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LATE-VICTORIAN SEXUAL RESPECTABILITY AND THE SOCIAL SYSTEM

(Continued)

III

THE INTEGRATION OF CONTINENCE AND INCONTINENCE INTO THE RESPECTABLE SOCIAL SYSTEM

In the process of establishing continence as the norm of gentlemanly sexual behaviour, continence became a Victorian gospel. The mere narration of the process under Section II in the previous issue of this journal did not in itself yield the historical meaning of the gospel of thrift in semen. To understand the process historically is to ascertain the function of continence in a comprehensive system of relationships. More specifically the gospel of continence reveals its meaning when it is related to (1) the dynamic quality inherent in the structure and functioning of the Respectable Economic System, the compulsion to accumulate and reinvest capital, (2) Respectable thought about the purpose of political economy, and (3) the degree of integration of the virtue of continence into the Respectable Social System.

Take the first point. For Marx the capitalistic economic system had in its structure and functioning itself an inherent compulsion, a dynamic quality, to accumulate and reinvest capital.¹ The realization of the dynamic quality produced derivative economic virtues and vices. The Respectable gospel of thrift in money was comprehensible in terms of an expanding economy requiring the rapid accumulation of capital. Extravagance became a vice. Industry was a virtue. It resulted in the accumulation of wealth which enriched both the individual and the community. Idleness was a vice. It resulted in poverty which depressed both the individual and the community. While the accumulation of capital became the end, consumption was

¹ In Grant Allen's perceptive novel *Babylon* (London, 1885) I, pp. 25-26 both Marx' and Weber's theses were stated. One character remarks to another in an episode set in an American farm community dominated by a very repressive type of Puritan sect, "Hopkinite Baptists". "What do those varmers all 'ere do? ... Why, they buy a bit 'o land, an' work, an' slave thesselves an' their missuses, all their lives long, what vor? To raise pork and corn on. What vor again? To buy more land; to raise more corn an' bacon; and so on, world without end, amen, for ever an' ever."

regarded but from one point of view, as a means of further production. Contrariwise, when it thwarted this purpose, it constituted “the unpardonable sin”, “unproductive consumption”. It was not “riotous living, unwholesome luxury, reckless extravagance.” Pure and simple the expression covered non-ascetic living.

“All the conveniences and comforts of life – books, music entertainment, education, the supply of all intellectual and moral needs – formed, in the strict interpretation, unproductive consumption, and were considered to militate against the wealth of nations. The reasoning is simplicity itself. The be-all and end-all is capital in the form of vast numbers of mills and machinery, raw material and stock. The amassing of increased quantities of capital by “saving” was thus the point to which all energy should be directed. Capital was also essential because it maintained labour, gave employment, and so furthered new production and accumulation. This being so, consumption was to be regarded with suspicion. The presumption was always against it, for it diminished saving. (The earlier economists had not yet developed the riper absurdity which held that saving did not reduce consumption.) Consumption may exculpate itself by showing that it serves a useful end – i.e. helps to maintain efficiency of labour-power in the bodies of labourers.”¹

In congruency with the dynamic quality of the economic system were not only the economic virtues, but their summation in a highly exaggerated form of the disciplined and ascetic life. Self-discipline and self-control, asceticism and the economic virtues, became a moral duty for the individual, but since thrift and extravagance were relative

¹ J. A. Hobson, *The Social Problem, Life and Work* (New York, 1901), p. 27. Cf. Marx's conclusion in his “Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts” written in 1844. “Political economy, the science of *wealth*, is therefore, at the same time, the science of renunciation, of privation and of saving. ... The science of a marvelous industry is at the same time the science of *asceticism*. Its true ideal is the *ascetic* but *usurious* miser and the *ascetic* but *productive* slave. ... Thus, despite its worldly and pleasure-seeking appearance, it is a truly moral science, the most moral of all sciences. Its principal thesis is the renunciation of life and of human needs. *The less you eat, drink, buy books, go to the theatre or to balls, or to the public house, and the less you think, love, theorize, sing, paint, fence, etc. the more you will be able to save and the greater will become your treasure which neither moth nor rust will corrupt- your capital.* The less you *are*, the less you express your life, the more you *have*, the greater is your *alienated* being. Everything which the economist takes from you in the way of life and humanity, he restores to you in the form of *money* and *wealth*. And everything which you are unable to do, your money can do for you...” Karl Marx, *Early Writings*, trans. and ed. T. B. Bottomore (London, 1963), p. 171. Bottomore's italics. The translation is also available in Eric Fromm, *Marx's Concept of Man* (New York, 1961).

terms – relative to the individual’s way of life – the functional need for thrift was powerfully counteracted by the high cost of gentility. Nonetheless, the moral duty to live an ascetic life found mid- and late-Victorian expressions in the fictitious character of M. D. Mulock’s “John Halifax, Gentleman” (1856), in the reality of Thomas Brassey,¹ the great railroad contractor, in the secularized Puritanism of Samuel Smiles,² in the political economy of Henry Fawcett,³ and in the Respectable public school system, the latter impressing upon the social character of the “Christian gentleman” the economic virtue and “duty” to work.

But it would be misleading to leave the matter at that. It is certainly necessary here to avert any confusion between what appears to have been that exaggerated asceticism just described and which derived from the structure and functioning of the economic system and the asceticism and disciplined life which derived from the imperative need for self-control and self-discipline in the formation of a “permanent political society”. On the latter problem, presumably an eternal one, Mill focused his acute intelligence. In 1842 he drew attention to the problem of establishing submission to law and government and yet preserving “the vigour and manliness of character which resisted its establishment”.

“First: There has existed, for all who were accounted citizens – for all who were not slaves, kept down by brute force – a system of *education*, beginning with infancy and continued through life, of which, whatever else it might include, one main and incessant ingredient was a *restraining discipline*. To train the human being in the habit, and thence the power, of subordinating his personal impulses and aims, to what were considered the ends of society; of adhering, against all temptation, to the course of conduct which those ends prescribed; of controlling in himself all the feelings which were liable to militate against those ends, and encouraging all such as tended towards them; this was the purpose, to which every outward motive that the authority directing the system could command, and every inward power or principle which its knowledge of human nature enabled it to evoke, were endeavoured to be rendered instrumental. The entire

¹ Arthur Helps, *Life and Labour of Mr. Brassey* (London, 1872).

² *Self-Help* (1859), *Character* (1871), *Thrift* (1875), and *Duty* (1887).

³ Henry Fawcett, *Manual of Political Economy* (London and Cambridge, 1863), *The Economic Position of the British Labourer* (London and Cambridge, 1865), *Pauperism: Its Causes and Remedies*, and with Millicent Garrett Fawcett, *Essays and Lectures on Social and Political Subjects* (London, 1872).

civil and military policy of the ancient commonwealths was such a system of training: in modern nations its place had been attempted to be supplied principally by religious teaching. And whenever and in proportion as the strictness of the restraining discipline was relaxed, the natural tendency of mankind to anarchy reasserted itself; the State became disorganized from within; mutual conflict for selfish ends neutralized the energies which were required to keep up the contest against natural causes of evil; and the nation, after a longer or briefer interval of progressive decline, became either the slave of a despotism or the prey of a foreign invader.”¹

In his essay entitled “Nature”, completed in 1854, Mill reverted to a consideration of the relationship existing in a civilized society between self-discipline, human nature and instincts, and civilization. He concluded that the victory of civilization represented the victory of self-discipline over instinct: “...nearly every respectable attribute of humanity is the result, not of instinct, but of a victory over instinct; and that there is hardly anything valuable in the natural man except capacities – a whole world of possibilities, all of them dependent upon eminently artificial discipline for being realized.”² Among other instincts Mill referred to those – e.g. the instinct for “destructiveness, an instinct to destroy for destruction’s sake” and the instinct of domination – which ought not merely to be regulated but to be altogether extirpated. To quote Mill:

“I can conceive no good reason for preserving this [destructiveness], no more than another propensity which if not an instinct is very like one, what has been called the instinct of domination, a delight in exercising despotism, in holding other beings in subjection to our will. The man who takes pleasure in the mere exertion of authority, apart from the purpose for which it is to be employed, is the last person in whose hands one would willingly entrust it. Again, there are persons who are cruel by character, or, as the phrase is, naturally cruel, who have a real pleasure in inflicting or seeing the infliction of pain. This kind of cruelty is not mere hardheartedness, absence of pity or remorse;

¹ J. S. Mill, *Dissertations and Discussions* (London, 1859), I, pp. 416-17.

² J. S. Mill, *Three Essays on Religion: Nature, Utility of Religion* (London, 1874), p. 46. “The truth is that there is hardly a single point of excellence belonging to human character which is not decidedly repugnant to the untutored feelings of human nature.” *Ibid.* “This brief survey is amply sufficient to prove that the duty of man is the same in respect to his own nature as in respect to the nature of all other things, namely, not to follow but to amend it.” *Ibid.*, p. 54.

it is a positive thing, a particular kind of voluptuous excitement. The East and southern Europe have afforded abundant examples of this hateful propensity. I suppose it will be granted that this is not one of the natural inclinations which it would be wrong to suppress. The only question would be whether it is not a duty to suppress the man himself along with it."¹

Moreover, genuine self-control was for Mill the indispensable precondition for the realization of the basic doctrine or principle of the liberal creed: the individual's understanding and pursuit of his own real interest. To fulfill in specific actions the goals which the individual had chosen for himself, his self-control through self-discipline had first to be established. This was not in the least a "natural" or automatic achievement but an amendment of human nature. In Mill's words

"But... the commonest self-control for one's own benefit – that power of sacrificing a present desire to a distant object or a general purpose which is indispensable for making the actions of the individual accord with his own notions of his individual good – even this is most unnatural to the undisciplined human being, as may be seen by the long apprenticeship which children serve to it, the very imperfect manner in which it is acquired by persons born to power whose will is seldom resisted, and by all who have been early and much indulged; and the marked absence of the quality in savages, in soldiers and sailors, and in somewhat less degree in nearly the whole of the poorer classes in this and many other countries."²

It is a central argument of this essay that the whole socialization process to which the gentleman was subjected in order to establish his civilized self-control (i.e. the whole process in which strict and extreme continence or what I have called an exaggerated asceticism became a rigid and fixed principle firmly structured in the social system itself) produced not merely a self-control of sorts, but often

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 56-57.

