

THOMAS PAINE'S THEORIES OF RHETORIC

HARRY HAYDEN CLARK

Thomas Paine has long been recognized as foremost among those who brought the rationalism of the eighteenth century home to the plain people and, in revolting against throne and altar, encouraged them to strive for democracy and the religion of humanity. If authorities on the history of political theory are agreed that in spite of his vast influence "Paine cannot be classed as a great political thinker" since "his theories of the state of nature, the rights of man, the social contract, representative government—in fact, all the great features of his system [—] had been marked out before and better by others," if the "source of his power is found in his rare faculty for popular statement," if "few political writers have had a more perfect mastery of the art of popular persuasion,"¹ it should be of interest to ascertain as far as possible the literary theories which helped to make the great republican the "prince of pamphleteers."² Of course, being neither a literary critic nor an aesthete, being concerned not with "pure" but with "applied" literature, Paine had relatively little to say regarding abstract literary theories. Nevertheless, if the criterion of the success of applied literature is its acceptance by those in whose cause it is applied, the fact that the demand for *Common Sense* and the *Rights of Man* ran to half a million copies of each³ suggests that, the same ideas being available in other forms, their style embodied a congruency to the human mind and heart which is after all the badge of a valid literary theory and which gives what Paine does have to say of his literary theory a rather unusual claim to our attention.

¹ C. E. Merriam, "The Political Theories of Thomas Paine," *Political Science Quarterly*, XIV, 402. See also C. B. R. Kent, *English Radicals*, London, 1899, 115. As regards *The Age of Reason*, I. W. Riley concludes, "there is not an idea in it which cannot be matched in the writings of the English free-thinkers of the Georgian era." (*American Philosophy. The Early Schools*, New York, 1907, 299).

² *The Cambridge History of English Literature*, XI, 53.

³ M. D. Conway, *The Life of Thomas Paine*, New York, 1892, I, 69, and *The Writings of Thomas Paine* (hereafter referred to as *Writings*), edited by Conway, New York, 1894-96, III, 382.

I

Before coming directly to a consideration of this theory, however, it may be well to remind ourselves that the contemporary effectiveness of Paine's work was due in part to other factors than the intrinsic merit of its style. Applied writing depends in no small measure for its success upon the condition of the point of application, and probably at no time in history had economic distress and political inefficiency done so much to make acceptable Paine's mordant criticism of monarchy and his ardent advocacy of humanitarian reform.⁴ He himself remarks in *Common Sense*, which is often credited with having single-handedly caused a somersault in opinion as to the American Revolution, that he found "the disposition of the people such, that they might have been led by a thread and governed by a reed,"⁵ a situation which does not suggest the need of any very violent power to overcome inertia. And it has been plausibly argued that Paine was not so much the creator as the voice of popular opinion,⁶ moulded by an infinite variety of other factors. In England "the chief activities [of the Society for Constitutional Information] were confined to spreading the writings of Thomas Paine in cheap editions, printing 'Proclamations' and letters advocating their principles, and attempting to cooperate in these measures with various similar organizations."⁷ Unfortunately, all writers cannot rely upon such an organization for distributing their work!

Furthermore, Paine's literary effectiveness may depend upon intangible factors, in part, integral with his general outlook and character. "What I write," he said, "is pure nature, and my

⁴ See W. P. Hall, *British Radicalism, 1791-97*, New York, 1912, especially the earlier part.

⁵ *Writings*, I, 275.

⁶ R. G. Adams, *Political Ideas of the American Revolution*, Durham, North Carolina, 1922, p. 112, and Sir George O. Trevelyan, *The American Revolution*, London, 1903, I, 162. One should remember that Paine was only one of a vast number of propagandists. See P. Q. Davidson, Jr., "Revolutionary Propaganda in New England, New York, and Pennsylvania, 1763-76." *University of Chicago Abstracts of Theses*, Humanistic Series, VII, pp. 239-42.

⁷ *The Life of Thomas Holcroft*, (ed. by Colby), London, 1925, II, 34. According to C. B. R. Kent (*The English Radicals*, p. 111), "In the end it [the second part of the *Rights of Man*] was adopted by the Constitutional Society as a kind of democratic Magna Charta, and sent by them to all the Corresponding Societies in England, France, and Scotland." See also Julius West, *A History of the Chartist Movement*, London, 1920, p. 22.

pen and my soul have ever gone together.”⁸ It is probably true, as I hope to demonstrate in detail elsewhere, that Paine wrote in the light of an all-embracing central principle, essentially religious,⁹ and such a principle, regardless of its intrinsic validity, helps to give a man’s writing focus and unity and driving power, as well as the sort of effectiveness which comes from hitting the reader repeatedly on the same nerve. No doubt Paine’s devotion to geometry and to scientific methods essentially deductive tended to give his work syllogistic convincingness and the air of dogmatic assurance which springs from the absence of a tedious inductive approach and a distracting regard for qualifications and exceptions. His general programme of returning to the simplicity of nature and his ostensible contempt for book-learning as opposed to the universal and sufficient light of nature¹⁰ tended, furthermore, to free his style from pedantic literary allusions which so often clogged earlier American style, as for example that of Cotton Mather’s *Magnalia*. If the rank and file of robust men are attracted by a good fight, Paine handled words as the pugilist handles his gloves; he delights in verbal knock-outs. Witness the way in which this so-called Quaker apostle of humanitarian brotherhood salutes an opponent: “Remember thou hast thrown me the glove, Cato, and either thee or I must tire. I fear not the field of fair debate, but thou hast stepped aside and made it personal. Thou hast tauntingly called on me by name; and if I cease to hunt thee from every lane and lurking hole of mischief, and bring thee not a trembling culprit before the public bar, then brand me with reproach, by naming me in the list of your confederates.”¹¹ At the period of the birth of the nation the Fathers were outspoken, believing in free speech as a means of “conveying heat and light,” (especially heat!) as Paine’s friend Benjamin Rush said, “to every individual in the Federal Commonwealth.”¹² After an age when opponents of monarchy and ec-

⁸ Conway, *Life of Paine*, I, 88.

⁹ This is also asserted by E. Halévy, *The Growth of Philosophic Radicalism*, London, 1928, pp. 188–89.

¹⁰ *Writings*, IV, 339–40. “Man must go back to Nature for information” (*ibid.*, II, 402). “Perfection consists in Simplicity.”

¹¹ *Writings*, I, 133.

