CARLYLE AND TRANSCENDENTALISM

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CARLYLE AND TRANSCENDENTALISM

INTRODUCTION

We who live in the twentieth century were born into a society whose roots are deep in scientific materialism. The smashing of the atom, devastating proof of the extent to which man has been led by scientific inquiry into an investigation of the natural forces at work in the universe, is but a natural outgrowth of this materialism. Whether in accomplishing such feats as this man has violated a moral law, or has undermined man's faith in the unseen, is of slight significance to a people whose recognized God is not a spirit but a mechanistic law. It is probable that any awareness of the existence of such a law as a moral law, is purely accidental to those in whose lives spiritualism has never entered.

In this respect our age is not unlike that in which Carlyle lived. His description of his age will make the resemblance apparent:

Were we to characterize this age of ours by any single epithet, we should be tempted to call it, not an Heroical, Devotional, Philosophical, or Moral Age, but above all others, the Mechanical Age. It is the Age of Machinery, in every outward and inward sense of that word ...

Not the external and physical alone is now managed by machinery, but the internal and spiritual also.

The essential difference between the two ages seems to be that whereas Carlyle's age was not far removed from the period in which the dogma of the Christian church was
accepted without question, thus making the spirit of inquiry more startling, our age has followed those in which this spirit has been the predominant characteristic. It is not surprising then that Carlyle, whose early spiritual training embodied the doctrines of Calvinism and Puritanism, should be perturbed by the extent to which the spirit of inquiry was fast removing the props from established dogma of any nature, and leaving in its wake nothing upon which man could with certainty base his faith.

In seeking an answer, other than that offered by the empiricists, to the question of the true nature and source of knowledge, Carlyle was introduced to German literature and philosophy through Madame de Staël's treatise De l'Allemagne. This introduction led to a great interest in the German writers Goethe, Fichte, Novalis, and especially to a serious consideration of the transcendental philosophy of Immanuel Kant.

The philosophy of transcendentalism was in direct opposition to the then existing philosophy of empiricism. According to the latter theory, all knowledge comes from experience through the medium of the senses. It is immediately apparent that there is nothing in this theory which admits of a moral law, or of the forces within man which such a law governs. Transcendental philosophy, on the other hand, assumes that human reason implies some questions which it cannot answer by recourse to the senses, because these questions transcend every faculty of the mind.
This would presuppose a knowledge to exist which is independent then of experience. This is Kant's thesis. He affirms that there is a knowledge which is independent of sensory experience and of all impressions of sense. This is intuitive or pure knowledge and is said to be a priori, or absolutely independent of all experience. This knowledge cannot be explained by reason; it is explainable only through postulates. Further, knowledge arising from this source is not materialistic but spiritualistic. Further comprehension of this type of knowledge leads to a distinction between reason and understanding. This Kant proposes to do in his explanation of transcendental philosophy. He treats likewise of time and space, and of the categorical imperative. Carlyle was greatly attracted by Kant's exposition, finding much in it to bolster his partially formulated personal creed.

He found ideas of equally great appeal in Goethe's theory of nature as the vesture of God, Fichte's theory of the Divine Idea, and Novalis' theory of the revelation of God and nature by means of hieroglyphs, all theories which had their roots in transcendentalism.

It is the purpose of this thesis to show Carlyle's interpretation and expression of these concepts by reference to specific works of his, and to reveal to what extent they were useful in helping him to refute the mechanism of his age.
CARLYLE AND TRANSCENDENTALISM

It is of no little significance that Carlyle's interest in transcendentalism was stimulated by influences which were fundamentally opposed to each other. The first of these, which one might designate as parental influences, served as a positive stimulus in his search for ultimate truth and reality; the other influences, which though not altogether peculiar to his age alone but which found ultimate expression in it, namely, empiricism and utilitarianism, were negative stimuli for his spiritual development. To assert that any one of these influences, viewed separately, predominated over the thought of Carlyle is but to build on false assumptions; wiser is it to say that one could not have produced profound effects without the existence of the other.

The parental influences which contributed to the character and expression of Carlyle's transcendentalism were twofold. First of all, as the offspring of Scotch parents, he inherited much of the ruggedness, energetic and stubborn opposition, stability and firmness of will by which this race has long been characterized.

It is impossible to exaggerate the importance of his belonging as a child to a stable race, to a social organization which was essentially traditional; for by this connection he was in sympathy with the collective will before in his maturity he came to oppose it. Besides, the very cant of his opposition, the very energy with which he sustained it, he owed to the remote and tacit will of the race to which he belonged, a will which he did not reject but whose scope he merely extended.
The second important factor among parental influences was that which invested Carlyle with a strong instinct for a personal religion. Though difficult to define, the religion of Carlyle's parents deeply embodied the doctrines of Puritanism and Calvinism. So closely allied are the two that no fine distinction can be made between them. In Puritanism with its exaltation of labor and suffering as the chief realities of life, its stoicism, independence, and rigid adherence to God's truth, Carlyle found still other attributes. Writing of John Knox and Puritanism in "The Hero As Priest" he says:

But in our island there arose a Puritanism, which even got itself established as a Presbyterianism and National Church among the Scotch; which came forth as a real business of the heart; and has produced in the world very notable fruit. In some senses, one may say it is the only phasis of Protestantism that ever got to the rank of being a Faith, a true heart-communication with Heaven, and of exhibiting itself in History as such ...