² *Ibid.*, p. 50. Similarly Arnold recognized the universal problem of self-discipline in relation to the attainment of a higher civilization. As a discipline, he believed Puritanism to be invaluable. Mankind could not afford to discard it. Restraint, self-control, consciousness of evil and sin were indispensable to man in his pursuit of total perfection. Puritanism gave "the indispensable basis of conduct and self-control, the platform upon which the perfection aimed at by Greece can come into bloom." (*Culture and Anarchy*, pp. 96, xxxvi, 92, ch. IV). But England had been wrong in making Puritan Hebraism primary and Hellenism secondary. Hellenism was needed to rectify the Puritan distortion of the sense of conduct, its "fixed law of doing." Hellenism gave "spontaneity of consciousness" which tended "continually to enlarge our whole law of doing." (*Ibid.*, p. 105.)

yielded a psychic condition of “over-repression”¹ among gentlemen and a rigidity of character-structure. Hence the social character of the gentlemen contradicted, as did the social system itself, the principle and possibility of genuinely free association, i.e. associations free of domination and submission both within and without the family. What was structured in the social system was also structured in the family. To resolve the contradictions rationally was to realize the possibility of the universal principle of free association latent in the Respectable Social System itself.

Take the second point from which something of the historical meaning of the gospel of continence may be gathered: Respectable thought about the purpose of political economy. Although the avowed purpose of political economy was to ascertain the “laws” (in the sense of “‘necessary relations’ between economic phenomena”²) governing the production, exchange, and distribution of wealth, in practice, so far as the Respectable classes and their political spokesmen in mid-Victorian England were concerned, political economy vindicated the economic behavior, which best facilitated “the greatest accumulated result in wealth.” In Robert Lowe’s words, political economy taught “the best way of accumulating the most wealth in the shortest time.”³ The great majority of the educated classes, the recipients of the great prosperity promised by political economy with the repeal of the Corn Laws, thought that political economy demonstrated that wealth was “most rapidly accumulated and most fairly distributed” by allowing each to pursue his own economic self-interest “unrestrained either by the State or by public opinion so long as they refrain from fraud.”⁴ To both the political economists and the Respectable classes Frederic Harrison’s query evoked by his sympathy for the working classes, “Why is it the science of producing the greatest wealth, instead of wealth in the best way?”⁵, raised the question of morality and moral

¹ See below, p. 246.

² Mill “restricted the domain of inexorable law to the physical necessities to which production is subject and emphasized for all the rest, all institutions in particular, that they are man-made, changeable, malleable, and ‘progressive’. There was no invariable natural order of things social, and economic necessity meant to him largely necessity in regard to a given state of the changing institutional frame. However much he glorified his age in other respects, the actual state of society he did not consider as either ideal or permanent.” Joseph H. Schumpeter, *History of Economic Analysis* (New York, 1954), pp. 537, 531.

³ Hansard, CC, 4 April, 1870, p. 1200.

⁴ J. E. Cairnes, *Essays in Political Economy, Theoretical and Applied* (London, 1873), pp. 240-41.

⁵ Professor Cairnes on M. Comte and Political Economy, in: *Fortnightly Review*, N.S., VII, (1870), p. 56.

judgment. The question was irrelevant to the economists who defined their enquiry to be a science free of moral judgments, neutral between competing economic systems, and not an art. Harrison's question was already settled for the Respectable classes who were the main recipients of the mid- and late-Victorian accumulation of wealth. In short the dynamic quality inherent in the structure and functioning of the economic system itself, its compulsion to accumulate and reinvest capital, was not very dissimilar from the purpose to which the Respectable classes believed political economy to be committed, teaching the quickest way to accumulate and the fairest way to distribute the greatest wealth. According to the theory of classical political economy, the "causes" of wealth were twofold, work and thrift; the "causes" of poverty, idleness and waste. Robert Lowe dogmatically affirmed that these simple propositions contained all that was known or could be known about the production and accumulation of wealth.¹ In Mill's broader context, "saving enriches and spending impoverishes the community along with the individual." Saving not only enriched the individual, but it enlarged the capital structure and the fund for paying wages. "From the daily papers to the latest economic treatise, from the pulpit to the House of Commons", wrote two dissenters, "this conclusion is reiterated and restated till it appears positively impious to question it."² From this doctrinal assumption it followed that the thrifty rich man automatically, in spite of anything he could do, pursued a course of conduct conducive to the general welfare. The highest morality and economic justice inhered in the undisturbed (by government or trade unions), competitive, self-regulating, self-adjusting mechanism of a free market economy. The superseded Aristocratic Social System had disturbed the mechanism of a free market economy by protecting its privileged orders and by recourse to patronage as a regulating agency. By contrast a free market economy was founded on equality. There were no legally privileged orders. Theoretically individuals met as equals on the market to dispose of their wages and commodities. Wages and prices were determined by competition on a basis of equality. In the Respectable Social System where privilege and unfair advantage prevailed, these no longer derived as in the past from the privileged orders control of government, though Respectable classes now controlled governments, but from the privileged Respectable classes advantages in the market, their virtual monopoly of the means of production. The superiority of a market economy was not only a fundamental doctrinal supposition

¹ Political Economy Club (London, 1881), III, Part VII, p. 86.

² A. F. Mummery and J. A. Hobson, *The Physiology of Industry: Being an Exposure of Certain Fallacies in Existing Theories of Economics* (London, 1889), pp. iii-iv.

of the economists, but the first article in the economic creed of the Respectable classes. The latter could pick and choose from the former's writing to vindicate Economic Respectability. Harrison's charge that political economy was "stereotyping a social system" which as a Positivist he sought to transform was not without substance.

But what has all this to do with the gospel of thrift in semen? The economic virtues and vices – derivatives of the dynamic quality inherent in the structure and functioning of the economic system and vindicated by the political economists – included the sexual virtues and vices of continence and incontinence. Continence was good. Attained by sublimation through industry, it resulted in the accumulation of wealth. Incontinence was bad. The outcome of idleness and yielding to temptation, it resulted in poverty and early marriages. But continence became integrated in the economic and social system not only because of its relation to capital accumulation, but because in the functioning of the new industrial society something approximating conformity to certain coordinated patterns of behavior for gentlemen (e.g. professional men), became indispensable for society as a going concern.

Take our third point, the degree of integration of the virtue of continence into the Respectable Social System. The transfer of the analogy made above from the virtue of industry to the virtue of continence revealed something of the degree of continence as a virtue into the Respectable Social and Economic System. It had, relative to its predecessor, become a closely integrated system, "functionally rational". As England became more industrialized and the division of labour and organization developed, increasingly spheres of human activity were made "functionally rational" and "calculable in advance". Karl Mannheim understands by the term "rational" not "the fact that a person carried out acts of thinking and knowing, but rather that a series of actions is organized in such a way that it leads to a previously defined goal, every action in this series of actions receiving a functional position and role."¹

While "functional rationality" signified the organization of actions with reference to well-defined goals, "self-rationalization" and "self-observation" concern the individual in relation to these activities. "Self-rationalization", according to Mannheim, is "the individual's systematic control of his impulses – a control which is always the first step to be taken, if an individual wants to plan his life so that every action is guided by principle and is directed towards the goal he has in mind." Acton asserted the principle or means to be continence and

¹ Karl Mannheim, *Man and Society in an Age of Reconstruction*, trans. Edward Shils (New York, 1940), pp. 53, 55.

industry and the goal professional success. Like Smiles,¹ Acton incessantly sermonized on self-rationalization, and the fact of sermonization was indeed another indication of that constant pressure exerted in order to insure a high degree of integration of continence into the Respectable Social System.

Another way of attaining the integration of continence was through the process of self-observation; a more certain technique in acquiring self-control. Mannheim distinguishes between two processes.

“It is an example of self-rationalization if I subject my spontaneous wishes or sudden impulses so as to attain a given end; thus if I obey the laws of a technique of thought or keep to the motions prescribed by the technique of a particular type of manual work, I am, by a process of mental training, subordinating my inner motives to an external aim. Self-observation on the other hand, is more than such a form of mental training. Self-observation aims primarily at an inner self-transformation. Man reflects about himself and his actions mostly for the sake of remoulding or transforming himself more radically. Normally man’s attention is directed not towards himself but towards things which he wishes to manipulate, to change and to form. He usually does not observe how he himself functions. He lives in immediate acts of experience; he is absorbed in them without ordinarily comprehending them. He reflects, and sees himself for the first time when he fails to carry through some projected action, and, as a result of this failure, is thrown so to speak, back upon himself. ‘Reflection’, ‘self-observation’, ‘taking account of one’s own situation’ assume, in such moments, the functions of self-organization. It is clear that persons who are confronted more frequently with situations in which they cannot act habitually and without thinking and in which they must always organize themselves anew will have more occasion to reflect on themselves and on situations than persons who have adapted themselves once and for all.”²

The process of self-observation seemed to have been a reality among Victorian gentlemen of the professional classes. As it has been said of the first “muscular Christian”, the agnostic Leslie Stephen, “The key to Stephen’s character is his effort to change himself.”³

¹ See *Character* (London, 1871), Ch. VI, “Self-Control”.

² Mannheim, *op. cit.*, pp. 56-57.

³ N. G. Annan, Leslie Stephen, *His Thought and Character in Relation to his Time* (London, 1951), p. 97. For the process of self-observation among the Chapham Sect, see David Spring, “The Clapham Sect: Some Social and Political Aspects,” *Victorian Studies*, Vol. V, No. 1 (1961) pp. 36-42.