¹² H. Niles, *Principles and Acts of the Revolution in America*, 235. The Continental Congress, according to its *Journal* (edition of 1904, I, 108), stood for freedom of the press “whereby oppressive officials are shamed or intimidated into

clesiasticism, living at their mercy, had been obliged to take refuge in sinuous methods and guarded analogies, many vigorous spirits no doubt found Paine's outspoken bluntness refreshing, if not contagious. Finally, if, as Emerson remarks, a man can excel in nothing who does not believe that what he is doing is at the moment the most important thing in the world, Paine's solemn conviction that he was a messiah sent to liberate mankind from "the tributary bondage of the ages" to throne and altar, to usher in "the birthday of a new world,"¹³ steeled him with self-confidence, economic and political history having given him a sympathetic audience, which inspired his pen in its consecration to a noble cause with a fervour apostolic. His spirit was dampened by no paralyzing surrender to determinisms, economic or mechanistic, or by any misgivings as to the efficacy of his tools: he was enraptured by the magic witchery of words, confident that if mankind were to be regenerated, it would be through the mighty power of the pen. A perfectibilian dedicated to the current faith that conduct is the mere externalization of opinion, he regarded "one philosopher though a heathen" as of "more use" than "all the heathen conquerors that ever existed," the French Revolution being literally truth clad in hell-fire, "no more than the consequence of a mental revolution priorly existing in France"¹⁴ engendered by "the writings of the French philosophers." "There is nothing which obtains so great an influence over the manners and morals of a people as the Press."¹⁵ "Letters, the tongue of the world," represent the fighting wedge of progress, the writer commanding "a scene as vast as the world. . . . Jesus Christ and his apostles could not do this."¹⁶

II

If such general factors, integral with Paine's general outlook, help in part to explain his power, it must also be borne in mind that his mastery of his art was conditioned, in no small measure, by a knowledge of the achievements and methods of other writers and thinkers. It has been conventional to take

more honourable or just modes of conducting affairs." See T. Schroeder's "Intellectual Liberty and Literary Style," *Open Court*, XXXIV, 275 ff.

¹³ *Writings*, I, 119.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, II, 333.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, I, 16.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, II, 102-3; IV, 287.

him at his word—"I neither read books, nor studied other people's opinion"¹⁷—notwithstanding the fact that he contradicted this assertion repeatedly in word and act; it has been conventional to assume as axiomatic that he was distinguished by an "immense ignorance of history and literature."¹⁸ Ignorant he no doubt was, if one uses the learning of a Coleridge or an Arnold as a standard; but such a view of Paine's knowledge of books, which has never been thoroughly investigated, would seem rather naively to neglect certain somewhat unique considerations. If, as in the case of Franklin, his formal schooling ended at an early age, he was aflame with an insatiable curiosity, and he had most unusual opportunities for satisfying it. "I seldom passed five minutes of my life however circumstanced," he confides, "in which I did not acquire some knowledge."¹⁹ To begin with, contemporary doggerel records that as a result of his repeated triumphs in debate at the "White Hart Evening Club" his fellow-townsmen at Lewes crowned "Immortal Paine . . . General of the Headstrong War," his ability being such that the excisemen of England finally appointed him to plead with Parliament on behalf of "The Case of the Officers of the Excise," 1772. He had served as a school-teacher, and Franklin, who sponsored his coming to America, supposed he would continue that calling there. There, however, as editor of *The Pennsylvania Magazine*, he received and commented upon current publications in America, England, and France. It appears that before 1775 he had "received much pleasure from perusing" such English magazines as *The Gentleman's*, the *London*, the *Universal*, the *Town and Country*, the *Covent-Garden*, and the *Westminster*.²⁰ The Continental Congress regarded him as competent to serve as "secretary for foreign affairs almost two years,"²¹ a position in which he read and wrote a vast number of important letters. These opportunities for securing information, however, are trivial compared with

¹⁷ *Writings*, II, 463.

¹⁸ *Cambridge History of English Literature*, XI, 53.

¹⁹ Quoted by his friend, T. C. Rickman, *The Life of Thomas Paine*, London, 1819. "As to the learning that any person gains from school education, it serves only, like a small capital, to put him in the way of beginning learning for himself afterwards. Every person of learning is finally his own teacher . . .". *Writings* IV, 64.

²⁰ *Writings*, I, 15.

²¹ *Ibid.*, I, 413.

his immense opportunities as a result of his multitudinous contacts, in Franklin's circle in America, Godwin's circle in England, and Condorcet's circle in France.²² What could he not have learned regarding ideas, perhaps from books whose names were unmentioned, from listening to the conversation not only of the men mentioned but of such men as Jefferson, Barlow, Dr. Rush, John Adams, Horne Tooke, Holcroft, Burke (whose earlier work Paine admired), Brissot, Lafayette, and countless others who were Paine's frequent companions and his hosts?

The fact that Paine seldom refers to other writers may not be inconsistent with a knowledge of their ideas, especially when one takes into account the indirect conversational sources suggested above and the considerations which follow. First, as a perfectibilian condemning the past and gazing hopefully into the future, as a sworn enemy of a socially mediated tradition, Paine was generally too much of a logician to cite that tradition as support for an attack upon it. Second, as a naturalistic opponent of philosophies and religions dependent upon books which were for him rooted in traditional imposture and national and temporal idiosyncrasies, Paine advocated, through the scientific quest for universal and immutable natural law, the study not of books but of nature, which was supposed to be everywhere, to all times and peoples, a uniform and universal revelation of a wisdom and benevolence divine; consequently, he could not logically appear to depend himself upon books. Indeed, contemporary critics taunted him upon the inconsistency of himself condemning a book-religion by means of a book and offering a book as a remedy.²³ Third, it was part of the established campaign strategy of the Godwinian circle, which saw to the details of publishing the *Rights of Man* in England, to cite "no authori-

²² See Conway's *Life of Paine*, I, 225; M. C. Tyler's *Literary History of the Revolution*, New York, 1897, I, 455-56; John Adams, *Works*, Boston, 1850-56, II, 507.

²³ *Writings*, IV, 83. See William Cobbett (*Observations on Paine's Age of Reason*, p. 1-2): "You offer wonders of inconsistency for our digestion. We are to believe you on your word, that we, infallible men of reason, having the Bible of Creation (as you call it) daily before our noses, are not withstanding, in imminent danger of losing sight even of morality, humanity, and theology—that a *work*, a *written book on Religion*, is not only *necessary*, but even *exceedingly necessary* for our preservation; that our Creator has not provided for such a *work*, but has abandoned mankind to the pernicious effects of seduction and immorality; that he is surpassed in benevolence by you; and that he has left the production of a *work exceedingly necessary, in a moral point of view*, to the care of *poor, silly Tom Paine . . .*"

ties."²⁴ Fourth, Citizen Egotism, as Paine was called, posing as an original genius, was not anxious to share the glory of having "a range in political writing beyond, perhaps, what any man ever possessed in any country,"²⁵ of having "arrived at an eminence in political literature the most difficult of all lines to succeed and excel in, which aristocracy with all its aids has not been able to reach or to rival,"²⁶ of having by his pen equalled the power of Washington's sword, his book which liberated America having "the greatest sale that any performance ever had since the use of letters."²⁷