We may censure Puritanism as we please ... but we, and all men, may understand that it was a genuine thing; for Nature has adopted it, and it has grown, and grows.2

Although this expression came long after Carlyle's beliefs had been definitely formulated, it is not unreasonable to suppose that the ideas of "faith" and "a true heart-communication with heaven" to which he here alludes, were latent in his early thought, awaiting, as it were, some final conviction requisite for ultimate expression.
In Calvinism, which embraced these puritanical concepts, Carlyle was exposed to still another idea which was to prove fundamental in any consideration of transcendentalism. "The first word of Calvinism is God, immanent and transcentdent," and to know Him is man's supreme end. God, who is Infinite, the Absolute Ego, is above and beyond man's thinking and striving, and yet a part of his Ego dwells within the soul of every man:

The Soul, what can properly be called the Soul, lies dead in the bosom of man ... Nevertheless, God is in it; here, even here, is the Revelation of the Infinite in the Finite; a majestic Poem (tragic, comic or epic), couldst thou but read it and recite it! Watch it then; study it, catch the secret of it, and proclaim the same in such accent as is given thee.

Since all man's efforts should be turned to seeking and to knowing God, some avenue of approach to Him must be accessible to man; this method of approach is Faith. Though man can never really know God, he can, through faith, be guided in his earthly strivings. So it is that for religious belief, faith becomes a cardinal principle in Calvinism. Akin to this concept of faith is another which affirms God's unceasing interest and manifestation throughout all nature and in man's actions.

Whatever Carlyle may have later assimilated through varying sources which contributed to his later expression, it is apparent that in these ideas which stemmed directly from parental influences, he had a basis for the growth and development of a spiritual idealism based on suffering and
resignation, and strong in the faith of the power of inner reality. Professor Harrold summarizes the value of these influences thus:

... it is important to remember the fundamental idealism bred in him by his Calvinistic environment. From that early puritan point of view, as much as from Goethe or Richte, sprang his inspiration to view all material forms as clothing of something invisible and abiding. Having its basis in the puritan certainty that man moves among shadows, it readily adapted itself to the notion that the visible is but a vesture.

It is not surprising then that with the stimulus of such potent influences as these, Carlyle should be perturbed by the extent to which the spirit of inquiry, motivated by the rise and development of empiricism, was fast removing the props from established dogma of any nature, and leaving in its wake nothing upon which man could with certainty base his faith.

The very tenets upon which empiricism is founded were incompatible with Carlyle's formative thought. According to the empiricists, all knowledge is derived from sense experience, the mind being originally a blank, a tabula rasa, upon which sense-given impressions are mechanically recorded:

Our observations, employed either about external sensible objects, or about the internal operations of our minds, perceived and reflected by ourselves, is that which supplies our understandings with all the material of thinking. These two are the fountains of knowledge, whence all the ideas we have, or can naturally have, do spring.
It is apparent from this thesis that the source of our knowledge of external objects is sensation, whereas the source of our knowledge of the operation of our own mind within us is based on reflection. This being true, any knowledge obtained through other sources such as divine intervention or the like, is without authority. What then happens to faith, by which man is intuitively guided by the Infinite to an awareness of knowledge wholly independent of sense experience? If the mind is originally a blank, how does one explain the existence of innate ideas, that body of knowledge for which there is no explanation in sense experience? The empiricists answer that there are no such innate ideas inasmuch as they are not universally recognized by all people as such, and in order for a truth to be a reality, it must be a universal truth. What then happens to religious belief? What happens to those beliefs which stem from within, from the heart, from intuition or spiritual insight? Carlyle realized the seriousness and gravity of such a doctrine as this. In his essay on "Goethe" which appeared in The Foreign Review in 1828, he hurls a biting invective against John Locke, the Founder of the new philosophy of empiricism:

Locke, himself a clear humbly-minded, patient, reverent, nay religious man, had paved the way for banishing religion from the world. Mind, by being modelled in men's imaginations into a Shape, a Visibility; and reasoned of as if it had been some composite, divisible and reunitable substance, some finer chemical salt, or curious piece of logical joinery, -- began to lose its immaterial mysterious, divine though invisible character: it was tacitly figured as something that might, were our organs fine enough, be seen. Yet who had ever seen it? Who could ever see it? Thus
by degrees it passed into a Doubt, a
Relation, some faint Possibility; and at
last into a highly-probable Nonentity.
... And what then was Religion ... chiefly
a delusion; often a false and pernicious
one.7

And in Past and Present he reiterates much of this same thought,
though directing his attack against the age in which he finds
himself, an age devoid of all but mechanics and shams; an age
in which dynamics has been totally disregarded.

"But it is said our religion is gone ... God's
absolute Laws, sanctioned by an eternal Heaven
and an eternal Hell, have become Moral Philoso-
phies, sanctioned by able computations of Profit
and Loss, by weak considerations of Pleasures of
Virtue and the Moral Sublime.

It is even so. To speak in the ancient Dialect,
we "have forgotten God," in the most modern
dialect and very truth of this Universe as it is
not. We have quietly closed our eyes to the
eternal Substance of things, and opened them
only to the Shows and Shams of things. We
quietly believe this Universe to be intrinsically
a great unintelligible Perhaps ..."8

Thus summing up the spiritual condition of his age,
Carlyle is faced with the realization that man is considered
as a mere passive and receptive animal, acting in dumb
obedience to mechanistic laws. He has lost all sense of
inward values, the ability to act according to inner feeling
rather than in obedience to pure rationalism; in fact man
has lost all initiative to act at all. Realizing this,
Carlyle, as if to reassure for himself the indisputable fact
of the existence of other than pure materialism, cries out
vehemently:

To speak a little pedantically, there is a
science of Dynamics in man's fortunes and
nature, as well as of Mechanics. There is a science which treats of, and practically addresses the primary, unmodified forces and energies of man, the mysterious springs of Love, and Fear, and Wonder, of Enthusiasm, Poetry, Religion, all which have a truly vital and infinite character; as well as a science which practically addresses the finite, modified developments of these ...  