That not only a high degree of functional rationality characterized the Respectable Social System, but a high degree of integration of continence and industry may be appreciated by examining their *comparative absence in the Aristocratic Social System of the eighteenth century*. "My mode of conduct, my control over and my regulation of my impulses will obviously be quite different when I am a member of a far-reaching organization [i.e. a complex industrial society] in which every action must be carefully adjusted to all others, from what it is when I am more or less isolated and independent and can do whatever I think right."¹ The latter part of Mannheim's statement was applicable to the behavior of gentlemen as members of the eighteenth century Aristocratic Social System just as the former part was applicable to the behavior of gentlemen as members of the Respectable Social System. During the earlier period of moral laxity gentlemen were not conspicuous for their industry. Moreover Georgian rakes not only excessively indulged in the vices of their times such as drinking, gambling, wenching, dueling, rioting, and blasphemy, but organized them into famous fraternities such as the Medmenham Monks and the Beggar's Benison. The latter's induction ceremony resembled a pagan fertility rite. The decline of the whole tradition represented by these activities set in from 1765 coinciding with the rise of Evangelicalism. New patterns of behavior for gentlemen began to emerge.

"This gradual shift of moral values is first observable among the generation of young blades who came into prominence about 1765. Known as marcaronis and jessamies, they had little interest in these favorite frolics of the bucks and bloods, street rioting and dueling; even gambling and women were of less interest to them than their own clothes, manners, and superior graces... the significance of the marcaronis lies in the fact that they were so numerous. There were enough of them to set a new standard of behavior, one which eschewed violence, preferred tea to wine, and encouraged dallying with sin rather than embracing it as their fathers and older brothers had done. The result of this was that street marauding by members of the upper class had almost completely disappeared in London by 1770... Dueling waned, until by 1780 such conflicts were relatively rare. Gambling continued in full force because it was an occupation consistent with the new mode. Sexual morality, too, was slower to improve, but by the turn of the century the code of the middle class was gradually spreading out to encompass the aristocracy."²

¹ Mannheim, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

² Louis C. Jones, *The Clubs of the Georgian Rakes* (New York, 1941), p. 8.

An excellent index to the change wrought in the sexual norm for gentlemen was the differential treatment accorded to Lord Byron and Sir Francis Dashwood, a famous Georgian rake.

“Although Lord Byron’s career of debauchery fell short of that of Sir Francis Dashwood, ... society of that later age could no longer turn away and with a bored laugh ignore the whole matter as a personal affair. No better proof of the changes that had come over English morals between 1765 and 1825 could be found than the difference in public attitude toward [Dashwood]... and Byron after their scandals became known. The sexual excesses and sacrilegious impieties of Sir Francis in the 1760’s approximately balance Lord Byron’s relations with Mrs. Leigh and the scandals of his own affairs, yet Byron was frozen into exile, while Dashwood became Postmaster General of Great Britain and remained the friend of England’s great.”¹

A most significant institution in the transformation of the sexual norm of gentlemen was the reformed public school. At the beginning of the nineteenth century Sidney Smith declared that public school boys were not corrupted by the world because the schools had deprived the world of the opportunity. In the same vein a school master wrote in 1806 that “the youth at Eton are dissipated gentlemen; those at Westminster dissipated with a little of the blackguard, and those at St. Paul’s most depraved of all.”² As we have seen, the great moral changes and the establishment of the Respectable sexual norm was wrought in the public school system in the generation before 1860.

Not only the sexual norm of gentlemen, but the economic norm also changed. The Earl Fitzwilliam and the seventh Duke of Devonshire exemplified a new type of landed gentleman and the changes wrought in the economic habits of the upper-class landowner between 1830 and 1880.³ Both were conspicuous for their evangelical piety and industry. In 1859 Samuel Smiles wrote: “It is to the honor of the wealthier ranks in this country that they are not idlers; for they do their fair share of the work of the state...”⁴ The “Cornhill” magazine, too, observed that gentlemen were not wanting in energy.⁵ T. H. S. Excott remarked upon the conspicuous energization of the Aristocracy after

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

² Quoted in Vivian Ogilvie, *The English Public School* (London, 1957), p. 125.

³ See David Spring, “Earl Fitzwilliam and the Corn Laws,” *American Historical Review*, 1954 and his “The English Landed Estate in the Age of Coal and Iron: 1830-1880,” *Journal of Economic History*, Vol. XI (1951).

⁴ *Self-Help* (London, 1859), Ch. I.

⁵ “Gentlemen,” *Cornhill Magazine*, (1862), pp. 327-42.

the passage of the Great Reform Bill. "The impulse given to the whole mass of the patriciate was immense and the sum of the new-born or newly-displayed energies as surprising as it was satisfactory. The man of pleasure ceased to be the type to which it was expected, as a matter of course, that all those born in the purple should conform."¹

The reformed public school inculcated the new economic norm. In Arnold's Rugby "The chief end of learning was neither knowledge, nor, essentially, mental training, but the spirit of work. As with Carlyle, the moral trait of industriousness was the most important thing a boy could acquire through study."² Truly it was asserted in 1860 that the public schools "contributed largely to the formation of those habits and dispositions which are essential to the working" of English institutions.³ In the words of one acute observer the public schools harmonized "with other institutions, and with a certain rude, vague, yet quite intelligible something, which may be called the English Scheme of Life. The Great Endowed Schools are less to be considered as educational agencies, in the intellectual sense, than as social agencies."⁴

Both the sexual and the economic behavior of gentlemen became less and less of a "private affair" as the Aristocratic Social System was transformed during the latter part of the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth century into its successor, the Respectable Social System. The transformation underscores Mannheim's remark that "every action must be carefully adjusted to all others" in a social system that has established a high degree of functional rationality. In showing industry and continence to be correlative virtues, the adjustment had been shown. The Respectable Social System had a normative standard of sexual morality congruent with other standards of behavior, in particular the norm of economic behavior. In this essay the motives of Respectable gentlemen have been conceived in their significance for a more comprehensive system of relations, the social system. For its functioning (i.e. the realization of specific goals), the two models of behavior represented by the Respectable Economic Man and the Respectable Sensual Man, were in themselves inescapable for they were integrated in the Respectable Social System of relationships. Behavioral patterns, relationships, and thought were in a condition of congruency. These models not only provided patterns of moral behavior (a moral order that imposed obligations upon gentle-

¹ T. H. S. Escott, *England: Its People, Polity, and Pursuits* (London, 1879), II, pp. 35-37.

² E. C. Mack, *op. cit.*, p. 250.

³ *Athenaeum*, 17 Nov., 1860, p. 667.

⁴ Harold Staunton, *The Great Public Schools of England* (London, 1865), p. xvii.

men)¹ towards which gentlemen could orient, but these models also fostered an equally indispensable approximate regularity of expectations.

Although this essay has thus far emphasized a high degree of integration into the Respectable Social System of continence as a gentlemanly virtue, its integration was not functional for the system. On the contrary, continence could not, as purity reformers aspired, be integrated exclusively. As it will be shown, continence could only be integrated and made functional in conjunction with its opposite, incontinence. Both virtue and vice were integrated in a comprehensive system of celibacy, marriage, the double standard, and prostitution. Although the overwhelming pressure of Respectable opinion exalted virtue,² in reality English gentlemen were oriented either to a single standard of virtue or to a double standard of vice. If they oriented towards the double standard, their indulgence found strong justification from the body of doctors who advocated premarital indulgence on the basis of good health. Gentlemen fell into two distinct categories, the incontinent and the continent. In the words of a French writer, "The English language has no word for *fredaine*, perhaps the thing does not exist on this side of the channel. The Englishman is either virtuous or an utter reprobate... there is no middle course; contrasts strike you in every phase of life."³ A third category were those who vacillated between the two extremes. In Hardy's "Tess of the D'Urbervilles", Alex D'Urberville was delineated as a type in whom "animalism had become fanaticism".⁴ He vacillated between the two poles of raker and Respectable fanatic inspired by religion.

There are many reasons for the polarization of gentlemanly types into the continent and incontinent and for the vacillators. At the polar

¹ "For only when the motives of individuals are seen in their significance for a more comprehensive functioning system does motive interpretation achieve a truly sociological level." Max Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, trans. A. M. Henderson and Talcott Parsons, ed. with an Introduction by Talcott Parsons (New York, 1947), p. 29.

² If detected, infractions of the moral order could well mean social ostracism for a gentleman. "The respect for moral character is a distinguishing mark of good society in this country as compared with that of the continent. No rank, no wealth, no celebrity will induce a well-bred English lady to admit to her drawing-room a man or woman whose character is known to be bad. Society is a severe censor, pitiless and remorseless. The woman who has once fallen, the man who has once lost his honour, may repent for years; good society shuts its door on them once and for ever." Anonymous, *The Habits of Good Society* (London, 1859), p. 67.

³ O'Rell, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

⁴ Tess (London, 1952), pp. 390, 386, 411, 420. See also the character of Tom Gradgrind in *Hard Times*, pp. 174, 225, 228.

extreme of purity various agencies, like the public school, good society, and literature had devoted themselves to the process of establishing continence as a norm. Gentlemen could be made pure out of conviction or by submission to the tremendous pressure brought to bear upon them. Continence was, indeed, highly integrated into the Respectable Social System. At the other polar extreme of impurity stood the "utter reprobate". The reasons for his behaviour may be ascertained by a broad consideration of the double standard of morality in its relation both to the Respectable disassociation of the elements of love in the gentleman's mind and to reasons more social in character. These relationships will be considered separately.

In a psychological aspect at least the double standard was clearly associated with the immature sexuality of the gentleman as revealed in the Respectable disassociation of the elements of love: his "inability to fuse the two currents of love and sensuality into love of one person."¹ Freud ascribed the disassociation to the frustration of intense incestuous fixations, to the unsuccessful resolution of the Oedipus complex so that sexual attitudes were not freed from the parental models. The disassociated elements became polarized and were reflected in the Respectable ideological opposition between sexual love, suspect and degrading, and ethereal love, honourable and exalting. The opposition produced a conflict in the gentleman's conscience. The conflict was often resolvable either by "the gift of continence" both in celibacy and marriage, or alternatively by recourse in both celibacy and marriage to the double standard of morality in search of that sexual satisfaction which married gentlemen were "unable to obtain from their relationship with their wives, for whom they feel only tenderness, affection, and esteem",² and which unmarried gentlemen were unable to obtain from their relationship with their sweethearts who had to be chaste before marriage. According to Freud the men loathed the prostitutes who gave them sexual satisfaction. Since this generalization was sharply contradicted by known exceptions in the world of mid- and late-Victorian prostitution, and since there were other reasons for the existence of prostitution which will be discussed subsequently, the disassociation of the love elements can not be regarded as an all inclusive and exclusive explanation for the existence of the double standard.