Fifth, considering that Paine was the spokesman of the unschooled and the illiterate, priding himself upon his ability to resolve imposing sophistry to its simple elements, to avoid the artificiality of an aristocratic culture, it would be unlikely that Paine would strain toward literary allusions. And finally, it was an effective part of his strategy in *The Age of Reason*, as Richard Watson scrupulously noted,²⁸ to disclaim all learned appeals to other books, and "to undertake to prove, from the Bible itself, that it is unworthy of credit." How Paine revels in demonstrating, as he thinks, that the Bible is "book of lies, wickedness, and blasphemy"²⁹ without going for proof beyond what was regarded as the sacred Word of God!³⁰ Considering such a confessed controversial strategy, it would seem rather obvious that the paucity of other books cited could not be taken as valid evidence of the author's "immense ignorance." This, however, is but one of many instances of inadequate interpretations of Paine as a result of a failure to read individual passages in the light of both the contemporary climate of opinion and the man's central philosophical outlook. I would not imply

²⁴ Witness Godwin's advice to Thelwall: "Amass as much knowledge as you please, but no authorities. To quote authorities is a vulgar business; every soulless hypocrite can do that. To quote authorities is a cold business; it excites no responsive sentiments and produces no heart-felt conviction . . . Appeal to that eternal law which the heart of every man of common-sense recognizes immediately. Make your justification as palpable to the unlearned as the studious. Strip it of all superfluous appendages; banish from it all useless complexity." (Quoted by C. Cestre, *John Thelwell*, London, 1906, 202).

²⁵ *Writings*, II, 463.

²⁶ *Writings*, II, 462-3.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, IV, 431.

²⁸ *An Apology for the Bible, in a series of Letters Addressed to Thomas Paine* . . . Cork, 1796, p. 96.

²⁹ *Writings*, IV, 103.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, IV, 105.

that Paine was in any sense a prodigy of learning, but I do think that he had a decent knowledge of contemporary currents of opinion and literary methods. With the six considerations just suggested in mind, it would seem that what references Paine does make directly to other writers might be taken at somewhat more than their customary face-value, since such references conflicted with his whole philosophy and his controversial method, inviting taunts, painful to a logician and moralist, of an inability to follow his own precepts. Elsewhere³¹ I hope to discuss Paine's references to more than an hundred such figures as the following, and to show his knowledge, in varying degrees, of their work; these are: Homer, Xenophon, Aesop, Herodotus, Thucydides, Plato, Aristotle, Zoroaster, Confucius, Cicero, Virgil, Pliny, Tacitus, Scaliger, Dragonetti, Augustine, Maimonides, Origen, Spinoza, Luther, Cervantes, Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, Barclay, Milton, Bunyan, Tillotson, Locke, Sydney, Henry Lord, Descartes, Newton, 'Hudibras' Butler, Grotius, Denham, Dryden, Defoe, Swift, Pope, Smollett, Thomson, Allan Ramsay, Chatterton, James Ferguson, Benjamin Martin, Conyers Middleton, Churchill, Robertson, Chesterfield, Wilkes, Blackstone, 'Junius', George Lewis Scott, Samuel Rogers, Fox, Burke, Johnson, Shelburne, Robert Merry, Blake, Sampson Perry, Godwin, Mary Wollstonecraft, Holcroft, Priestly, Cobbett, Rapin, Burgh, Price, David Levi, Ferguson, Sir William Jones, Whiston, 'Peter Pindar', Adam Smith, David Williams, Franklin, Jefferson, Barlow, John Adams, James Wilson, Samuel Adams, Christie, Edward Fitzgerald, Towers, Mackintosh, Washington, Gouverneur Morris, Monroe, Palmer, Montesquieu, Voltaire, Rousseau, Turgot, Quesnay, Raynal, Helvétius, Boulauger, Brissot, Lafayette, and Condorcet. But could the 'rebellious staymaker' read critically and digest the ideas of such authors? His diabolically acute analysis of the Holy Scriptures suggests that he could. At least he should have been able to profit by the theory and practice of these authors

³¹ I have begun this task in a study of "Thomas Paine's Relation to Voltaire and Rousseau," which will be found in the *Revue Anglo-Américaine*, April and June, 1932. Two quotations from Rousseau, unnoted there, have since come to my attention; see *Writings*, III, 104, (80-81) and I, 150. F. J. C. Hearnshaw (*Development of Political Ideas*, 1927, pp. 56-57) says Paine "disseminated Rousseau's doctrines."

in formulating his own literary theories, which are for the most part in close accord with those of his age.³²

III

Having now considered extra-literary factors which aided Paine and having suggested that he was not quite so ignorant of literary tradition as generally supposed, let us turn directly to a presentation of what he himself has to say regarding literary theory and the art of writing controversial prose. What were his avowed aims?

First among these aims is candour, simplicity, and clarity. He would "rid our ideas of all superfluous words, and consider them in their natural bareness and simplicity."³³ "I speak a language full and intelligible," he remarks in summing up his writing on "every subject." "I deal not in hints and intimations. I have several reasons for this: First, that I may be clearly understood. Secondly, that it may be seen I am in earnest; and, thirdly, because it is an affront to truth to treat falsehood with complaisance."³⁴ He describes the *Rights of Man* as "a book calmly and rationally written, . . . in a fair, open, and manly manner,"³⁵ and he tells us elsewhere that he forbade himself "the use of equivocal expression or mere ceremony."³⁶ When Americans were reluctant on account of sentimental ties to break the bond which bound them to the Fatherland, he exclaimed impatiently, "I bring reason to your ears, and in language as plain as A, B, C, hold up truth to your eyes."³⁷ No doubt John Adams came as near hating Paine as any man, and as a Federalist he increasingly abominated his anti-traditional³⁸ and equalitarian principles, yet he was honest enough to recog-

³² Unfortunately, little study has been devoted to the literary theories underlying the applied literature of Americans such as Franklin, Jefferson, Adams, Barlow and Hamilton. If the birth of the nation was in no small measure rendered possible by the literary efforts of these men, it would seem that the theories underlying these efforts deserve presentation and analysis. Most critics who have approached them from the literary point of view have been content with registering their merely subjective likes and dislikes.

³³ *Writings*, II, 238.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, IV, 406.

³⁵ *Writings*, III, 54-55.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, III, 115. "Plain language may perhaps sound uncouthly to an ear vitiated by courtly refinements, but words were made for use." *Ibid.*, I, 182.

³⁷ *Writings*, I, 178. "I offer nothing more than simple facts, plain arguments, and common sense." (*Ibid.*, I, 84).