Carlyle's rich inheritance of moral principles together with his native opposition enabled him to combat the mechanistic theory with great fervor. This inheritance, however, rich though it was, was not in itself strong enough to bring him certain conviction. His keen intellect had been severely challenged by his education, and though his beliefs were deep-rooted in Calvinism and Puritanism, these beliefs had been unduly challenged by the new thought of his age. He needed, therefore, further assurance than his early training had provided him, that there is a knowledge over and above that provided by sensory experience alone. For this assurance he turned to possibilities which were not within his immediate sphere of literary contact. That these possibilities were fruitful is evidenced by the following entry in his Notebooks for March 1830:

I think I have got rid of Materialism: Matter no longer seems to me so ancient, so unsubduable, so certain and palpable as Mind. I am Mind: Whether matter or not I know not - and care not -. Mighty glimpses into the spiritual Universe I have sometimes had (about the true nature of Religion, the possibility, after all of 'supernatural' (really natural influence etc. etc.): would they could but stay with me, and ripen into a perfect view! - Miracle? What is a Miracle? Can there be a thing more miracoulous than any other
thing? I myself am a standing wonder. It is the inspiration of the Almighty that giveth us Understanding. 10

What had given him this new certainty? The answer is to be found in the influence which German literature and philosophy had upon the thought of Carlyle.
When Carlyle made the following entry in his Note-books for April 13, 1822, he unconsciously summarized the trend of his thinking, disclosing, on the one hand, the fervor of his spiritual quest for truth, and, on the other, the chaotic state in which he found himself engulfed because of the assimilation of ideas heretofore foreign to his province of knowledge:

Is it better then to have a straight road formed for us, tho' a false one thro' this confused wilderness of things - than to be waiting asking searching for a true one, if we never find it altogether? ... What is the proper province of Reason?

In seeking an answer to these and similar questions pertaining to the nature, source, and function of knowledge, he had been introduced to German literature and philosophy through Madame de Staël's treatise entitled De l'Allemagne. This work, though faulty in many respects because of the romantic sentiment which colored the thinking of Madame de Staël, thus weakening the value of many of her assertions, was, however, of great value to Carlyle. It provided him with a new perspective on idealism. His thinking was akin to hers in the religious spirit with which they both sought a religious ideal in the "new literature." Whereas Madame de Staël based her search on sentiment, and found this ideal in what she termed the True and the Beautiful, Carlyle found his religious ideal in work which was guided by a moral need. Their approach, however, was similar; it was from the dynamic
rather than the mechanic. This is evidenced in Madame de Staël's comment on Leibnitz, a great exponent of empiricism. She writes:

Leibnitz was an idealist, who founded his system solely upon reasoning; and from thence it arises that he has pushed his abstractions too far, and that he has not sufficiently supported his theory upon inward persuasions, the only true foundation of that which is above the understanding; in fact, reason upon the liberty of man, and you will not believe it; lay your hand upon your conscience, and you will not be able to doubt it.

... We must believe certain truths as we believe our own existence; it is the soul which reveals them to us, and reasonings of every kind are never more than feeble streams derived from this fountain.

A striking parallel to this statement is found in Carlyle's notation for January, 1827:

These things, I fear, are not to [be] proved, but believed; not seized by the Understanding but by Faith.

... For the present, I will confess it, I scarce see how we can reason with absolute certainty on the nature of or fate of anything; for it seems to me we only see our own perceptions and their relations; that is to say, our soul sees only in its own partial reflex and manner of existing and conceiving. I should have this cleared up: How does Kant manage it?

It was in furnishing direction for the answer to such a query as this that Madame de Staël's De l' Allemagne proved of further value to Carlyle. Her sympathetic treatment of German literature and philosophy, and of the men responsible for such a body of thought, gave Carlyle a glimpse into the hidden beauty of their works, and above
all, an appreciation for their treatment of the problems which were consuming his every thought. Needless to say, Carlyle examined much of this material in the original; however, the immediate stimulus for such endeavors was his reading of *De l' Allemagne*. Under the force of this stimulation, he sought and found in the doctrines of Goethe, Kant, Fichte, and Novalis, varying ideas which enabled him to form an adequate individual creed strong enough to answer satisfactorily the challenge which empiricism seemed to hold for him alone.

By Carlyle's own admission Goethe was the greatest single influence among the German writers. In a letter to Goethe dated August 20, 1827, he acknowledges his debt to him in a long and glowing tribute:

> As it is, your Works have been a mirror to me, unasked and unhoped-for, your wisdom has counselled me; and so peace and health of Soul have visited me from afar. For I was once an Unbeliever, not in Religion only, but in all the Mercy and Beauty of which it is the Symbol; storm-tossed in my own imaginations; a man divided from men; exasperated, wretched, driven almost to despair ... But now thank Heaven all this is altered; without change of external circumstance solely by the new light which rose upon me, I attained to new thoughts and a composure which I should once have considered as impossible ... I look forward to a life spent in Literature ... having learned that what I once called Happiness is not only not to be attained on Earth, but not even to be desired.\(^{14}\)

Examining these statements one sees that there must have been many ideas latent in the writings of Goethe which stirred a responsive chord in the thinking of Carlyle.
He admits at the outset that he had lost faith in all forms of religion. It is presupposed then that he had lost faith in himself; the loss of faith in oneself leads to a loss of faith in what one believes. This faith in himself was restored through the medium of reverence and self-renunciation. In Goethe he found one who recognized and exalted man as the greatest of all creations, a creature to be reverenced because of the sublime which dwells within him:

For it can never be forgotten that to Goethe I owe the all-precious knowledge and experience that Reverence is still possible, may Reverence for our fellowman, as a true emblem of the Highest, even in these perturbed, chaotic times.15