It would seem to be most relevant as an explanation of the married gentleman's recourse to the double standard. An anecdote about a

¹ Keith Thomas, "The Double Standard," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, April 1959, p. 207. On the subject of immature sexuality there is an excellent discussion in Philip Rieff, *Freud: The Mind of the Moralizer* (New York, 1961), Ch. v.

² *Ibid.*

sexually inhibited marriage in Mayhew's "London's Labour and the London Poor" was apropos. He presented the case of a lady who unexpectedly encountered her husband acting as a paramour in a "House of Assignment", an establishment frequented by "ladies of intrigue", "married women who have connections with other men than their husbands, and unmarried women who gratify their passion secretly."¹ The couple retired happily and enlightened to their home.

To sum up, a comprehensive system of interlocking institutions consisting of Respectable celibacy and Respectable marriage on the one hand, and of celibacy and prostitution and marriage and prostitution on the other hand, were regulated by two systems of morality; firstly the single standard of purity or continence and secondly the double standard of impurity or incontinence. Perceptive late Victorians understood prostitution to be an integral part of the whole matrimonial system.² "Our existing system", wrote Grant Allen, "is really a joint system of marriage and prostitution in which the second element is a necessary corollary and safeguard of the first."³ The function of the prostitute as a "safeguard" was understood by Lecky. "Herself the supreme type of vice, she is ultimately the most efficient guardian of virtue."⁴ In its function of maintaining the chastity of young ladies prostitution became an indispensable and integral part of the matrimonial system whose structure and functioning required not only "chaste" but "pure-minded" women. Within this comprehensive system then, continence and incontinence represented alternative course of action. Continence was practised in Respectable celibacy and Respectable marriage. In celibacy continence indicated complete abstinence. In marriage continence might signify, though not necessarily, unsatisfactory inhibited sexual indulgence because of the disassociation of the love elements. Incontinence was practised in celibacy and marriage by resorting to prostitution and the double standard. In celibacy incontinence indicated sexual indulgence. In marriage incontinence might signify extra-marital indulgence in quest of a sexual satisfaction not realized in a Respectable marriage.

When unmarried or married gentlemen loathed prostitutes to whom they resorted, these cases posed no problem in maintaining that tenaciously and nearly universally held belief in the disassociation of

¹ Henry Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor* (London, 1862), IV, p. 258.

² "Prostitution is as inseparable from our present marriage customs as the shadow from the substance. They are two sides of the same shield." *Westminster Review*, Nov. 1868, p. 365. Havelock Ellis, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*, VI, Ch. VII, "Prostitution", pp. 254, 315-16. Mrs. Havelock Ellis, James Hinton, *A Sketch* (London, 1918).

³ "The Girl of the Future," *Universal Review*, 1890, p. 58.

⁴ *Op. cit.*, II, pp. 229-30.

the elements of love. The loathing reflected and confirmed the disassociation. The unmarried gentleman's initiation in sexual love posed a different problem. Men and especially young men, it was feared by Acton, had erroneously formed their opinions of women's sexual feelings from what they observed from "loose" or "low and vulgar women", pretty women, not necessarily prostitutes, who liked to attract men of higher social status. "Any susceptible boy is easily led to believe, whether he is altogether overcome by the syren or not, that she, and therefore all women, must have at least as strong passions as himself."¹ The early impression was corroborated when prostitutes simulated sexual feelings so well that the unsuspecting novice thought it genuine. Acton wrote to expose the fallacy propagated by "loose" women and prostitutes, and to "vindicate female nature from the vile aspersions cast on it by the abandoned conduct and ungoverned lusts of a few of its worst examples."² The gentleman's ideal woman was passionless. The "womanly women", living up to the stereotype, were "afraid to admit they have any desire for sexual pleasure."³

Acton affirmed the truth about the sexual nature of women as his medical experience revealed it to him. It necessitated some qualification of his blanket assertion. "There are many females who never feel any sexual excitement whatever. Others, again, immediately after each period, do become, to a limited degree capable of experiencing it; but this capacity is often temporary, and may cease entirely till the next menstrual period. The best mothers, wives, and managers of households, know little or nothing of sexual indulgence. Love of home, children, and domestic duties, are the only passions they feel."⁴ Wives allowed cohabitation to gratify their husbands, not any sexual feelings of their own. They even dutifully submitted themselves when their aversion was strongest during periods of pregnancy. "As a general rule, a modest woman seldom desires any sexual gratification for herself. She submits to her husband's, but only to please him; and, but for the desire of maternity, would far rather be relieved from his attentions. No nervous or feeble young man need, therefore, be deterred from marriage by any exaggerated notions of the duties required from him. The married woman has no wish to be treated on the footing

¹ *Functions* (1862 ed.), p. 102.

² Acton, *op. cit.* (1862 ed.), p. 102. Acton admitted that "all that we have read and heard tends to prove that a reciprocity of this sexual desire is, to a great extent, necessary to excite the male..." (1857 ed.), p. 57.

³ Ellis, *op. cit.*, III, p. 164.

⁴ Acton, *op. cit.*, p. 102. "That a mucous fluid is sometimes formed in coition from the internal organs and vagina is undoubted, but this only happens in lascivious women, or such as live luxuriously." "Generation," *Rees' Cyclopaedia*. Cited in H. Ellis, *op. cit.*, III, p. 157.

of a mistress.”¹ Excepting a very small minority of women, who, being either hereditarily predisposed or immorally educated, found it difficult to restrain their passions, the fact remained “that, in general, women do *not* feel any great sexual tendencies.”²

To conserve the disassociation of the elements of love in the gentleman’s conscience, to maintain the opposition between sexual and ethereal love, it was necessary to deny the existence of any sexual desire in Respectable women.

To enlarge our understanding of the double standard it is necessary to consider again the social system and the social demands that it imposed upon the gentleman. “If young men are licentious”, wrote the “Saturday Review” in 1860³ “society is said to be at fault for erecting in the minds of the comfortable classes a standard of comfort which discourages early marriages.” As an etiquette book put it, “As a rule, no man is fit to become a husband before he is thirty.”⁴ Young gentlemen were exhorted to lead a celibate life until they could set up and maintain a suitable establishment. Their enduring status as gentlemen depended upon their ability to live at a high level of comfort. Ladies often considered it beneath their dignity to marry into an establishment less stylish than that which it had taken their fathers all their lives to establish.⁵

For gentlemen, the simple aphorism, “Virtue is good, but a house in Belgravia is better”,⁶ contained the truth. Thus, outward respectability, in the sense of being able to exhibit the high status of comfort commensurate with the comfort of “genteel” status,⁷ directly influenced Sexual Respectability. The influence of outward respectability consisted, in part, in the suspension of Sexual Respectability. Gentlemen and aspirants to “genteel” status, whose financial position resulted in the postponement of their marriage, were provided with a second standard of morality.

It was not only that young gentlemen could not afford to marry.

¹ Acton, *op. cit.*, pp. 102-03. For Acton’s case history of the ideal wife, see *op. cit.*, p. 103.

² *Functions*, (1862 ed.), p. 105.

³ *Saturday Review*, 1860, pp. 106-07.

⁴ Anonymous, *Modern Etiquette in Private and Public Including Society at Large* (London, n. d.), p. 67.

⁵ *Saturday Review*, 12 Jan., 1867, p. 48.

⁶ J. Edgar Foster, *The Divorce Court* (Ipswich, 1891), p. 25.

⁷ Habituating themselves to a high standard of comfortable living became part of the upper middle-class way of life during the nineteenth century. During the last quarter of the century upper middle-class families were confronted with the choice of curtailing either their comfort or the size of their families. For a detailed study of the relationship between family limitation and the desire to maintain a high standard of living, see J. A. Banks, *op. cit.*

There was, according to the "Saturday Review" of January 1867¹, a "growing disinclination to marry... among rich men no less than poor." As early as 1845, the "Quarterly Review"² described how education stereotyped the character of English wives making them so dull and insipid as to deter men from marriage. Although the novel and the theatre idealized and falsified the real condition of marriage, the "Saturday Review",³ faced the truth that "bored husbands" were by no means rare. "Most men are horribly bored at home, and... the mass of us really suffer from the domestic stagnation to which national customs and the exclusiveness [in the sense of possessiveness] of our women doom us as soon as we become family men." In 1869⁴ the "Quarterly Review" recognized the problem of enticing young men into marriage. "The more admirable the wives", meaning the closer they resembled the model of the ideal type, the womanly woman, "the more profoundly bored the husbands."⁵

"The Saturday Review"⁶ observed that "in very few families" the "mean between dissipation and stagnation" did not exist. Dissipation seems to have meant the *demi-monde*. "Your writers speak of it [the *demi-monde*] as if there were an acknowledged rivalry between the members of it and your married women." "But our married women", said Will, "are going to form a trade union among themselves to crush that institution."⁷ Disraeli's wife was delighted by the compliment, "Why, my dear, you are more like a mistress than a wife."⁸

If the young gentleman could not afford to marry, or if he did not relish the prospect of married boredom, an admittedly attractive *demi-monde* provided a competitive rival. Near the end of the fifties *demi-mondaines* became conspicuous in the fashionable life of Hyde Park.⁹ In 1862 Henry Mayhew revealed the existence of a class of gentlemen characterized by "an invincible distaste to marriage", and satisfied to keep their own mistresses. "The prevalence of this custom, and the extent of its ramifications is hardly dreamed of, although its effects are felt, and severely."¹⁰ In 1864 the "Westminster Review"¹¹ declared that leading newspapers had admitted the *demi-mondaines* to be more convenient, cheaper, and more agreeable than marriage. "Anonyma",

¹ Saturday Review of January 1867, p. 48.