³⁸ See *Writings*, III, 61.

nize that he himself "could not have written anything in so manly and striking a style [as *Common Sense*]," and that it contained "a great deal of good sense delivered in clear, simple, concise, and nervous style."³⁹ This first ideal of Paine's was of course in line with that of eighteenth-century prose writers from Defoe to his beloved patron Franklin, although Paine was conspicuously lacking in Franklin's inoffensive Socratic approach and his skill in winning assent without antagonizing. As Franklin wrote Hume, who had pronounced him the first man-of-letters of the New World, "certainly in writings intended for persuasion and for general information, one can not be too clear; and every expression in the least obscure is a fault . . . The introducing new words, where we are already possessed of old ones sufficiently expressive, I confess must be generally wrong."⁴⁰ Moreover, Paine's mastery of his familiar friend's ideal in this respect is attested by the fact, as Jefferson remarked,⁴¹ that *Common Sense*, which Paine submitted to Franklin for criticism, was first attributed to Franklin.

One may designate *boldness* Paine's second ideal, one, unfortunately, as it seems to me, which not seldom carried him, as he confessed, beyond the "common track of civil language."⁴² It is, he says, "curious to observe how soon this spell [of sentimental attachment to monarchy] can be dissolved. A single expression, boldly conceived and uttered, will sometimes put a whole company into their proper feelings: and whole nations are acted on in the same manner."⁴³ In transferring this lit-

³⁹ *Works*, I, 205.

⁴⁰ From Franklin's letter quoted by W. C. Bruce, *Benjamin Franklin Self-Revealed*, New York, 1917, II, 439. Franklin summed up his own conception of what constitutes a good piece of writing as follows: "To be good it ought to have a tendency to benefit the reader, by improving his virtue or his knowledge. But, not regarding the intention of the author, the method should be just; that is, it should proceed regularly from things known to things unknown, distinctly and clearly without confusion. The words used should be the most expressive that the language affords, provided that they are the most generally understood. Nothing should be expressed in two words that can be as well expressed in one; that is, no synonymes should be used, or very rarely, but the whole should be as short as possible, consistent with clearness; the words should be so placed as to be agreeable to the ear in reading; summarily it should be smooth, clear and short, for the contrary qualities are displeasing." (Quoted by W. C. Bruce, *Franklin Self-Revealed*, II, 440).

⁴¹ *Works* (ed. Ford), New York, 1904-5, X, 133.

⁴² *Writings*, I, 140.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, II, 481. See also the passage (*ibid.*, I, 133-134) where Paine tries to rationalize his delight in abusiveness, arguing that "personality is concerned in any political debate."

erary method acquired in the rough-and-tumble of politics to religion, Paine was conscious of pioneering in "a style of thinking and expression different to what had been customary in England."⁴⁴ As he wrote Elihu Palmer, whose "Principles of Nature" carried on Paine's tradition in America, "The hinting and intimidating manner of writing that was formerly used on subjects of this kind, produced skepticism, but not conviction. It is necessary to be bold. Some people can be reasoned into sense, and others must be shocked into it. Say a bold thing that will stagger them, and they will begin to think."⁴⁵ And in speaking of the agitation caused by the boldness of the first part of *The Age of Reason*, he concludes, "I have but one way to be secure in my next work, which is, to go further than in my first. I see that *great rogues* escape by the excess of their crimes, and, perhaps, it may be the same in honest cases."⁴⁶ I do not choose to stain these pages by quoting examples of the scarlet and profane Billingsgate and the coarse innuendoes which Paine unworthily employed as an attack upon Christianity in his illiberal and intolerant endeavour to prove that "the only true religion is deism."⁴⁷ If Franklin was an agnostic, he was also tolerant of most religions and rich in the benign wisdom of silence. Where the master feared to tread, the disciple rushed in, with the result that whereas Franklin died the venerated Citizen of the World, beloved of mankind, Paine literally became an object of fear and pity, spending his last years in a vain endeavour to patch together the floating fragments of a wrecked renown. We cannot digress from our restricted purpose here to discuss the vast problems involved in Paine's deism. One observation might be ventured, however. Just as Paine's view that the dead have no authority over the living, that one generation can renounce its obligation to its predecessor, has been undermined by modern doctrines of the inexorable continuity of evolution, so his religious view that one must "vindicate the moral justice of God against the calumnies of the Bible,"⁴⁸ in which God is presented as cruel, by forsaking the

⁴⁴ *Writings*, II, 394. Thomas Secombe (*The Age of Johnson*, London, 1900, p. 115-16) says that Paine's manner, as applied to Christianity, was "of a rather different kind to any that had preceded it in England."

⁴⁵ Conway, *Life of Paine*, II, 298. See also *Writings*, III, 404.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Writings*, IV, 167. See also IV, 190.

⁴⁸ *Writings*, IV, 96.

Bible for nature, has likewise been undermined by the modern evolutionists' demonstration that nature is more cruel than the God of the Old Testament in her indifference to the struggle for existence and the survival of the fittest. Evolution has reinforced, unexpectedly, the famous nature-argument of Butler's *Analogy* (1736), against the earlier deists, who were sure that nature was all benevolence, an argument which Richard Watson tellingly used against Paine in 1796.⁴⁹

If, as a political thinker, his chief weakness lay in his blindness to the unconscious and historical element in human association, the recognition of which constitutes "Burke's supreme claim to greatness,"⁵⁰ as a religious thinker this handicap is much more pronounced, since as a rationalist Paine sees but one path to truth, discounting insight, faith, illusion, and the religious imagination, which have guided such seers as Plato and Dante, as mere obscurantism. And this defect is furthermore aggravated by the fact that, with one or two exceptions, he was totally unfitted, by his external, mechanistic concept of God as a watchmaker and by his doctrine that worship consists only in external humanitarian service, to "be a Columbus to whole continents and worlds within," which has constituted the central objective of the American transcendentalists and of most distinctively religious people. Thus does the iniquity of oblivion, at the behest of time, scatter her poppy, and in rendering the boldest affirmations untenable instruct us in the wisdom of philosophic humility and the avoidance of unseemly dogmatism and violence of expression.

Of course Paine's boldness of phrase is merely the outward garment of the perfectibilian's black-and-white philosophy, according to which all rulers of the past were devils⁵¹ while all rulers of the future will be saints. "The present state of civilization is as odious as it is unjust. It is absolutely the opposite

⁴⁹ *Apology*, 8-9. See Joseph Butler's *The Analogy of Religion, Natural and Revealed, to the Constitution and Course of Nature*, ed. Halifax, Oxford, 1844, p. 5 and p. 11; and see W. Grisenthwaite, *A Refutation of . . . Thomas Paine, etc.*, Wells, 1822, pp. 10-11.

⁵⁰ C. P. Gooch, *Cambridge Modern History*, VIII, 756-57.

