The second and more formidable effect which mind is accused of having upon human nature has to do with the perversion of the human spirit. Under the sway of a psychology of mind which insists that all human faculties be subordinated to the one faculty of abstract cognition, the human psyche, now virtually a slave to abstraction, does violence to its own self: "Joy becomes ever less available to us; our natural impulse of sympathy with our fellow men and the universe we inhabit is thwarted."91

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Trilling obviously finds a measure of cogency in the criticism upon which the second charge against mind rests. Indeed he can be said to show sympathy with this aspect of the adversary proceeding. In Emerson's expressed attitude toward science, Trilling finds a profound metaphorical description of what the technology of modern science was doing to the world even in the nineteenth century. In 1856 Emerson wrote of a "terrible machine" which was possessing itself of the ground, the air, men and women, and even becoming a threat to thought. Trilling quotes Emerson to give substance to this second charge of the adversary proceeding, and, obviously approving of that criticism, he follows Emerson's observation with his own comment on the matter: "The consciousness that some alien power has taken possession of human existence is now of the very substance of our life in culture. In one or another degree we all share it, we all are aware of some diminution which technology works upon our humanity."92

Yet Trilling would argue that the adversary proceeding has in fact exaggerated the problems which the "objective consciousness" of science has brought in contemporary life. It is not objectivity itself, but the unconditioned notion of objectivity which brings distress in the spiritual and intellectual life of contemporary times. Modern scientists, endorsing objective consciousness as the sole means of knowledge, are the ones to be impugned for a blind and inhuman allegiance to a single method of mind. Against the conditioned ideal of objective consciousness, Trilling places into contrast the conditioned notion of objectivity as it "has been traditionally understood." Acknowledging the psychological and moral hazards of "objectives consciousness," he goes on to say: "But when we have given this much assent to the common characterization of the mental
life of our time, we must see that what distresses us has nothing whatever to do with the intellectual ideal of objectivity as that has traditionally been understood and striven for.\textsuperscript{93} Trilling therefore defends objectivity as something quite different from the objective consciousness of science. Objectivity is not an invention of science, nor does it seek to limit human perception, nor does it devalue its object of perception, nor is it ultimately reductive in function.\textsuperscript{94}

Objectivity, as it has been traditionally understood, has its genesis among the romanticists. It was they who first encountered the divisive and dehumanizing powers of mechanistic science. It was they who sought to integrate the abstract and subjective elements of mind into a single human experience. And it was they who understood better than contemporary thinkers that the abuse of the objective powers of mind does not warrant the rejection of objectivity itself.

Matthew Arnold, accepting the legacy of his romantic predecessors, assimilated and defined the romantic position on objectivity. His definition of objectivity, Trilling contends, is "the simplest and the best." For Arnold objectivity is the effort "to see the object as in itself it really is." And for Trilling this means that "the aim of ... objectivity is the fullest possible recognition of the integral and entire existence of the object."\textsuperscript{95}

As such Trilling suggests objectivity is a necessary prelude and part of a dialectical moment of perception when a person views "a phenomenon of nature, or a work of art, or an idea or system of ideas, or a social problem, or, indeed, a person" in freedom from his "habitual thought, to our predilections and prejudices," and "casual or hasty inspection,"\textsuperscript{96} Objectivity as the first element of dialectical
perception does not exclude what is necessary for the completion of that experience—the subsequent affects of mind and person toward the object as something to be admired, or loved, or sympathized with, or, as the case often is, detested. About this non-exclusive aspect of objectivity Trilling writes with emphasis:

This way of seeing the object, as something we move toward or away from, even as something we wish to destroy, is not precluded by the ideal of objectivity, which requires only that, before the personal response is given, the effort to see the object as in itself if really is be well and truly made.\textsuperscript{97}

Hence traditional objectivity has its own defined limits. Unlike the objectivity of science, it does not claim that its knowledge of the world rests on absolute certitude. In contrast to the unconditioned objectivity of science, objectivity is understood by those who practice it to be "an effort which can never wholly succeed."\textsuperscript{98}