To acknowledge this is to further admit of the close union which man has for man, a union based on man's spiritual kinship. Carlyle voices this faith in a letter to Goethe dated September 25, 1828:

... it must be a consolation to think that neither in this age, nor in any other, can you ever be left alone; but that wherever men seek Truth, spiritual cleanliness and Beauty, there you have brothers and children.16

and again in his Notebooks:

On the whole I have been somewhat in the wrong about 'independence'; man is not independent of his brother ... know this; and know also that thou hast a power of thy own, and standest with a Heaven above even thee.17

After finding man a creature worthy of reverence, it is but a half-step to attempt to analyze what type of spiritual union it is which binds man to man, and by what sign does man recognize this spirituality. Carlyle had written Goethe as follows:
Endless gratitude I owe you; for it is by you that I have learned what worth there is in man for his brotherman; and how the "open secret," though the most are blind to it, is still open for whoso has an eye.18

What is this open secret to which he refers? Nowhere in Carlyle's works does he define what he means by 'the open secret.' It is to be assumed, however, that for him it was no one specific thing, but a 'something' difficult to define because it was an admixture of ideas from varying sources. The contribution which Goethe made to this conception forces a consideration of the second great idea which Carlyle gained from Goethe, and which became a lasting part of his concept of the universe. It was, namely, the idea of nature as the dynamic expression of the divine, a garment or vesture, as it were, which reveals God. Inasmuch as God is behind this garment of material things, in order to seek and understand Him, whom we regard as the Finite, we must understand his manifestation in the Infinite which is all about us.

"Wonderful Universe!" writes Carlyle. "Were our eyes but opened, what a secret were it that we daily see and handle without heed!"19 It was left for Fichte to explain how our eyes might be opened to this wonder which the universe holds, but Carlyle here glories in the fact made clear by Goethe's garment doctrine, that the universe is no longer a mass of indifferent matter—a theory paramount in the philosophy of the empiricists --, but it is a wonderful symbol and manifestation of the divine, a dynamic revelation:
For matter, were it never so despicable, is Spirit, the manifestation of Spirit: were it never so honourable, can it be more? The thing Visible, may the thing Imagined, the thing in any way conceived as Visible, what is it but a Garment, a clothing of the higher, celestial Invisible, unimaginable, formless, dark with excess of bright?  

So powerfully did this concept of nature as the vesture of God become fixed in Carlyle's reasoning, that he was tempted to regard nature as God. This is apparent in the following exhortation:

Or what is Nature? Ha! why do I not name thee God? Art not thou the "Living Garment of God?" O heavens, is it, in very deed, He, then, that ever speaks through thee; that lives and loves in me?

Carlyle's Calvinism, however, prevented his regarding the universe pantheistically.

Thus with this new view of the world as a living expression of the divine, Carlyle was able to add force to his declamation against materialism:

Neither say that thou hast now no Symbol of the Godlike. Is not God's universe a Symbol of the Godlike?

Of equal value among the lasting ideas which Carlyle gained from Goethe, and which became for him a Golden Rule, was the doctrine of work. Goethe regarded work primarily as a mode of self-development; Carlyle, on the other hand, regarded it in many aspects. He views it first as the whole duty of man:

Hence our Whole Duty, which is to move, to work, -- in the right direction. Are not
our Bodies and Souls in continual movement, whether we will or not?

He next considers work as the kingdom of every man wherein he can realize his own particular avocation:

Not what I Have ... but what I Do is my kingdom. To each is given a certain outward Environment of Fortune; to each, by wisest combination of these two, a certain maximum of Capability. But the hardest problem were ever this first: To find by study of yourself, and of the ground you stand on, what your combined inward and outward Capability specialty is.

Then is work regarded as the only true happiness for man. Here Carlyle would refute a great dictum of his age, namely, that pleasure, not work, is the ultimate goal and only complete happiness for man. He exclaims:

The only happiness a brave man ever troubled himself with asking much about was, happiness enough to get his work done. Not "I can't eat!" but "I can't work!" -- that was the burden of all wise complaining among men.

Aside from being the only complete happiness, work has the added virtue of being eternal. And so Carlyle, becoming the teacher advises:

My friend, all speech and rumor is short-lived, foolish, untrue ... Genuine Work alone, what thou workest faithfully, that is eternal as the Almighty Father and World-Builder himself.

And finally, work becomes a moral need, the only type of compensation one should seek or hope to attain in this world. The following notation was written by Carlyle to Goethe on learning of the death of Goethe's son:

Hope and Comfort is "to work while it is called Today" -- and so Forward! Forward!
To view nature as a vesture of the divine, to recognize in man a sense of grandeur, and to acknowledge work as a moral need; wherefore does the knowledge to do these things arise? Does it stem, as the empiricists would claim, from sense experience? If so, what sense experience would or could reveal God behind the garment of material things, or proclaim the worth of man to his fellowman? In seeking an answer to these questions, Carlyle became cognizant of the value of the doctrines of another great German writer and philosopher, namely, Immanuel Kant.

Whether or not Carlyle fully comprehended the basic Kantian doctrines is of importance only to the extent that one realizes that here, as with other very significant material which he read, he interpreted these doctrines in the light of his fundamental individual creed, which, as has been previously noted, had its roots in parental influences. Of far greater significance is the fact that herein lay matter which not only stimulated his thinking to its highest attainment, but which certainly led to the formation of ideas so consistently adapted by him in his subsequent writings, and so latent in them, as to help create for him the enviable title of prophet of his age.