⁵¹ "What scenes of horror, what perfection of iniquity, present themselves in contemplating the character and reviewing the history of such governments! If we would delineate human nature with a baseness of heart and hypocrisy of countenance that reflexion would shudder at and humanity disown, it is Kings, courts and cabinets that must sit for the portrait". (*Writings*, II, 413; see also, *ibid.*, IV, 256).

of what it should be."⁵² "The politics of Britain, so far as respects America, were originally conceived in idiotism and acted in madness."⁵³ He is forever the implacable enemy of "mixed governments," middle courses, and gradual methods; nothing will do but "a total reformation."⁵⁴ To this apostle of the religion of humanity his former sovereign, afflicted with mental infirmity, is his "Madjesty,"⁵⁵ otherwise a "Royal Wretch,"⁵⁶ a "Royal Criminal,"⁵⁷ or "a sceptred savage."⁵⁸ The long struggles of the English people for a "freedom slowly broadening down from precedent to precedent" are to him nothing; in the background he sees not Magna Charta but William of Normandy, to him the "son of a prostitute and the plunderer of the English nation." His universal ascription of dark motives to men of the past would better become a believer in total depravity than a believer in liberalism and natural goodness. Indeed, his brutality toward his opponents accords oddly with his professed monopoly on virtues humanitarian. If Paine's ideal of boldness must be pronounced one of the regrettable weaknesses of his literary theory, we should recall that it was a weakness he shared with his contemporaries, whose ungentle ways, it must be admitted, were not conducive to temperate expression. William Cobbett, for example, whose later affection for Paine caused him to bring his remains back to his native land, called him "a profane fool," a "blockhead," a "bloodhound," "an ass," and "red-nosed Tom, . . . the impostor, the liar, and the disturber of mankind." "Men will learn to express all that is *base, malignant, treacherous, unnatural*, and blasphemous, by the single monosyllable Paine."⁵⁹ And Paine's good friend Samuel Adams, who argued that "the natural liberty of man is to be free from any superior power on earth, and not to be under the will or legislative authority of man, but only to have the law of nature for his rule,"⁶⁰ was addressed by American opponents as

⁵² *Writings*, III, 337.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, II, 122. "Everything in the English government appears to me the reverse of what it ought to be, and of what it is said to be," (*ibid.*, II, 315).

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, II, 120.

⁵⁵ *Conway's Life*, II, 31.

⁵⁶ *Writings*, I, 123.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, I, 161.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, I, 132.

⁵⁹ *Observations on Paine's Age of Reason*, pp. 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8.

⁶⁰ As quoted in J. T. Adam's *The Epic of America*, 83. See the correspondence between Samuel Adams and Paine, *Writings*, IV, 200-8. As examples of Samuel

"the foulest, subtlest, and most venomous serpent ever issued from the egg of sedition." And in England, of course Paine's boldness was in accord with that of such writers as Junius, "the favorite model of political writers,"⁶¹ whose "brilliant pen . . . enraptured" Paine, who said that "in the plenitude of its rage it might be said to give elegance to bitterness."⁶² "No writer of the time came so near to the style of Junius," it had been said, "as Paine."⁶³

Somewhat akin to Paine's ideal of boldness was his third ideal, that of *wit*. "Wit," he explained, "is naturally a volunteer, delights in action, and under proper discipline is capable of great execution. 'Tis a perfect master in the art of bush-fighting; and though it attacks with more subtility than science, has often defeated a whole regiment of heavy artillery . . . 'Tis a qualification which, like the passions, has a natural wildness, that requires governing. Left to itself, it soon overflows its banks, mixes with common filth, and brings disrepute on the fountain. We have many valuable springs of it in America, which at present run purer streams, than the generality of it in other countries."⁶⁴ He may have been thinking of the wit of Franklin, rising to the surface of his work like sparkling bubbles in wine, or the wit of Freneau, or of Barlow and the Hartford Wits. Occasionally Paine gives us a mild cerebral tickle as when, in speaking of peace terms unpopular with the democrats, he remarked, "this is what the tories call making their peace, 'a peace which passeth all understanding' indeed."⁶⁵ Often, however, as Romilly said, he is "flat where he attempts

Adams's boldness of language see *Writings of Samuel Adams*, ed. Cushing, New York, 1904-8, II, 313-21. ("Vindex" in *Boston Gazette*, April 20, 1772) and II, 332-37. ("Valerius Poplicola" in *Boston Gazette*, Oct. 5, 1772). R. V. Harlow (*Samuel Adams*, New York, 1923, p. 183) says "There are pages upon pages of this sort of thing in Adams's extant works."

⁶¹ J. B. Daly, *The Dawn of Radicalism*, London, 1886, 105.

⁶² *Writings*, II, 198.

⁶³ W. H. Burr, *Paine, Was He Junius?* 1890, p. 14. The argument that Paine was Junius seems to me inconclusive; but might not the "three hundred parallels of character, conduct, opinion, style, sentiment, and language" suggest that Junius, whom Paine read, influenced him?

⁶⁴ *Writings*, I, 16. Paine wrote elsewhere (*ibid.*, IV, 342), anonymously, "With respect to morality, the writings of Thomas Paine are remarkable for purity and benevolence; and though he often enlivens them with wit and humour, he never loses sight of the real solemnity of his subject,"

⁶⁵ *Writings*, I, 177,

wit,"⁶⁶ as when he described the traitor Arnold boarding "the *Vulture* sloop of war lying in the North River; on which it may be truly said, that one vulture was receiving another." And often his wit is winged with a desire to pain. John Adams, who had been a target for Paine, attributed the Federalists' defeat in part to a failure to guard themselves against "that scoffing, scorning wit, and that caustic malignity of soul, which appeared so remarkably in all the writings of Thomas Paine."⁶⁷ Certainly in respect to his wit, and his deficiency in humour, Paine was a true citizen of that rationalistic century which produced such wits as Swift, Defoe, Bolingbroke, Pope, Churchill, Peter Pindar, Wilkes, and Junius, all of whom Paine read and admired.

Paine's fourth ideal—perhaps unexpected in one who was essentially a rationalist otherwise—may be described as an *appeal to feeling* and a regard for those niceties of composition, such as connotation, antithesis, balance, and cadence, which are productive of emotional or poetic pleasure. This aspect of Paine's work has been, I think, little noticed, and yet I venture to think it has stood him in good stead in his conflict with oblivion. "I had some turn," he confessed, reminiscently, "and I believe some talent for poetry; but this I rather repressed than

⁶⁶ Sir Samuel Romilly, *Memoirs*, etc., I, 415-16. "There have been several answers to Burke since you left us, but none that have much merit except one by Paine . . . It is written in his own wild but forcible style; inaccurate in point of grammar [for an exhaustive list of such errors see F. Oldys, *Life of Paine*, London, 1792, pp. 46, 67, 88, 98 ff.] flat where he attempts wit, and often ridiculous when he indulges himself in metaphors; but, with all that, full of spirit and energy, and likely to produce a very great effect. It has done that, indeed, already; in the course of a fortnight, it has gone through three editions; and, what I own has a good deal surprised me, has made converts of many persons who were before enemies to the [French] Revolution." See also *Tom Paine's Jestes: Being an entirely new and select collection of Patriotic Bon Mots, Repartees, Anecdotes, Epigrams, Observations, &c. on Political Subjects*, By Thomas Paine and other supporters of the Rights of Man . . . London, 1794. (A copy of this rare volume, of 56 pages, sold at sixpence, will be found in the British Museum, No. 8135. a. 65).