In speaking of objectivity as "effort," Trilling is, of course, introducing a neglected aspect of mind. His choice of words here is deliberate and illuminating because it casually broaches a subject which is seldom discussed in intellectual circles: the concept of "intellectual honor." As "the effort" of traditional objectivity "must always fail,"—for reasons having to do with the nature of individual persons, of society, and "of mind itself"—it would seem that those who seek to practice objectivity do so under the burden of a sense of inevitable defeat. But that is not the case, so Trilling argues. The very limitation of the effort of objectivity, as it is acknowledged by those who practice it, engenders "something like a sense of intellectual honor" and a faith "that in the practical life, which includes the moral life, some good must follow from even the relative success of the endeavor."\textsuperscript{99}
The patience, the humility, the moderation required of such objectivity has never made it attractive to men. Moreover, the disposition of men today toward such a deliberate moral attitude of mind is rejected in favor of a new concept of authenticity which "stipulates that only those things are real, true, and to be relied on which are experienced without the intervention of rational thought." And so again, Trilling implies, mind is impeached not really because it perverts human perception or because it does injury to the human psyche, but rather because men are loath to suffer the disciplining and abstemious nature of mind.

This positive rejection of mind Trilling sees as flowing from "the contemporary ideology of irrationalism," which celebrates the immediacy of experience and perception over and against rational mind. In describing this vision of mind as "irrationalism" he implies that a new philosophy of mind has arisen in contemporary culture which endorses noncognitive experience with the same intolerance and absolutism as eighteenth-century rationalism apotheosized reason over every other kind of human experience. But if "irrationalism" is to be recognized as a cultural event of new significance in contemporary society, the motives behind it are not new. Irrationalism seeks the immediacy of experience with "means" that are not "new": "They include intuition, inspiration, revelation; the annihilation of selfhood perhaps through contemplation but also through ecstasy and the various forms of intoxication; violence; madness." So that the perennial availability of these "old means" is indicative or symptomatic of the kind of motive which antecedes ideology. And that motive, as Trilling has shown in the "enchanting romance" of William Morris, is the old Adam, or the eternal desire of the human heart to escape the aggressive and authoritative dialectic of mind.
"The impulse to transcend rational mind," Trilling writes in the concluding paragraph of his confirmatio, "would seem to be very deeply rooted in man's nature." Even before the anthropologists taught men "not to despise or condescend" to this impulse, the most accomplished and creative artists and philosophers appreciated its value and sought to realize its meaning through various means. 102

But before the modern period no thinker or artist ever apotheosized this aspect of the human psyche. They understood it to be one of the constants of human nature. It was recognized formally as the Dionysian aspect of human personality, and as such it was considered to be a psychic force which was productive of insights about man and the world. But it was always subordinated to reason, or at least related to reason as one of the elements of or terms in the dialectic of artistic perception.

The phenomenon of madness, as it was treated by Plato, Shakespeare, Cervantes, Nietzsche, and Yeats illustrates this point. Of madness and its significance as the matter of art in the works of these artists, Trilling observes:

Madness, for example, figures memorably in the work of Plato, Shakespeare, Cervantes, Nietzsche, and Yeats, all of whom represent it as a condition productive of truths which are not accessible to our habitual and socially countenanced mode of perception and constitute an adverse judgment upon it. 103

Thus the manner in which these thinkers and artists shaped the material of madness was "of the profoundest and most cogent import." Madness for them was not mere "figure of speech" but something more than "a metaphorical construct." Yet Trilling observes of artists' treatment of madness that "no one ever supposes them to be urging it upon us that

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madness, because of the heuristic and moral powers . . . is a state of existence which is to be desired and sought for, and, as it were, socially established.\textsuperscript{104}

Yet today, "it has become possible to claim just such credence for the idea that madness is a beneficent condition, to be understood as the paradigm of authentic existence and cognition." In one of the oldest institutions of civilization and society, the medical profession—and in that section of it which is dedicated to curing such pathology of the mind—there are those who claim that madness, far from being an aberration, is a self-liberating and salutative condition of mind. Trilling, in giving account of this new therapy, refers to it as coming from "a notable section of post-Freudian psychiatric opinion with wide influence in intellectual community." Although he does not mention the names of specific psychiatrists, he is actually alluding to the theories of R. D. Laing and David Cooper. But, about madness and their opinion of it, he is quite specific and accurate:

The line is taken that insanity is directly related to the malign structures and forces of society, not as a mere passive effect but, rather, as an active and significant response to society's destructive will. Insanity is represented as a true perception appropriately acted out—society itself is insane, and when this is understood, the apparent aberration of the individual appears as rationality, as liberation from the delusion of the social madness.\textsuperscript{105}