The dominant ideas in the philosophy of Kant which appealed to Carlyle are those which treat of (1) reason and
understanding, and (2) time and space. These ideas stem from Kant's premise that there is a body of knowledge that is occupied, not with objects, but with the way in which knowledge of objects may be gained so far as possible a priori, that is, absolutely independent of all experience; this knowledge he terms transcendental. He explains the principles of transcendental deduction in this manner:

There is a distinction in law between the question of right and the question of fact. Both must be proved, but proof of a right or claim is called its deduction. Now among the variety of conceptions that make up the very mixed web of human knowledge, there are certain conceptions that put in a claim a priori ... It is useless to refer to the fact of experience in justification of such a claim, but at the same time we must know how conceptions can possibly refer to objects of experience, although those objects have not been derived from experience. An explanation of the manner in which concepts can relate a priori to objects, I call transcendental deduction; and from it I distinguish an empirical deduction, which simply tells us how a conception has been acquired by experience and reflection on experience. 28

In finding concepts in the mind other than those which come from experience, Kant goes further and distinguishes between what he considers the two fundamentals of knowledge, namely, matter and form. He explains that the matter of knowledge is that element in phenomena which corresponds to sensation; this comes from experience. By the form of knowledge he means that element which makes possible that various determinations of phenomena be arranged in a certain way; this element is furnished by the active mind itself.
Space, time, and such relations as cause and effect, are forms given to our knowledge by the active mind. These forms of knowledge apply to anything which we can experience, but we cannot know whether they apply to things in themselves. By things in themselves he means those things which we cannot unquestionably demonstrate the existence of as nature, the soul, and God. We cannot experience nature; we can only experience her manifestations as the phenomena of our consciousness. Nor can we experience the soul; we can never grasp it. All experience rests on the unifying activity of the self -- of which the soul is a vital part, yet the soul is outside experience, and therefore the laws of experience do not apply to it. So, too, is God outside the field of experience. Thus nature, the soul, God, and other things in themselves, are left free and unconfined by human law. By this means is the freedom of man's will maintained, which freedom is the basis of morality.

The question which logically arises from the foregoing statements, and one which Carlyle no doubt found of great interest in pursuing an answer to is this: By what law, then, are things in themselves governed? The answer is: by moral law. As this law has no foundation in experience, its origin must be traceable to some inner source; this inner source Kant finds to be pure or practical Reason -- it is what Carlyle recognized as intuition, or Primitive Truth. He describes it in the following passage from The State of German Literature wherein he speaks of the attitude.
of the Germans as a whole toward the new philosophy:

They deny his [Hume's] first principle, that Sense is the only inlet of knowledge, that Experience is the primary ground of Belief. Their Primitive Truth, however, they seek not historically and by experiment, in the universal persuasions of men, but by intuition, in the deepest and purest Nature of man. ... God is, may alone is, for with like emphasis we cannot say that anything else is. This is the Absolute, the Primitively True, which the philosopher seeks. To open the inward eye to the sight of this Primitively True; or rather we might call it to clear off the obscurations of Sense, which eclipse the truth within us, so that we may see it, and believe it not only to be true, but the foundation and essence of all other truth ... may be said to be the problem of Critical Philosophy.29

Is this Primitive Truth to which Carlyle refers analogous to Kant's concept of Reason? To answer this query one must consider briefly Kant's ideas concerning the understanding and Reason, and Carlyle's interpretation of these ideas.

For Kant, the Understanding is that factor which provides man with a knowledge of the sense world. Its primary function is to unify the data which the senses provide according to its own laws; in so doing it gives us the only knowledge which we have of the world relative to color, sound, taste, and the like, and of the ideas which we associate with this knowledge. It becomes, then, the source of our knowledge of phenomena or appearances, and appearances are the only real reality for man. Further, the Understanding is empirical, not transcendental, and does not apply to objects or things in themselves.

Reason, on the other hand, is of a twofold nature: it
is speculative and pure. Speculative Reason supplies man with ideas which he cannot realize in experience. The actuality of these ideas is supplied by practical or pure reason. Such ideas which point to God, the soul and other things in themselves, are transcendental, going beyond human experience. "Reason is concerned with the grounds of the determination of the will ... to realize and fulfill the moral law is thus to realize the Ideas of Reason." 30

For Carlyle, Kant's distinction between Understanding and Reason led to an interpretation of Understanding as the mechanical, and Reason as the dynamic faculty by which we obtain knowledge. "The Understanding," he declares, "is indeed thy window, too clear thou canst not make it." 31 That part of phenomena which man is able to comprehend, the unimportant part, the mechanical, is made possible for comprehension by this organ of logic, the Understanding, which is uninspired:

Boundless as is the domain of man, it is but a small fractional proportion of it that he rules with Consciousness and by Forethought: what he can altogether know and comprehend is essentially the mechanical, small; the great is ever in one sense or other, the vital; it is essentially the mysterious, and only the surface of it can be understood. 32

The great, the vital, is of course, the dynamic, the inner insight of the soul, and it is Reason which governs this inner insight, which is not on a par with Understanding, but which transcends it:
We allude to the recognition, by these Transcendentalists, of a higher faculty in man than Understanding; of Reason (Vernunft), the pure, ultimate light of our nature; wherein, as they assert, lies the foundation of all Poetry, Virtue, Religion; things which are properly beyond the province of the Understanding, of which the Understanding can take no cognisance, except a false one.

Reason becomes for Carlyle the only means by which pure knowledge can be obtained by man. Whereas the Understanding has to apply to the senses for its permission, as it were, to function, Reason operates by its own laws, independent of any intermediator; its decisions, therefore, are the only pure ones. The decision that man should regard duty as a moral law given him by God, becomes then, a decision not of the Understanding, but of Reason. Further, though Kant viewed appearances as the only reality for man, and the Understanding as the organ by which these appearances are knowable, Carlyle found the only reality for man to be, not in appearances, but in inner truths, and found Reason to be the sole faculty by which these truths become comprehensible.