⁶⁷ John Adams, *Works*, IX, 278. In arranging terms of a debate with the Abbe Siéyes on monarchy, Paine promised to "treat the subject seriously and sincerely," but held himself "at liberty to ridicule, as they deserve, Monarchical absurdities, whensoever the occasion shall present itself." His so-called wit directed at the Virgin Mary and Mary Magdalene is of course especially painful. Richard Watson censured him for introducing "railing for reasoning, vulgar and illiberal sarcasm in the room of argument," (*Apology*, 14) and the anonymous author of *Christianity the Only True Theology; as an answer to Mr. Paine's Age of Reason*, (London, n. d.), censures Paine's neglect of "a serious and impartial examination of truth" for "illiberal satyr, and impertinent witticism," for "the lighter weapons of ludicrous description and impudent buffoonry". (pp. 7, 58-59).

encouraged, as leading too much into the field of imagination."⁶⁸ Nevertheless, this repressed feeling for the poetic is seldom far beneath the surface, fertilizing his art, giving it at times, as even his enemies admitted, an elevation which was not without beauty. At first, although I think it is not generally known, this hard-headed rationalist was much given to wandering in fairy lands of fancy, as one will note who reads his early papers in *The Pennsylvania Magazine* for the year 1775 on such topics as "Cupid and Hymen." Enchanted with his new-found home, Paine wandered fancifully in "the groves of Arcadia," charmed with the "lovely appearance," the "air of pleasantness," every shepherdess being "decorated with a profusion of flowers," while amidst the "little cottages" and the "jessamine and myrtle" "the sound of labour was not heard" but only "a sweet confusion of voices mingled with instrumental music."⁶⁹ It is

⁶⁸ *Writings*, IV, 63. This attitude toward poetry was in accord with that of Paine's contemporaries. Witness Franklin's advice to Ralph: "I approved the amusing one's self with poetry now and then, so far as to improve one's language but no farther." *Writings*, I, 270. Madison argued that "something more substantial, more durable, more profitable [than poetry] befits our riper age." See H. H. Clark, *Poems of Freneau*, New York, 1928, especially pp. xlvii-lviii, for a consideration of Deism as related to the genesis of American poetry. On Paine's editorship in relation to early American journalism and its literary ideals see Lyon N. Richardson, *A History of Early American Magazines, 1741-1789*, New York, 1931, and A. H. Smyth, *The Philadelphia Magazines and Their Contributors 1741-1850*, Philadelphia, 1892.

⁶⁹ *Writings*, I, 36. As further examples of this sort of style, see *Writings*, I, 26-27, where he delights, in a "pleasant kind of melancholy," when even "the trees seemed to sleep," in crossing the Styx to the "Plutonian world" in quest of Alexander the Great, marvelling at a chariot "drawn by eight horses in golden harness" and all the splendour which "shined so luminously". The tendencies here suggested are found elaborated in the work of Paine's contemporary and admirer, Philip Freneau. (See H. H. Clark, "What Made Freneau the Father of American Prose?" (*Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts, and Letters*. XXV, May 1930, pp. 39-50). And see the purple patch (*Writings*, I, 22-23) which suggests that the deist's delight in nature was not so exclusively cold-blooded and scientific as might be imagined: "Tho' nature is gay, polite, and generous abroad, she is sullen, rude, and niggardly at home: Return the visit, and she admits you with all the suspicion of a miser, and all the reluctance of an antiquated beauty retired to replenish her charms. Bred up in antediluvian notions, she has not yet acquired the European taste of receiving visitants in her dressing-room: she locks and bolts up her private recesses with extraordinary care, as if not only resolved to preserve her hoards, but to conceal her age, and hide the remains of a face that was young and lovely in the days of Adam. He that would view nature in her undress and partake of her internal treasures, must proceed with the resolution of a robber, if not of a ravisher. She gives no invitation to follow her to the cavern. The external earth makes no proclamation of the interior stores, but leaves to chance and industry, the discovery of the whole. In such gifts as nature can annually re-create, she is noble and profuse, and entertains the whole world with the interest of her fortunes; but watches over the capital with the care of a miser. Her gold and jewels

in this scene that Cupid rescues the beauteous Ruralinda from Gothic, Lord of the Manor, and returns her to her shepherd swain with whom she lives happily ever after. No wonder Paine, who is popularly pictured in this period as a sort of fire-eater, wrote Franklin, "I thought it very hard to have the Country set on fire about my Ears almost the moment I got into it."⁷⁰ Nevertheless, he was summoned forth from this Arcadian fairyland to publish *Common Sense*, the call to arms, January 10, 1776, which presages his matured prose style embodied fifteen years later in the *Rights of Man*. As I have suggested, his style in 1775 was, for the most part, ornate, involved, artificial, rich in languorous emotional overtones which caress the sentimental fancies of an Arcadian; his style in 1791 is essentially bare, terse, swift, metallic, and epigrammatic, not without an echo, here and there, of stately eloquence. What accounts for this interesting stylistic evolution?⁷¹ It cannot be attributed entirely to the outgrowing of youthful sentimentalism, for Paine was thirty-eight when he wrote the passages just quoted. No doubt, as in the case of Sidney Lanier later, the author's personal experience in the war had something to do with helping him to view things realistically and to give his words the ring of sincerity. For Paine was an aide to General Greene, and took part in an engagement which involved rowing "in an open boat to Fort Mifflin during the cannonade," a "very gallant act," as a contemporary said, "that shows what a fearless man Mr. Paine was."⁷² Such an experience in the teeth of a cannonade has a way of making a man think less about Cupids and shepherdesses and fairies and Necromancers' cells. No wonder he poured out "The Crisis" in "a passion of patriotism,"⁷³ writing,

lie concealed in the earth, in caves of utter darkness; and hoards of wealth, heaps upon heaps, mould in the chests, like the riches of a Necromancer's cell." One would hardly suspect that this passage constitutes a good share of a so-called "useful" essay on ways and means of mining! For evidence regarding Paine's authorship of these and other early articles, see Frank Smith, "New Light on Thomas Paine's First Year in America," *American Literature*, I, 347-371.

⁷⁰ *Writings*, I, 393.

⁷¹ It should be borne in mind, of course, that between Paine's early work in 1775 and the *Rights of Man* in 1791 and 1792, there was a general reaction in America against stilted and grandiloquent language, which was satirized, for example, by the Hartford Wits' *Echo*. See the ridiculous examples of contemporary high-flown artificiality quoted at length by C. B. Todd, *Life and Letters of Joel Barlow*, New York, 1886, pp. 52-53.

⁷² Conway, *Life of Paine*, I, 99.