This eccentric and absolutistic vision of life, so far removed from Trilling's conception of dialectic and conditioned reality, does not evoke any detailed response from him. Once again Trilling allows the insufficiency of the position to speak for itself. His only response is a succinct statement upon which the confirmatio is ended and in which he establishes once more the fact that contemporary culture
devalues mind. "The project," he concludes, "may be taken as the measure of how desperate is the impulse to impugn and transcend the limitations of rational mind." But his brevity here is intended to suggest how symbolic and illuminating is this adverse judgment upon mind which is now being made by representatives of one of the greatest institutions of modern civilization. In assenting to a mode of behavior which diminishes the value of mind, Trilling is suggesting that the institution of medicine is suffering the same plight which he finds in the university. But whereas the devaluation of mind in the university seems to come about from a passive and almost unconscious desire to escape mind, the learned doctors of psychiatry are formally rejecting mind in favor of what was once considered to be the aberration called madness.

The fourth and final section of the oration, denominated by Cicero as the peroratio, is always devoted to a summary of the entire lecture. And clearly this is Trilling's intention as he begins his peroratio by generalizing about his efforts in the former parts of the lecture:

In what I have said this evening I have tried to canvass the situation in which mind stands in our nation at the present time. My emphasis has been on the vicissitudes of the situation, on those circumstances of several kinds which might be thought to limit a free, general participation in the activities of mind or to baffle its intentions and fatigue its energies.

But Trilling's intention takes him beyond mere summary, and he explains in later sentences of the peroratio:

In describing some of the special vicissitudes which at the present time attend the right conduct of mind, it has not been my intention to suggest that these, though disquieting, are overwhelming. I have not meant to say that mind, in Wells's phrase, is at the end of its tether.

Trilling therefore wishes to dismiss any impression that he, as an
elder statesman of American literature, is disheartened about the future of mind in the modern world. If, in earlier sections of the lecture, one finds a melancholy, autumnal tone, it is here dissipated as Trilling shows that he has not the least intention of becoming "the aged eagle."

The first point which Trilling makes in the peroratio is that confidence in mind has not always been a consciously held attitude among men. Indeed, looking at the past from a general historical perspective, "it is difficult to say what part mind has played in the life of nations." When one examines the life of a nation, it is difficult to say how and at what point in the development of a nation, "the conscious and self-conscious mind" can be spoken as being "the most salient" force in a national destiny. This is because much of what one terms a nation's life is diffused in the many agencies of government, and habit, inertia, old pieties and class interests obscure the historical operations of intelligence. Moreover, intelligence is revealed only in "moment," and most of what one defines as intelligence is perceived in the practical acts of men; as a result this very practicality of intelligence obscures the high quality of mind behind the act. As Trilling describes this difficulty: "And intelligence, which, in the degree to which it is effectual, is probably more than simply practical."109

However, in one time in history, Trilling discerns a specific cultural development in which "there would seem to have developed some obscure unarticulated idea that mind, in the sense in which I have been speaking of it, ought to have a place in the national enterprise."110 This cultural event took place four hundred years ago, in Renaissance
England, when the aristocracy became interested in education. This new interest in education among the aristocrats was of such an unprecedented character that it has commanded the attention of the distinguished historian J. X. Hexter, who has written an essay devoted to the social phenomenon of "the sudden movement of the aristocracy and the gentry into the schools and the two universities."\textsuperscript{111}

In earlier times, these schools, "formerly the preserve of boys and young men of the lower classes," provided the opportunity for social ascendancy as clerks and priests of Church. But in the sixteenth century these schools became flooded with young aristocratic gentlemen who, alongside of their once exclusive interest in "manners and grace," now deigned to become scholars and knowing men.\textsuperscript{112}

This "essence of mind," which the aristocracy suddenly discovered and wished to cultivate, survives on to this day and is known as "the mystique of mind." One knows and recognizes it when it is spoken of mind under the aspect of "energy," of "intentionality," of "impulse toward inclusiveness and completeness," of "search for coherence," and of "looking before and after." So much is taken into the phrase "mystique of mind," so much of what are considered the abstract and particular elements of mind, that the phrase must be understood here as representing mind as dialectic.\textsuperscript{113}