Thus does Carlyle's concept of Reason attain to a transcendental apprehension of truth, by which a knowledge of things in themselves, though not comprehensible to any but the 'Seer,' is provided for all to attain unto. Understanding remains for him the uninspired organ of logic.

With equal candor does Carlyle apply his own interpretation of Kant's concepts of Time and Space. According to
Kant, "space and time are the two pure forms of sensible perception which constitute principles of a priori knowledge."34 He further explains space as

...nothing but the form of all phenomena of outer sense. It is the subjective condition without which no external perception is possible for us.35

Similarly, time is "but a form of inner sense, that is, of the intuition of ourselves and of our inner sense."36

In an entry in his Notebooks for September, 1830, Carlyle admits he is not clear on this definition:

Space is a mode of our Sense; so is Time (this I only half understand): we are - we know not what; light sparkles floating in the Aether of the Divinity! - So that this solid world, after all, is but an air-image; our Me is the only reality, 'and' all is Godlike or God?37

Nevertheless, in Novalis he attempts a definition or explanation of time and space. He writes:

Time and Space themselves are not external but internal entities: they have no outward existence, there is no Time and no Space out of the mind; they are mere forms of man's spiritual being, laws under which his thinking nature is constituted to act.38

In Sartor Resartus, he again refers to space and time as forms of thought, not of sense:

That the Thought - forms, Space and Time, wherein once, once for all, we are sent into this Earth to live, should condition and determine our whole Practical reasonings, conceptions, and imagings or imaginings, seems altogether fit, just, and unavoidable.39

Carlyle departs from Kant's concept of time and space by classifying them as forms of man's mind, rather than
forms of sense. What he held to, however, was Kant's concept of the ideality of space and time. It has been noted that as Kant finds reality in appearances, and these appearances are based on sense, so does Carlyle find reality in inner truths. It follows then that Carlyle would deny any absolute reality to time and space which are after all but forms of perception, which perceptions are but ideas. In thus refuting the reality of time and space as the two factors which constitute our knowledge of the material world, Carlyle refutes materialism. This, of course, was his primary aim in turning to Kant - to find a basis for opposing the whole philosophy of materialism.

This, however, was not Carlyle's only and final concept of time. For the more enlightened view which he took of it, one must consider the influence of Fichte, and his theory of the Divine Idea.

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Unlike his brief explanations of other ideas in German literature and philosophy which appealed to him, Carlyle, in interpreting Fichte's Divine Idea, gives two lengthy explanations of it. The first of these, which is found in his essay on "The State of German Literature," is as follows:

According to Fichte, there is a 'Divine Idea' pervading the visible Universe; which visible Universe is indeed but its symbol and sensible manifestation, having in itself no meaning, or
even true existence independent of it. To the mass of men this Divine Idea of the world lies hidden: yet to discern it, to seize it, and live wholly in it, is the condition of all genuine virtue, knowledge, freedom; and the end, therefore, of all spiritual effort in every age. Literary Men are the appointed interpreters of this Divine Idea; a perpetual priesthood, we might say, standing forth, generation after generation, as the dispensers and living types of God's everlasting wisdom, to show it in their writings and actions, in such particular form as their own particular times require it in. For each age, by the law of its nature, is different from every other age, and demands a different representation of the Divine Idea, the essence of which is the same in all; so that the literary man of one century is only by mediation and reinterpretation applicable to the wants of another. But in every century, every man who labours, be it what province he may, to teach others, must first have possessed himself of the Divine Idea, or, at least, be with his whole heart and his whole soul striving after it.40

The other explanation, which appears in a later publication, "The Hero As Man of Letters" in Heroes and Hero-Worship, is similar in interpretation, differing only in the addition of two ideas: Carlyle affirms (1) that the Divine Idea "is the reality which 'lies at the bottom of all Appearance,"41 and (2) that the mass of men live "not dreaming that there is anything divine in them."42

In analysing the ideas which are manifested in these interpretations, certain concepts are outstanding. The first of these is that which asserts the spiritual nature of all existence; this condition being possible because of the immanence of the Divine in the actual. Carlyle sees
in this concept a place for Faith to function, a factor of importance considering his Calvinistic tenet of the necessity of Faith in man's life. He unites the faith concept with the doctrine of immanence when he says:

For the Faith in an Invisible, Unnamable, Godlike, present everywhere in all that we see and work and suffer, is the essence of all Faith whatsoever; and that once denied, or still worse, asserted with lips only, what other thing remains believable?43

The fact that there is a spiritual nature in all phenomena presupposes a certain unity to exist among all things. Carlyle employs some of his most effective rhetoric in voicing this idea when he says that the

... little fire which glows star-like across the dark-growing moor, where the sooty smith bends over his anvil ... is it a detached, separated speck, cut-off from the whole Universe; or indissolubly joined to the whole? ...

Detached, separated! I say there is no such separation: nothing hitherto was ever stranded, cast aside; but all, were it only a withered leaf, works together with all ... Rightly viewed, no meanest object is insignificant; all objects are as windows through which the philosophic eye looks into Infinitude itself.44

The next concept which is apparent in Fichte's theory of the Divine Idea is that of symbolic revelation. This concept was not new to Carlyle. He met it first, as has been noted, in Goethe's theory of nature as the garment or vesture by which God reveals himself to man. In Fichte, however, Carlyle found a different approach to the meaning of symbolic revelation. According to Fichte, there exists behind what man regards as the reality of things, a mind
which has existed since the beginning of time. This mind has embraced the whole span of eternity, and has planned the scheme of all existence according to one magnificent idea. This idea is divine, because it has its origin in that which is so great as to divine the order of eternity, yet is so infinite as to transcend man's power of comprehension. All operations of this idea occur according to design, "whereof a Chapter is completed from epoch to epoch, and by some named History," thus history becomes a form of revelation. The direct medium by which the manifestations of the Divine Idea are made known to man, is the Great Man, or Hero. He is

what we call an original man; he comes to us at first-hand. A messenger he, sent from the Infinite Unknown with tidings to us ... Direct from the Inner Fact of Things; he lives and has to live, in daily communion with that. He sees ... that this so solid-looking material world is, at bottom, in very deed, Nothing; is a usual and tactual Manifestation of God's power and presence, - a shadow hung out by Him on the bosom of the void Infinite; nothing more.