⁷³ *Writings*, IV, 431.

it is said, on the head of a drum in the light of flickering campfires while the wornout army slumbered. More important, however, was the intellectual influence of associating on intimate terms, as Secretary of Foreign Affairs, fellow-author, or guest, with the leaders of Revolutionary thought such as Jefferson and Franklin, and the natural tendency to assimilate not only their thought⁷⁴ but their ideals as regards the art of writing, which were in the direction of sobriety, clarity, precision, ease, vigour and purposeful didacticism. He confessed that, while he formerly had no interest in politics,⁷⁵ "it was the American revolution that made me an author,"⁷⁶ and that as regards his later work such as the *Rights of Man* "the principles . . . were the same as those in "*Common Sense*,"⁷⁷ learned in America. Henceforth, the ever-growing faith in the natural man and Utopian progress, which throbbed and pounded and exulted through his work, was in his mind given philosophic sanction by what he took to be the concrete and successful embodiment of it in the history of America. In such an interpretation, however, it is manifest that he, like other naturalists of the French Revolutionary era, failed to perceive the extent to which the American "order and decorum,"⁷⁸ which Paine expected in vain in the French Revolution, and which he attributed to natural goodness, were the inherited habitude of a Puritan liberalism, mindful of the dark impulses of the human heart, which strove not to make men masterless but self-mastered.⁷⁹ Such an entrancing vision of being instrumental in "regenerating the Old World by the principles of the New,"⁸⁰ by merely modifying the external machinery of government, in conjunction with the stylistic ideals of such intimate friends as Franklin and Jefferson,⁸¹ made him impatient not only of fanciful writing but even

⁷⁴ See M. R. Eiselen, *Franklin's Political Theories*, New York, 1928; and G. Chinard, *Thomas Jefferson*, Boston, 1929.

⁷⁵ *Writings*, IV, 63 ff.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, III, 402.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, III, 382.

⁷⁸ *Writings*, II, 463.

⁷⁹ See J. W. Thornton, *The Pulpit of the American Revolution*, Boston, 1860; and Alice M. Baldwin, *The New England Clergy and the American Revolution*, Durham, North Carolina, 1928.

⁸⁰ *Writings*, III, 98.

⁸¹ Jefferson (*Works*, ed. Ford, VIII, 65) wrote, in 1801, regarding poetry: "In earlier life I was fond of it, and easily pleased. But as age and cares advanced, the powers of fancy have declined . . . So much has my relish for poetry deserted me that, at present, I cannot read even Virgil with pleasure . . . The

of non-didactic or non-historical writing such as the drama. "Mr. Burke should recollect," he says, "that he is writing history and not *plays*; and that his readers will expect truth, and not the spouting to rant of high-toned exclamation."⁸² Jefferson, in the interest of "reason and fact, plain and unadorned," had condemned the undidactic novel for its "poison" of "fancy."

As I have suggested, however, Paine's early delight in the poetic did not desert him, but, being repressed, indirectly fertilized his style, giving it, at its best, colour, connotation, and cadence, enabling him to hold in thrall not only the reader's head but his heart. For the "prince of pamphleteers" knew that "the mind of a *living public* . . . feels first and reasons afterwards."⁸³ Everyone, of course, is familiar with his picturesque retort to Burke, who in the French Revolution pitied the rich but forgot the poor. As Paine remarked, "He is not affected by the reality of distress touching his heart, but by the showy resemblance of it striking his imagination. *He pities the plumage, but forgets the dying bird.*"⁸⁴ In metaphors of such haunting beauty Paine often succeeds in pointedly compressing his argument, rendering it strikingly memorable and quotable. "The palaces of kings are founded on the bowers of paradise." "Government, like dress, is the badge of lost innocence." "Cannons are the barristers of kings." If "there is in Paine's style none of the organ's roll which hushes Burke's

very feelings to which it [poetry] is addressed are among those I have lost." Although as a young man Jefferson did not object to novels provided they were sufficiently didactic and morally "useful" (*Works*, Ford, ed. I, 396), in general he considered them fanciful, and hence objectionable: "A great obstacle to good education is the inordinate passion prevalent for novels, and the time lost in that reading which should be instructively employed. When this poison infects the mind, it destroys its tone and revolts it against wholesome reading. Reason and fact, plain and unadorned, are rejected. Nothing can engage attention unless dressed in all the figments of fancy, and nothing so bedecked comes amiss. The result is a sickly judgment, and disgust towards all the real business of life." (*Works*, ed. Ford, X, 104). It should be remembered, also, that Benjamin Martin, the Newtonian popularizer whose lectures impressed Paine at the age of twenty (*Writings*, IV, 63), proclaimed "As to Poetry, it is so far from being the Source of any Learning, that, on the contrary, it has, for its subject, *pure Fiction*, which is quite its Opposite: If *Wit* and *Fancy* be your *Taste*, read Poetry; if *Wisdom* and Learning, attend on [natural] Philosophy". (*A Panegyrick*, p. 54).

⁸² *Writings*, II, 286-87. "I consider Mr. Burke's book in scarcely any other light than a dramatic performance; and he must, I think, have considered it in the same light himself, by the poetical liberties he has taken of omitting some facts, distorting others, and making the whole machinery bend to produce a stage effect." (*Ibid.*, II, 297).

⁸³ *Writings*, I, p. 395.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, II, 288.

listeners into a state of veneration and awe,"⁸⁵ a statement to which there are many exceptions, he is a master of epigrams, clothed often in homely phrases, which "became catchwords; household proverbs; verbal banners to flaunt before the astonished vision of a comfortable aristocracy and a contented conservatism."⁸⁶ This facility in the art of epigrams stems, no doubt, partly from the neo-classical delight in the general rather than the particular, partly from Paine's delight in logical abstraction as opposed to historic relativism, and partly from the fact that his delight in the universality of natural law led to a delight in framing major premises in terms universal. I venture to think, however, that Paine's writing derives no small measure of its vibrating power from his ability, as a retentive student of the English Bible, to clothe his thought in the moving diction and haunting cadences of that masterpiece of beauty which has left its authentic stamp upon most of what is great in English letters. For Paine did not condemn all the Bible, even in content. He never tires of praising the Book of Job, especially for its style. "As a composition, it is sublime, beautiful, and scientific: full of sentiment, and abounding in grand metaphorical description . . . In the last act, where the Almighty is introduced as speaking from the whirlwind, to decide the controversy between Job and his friends, it is an idea as grand as poetic imagination can conceive."⁸⁷ And it will be found, I think, that usually wherever Paine attains a dignity and impressiveness of style, an earnest and lofty eloquence, and a telling incisiveness of phrase, there are subtle echoes of the book he condemned. "The vanity and presumption of governing beyond the grave is the most ridiculous and insolent of all tyrannies. Man has no property in man; neither has any generation a property in the generations which are to follow."⁸⁸ "The farce of monarchy in all countries is following that of chivalry, and Mr. Burke is dressing for the funeral. Let it then pass gently to the tomb of all other follies and the mourners be comforted." "It is [quoting] authority against authority all the way, till we come to the divine origin

⁸⁵ Seccombe, *op. cit.*, 86-87.