The "inarticulate intuition" which came upon the aristocracy of sixteenth century England is of monumental significance because it heralds the ascendancy of mind in the affairs of the modern nation-state. Trilling evaluates its significance when he says:

\begin{quote}
With the passage of time that dim perception has achieved a fuller consciousness—we now judge societies
\end{quote}
and their governments by the same criteria we use in estimating the rightness of the conduct of mind. We judge them by their energy, their intentionality, their impulse toward inclusiveness, by their striving toward coherence with due regard for the integrity of the disparate elements they comprise, by their power of looking before and after.\textsuperscript{114}

The revolutionary impact of this cultural phenomenon can be understood, Trilling continues, by recognizing how the relationship between mind and society has been reversed since the time of Plato: "Plato, when he undertook to say what the right conduct of mind should be, found the paradigm in the just society. We reverse that procedure, finding the paradigm of a just society in the right conduct of mind."\textsuperscript{115}

It is when one contrasts the attitudes of citizens of contemporary civilization with the received standard of the sixteenth century that one experiences a "disquieting feeling." Yet Trilling is quick to remind his readers that disquietude is not to be equated with despair. Moreover, he continues, the very dialectic of history which teaches men to "look before and after," should remind them of how much a part error is in the life of reason:

Seen in its totality, seen historically, the life of the mind consists as much in its failed efforts as in its successes, in its false starts, its mere approximations, its very errors. It is carried on, we may say, even in the vicissitudes it makes for itself, including its mistrust or denial of its own ideal nature. All these are manifestations of the energies of mind, and William James, a philosopher in whose peculiar largeness of spirit we may perceive an affinity with Jefferson's, was at pains to remind us that they, in all their ill-conditioned disorder, are actually a function of mind's ideal achievement.\textsuperscript{116}

And it is just at this point that Trilling affirms with perfect clarity and finality his commitment to the dialectical vision of mind: "Mind does
not move," he writes, "toward its ideal purposes over a royal straight
road but finds its way through the thicket of its own confusions and
contradictions." There is then, for Trilling, no royal road, no Rue
Espirit Geometrie, of mind, but only that famous symbolic thicket of
dialectic found in the Marriage of Heaven and Hell.

And for this reason alone, if for none of the others, Trilling
urges men to walk circumspectly as they see mind drawing "back from its
own freedom and power, from its own delight in itself." With such
deliberation, with such achieved awareness, Trilling suggests that his
lecture will not be considered as "counsel of despair," but rather a new
affirmation of an innate power of mind, the power of dialectic as it is
experienced in the wish of the human mind to become "conscious of it-
self . . . to examine a course it has taken and to correct it."

As the last and final point of the peroratio, Trilling urges that
his readers always keep this vision of the dialectical life of mind
before them as they "make judgment of a culture." Not that the ideal
purposes of mind, those matters of mind associated with "order, in-
clusiveness and coherence" are to be forgotten. On the contrary, Trilling
would have men remember the inevitability of error so that they will not
despair of the ideal order which mind seeks to realize. What he wishes
men to experience is disquietude and not despair as they understand that
"within the intellectual life of the nation, and not of our nation alone,"
there has come about "a notable retraction of spirit, a falling off in
mind's vital confidence in itself."

And while it is true that the dialectical vision of history teaches
men that the history of mind "has never been a bland continuity," and
that the past indeed shows periods "when mind shines forth with special
luminosity and periods when it withdraws into the shadows," the circumstances of today do require that men be vigilant, that they keep before them a certain "disquietude." As heirs to the Jeffersonian legacy, Americans should be conscious that "mind, far from being ornamental," is part of "the superstructure of society," and that, as a consequence of this identification of mind with national purpose, "any falling off of its confidence in itself must be felt as a diminution of national possibility, as a lessening of the social hope."

The final sentence of the peroratio comes as something of a surprise to the reader. Whereas the concluding sentences of the exordium, the narratio, and the confirmatio all contain a note of sadness and resignation about the fate of mind, this final sentence of the lecture is in essence an act of affirmation. It is a long, circuitous path which one follows before arriving at the heart of the issue of Mind in the Modern World. It is this circumspection, this holding back of a quick and easy judgment, which, if it is tormenting to the reader, nonetheless teaches him the power and the discipline of the dialectical vision of reality.
NOTES

CHAPTER V


2Ibid.

3Ibid., p. 40.