³ Saturday Review, 12 June 1869, p. 770.

² Quarterly Review, Vol. XXV, p. 111.

⁴ Quarterly Review, Vol. XXVII, p. 474.

⁵ Mona Caird, "Marriage," Westminster Review, Aug. 1888, p. 197.

⁶ Saturday Review, 12 June 1869, p. 770.

⁷ William Black, In Silk Attire (London, 1869). Cited in Patricia Thomson, The Victorian Heroine. A Changing Ideal, 1837-1873 (London, New York, and Toronto, 1956), pp. 157-58.

⁸ Barbara Stephen, Emily Davies and Girton College (London, 1927), p. 14.

⁹ Pearl, op. cit., pp. 96-97.

¹⁰ Mayhew, op. cit., pp. 215-16.

¹¹ Westminster Review, July 1864, pp. 40-41.

the representative *demi-mondaine*, “is to a certain extent the pet of the age, and is openly pleaded for by many practical moralists as a present necessity to the convenience and harmony of the world.” The best summary account and assessment of the *demi-monde* was left by W. R. Greg.

“...thousands of men find it perfectly feasible to combine all the freedom, luxury, and self-indulgence of a bachelor’s career with the pleasures of female society and the enjoyments they seek for there... while the *monde* has been deteriorating, the *demi-monde* has been improving; as the one has grown stupider and costlier, the other has grown more attractive, more decorous, and more easy. The ladies *there* are now often as clever and amusing, usually more beautiful, and not infrequently (in external demeanour at least) as modest, as their rivals in more recognized society. Wanting the one essential female virtue, they often seek to atone for its absence by accomplishments and amiabilities which irreproachable respectability does not invariably display... as long as men are fond of female society, and yet hate to be bored, and shrink from profitless exertion and fatiguing *gene*, and possess only a moderate competence, and above all things dread pecuniary embarrassment or ruin – so long will those whose principles are not strict and whose taste is not fastidious, be prone to seek that society where they can have it on the easiest and cheapest terms. And the only way in which virtuous women and women of the world can meet and counteract this disposition, is the very opposite to that they have seemed inclined to adopt of late. They must imitate that rival circle in its attractive and not in its repellent features, – in its charms, not its drawbacks, nor its blots; in its ease and simplicity, not in its boldness or its license of look and speech; its wastefulness, and in the cheerfulness and kindness which redeem or gilds so many of its sins.”¹

Mrs. Linton wrote a famous essay in which she charged that “The Girl of the Period”, the rich girl from Bayswater and Belgravia, imitated the *demi-monde* in manner and feeling, in her “slang, bold talk, and fastness”. She envied the fashionable prostitutes far more than she abhorred them.² The notoriety and attractiveness of the *demi-monde* seemed to have reached its zenith early in the seventies.³

¹ W. R. Greg, “Why Are Women Redundant?”, *Social and Libery Judgments* (2nd ed., London, 1869), pp. 304-06.

² Anonymous, *The Girl of the Period* (London, 1868), pp. 4-8. The essay was reprinted from the *Saturday Review*. A copy in the Bodleian library, Oxford, boasts a circulation of thirty-five thousand.

³ Pearl, *op. cit.*, pp. 191-93.

IV

SEXUAL RESPECTABILITY AND THE LOGICAL METHOD
OF THOUGHT

While both the Respectable norm of continence and the deviation of incontinence were integrated in the Respectable Social System, Sexual Respectability itself was vindicated by the dominant method of thought in Victorian England, the so-called Logical Method of Thought, a method unable to transcend the system of human relationships in which it was integrated. Only three of the general characteristics of the Logical Method need to be mentioned here. (1) Its attempt to detect uniformity of behavior patterns about which generalized laws could be ascertained. In economic thought the assumption of uniformity of behavior was represented by the universal model of the economic man and his uniform economic motives. So, too, with the universal model of the sensual man. (2) Its answer to the Logical problem of contradiction. Of two opposing propositions one must be true, the other false; not both true and false. The Logical Method did not conceive the truth as being many-sided. Both abstractions of the economic and sensual man represented this answer in that the motives which these models incorporated were opposed in irreconcilable antithesis. (3) Its division of the mind into a number of faculties, such as the moral, the knowing, the artistic, the theological, etc. The development of the moral faculty was the index to character.¹

Although these characteristics of the Logical Method generally – whether wittingly or unwittingly – influenced the thought about Sexual Respectability of the individuals already discussed in this essay, an essay on “Vice, Crime and Insanity”² by Dr. Charles Mercier, a Late Victorian alienist, provides a really excellent expression of the implicit wielding of the Logical Method in an analysis of conduct. By recourse to the abstraction of the economic man Mercier was able to assess

¹ For an excellent introduction, see R. G. Collingswood, *Ruskin's Philosophy* (Kendal, 1922); J. S. Mill, *A System of Logic, Ratiocinative and Inductive*, 2 vols. (6th ed., London, 1865); J. S. Mill, *Dissertations and Discussions* (London, 1859) II, “Michelet's History of France”. Since Mill's thinking was dialectical (see the brilliant formulation in ch. 2 of *On Liberty* (1859)), (2) in the text stands contradicted as far as Mill is concerned, but remained true for the Respectable frame of mind. For attempts to apply the method to the writing of history, see Henry Thomas Buckle, *History of Civilization in England*, 2 vols. (London, 1857-61), and John Elliot Cairnes, *The Slave Power* (London, 1862). For a bibliography of the method as it was formulated as the a priori and deductive method in classical political economy, see IRSH, Vol. VIII (1963), Pt. 1, p. 27, fn. 3. See also W. E. Houghton, *op. cit.*, ch. 5.

² Charles Mercier, “Vice, Crime, and Insanity,” ed. Thomas Clifford Allbut, *A System of Medicine* (London and New York, 1899), VIII, pp. 248-294.

moral character by simply observing where the individual fell upon a monetary scale. The individual who by dint of industry, thrift, sobriety, and continence earned an acknowledged position of high outward Respectability on the monetary scale was also esteemed by Mercier to occupy a position of high moral Respectability on the moral scale.¹ The two scales were identical. Mercier's essay implicitly assumed not only the abstraction of the economic man, but of the sensual man too. The adoption of these models facilitated the moral assessment of all conduct, normal and abnormal.

Mercier not only speaks of virtuous and vicious conduct, but the character behind the conduct, the strength of the moral faculty, the power to conform to the requirements of a rigid inflexible external code of conduct internalized as "duty". The principle of character which separated the virtuous, vicious, criminal, and insane individuals from one another on the single scale was at the same time "the foundation of morality". According to Mercier, this principle was the individual's "power of postponing the immediate gratification of desire for the sake of some future good".² Fifteen years earlier the same principle was referred to as "inhibitory power". According to Dr. Hack Tuke what occurred in so-called "moral insanity" was an enervation of "the higher centers involving paralysis of voluntary power", thus "permitting an excessive and irregular display of feeling in one of the lower forms it assumes. This view, which transfers the seat of mischief from the feelings themselves to volitional or inhibitory power, might suggest the more accurate term of 'inhibitory insanity'. Speaking generally, the higher levels of cerebral development which are concerned in the exercise of moral control, i.e., 'the most volun-

¹ Cf. Marx's critique of the conversion of money into virtue as the negation of individuality. "That which exists for me through the medium of *money*, that which I can pay for (i.e., which money can buy), that I *am*, the possessor of the money. My own power is as great as the power of money. The properties of money are my own (the possessor's) properties and faculties. What I *am* and *can do* is, therefore, not at all determined by my individuality. I *am* ugly, but I can buy the *most beautiful* woman for myself. Consequently, I am not *ugly*, for the effect of *ugliness*, its power to repel, is annulled by money. As an individual I am *lame*, but money provides me with twenty-four legs. Therefore, I am not lame. I am detestable, dishonorable, unscrupulous and stupid but money is honored and so also is its possessor. Money is the highest good, and so its possessor is good. Besides, money saves me the trouble of being dishonest; therefore, I am presumed honest. I am *stupid*, but since money is the *real mind* of all things, how should its possessor be stupid? Moreover, he can buy talented people for himself, and is not he who has power over the talented more talented than they? I who can have, through the power of money, *everything* for which the human heart longs, do I not possess all human abilities? Does not my money, therefore, transform all my incapacities into their opposites?" (T. B. Bottomore, op. cit., p. 191.)

² Mercier, op. cit., pp. 264-68.

tary' of Jackson, and also 'the altruistic sentiments' of Spencer, are either imperfectly evolved from birth, or having been evolved have become diseased and more or less functionless, although the intellectual functions are not seriously affected, the result being that the patient's mind presents the lower level of evolution in which the emotional and automatic functions have fuller play than is normal." Tuke ascribed "moral insanity" to the inability of "inhibitory power" to control the "lower nature" and the "lower emotions". Tuke defined "moral insanity" as a mental state in which the reasoning was intact, but there was "a perverted state of the feelings, temper, inclinations, habit, and conduct", and "a deficiency or impairment of moral feeling or self-control, such things being either the development of a character natural to the individual, or a departure from it, which contrasts most strikingly with its former traits."¹

The same principle of inhibitory power as it was formulated by Mercier informed classical economic thought. The power of postponing the immediate gratification of costly indulgence was expressed in the economic virtues of industry, thrift, abstinence, and continence. "For the sake of future good" was expressed in terms of economic success. Both political economists and Mercier were in fact characterizing the mature individual. As Helen Deutsch has remarked, "The inability to say no may express nothing more than an infantile inability to give up an immediate pleasure for the sake of a greater but delayed one."²

Mercier was not content to state the principle of character maturity. He asserted that the power of postponing immediate gratification of desire for some future good, was a measureable power. It was to be measured against the moral scale containing not merely Respectable virtue, but vice, crime, and insanity. He thereby integrated in his thinking Respectable social character and Respectable morality.