He is able to divine this because he possesses the first great characteristic of a Great Man, namely, sincerity. This sincerity, however, does not make him ostentations; he is not conscious of it:

No, the Great Man does not boast himself sincere, far from that ... he cannot help being sincere! The great fact of existence is great to him. Fly as he will, he cannot get out of the awful presence of this Reality. His mind is so made; he is great by that, first of all. Fearful and wonderful, real as Life, real as Death, is this
universe to him. Though all men should forget its truth, and walk in a vain show, he cannot. ... A little man may have this, it is competent to all men that God has made: but a Great Man cannot be without it.48

Within this idea, one is able to find a further suggestion: a justification for the moral significance of action. This type of suggestion would have great appeal for Carlyle. Though it is only given to the Great Men to be, as he termed them, "the inspired Texts of the Divine Book of Revelation,"49 yet a part of the Divine Idea dwells within each being, whether or not he recognizes it. Thus all should strive after the Idea, and one's acts should be representative of one's strivings, for once to

Cast forth thy Act, thy Word, into the ever-living, ever-working Universe: it is a seed-grain that cannot die, unnoticed Today, it will be found flourishing as a Banyan-grave after a thousand years.50

The fact that man's actions grow and are assimilated into the divine plan of the universe, places a responsibility upon him to make his acts worthy of perpetuation, for once projected

What is done is done; has already blended itself with the boundless, ever-living, ever-working Universe, and will also work there, for good or for evil, openly or secretly, throughout all time.51

Working then in this faith, the life of every man becomes of greater significance in the unfolding of the Idea. Though he cannot discern just what part of the pattern his life represents, he is certain that his contribution has been foreseen by the creator of the pattern, for
the life of every man is as the wellspring of a stream, whose small beginnings are indeed plain to all, but whose ulterior course and destination, as it winds through the expanses of infinite years, only the Omniscient can discern.52

The realization of this fact suggests for consideration the difficulty of working toward its fulfillment.

This realization grows out of another concept apparent in Fichte's theory: that of time as arresting and hemming in the sphere of activity necessary for the realization of life. It is this concept which troubled Carlyle throughout his life. He could not reconcile himself to the fact that while time is the medium by which man strives after the Idea, yet, at the same time, it acts as a counter check allotting him but a certain extension in which to achieve his goal before abruptly terminating his existence. In this sense, time is to be regarded as man's arch enemy. His only solution for combating time is to be found in his wholehearted devotion to work. Carlyle explains:

it continues ever true that Saturn or Charonos, or what we call Time, devours all his children: only by incessant Running, by incessant Working, may you (for some threescore-and ten years) escape him; and you too he devours at last. ... Our whole terrestrial being is based on Time, and built on Time; it is wholly a Movement, a Time - impulse; Time is the author of it, the material of it.53

Yet the idea of death, the arrestor of time, being possible in a universe of immanent life-energy is incongruous, "for not Mankind only, but all that Mankind does or beholds is in continual growth, regenesis, and self-perfecting
vitality. Thus does this idea lead to yet another and final concept - that of the doctrine of becoming. This concept is not peculiar to Fichtean doctrine; it is a vital part of the Neo-Platonic theory of the universe, and also a concept of Hindoo mysticism. It also has foundation in the legend of the Phoenix, a legend which Carlyle found especially interesting. According to this legend, this bird, which is said to have lived for five hundred years, burned herself and rose again from her ashes, becoming in this manner, an emblem of immortality. Fichte’s treatment of the 'becoming' idea is that man does not die but achieves through mystical means, a union with the Idea, the source which revitalizes him. Though Carlyle failed to accept the view of mystical reunion, he did regard society and man as ever changing phenomena. Of society he says:

Society is not dead ... She herself through perpetual metamorphases in fairer and fairer development has to live till Time also merge in Eternity.

and of man’s change and rebirth he says:

Thus, like some wild-flaming, wild-thundering train of Heaven’s Artillery, does this mysterious Mankind thunder and flame, in long-drawn, quick-succeeding grandeur, through the unknown Deep. Thus, like a God-created, fire-breathing, Spirit-host, we emerge from the Inane; haste stormfully across the astonished Earth, then plunge again into the Inane.

Noting carefully the varied explanations of the doctrine of Fichte, and its many implications and applications, one cannot help noting that, except in the concrete explanation
of Fichte's theory of the Divine Idea, Carlyle refrains from identifying that which is the creator and manifestor of phenomena as an idea. For him, if not a personal God, it certainly assumes the aspects of a presence, rather than an idea. And that this presence dwells in man is as certain a fact for him as any of the other ideas inbred from his Calvinistic inheritance. He accepted without question Fichte's belief that man's life is a moral struggle against time, but for affirmation of his belief in the God-like in man, he explored still another German influence, namely, Novalis.

The recognition by Novalis of the God-like in man finds explanation in his ideas concerning Nature. He, like Goethe, believes

the material Creation is but an Appearance, a typical shadow in which the Deity manifests himself to man. Not only has the unseen world a reality, but the only reality: the rest being ... but literally and in scientific strictness, 'a show.'