4Ibid., p. 4.

5Ibid.

6Ibid., pp. 4-5.


9Ibid., p. 6.

10Ibid.

11Ibid.

12Ibid.

13Ibid.

14Ibid.

15Ibid., p. 7.

16Ibid.

17Ibid.

18Ibid.

19Ibid.
20 Ibid.
21 Ibid.
22 Ibid., p. 8-9.
23 Ibid., p. 9.
24 Ibid.
25 Ibid.
26 Ibid., pp. 9-10.
27 Ibid., p. 10.
29 Trilling, Mind in the Modern World, p. 11.
30 Ibid., p. 39.
32 Trilling, Mind in the Modern World, p. 11.
33 Ibid., p. 12.
34 Ibid.
35 Ibid.
36 Ibid.
37 Ibid.
38 Ibid.
41 Ibid., p. 13.
42 Ibid.
44. Ibid., pp. 14-15.
45. Ibid., p. 16.
46. Ibid.
47. Ibid., p. 17.
48. Ibid.
49. Lionel Trilling, Preface to The Opposing Self (New York: The Viking Press, 1955), pp. IX-XV.
53. Ibid., p. 18.
54. Ibid.
55. Ibid., pp. 18-19.
56. Ibid., p. 19.
57. Ibid., p. 21.
58. Ibid., p. 19.
59. Ibid.
62. Ibid., p. 21.
63. Ibid., p. 20.


70 Ibid., pp. 21-22.

71 Ibid., p. 23.

72 Ibid., p. 23.

73 Ibid., p. 24.

74 Ibid., p. 24.

75 Ibid.

76 Ibid., p. 25.

77 Ibid., 24.

78 Ibid., p. 25.


80 Ibid., p. 27.

81 Ibid.

82 Ibid., p. 25.

83 Ibid., p. 25.


86 Ibid., p. 30.

87 Ibid., pp. 29-30.

88 Ibid., p. 31.

89 Ibid., pp. 31-32.

90 Ibid., p. 32.

91 Ibid.

92 Ibid., p. 33.
119 Ibid.
120 Ibid.
CONCLUSION

The whole effort of this dissertation has been directed toward establishing the critical methodology of Lionel Trilling. The very character of such an aim requires that one deny himself the pursuit of any other aspect of Trilling's criticism, no matter how interesting the other aspects of his work might be. Yet, if Trilling's work is to be appreciated as a whole, the laborious, often dull task of formulating his critical stance is quite necessary. It enables the reader to appreciate the continuity of Trilling's thought as it is present within particular essays and in his writings in general. In fact, it so puts things in such perspective that one is able to appreciate other aspects of his work without losing sight of the general purpose.

There is in Trilling's criticism a charm, a dignity, and an elegance that can be distracting, unless one keeps before himself the serious, even perhaps religious, intention which suffuses his criticism. Like Arnold, Trilling sees the poet and the artist as gaining the ascendancy of a moral teacher in a world in which the priest, minister, and rabbi seem no longer to be the dominant source of man's spiritual life. Hence the critic, as steward of literature, always has a moral purpose in the sense that he wishes to make men think deeply about the values of literature as they touch upon the life of the spirit. It is neither by chance nor rhetorical art that Trilling ends one of his last and greatest works with a religious metaphor. In the last chapter of *Sincerity and*
and Authenticity, Trilling discusses the work of the Freudian revisionists, Hebert Marcuse, Norman Brown, David Cooper, Michel Foucault, and R. D. Lang. He has many reservations about their work, and takes great pains to demonstrate the insufficiency of their vision of man, by defending psychoanalysis as Freud first conceived it. (It might be added that Trilling presents here one of the most moving and convincing defenses of the thought and purposes of Freud ever written.) But he ends the chapter on a note of dismay, not about what the Freudian revisionists have done with Freud, but about the attitude of the "educated public" who have received these changes with facile acceptance.

Those who accept the newly proclaimed doctrines do so without any kind of resisting thought, without dialectic. They are quick to identify themselves with the mad Christ of whom Laing speaks as existing in every man, but they do so, or wish to do so, without any of the "inconveniences" of being a Christ, of engaging in the dialectic of spirit, "with none," Trilling observes, "of the inconvenience of undertaking to intercede, of being a sacrifice, of reasoning with rabbis, of making sermons, of having disciples, of going to weddings and to funerals, of beginning something and at a certain point remarking that it is finished." The religious metaphor of this ending sentence characterizes "the high seriousness" of Trilling's. If one is to appreciate this quality of his work as it shapes his criticism into a unified vision, then how important it is to know what Trilling's critical methodology is, no matter how dreary the process of defining it is.