Assessing the fundamental difference between virtue and vice, Mercier wrote:

"Among civilized man moral rank is gauged by the degree in which this power is possessed. He who lives a life of self-indulgence is considered morally inferior to him who lives abstemiously; and the difference between the immediate indulgence of the appetite, and abstemiousness is the difference between the immediate indulgence of the appetite and the foregoing of the immediate indulgence for the sake of greater future benefit. The spendthrift is regarded as less moral than the man who husbands

¹ Hack Tuke, *op. cit.*, pp. 21, 50, 58, 68, 124, 126.

² Helene Deutsch, *The Psychology of Women* (New York, 1947), I, p. 196.

his resources; and the spendthrift is the man who does not forego the instant of pleasure that is to be had for money, even at the expense of future want; while the thrifty man is he who prefers the greater future benefit to the instant gratification. So the men and women who live in debauchery and wantonness, are regarded as immoral, while those of chaste and cleanly life are moral, and here again the same difference lies at the root of the distinction. It is not denied that there are other differences, ...but the differences are less fundamental in character. The main difference between morality and immorality is postponement or foregoing of immediate gratification, the main standard by which degrees of morality are assessed is the extent of the possession of this power. If a man is a drunkard, it means that he gratified the instant pleasure that he derives from the imbibition of alcohol, in spite of the future disadvantage of loss of money, of health, esteem. If he is a gambler, a loafer, an opium-eater, a votary of any other form of vice, the same rule holds good. The essence, the characteristic, the differentia, the identifying mark of vice, is the instant indulgence of desire at the cost of future disadvantage; the characteristic of virtue is the foregoing of immediate gratification for the sake of greater future benefit."¹

The greater the power of self-restraint, the greater the individual's virtue. The lesser the power, the lesser the individual's virtue. When the commission of vice inflicted injury upon others, it turned into wrong-doing. The wrong-doer, Mercier said was "imperfectly socialized". "His adaptation to the social state is faulty. In both vice and wrong-doing the incapacity is an incapacity of control; it is a lack of inhibition; a want of self-restraint; an inability to restrict undue freedom of action."²

The distinction between simple vice and insane vice interested Mercier. He found it possible to construct "a continuous series of graduated cases from highly moral, virtuous and praiseworthy conduct at one end, through conduct which exhibits simple vice of various degrees, to the outrageous forms of vice that are palpably the expression of insanity."³ He created several imaginary scales. The first depicted a continuous series of examples between industry and idleness, between idleness that was vicious only, and idleness that was insane. He did the same for sobriety and drunkenness that was insane. He did the same for sexual conduct. In each form of virtue and vice,

¹ Mercier, *op. at.*, p. 249.

² *Ibid.*, p. 254.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 259.

the scale was continuous. Mercier thought he had ascertained the principle by which virtue, simple vice, and insane vice could be located on the scale. The principle was “*the gravity of the difference between the benefit of the immediate indulgence and the benefit in the future which immediate indulgence will forfeit.*”¹ In vice the gravity was not only great, but known to be great. In insane vice the gravity was not only known to be profound, but the power of self-restraint was completely wanting. According to Mercier the insane were addicted to the vices of “busy idleness”, extravagance, gluttony, drunkenness, sexual dissoluteness, and “incurable mendacity”. The insane were likened to “fair savages”; they were atavistic throwbacks. In the main the process of adjusting self to circumstances was defective. Like the imbecile, the insane lacked the ability of conserving their life by their own efforts. The insane individual was classifiable with “scientific precision as a moral imbecile”. “As the imbecile, with patience and with labour”, wrote Mercier, “may be educated to understand some of the simpler relations among phenomena, so the moral imbecile may be educated to exercise some degree of self-restraint; but as no amount of education can give the former a normal amount of intelligence, so no amount of pains can make the latter normally industrious or thrifty.”² Since the insane, like their primitive counterpart, did not conform to the Respectable standard of morality, it was assumed that both deviants were of identical character. The Respectable psychology of Dr. Mercier identified the standard of sanity with the standard of morality and the standard of insanity with the standard of immorality.³

Like the Logical Method of Thought, Respectable psychology vindicated respectable behavior. In a vein similar to Dr. Mercier, Dr. William R. Huggard, also a Late-Victorian alienist, observed that standard of conduct varied in different societies, and that conduct which was socially approved in some primitive societies was considered a mark of insanity in English society. To the view that nature absolutely and definitely drew the line which divided the sane from the insane, Huggard opposed the view that society in the final analysis determined the separation. Nature made a broad margin of gradations, but society itself determined exactly what constituted sanity. Insanity could not be objectively defined as simply a defective condition of the

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 260.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 265, 268.

³ “The test of insanity is not the relative strength of one motive or another in the mind of the actor, but whether his conduct is or is not adjusted to his circumstances; and, if it be not, whether the maladjustment is corrigible. If it be corrigible, the process of adjustment is normal, and he is sane; if it be incorrigible, the process of adjustment is disordered, and disorder of the process of adjusting self to circumstances in insanity... by conduct alone, can insanity be estimated.” *Ibid.*, p. 274.

mind. It was not only that, but more besides. It was not of fixed meaning, but a changing conception relative to "the standard of the sanity in the class" to which the individual belonged. "From this point of view, insanity is any mental defect that renders a person unable (and not capable of being made able by punishment) to conform to the requirements of society." From the fact that primitive societies approved conduct regarded insane by civilized societies, he deduced that civilization progressively raised the standard of sanity requiring more self-control and more intelligence. The same fact gave him a clue to the character of insanity itself. "Many cases of insanity might properly be regarded as a kind of 'throw back' to a type of organization common only amongst lower races of mankind."¹

The alienists obscured the distinctions which differentiated the standard of morality from the standard of sanity, and the standard of immorality from the standard of insanity. While the rigid standard of morality could be changed or enlarged on the approval of public opinion, according to Huggard, the approval signified that the change was moral and sane, and that the standard of morality and sanity itself had changed. Conversely, if public opinion disapproved some act of unconventional behavior common to a particular class which it called immoral, it was simply refusing to change the standard of morality and of sanity, and the act in question was according to the moralists one of depravity, according to the alienists one of insanity. The non-conformists who did "what everybody does", were not only as Mill said, "the subject of as much depreciatory remark as if the or she had committed some grave moral delinquency," but also incurred the risk of being victims of "a commission *de lunatico*".² By obscuring the distinctions between the standards of morality and of sanity, alienists, like Huggard, helped to narrow the range of conduct which might be unconventional and still thought sane.³

¹ William R. Huggard, "Definition of Insanity," *Journal of Mental Science*, XXIX, (Jan. 1884) pp. 475-484, and his "The Standard of Insanity," *British Medical Journal*, 28 Nov., 1885, p. 1013.

² J. S. Mill, *On Liberty*, ed. R. B. McCallum (Oxford, 1946), p. 61.

³ The economic character of the Respectable Economic System has changed profoundly. As an emphasis upon saving has been exactly reversed to an emphasis upon spending, so the indoctrination to save money and sexual energy has changed to the indoctrination to spend both. The morality of Acton and Mercier who correlated thrift and continence has given way to Keynesian economics and the sexual morality of the Kinsey Report. As Lionel Trilling has pointed out, the authors of the Kinsey Report conceive of sexuality primarily in behavioristic terms, only the physical side of sex being considered, and confine their interest in it insofar as it lends itself to quantitative measurement. They are partisans of a good sexuality by which they mean frequency. In the words of the Report: "It seems safe to assume that daily orgasm would be within the capacity of the average

It should now be clear that the Respectable Social System created a stereotype of truncated human nature and patterns of human behavior that were embodied in the abstractions of the Economic and of the Sensual Man. The System made “the desire for wealth” the main motive and sexual behavior had to be adjusted accordingly by inculcating a desire for continence. These abstractions or models represented the human nature of a particular historical epoch, Victorian England. To understand them more fully it is useful to call attention to that idea of “universal human nature” to which nineteenth century humanism perennially appealed in its opposition to the Respectable stereotype. Thus in his essay on Bentham, first published in 1838, Mill ascribed the limitations of the “felicific calculus”, of Bentham’s theory of human motivation, to “the incompleteness of his [Bentham’s] own mind as a representative of universal human nature”, to “his deficiency of Imagination”,¹ and to his inability to recognize “the moral part of man’s nature in the strict sense of the term – the desire of perfection, or the feeling of an approving or of an accusing conscience...”² Like Mill, Marx was also to protest against Bentham’s identification of a particular expression of human nature as it appeared in the new industrial society with universal human nature.³ Or to take another Victorian humanist. Arnold laid bare the “Puritan” “tendency to cultivate strictness of conscience rather than spontaneity.” What the “Puritan” wanted, according to Arnold, was “a larger conception of human nature, showing him the number of points at which his nature must come to its best, besides the points at which he himself knows and thinks of.”⁴ Lastly, attention may be drawn to Ruskin’s mid-Victorian humanist critique of classical economic thought and of the character of work in industrial England. Ruskin challenged the abstraction of the economic man and the worker’s alienation in his work. As in the case of Mill, Marx, and Arnold, his critique was founded upon a premise of “universal human nature”.

male and that the more than daily rates which have been observed for some primates could be matched by a larger portion of the human population if sexual activity were unrestricted.” (Quoted in Lionel Trilling, *The Liberal Imagination, Essays on Literature and Society* (London, 1955), pp. 230-42). Fromm has described post-World War I society in terms which Mercier has defined as characteristic of insanity. Fromm writes: “Not to postpone the satisfaction of any desire became the main tendency in the sphere of sex as well as in that of all material consumption.” The Victorian fear of the “appetites” has been succeeded by the post-Victorian belief that “the world is one great object of our appetite.” (Eric Fromm, *The Art of Loving* (London, 1957), pp. 91-2, 87). Chastity has given way to “sexiness”, saving to spending.

¹ J. S. Mill, *Dissertations*, p. 354.

² *Ibid.*, p. 353.

³ Karl Marx, *Capital* (Chicago, 1906), I, p. 668.

⁴ M. Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, p. 109.