Nature is then, symbolical of spirit; she reveals herself to man in hieroglyphs, the understanding of which unfolds for him the only reality. This emblematic representation of nature and the world fascinated Carlyle and appealed to his imagination. He interprets the concept of the symbol as follows:

In the Symbol proper, what we call a Symbol, there is ever, more or less distinctly and directly, some embodiment and revelation of the Infinite; the Infinite is made to blend itself with the Finite, to stand visible, and as it were, attainable there.
Man and nature are but symbols of God. To understand the revelations of God, one must be able to interpret that which these symbols reveal. As this pertains to nature, it means the ability to read hieroglyphically; as it pertains to man, it means the ability to recognize in him an indwelling of the Infinite. The latter fact, according to Carlyle, is everywhere apparent:

Remarkable it is truly, how everywhere the eternal fact begins, again to be recognized, that there is a Godlike in human affairs; that God not only made us, but is in us and around us.59

The fact that the Infinite dwells within man is, as Carlyle sees it, the cause of his unhappiness:

Man's unhappiness, as I construe it, comes of his Greatness; it is because there is an Infinite in him, which with all his running he cannot quite bury under the Finite.60

It is this God-like in man which binds him to his fellowman and makes him recognizable by him.

Man is a Spirit, and bound by invisible bonds to all men; secondly, he wears clothes, which are the visible emblems of that fact.61

How is it possible for clothes to assume such an importance as to be the media by which man recognizes man? They are of this importance because they were woven in the loom of heaven:

Round his mysterious Me, there lies under all those woolrags, a Garment of Flesh, contextured in the Loom of Heaven; whereby he is revealed to his like, and dwells with them in Union and Division.62
Clearly the clothes to which Carlyle here refers are not those fashioned from materials, but are the innumerable opinions man has formed from the impressions given him by his garment of flesh or senses. If from this garment man can discern nothing but mechanism in the universe, he has let all of the God-like vanish from his conception of the universe, thus committing, according to Carlyle, the most brutal error, for

he who discerns nothing but Mechanism in the Universe has in the fatalist way missed the secret of the Universe altogether. That all Godhead should vanish out of men's conception of the universe seems to me precisely the most brutal error.63

In his theories of the God-like in man, the symbolical revelation of Spirit, and the world as a problem for hieroglyphical interpretation, Novalis supplied Carlyle with ideas, which in conjunction with those derived from Goethe, Kant, and Fichte, enabled him to deny empiricism to such an extent as to wish vehemently that others might come to see as he did:

Pray that your eyes may be opened that you may see what is before them! The whole world is built, as it were, on Light and Glory; only that our spiritual eye must discern it: to the bodily eye Self is as a perpetual blinder, and we see nothing but darkness and contradiction.64
CONCLUSION

If one argued that Carlyle skimmed only the surface of the great body of German literature and philosophy which stimulated his thinking, the accusation would not be altogether just. True it is that he fails in many of his explanations to assure his reader that he fully comprehends a given concept, but one cannot help noting that any material which he deemed pertinent, he evidently perused with great care. His failure to explain a concept correctly lay in his fault of allowing concepts formed from his Calvinistic background to color to too great an extent his interpretation of a given doctrine. On the other hand, those concepts which could not readily lend support to his particular argument, were, it appears, deemed by him not to require comment. It is surprising, however, that in one glaring instance, he failed to give expression to a concept which so concretely expressed his idea; namely, Kant's "categorical imperative." By this Kant means the belief in a theory to such an extent as to make it a law for all mankind. Carlyle's belief in work as a moral force certainly approached this "imperative" stage.

Though Carlyle altered many concepts to bring them in accord with his individual creed, yet he found much in the German writers, which, viewed without prejudice, lent support to this creed. In Goethe he found authority for his concept of the religious nature of work; in Fichte he found much to emphasize his belief in the organic unity of all things;
and in Novalis he found a new concept which colored his later writings—that of hieroglyphical revelation. In Kant, he found grounds for the refutation of empiricism, which was his ultimate goal. If he failed to give accurate expression to these concepts, he at least found in them what he sought, that which helped him reestablish for himself something concrete upon which he could with certainty base his faith.
FOOTNOTES


5. Carlyle and German Thought, p. 77.


9. Ibid., p. 68.


11. Ibid., pp. 21-22.

12. Madame de Staël - Holstein, Germany (Boston, Houghton, Mifflin, 1887), I: 159.


15. Ibid., p. 279.

16. Ibid., p. 120.

17. Notebooks, p. 156.

18. Goethe - Carlyle Correspondence, p. 288.


21. Ibid., p. 188.
22. Ibid., p. 253.
23. Ibid., p. 177.
24. Ibid., p. 119.
26. Ibid., p. 132.
27. Goethe - Carlyle Correspondence, p. 253.

30. Carlyle and German Thought, pp. 138-139.
31. Sartor Resartus, p. 222.
32. Essays, III: 3.
33. Essays, II: 27.
34. Critique of Pure Reason, p. 23.
36. Ibid, p. 28.
41. Heroes, pp. 204-205.
42. Ibid., p. 205.
43. Past and Present, p. 144.
44. Sartor Resartus, pp. 71-72.
45. Ibid., p. 177.
46. Heroes, p. 60.
47. Ibid., p. 91.
48. Ibid., p. 59.
49. Sartor Resartus, p. 179.
50. Ibid., p. 40.
51. Essays, I: 397.
52. Ibid., I: 398.
54. Ibid., p. 40.
55. Ibid., p. 236.
56. Ibid., p. 266.
58. Sartor Resartus, p. 220.
59. Essays, III: 42.
60. Sartor Resartus, p. 191.
61. Ibid., p. 60.
64. Notebooks, p. 136.


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