And such a methodology can be derived by isolating three themes or conceptions which appear in Trilling's writings often enough to be
considered the central ideas of his methodology. These are, as has
been shown, the notion of the imagination as the most comprehensive
and profound faculty of knowledge, a human faculty which perceives
reality through a dialectical union of instinct and reason; next, the view
that culture, which originates in the human imagination, is also dia-
lectical, and that when it loses this dialectical quality, it degenerates
into ideology; and, thirdly, the valuation of the romantic tradition as
the source and originating point of what has been called elsewhere in
this dissertation, "the dialectical sense of reality." Each of these
subjects is always present in Trilling's work; they are, so to speak,
"categories of his thought" without which Trilling's criticism cannot be
understood.

In the preface to the Liberal Imagination, Trilling writes in some
detail about the imagination as the imagination. He is interested in the
imagination as the faculty by which men come closest to truth. To the
imagination he attributes a power of dialectic which draws together the two
worlds of man. These two worlds are the world within man and the world
without man. The world within man is the immediate, personal world of
man, the world of feelings and instincts; the world outside of man, which
is perceived most acutely as reason is developed in man, is the whole
natural universe, and the world of the cultural milieu of time, place,
and people. In the dialectic of the imagination, these two worlds are
interfused, and this for Trilling constitutes reality. Because the
modality of the imagination is dialectical, its purposes can never be
at rest; any more than one can conceive of both the internal and external
world of man as being in stasis. No sooner does the imagination achieve
a dialectical synthesis of human experience than it is confronted with

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a task of creating another dialectic. In Trilling's vision of the world, much as in Blake's marriage of heaven and hell, human perception is not one event but an infinity of events in which the imagination humanizes the world by interpreting it as a dialectic between instinct and reason.

The second conception which comprises a basic idea of Trilling's methodology is his notion of culture. In the preface to The Opposing Self, Trilling discusses the historical circumstances in which men first grew aware of their autonomy through the power of the imagination. "There have always been selves, or at least since the oracle at Delphi began to advise every man to know his own. And whoever has read European history at all knows that the self emerges (as historians say) at pretty frequent intervals. Yet the self that makes itself manifest at the end of the eighteenth century is different in kind and in effect from any other self that had ever before emerged."² The distinguishing aspect of this self which emerges at the end of the eighteenth century lies in "its intense and adverse imagination of the culture in which it had its being."³

The consequences of the birth of this "adverse imagination" is a new conception of society as a dialectic of culture. Trilling explains: "And by this act it brought into being not only itself but also the idea of culture as a living thing with a fate of its own with the possibility, and the necessity, of its own redemption."⁴ Culture achieves its "redemption" through the maintenance of its dialectic, and it can only accomplish this by receiving the dialectical impulses of the imagination. Whenever a culture becomes absolutistic and removed from the creative energies of the selves which constitute it, it is an ideology. And this can happen to any culture, even a culture as brilliant as the early adversary culture.
In the preface to *Beyond Culture*, Trilling studies the fate of the romantic tradition—he calls it the adversary spirit or culture—as it continues on into the twentieth century. In this preface, it becomes apparent that Trilling allies himself to the romantic tradition, although he expresses great apprehension about the ideological qualities of the work and thought of those who make claim as representatives of the tradition. And although Trilling makes it quite clear that romanticism is now afflicted with the kind of decadence associated with ideology, it is apparent that he thinks its original philosophical and aesthetic premises are valid ones and pertinent to the life of the spirit. He is telling his readers this when he writes in the preface, in obvious reference to the early adversary culture of the nineteenth century, "that the primary function of art and thought is to liberate the individual from the tyranny of his culture in the environmental sense and to permit him to stand beyond it in an autonomy of perception and judgment." Here, one finds the third idea which constitutes Trilling's methodology. For though Trilling writes many harsh things about the present development of romantic culture, he is still obviously committed to the dialectical metaphysics of the imagination and of culture and the romanticism which originated these notions.
NOTES

CONCLUSION


VITA

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