The humanists who challenged the Respectable stereotype of human nature projected an alternative source as the basis for good conduct. In general they argued that the source was to be found, not in the norms of the class to which the individual belonged (i.e. structured in the social system itself and sanctioned by the will of God), but in man's nature. In Havelock Ellis' words: "Morality is thus the normal activity of a healthy nature, not the product either of tradition or of rationalism." Ellis' remarks appeared in his essay on Whitman. "Whatever tastes sweet to the most perfect person, that is finally right – this, it has been said, is the maxim on which Whitman's morality is founded, and it is the morality of Aristotle. But no Greek ever asserted and illustrated it with such emphatic iteration."¹ Respectable continence in itself was completely devoid of virtue. "It is in reasonable self-control that virtue resides; in the positive, healthy direction of all human actions by a good will and clear intellect."² But perhaps John Addington Symonds gave the most significant expression of all these late Victorian humanists who located the standard of right within mankind. He challenged standards purported to rest on divine sanction. His statement did not call for the conquest of man's sexual nature, but accepted it and called for its "regulation". Symonds assumed that moral standards could be constantly improved through discussion and thereby challenged the Respectable assumption of a fixed code.

"A man in perfect health of mind and body, enjoying the balance of mental, moral, and physical qualities, which health implies, carried within himself the norm and measure of propriety. These were the days when 'love was an unerring light and joy its own security.' What we call conscience, our continual reference to the standards of the Divine Will, did not exist for the Greeks. But instead of it he had for a guide this true artistic sensibility developed by centuries of training, fortified by traditional canons of good taste and prudence, and subject to continual correction by reciprocal and dialectical debate. The lawgiver, the sculptor, the athlete, the statesman, the philosopher, the poet, the warrior, the musician, each added something of his own to the formation of common taste, by which the individual might regulate his instincts."³

¹ Havelock Ellis, *The New Spirit* (London, 1890), pp. 110-11.

² William Clarke, *Walt Whitman* (London and New York, 1893), p. 70.

³ J. A. Symonds, *Studies of the Greek Poets* (London, 1873), pp. 416-17. See also his *Studies of Greek Poets Second Series* (London, 1876).

V

IMMATURE LOVE AND THE STRUCTURE OF THE
RESPECTABLE FAMILY

For the most part – though by no means entirely – our analysis has concentrated upon considerations of the overall pattern of unmarried gentlemanly sexual behaviour as it was related to Respectable sexual attitudes or ideology (reason *versus* sexual instinct and sexual emotions), to character traits (manly coldness and reserve), the norm of continence, the deviation from the norm, and character orientation (the incestuous fixation). It is to a consideration of married love in the Respectable family that this section is devoted. In this context the overall characteristics of the unmarried pattern assume a new meaning. For it becomes evident that the sexual attitudes, character traits, and the norm were acquisitions of the gentleman impressed upon his social character during the process of his socialization for his future life in the Respectable family.

The relationship of Respectable married love was characterized by the same immaturity, that, broadly speaking, typified the entire established relationship prevailing between ladies and gentlemen in the Respectable family. The character of the overall pattern of the respectable relationship between husband and wife was not mature, i.e. a free and equal association, but immature, i.e. an association between unequals characterized by domination and submission. Married love was an immature association of dominance and submissiveness corresponding to the structure of the Respectable family and congruent with the entirety of family associations. Gentlemen and ladies were not free to determine for themselves their own pattern of love. It was determined for them by the pattern of immature relationships prevailing in the family life for which they were destined. Not only were they brought up and educated in the proper Respectable attitudes to make such a relationship functional, but their social characters were so formed that they willingly accepted and acted upon these attitudes. Gentlemen and ladies were socialized into the types of social character, the “Christian gentleman” and the “womanly woman”, that integrated them into the structure of the Respectable family. Their integration signified the relative congruency of Respectable social characters and the structure of the family, a congruency that facilitated the realization of the Respectable goal of Respectable married love.

The subject of social character is far too large for the limited scope of this essay, but it needs to be touched upon because of its bearing upon the pattern of married love. The social character of individual

ladies or gentlemen has nothing to do with individual peculiarities which differentiate them, but with “the essential nucleus of the character structure” shared by most members of the classes of ladies and gentlemen.¹ Clearly a common social character is a derivative of a common way of life. But just what is meant by social character? “Character in the dynamic sense of analytic psychology is the specific form in which human energy is shaped by the dynamic adaptation of human needs to the particular mode of existence of a given society.”² To adapt this formula to the problem at hand it may be said that social character was the specific form in which human energy was shaped by the adaptation of human needs to the way of life prevailing among ladies and gentlemen in the Respectable family. After the adaptation “character in its turn determines the thinking, feeling, and acting of individuals.”³ If “determines” is toned down to greatly influences, the conception becomes a useful working hypothesis. When the social character of individual ladies and gentlemen were formed on the model of the “womanly woman” and the “christian gentleman”, the dominant needs of their social characters led them to fulfill the dominant social needs inherent in the functioning of the Respectable family. The model social characters behaved the way they had to given the structure of the Respectable family. By forming their social characters in reference to their future life in the family, ladies and gentlemen developed character traits and psychological needs that made them desire to behave as they had to behave. The psychological satisfaction of the needs stabilized the structure of the Respectable family.

The pattern of unequal association in married love was rooted not only in the structure of family relationships, but in the social characters of both the ladies and gentlemen themselves through which the relationships were expressed. To make Respectable women willingly accept their dependent and subordinate position in the world and their dependent and unequal relation in the family, the trait of psychological

¹ Eric Fromm, *The Art of Loving* (London, 1957), pp. 91-92, 87.

² I follow Eric Fromm's studies in characterology here. Especially his *Fear of Freedom* (London, 1952), “Appendix: Character and the Social Process”.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 239.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 239. Grant Allen, the greatest of the late-Victorian rebels, made the point: “What an extraordinary insight into character you have!” I cried. “You seem to divine what everybody's action will be under given circumstances.” ... ‘Character determines action,’ she said... ‘That is the secret of the great novelists... I have something of the novelist's gift; I apply the same method to the real life of the people around me. I try to throw myself into the person of others, and to feel how their character will compel them to act in each set of circumstances to which they may expose themselves.’ Hilda Wade (London, 1900), pp. 113-14. See also his *Dumaresq's Daughter* (London, 1891) for a perceptive novel about hysteria and psychosomatic blindness.

dependence was impressed upon their character in the course of their upbringing. Womanly dependence was impressed and idealized as a womanly virtue because the character of upper-middle and upper-class women was formed with reference to their prospective lives as dependent wives and mothers in the family. So deeply rooted was dependence in their character that it is no exaggeration to say that the "womanly woman" was markedly masochistic in her character-orientation.¹ The entire development of the lives of women, the formation of their character, their upbringing, their education, their womanly self-effacement, and their subordinate position and complete absorption of their individuality in the family prepared them for the role of submissive conformity to the pattern of immature love, "fusion without integrity", or lost of individuality.² Mill perceptively commented upon the result of the process of feminine character formation. "It may be asserted without scruple, that no other class of dependents have had their character so entirely distorted from its natural proportions by their relations with their masters."³ The basic patterns of relatedness, it seems to me, explain the character of Victorian love. The pattern of love was determined by compulsions internalized in individual social character and externalized in the structure of the family. In short both social character and family structure thwarted the realization of a free and equal love-pattern, mature love.

No less than ladies the social character of gentlemen was formed and character traits were impressed upon them to fit them for their prospective role of dominance in the Respectable family and to accept all the attitudes that accompanied their roles. The gentleman's basic character-orientation and character-trait was domination. In this he had internalized a psychological need to dominate which corresponded to externalized relationships of domination which prevailed in the structure of the Respectable family and the Respectable Stratification System. The social character of the gentleman integrated him into all Respectable relationships.

It is no exaggeration to say that the English gentleman was unable to free himself from the parental relation. He did not attain to the maturity signified by the individual's freedom from the father and mother figures. The development from mother-centeredness to father-centeredness and their final synthesis in the individual emancipated from the parental relationship was thwarted. In the Respectable patriarchal family the gentleman became father-centered and this

¹ See Peter T. Cominos, *The Late Victorian Revolt, 1859-1895* (unpublished D. Phil. thesis, Oxford, 1959), pp. 369-455, 583-630.

² Fromm, *Art*, p. 20.

³ J. S. Mill, *Subjection*, p. 39.

development was reinforced by the public school system wherein the boys were “alienated from home influences”. Gentlemen remained attached to the mother-figure. In this mother fixation they transferred the feelings, expectations, and fears that they once held toward their mothers to their wives. Gentlemen, like ladies, never emerged from the pattern of infantile relatedness and they sought for this pattern in their affective demands in the Respectable marriage. In the more severe cases, the gentleman’s social effectiveness was disturbed by his emotional immaturity. In the less severe ones, the conflict was limited to the sphere of intimate personal relationships.

Thus the pattern of infantile relatedness produced a social character in whom an incestuous fixation disassociated the elements of love. The gentleman’s inability to love fully was expressed in his ascetic love for his wife, or in his vacillation between ascetic and libertine behaviour, or in his complete libertine behaviour. His ascetic love was translated into his trait of manly reserve, the “anesthetic man”. The disassociation of the elements were vindicated by the Respectable Sexual ideology in which the inferior sexual emotions were pitted against their superiors, “reason”, “duty”, and “success”. The Respectable patriarchal family could not produce for its classes of gentlemen a social character in which a psychic balance of maturity was the keynote.¹ On the contrary the Respectable family upset the psychic balance and over-repressed the gentleman. In the over-repression of his sexual instinct in conformity with the demands of the Respectable morality rooted in the structure of the social system and the family, over-repression denied to the gentleman a vital part of his self, and the denial constituted a suppression of his spontaneity² and a conduciveness to his conformity to Respectable norms.³ The continuous presence of the rigid principle of Respectable morality that all pleasure

¹ For a discussion of the later Freud’s tripartite anatomy of the psyche in conflict and balance, see Philip Rieff, *op. cit.*, pp. 62-65.

² “...their suppression, because of the intensity of sexual desires, not only effects the sexual sphere but also weakens the person’s courage for spontaneous expression in all other spheres.” Eric Fromm, *Fear of Freedom* (London, 1952), pp. 210-11. “One premise for this spontaneity is the acceptance of the total personality and elimination of the split between “reason” and “nature”; for only if man does not repress essential parts of his self, only if he has become transparent to himself, and only if the different spheres of life have reached a fundamental integration, is spontaneous activity possible.” *Ibid.*, pp. 222-23.

³ “The loss of the self has increased the necessity to conform, for it results in a profound doubt of one’s own identity... The loss of identity then makes it still more imperative to conform; it means that one can be sure of oneself only if one lives up to the expectations of others. If we do not live up to this picture we not only risk disapproval and increased isolation, but we risk losing the identity of our personality, which means jeopardizing sanity.” *Ibid.*, p. 219.

was wrong¹ exerted an “influence of whose operation one is mostly unconscious”. Alone the principle checked “all blithness and freedom of spirit”. When countenanced by “a conviction that mirth is unscriptural”, it actually extinguished the possibility of flexibility of character. In short, John Morley who made these remarks was noting in a passage of real insight that the inelasticity of Respectable social character was clearly associated with the continuous exhortation to avert any kind of pleasurable experience.² The rigidity of Respectable morality was impressed upon Respectable social character itself, making each harmonious and functionally congruent with the other.

VI

THE LATE VICTORIAN REVOLT

The intellectual vindication of moral respectability provided by distinguished alienists like Mercier and Huggard strengthened its defenses against individuals who doubted its value and harboured unconventional thoughts. Had the respectable alienists directly related insanity to the pressure brought to bear upon the individual to make him conform to the code of Respectability, their position would have been really significant. While they explicitly adhered to the code of Moral

¹ “The proposition that all pleasant things are right is untrue”, wrote John Morley, “but is is certainly not so radically untrue as the more popular proposition that most pleasant things are wrong.” “From our school-days upwards”, Morley wrote, “we are taught, first by masters and discipline, and afterwards by the temper which we find prevailing in the world outside, that if anything is pleasant it is sure to prove to be wrong. It is attempted to represent even cricket and football either in their utilitarian aspects, as good for the body, just as grammar is good for the soul, than as means of pleasure and enjoyment. The notion that pleasure as pleasure is a desirable thing is repugnant to the heart of the commonplace pedagogue.” The principle that all pleasure was wrong was closely related to the business of getting on in the world. “Of the many extraordinary notions which constitute the distinctive characteristics of an average Englishman or Scotsman, none is more wonderful or more inveterate than the conviction that all pleasure is more or less a waste of time.” Pleasure was looked upon as at “most a necessary evil, incident to our fallen race.” However, as religion countenanced, less and less, the belief that pleasurable experiences were incompatible with the discharge of religious duties and the salvation of the soul, the purely secular belief in success countenanced more and more openly the declining “rigid ascetic theory of life”. “Just as we have ceased to believe that pleasure is fatal to salvation, people start to persuade us that it is fatal to getting on in the world.” Ambitious men in earnest about making their way in the world thought every diversion, “as the converted saints used to”, regardless of its character, a “frivolity” and a “stupid self-indulgence”. Anonymous (John Morley), *Studies in Conduct, Short Essays From the Saturday Review* (London, 1867), pp. 1-9.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 8-10.

Respectability, the Late-Victorian revolt against established authority in all aspects of life and thought worked profound changes in the study of psychology. Distinguished psychologists like Havelock Ellis abandoned the Respectable stereotype of human nature represented by the abstractions of the economic and sensual man. Elles determined to make a fresh and disinterested enquiry into the psychology of sex. Freud's first book contained a challenge to Respectable morality. According to an English alienist reviewing "Studies on Hysteria" (1895), Freud and Bauer were asserting that hysteria should be attributed to widely acknowledged tensions and guilt feelings generated by Respectability in relation to the family, the sexual instinct and sexual experiences, and to religious doubts.¹ Attempts to live upto the standard of Respectable morality and social, religious, and family expectations were driving individuals insane. Insanity was being associated with the pressure brought to bear upon the individual to make him conform to the code of Respectable morality. There was a world of difference between asserting that the immoral were insane and asserting that the standard of morality were driving individuals insane. It is the difference between triumphant Respectability and the revolt against it. The rise of modern psychology is understandable when it is seen in this context of a generalized challenge, reassessment, and reconstitution of established authority which is the essence of what I have called the "Middle-Class Revolution",² but now prefer to call the "Western" or "English Revolution", my concern being primarily with the development of that "Revolution" in late-Victorian England.

Contrary to the words of Jeyes' cited earlier, there was in late-Victorian England a considerable consciousness regarding the loss of personal identity, "for a self that has gotten itself lost in the hum and bustle of corporate existence." What may be called the late-Victorian discovery of self or individuality in love, in religion, and in work. In contrast to immature love, "mature love is union under conditions of preserving one's integrity, one's individuality."³ Unlike the immature love relationship of domination and submission, the mature love relationship is one of genuinely free and equal association. The development of modern Western society, according to Mill, was from domination and submission to equal and free association. In 1869

¹ Brain: A Journal of Neurology, XIX (1896), pp. 406-07. "...Freud... declared that the degree of sexual repression assumed to be normal in his time was excessive, and actually causing neurosis." E. Fromm, *Freud's Mission*, p. 100. In many respects Freud's thought incorporates current Respectable notions about the nature of man. See E. Fromm, *op. cit.*, Cf. Rieff, *op. cit.*

² Cominos, *op. cit.*

³ Fromm, *Art*, p. 20.

Mill wrote: "Already in modern life, and more and more as it progressively improves, command and obedience become exceptional facts in life, equal association its general rule." And again he stated: "But the virtue of human beings is fitness to live together as equals; claiming nothing for themselves but what they concede to every one else; regarding command of any kind as an exceptional necessity, and in all cases a temporary one; and preferring, whenever possible, the society of those with whom leading and following can be alternative and reciprocal."¹ It is no accident that Victorian rebels, like Grant Allen, who wanted to see mature love relations firmly established in the family and fellowship outside the family, recognized the need to reconstruct the entire system of human relationships within and without the family.²

Among late-Victorian rebels normative standards and patterns of behaviour, moral Respectability, were seen as overlaying and submerging the real interests of the individual. Shaw perceived a direct relationship between the late-Victorian religious revival and what were for him the soul-destroying demands of Respectable morality. "All religions", Shaw wrote, "begin with a revolt against morality, and perish when morality conquers them and stamps out such words as grace and sin, substituting for them morality and immorality."³ Against this background Whitman's verse has real meaning to late-Victorian rebels: "Nothing, not even God, is greater to one, than oneself is." "Whitmania"⁴ and "Ibsenism"⁵ protested the lost of personal identity. Underlying these observations was the general revolt against established authorities in the totality of late-Victorian life, the redevelopment of the "English Revolution". Against the established authority of the Logical Method of Thought, Respectable Psychology, the Respectable family, and the Respectable Social System emerged the challenges of the historical method of thought, modern psychology, the "new woman", and liberal socialism. Binding these challenges was the goal of emancipating mankind from fixations of character and beliefs which could not be generally transcended by

¹ J. S. Mill, *Subjection*, pp. 79-81.

² As a social critic Allen was prolific, See especially his, *Falling in Love and Other Essays* (London, 1889), *The Woman Who Did* (London, 1895), and "Natural Inequality," ed. Edward Carpenter, *Forecasts of the Coming Century* (London and Manchester, 1897), and Edward Clodd, *Grant Allen, a Memoir* (London, 1900) for a complete bibliography of his many books. There are literally hundreds of his essays scattered throughout the periodicals of the eighties and nineties.

³ "The Quintessence of Ibsenism," *Major Critical Essays* (London, 1948), p. 121.

⁴ Harold William Blodgett, *Walt Whitman in England* (London, 1934). For a bibliography of "Whitmania" in England, see P. T. Cominos, *op. cit.*, pp. 654-55.

⁵ Miriam Alice Franc, *Ibsen in England* (Boston, 1919).

individuals within the system and from various forms of dependence: *vis-à-vis* the past, *vis-à-vis* others in a psychological sense, and *vis-à-vis* the social system. Late-Victorian humanism aspired to realized human potential, independence, and freedom, making human choices truly autonomous and not determined by an uncritical acceptance of the past, by an arrested and constricting personal past, and by an impersonal compulsive present. The revolt, creating tensions, conflicts, deviant social characters, and incongruencies, plunged the Respectable Social System into a condition of crisis that reached a climax in 1894-95.¹ Until the earlier years of the twentieth century the revolt was superseded by an outburst of jingoism and imperialism which after 1895 seemed to make the lower classes quiescent and to divert attention from internal domestic issues. In the words of Halévy, “A wave of imperialism was sweeping over the country, and as hatred of the foreigner – the German, the Russian, the Frenchman – prevailed over hatred of the domestic enemy, and racial hostility thrust the conflict of classes into the background, the situation became unfavourable to labour agitation.”² While Late-Victorian radicalism and socialism intensified the class struggle and fostered lower-class consciousness of its interests in opposition to the interests of gentlemen, conversely “Social Imperialism was designed to draw all classes together in defense of the nation and empire and aimed to prove to the least well-to-do class that its interests were inseparable from those of the nation.”³ After 1895, and indeed ever since, it became possible to ponder again and again the words of Matthew Arnold quoted at the beginning of this essay. “Ask yourselves if you not sometimes feel in yourselves a sense, that in spite of the strenuous efforts for good of so many excellent persons amongst us, we begin somehow to flounder and to beat the air; that we seem to be finding ourselves stopped on this line of advance and on that and to be threatened with a sort of standstill. It is that we are trying to live with a social organization of which the day is over. Certainly equality will never of itself alone give us a perfect civilisation. But, with such inequality as ours, a perfect civilisation is impossible.”

¹ Cominos, *op. cit.*, pp. 630-33.

² E. Halévy, trans. E. I. Watkin, *Imperialism and the Rise of Labour* (London, 1951), p. 258.

³ Bernard Semmel, *Imperialism and Social Reform. English Social-Imperial Thought, 1895-1914* (Cambridge, 1960), p. 24. I should like to acknowledge my gratitude to Professor J. H. Hexter for his critical comments.