⁸⁶ W. P. Hall, *op. cit.*, 87.

⁸⁷ *Writings*, IV, 276. See also his appreciation of the nineteenth Psalm (*ibid.*, IV, 337).

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, II, 278.

of the rights of man at the creation. Here our enquiries find a resting place and our reason finds a home."⁸⁹ And in the following sentence, notice not only the biblical echoes in this attack on the Bible, but the balance and antithesis, and the stately cadence: ". . . the terrors and inquisitorial fury of the Church, like what they tell us of the flaming sword that turned every way, stood sentry over the New Testament; and time, which brings everything to light, has served to thicken the darkness that guards it from detection."⁹⁰ Paine's nice regard for rhythmic units and for the music of the spoken word are obvious, and this regard must have been effectively advanced by his manner of composing, which was also, incidentally, not unlike that of Emerson. "His manner of composing, as I have heard persons who have heard him relate," writes Hogg, "was thus. He walked backwards and forwards about a room until he had completed a sentence to his satisfaction; he then wrote it down entire and perfect and never to be amended. When the weather was fair, if there was a garden, a field, a courtyard at hand, he walked about out of doors for a while, and then came in and put down the sentence which he had arranged mentally, and went out again and walked until he was ready to be delivered of another."⁹¹ No wonder he could make his words, terrible but beautiful, march like soldiers with trumpets; no wonder he could make his words vibrate with the indignation of a Hebrew prophet foretelling the destruction of "Sodom and Gormorrah."⁹² In praising his timely appeal to feeling, however, I have in mind not so much his war propaganda, a type of work with which we are all unpleasantly familiar, as that portion of his writing inspired by passion social and humanitarian. For the bitterness with which he hated the oppressors was of course merely the reverse side of the tenderness with which he pitied the oppressed. "I defend," he said, "the cause of the poor, . . . of all those on whom the real burden of the taxes fall—but above all, I defend the cause of humanity." "I speak an open and disinterested language, dictated by no passion but that of humanity . . . my country is the world, and my religion is to do

⁸⁹ *Writings*, II, 304.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, IV, 405.

⁹¹ Hogg, *Life of Shelley*, ed. Dowden, 517.

⁹² *Writings*, I, 208.

good.”⁹³ If Paine was blind to most of what the historic majesty of the past has to teach, and if his idyllic prophecies of a New Jerusalem come on earth were belied by the events of the future, if few can accept today either his religion or political doctrines, which subsume a benevolence in nature and the natural man which realistic observation and evolution has tended to disprove, it may turn out that his most important contribution was the impetus which he gave toward a wider recognition of social evils and a quest for concrete remedies. A contemporary and reader of humanitarians such as Thomson, Cowper, Blake, Mary Wollstonecraft, Franklin, Jefferson, Voltaire, Rousseau, Raynal, Brissot and Condorcet, it is no wonder that, in elaborating his many practical suggestions⁹⁴ for the relief of social suffering, whereby life’s blessings were to be more equally distributed, his words throb with a contagious sympathy⁹⁵ which brought hope to the unfortunate, the poor, and the oppressed. For, much as he tempered his earlier addiction to the sentimental, he never forgot that “the mind of a living public . . . feels first, and reasons afterwards.” In this respect, Paine approaches, for a moment, the view of Burke, whose essay on “The Sublime and the Beautiful” (1756) he evidently read, who held that an ideal sentence should involve first, a thought, second, an image, and, third, a sentiment.

If the rationalist Paine was not unmindful of an appeal to the reader’s feelings, if he aimed “to make the reader feel, fancy, and understand justly at the same time,”⁹⁶ his practice had the support of a typically neo-classic theory of a desired balance between Memory, Judgment and Imagination, a balance which may be said to constitute his *fifth* literary ideal. It is interesting to note, incidentally, that the literary effectiveness of his defence of liberty is in no small measure dependent upon an allegiance to a principal of control. His statement of his theory is so important that I must beg leave to quote it in full, long as it is:

⁹³ *Writings*, II, 472.

⁹⁴ Among Paine’s humanitarian interests were abolition of slavery, arbitration schemes to avoid war, land reforms, income taxes, old age pensions, more practical and universal education, remedies for yellow fever, copyright laws, and many inventions for saving time and life.

⁹⁵ See, for example, the moving passage (*Writings*, II, 493) which concludes Paine’s presentation of his fourteen concrete suggestions, in the second part of the *Rights of Man*, for alleviating suffering.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, II, 69–70.

"The three great faculties of the mind", he wrote, much as did Sir William Jones, whom Paine read,⁹⁷ "are *Imagination, Judgment and Memory*. Every action of the mind comes under one or the other of these faculties . . . [The mind being like a watch,⁹⁸] the main spring which puts all in motion corresponds to the imagination; the pendulum which corrects and regulates that motion, corresponds to the judgment; and the hand and dial, like the memory, record the operation. . . . if the judgment sleeps whilst the imagination keeps awake . . . the master of the school is gone out and the boys are in an uproar."⁹⁹

". . . How very few men there are in any country," he remarks in censuring Raynal, "who can at once, and without the aid of reflection and revisal, combine warm passions with a cool temper, and the full expansion of the imagination with the natural and necessary gravity of judgment, so as to be rightly balanced within themselves, and to make a reader feel, fancy, and understand justly at the same time. To call three powers of the mind into action at once, in a manner that neither shall interrupt, and that each shall aid and invigorate the other, is a talent very rarely possessed. It often happens that the weight of an argument is lost by the wit of setting it off; or the judgment disordered by an intemperate irritation of the passions: yet a certain degree of animation must be felt by the writer, and raised in the reader, in order to interest the attention; and a sufficient scope given to the imagination, to enable it to create in the mind a sight of the persons, characters and circumstances, of the subject: for without these, the judgment will feel little or no excitement to office, and its determinations will be cold, sluggish, and imperfect. But if either or both of the two former are raised too high, or heated too much, the judgment will be jostled from its seat, and the whole matter, however, important in

⁹⁷ Paine seems to have drawn some of his knowledge of Eastern religions from Sir William Jones's *Asiatic Researches* (*Writings*, IV, 330); and Jones's *Principles of Government* (1782), which ran to five editions by 1818, is strikingly paralleled by passages in Paine's later political writing. In "A Discourse on the Institution of a Society," etc., p. 8, Jones writes: "Human knowledge has been elegantly analysed according to the three great faculties of the mind, *Memory, Reason, and Imagination*; which we constantly find employed in arranging and retaining, comparing and distinguishing, combining and diversifying the idea, which we receive through our senses, or acquire by reflection."

⁹⁸ In 1804, after Paley's works were published, Paine wrote: "When we see a watch, we have as positive evidence of the existence of a watchmaker as if we saw him; and in the same manner the creation is evidence to our reason and our senses of the existence of a Creator." (*Writings*, IV, 317) If Paine may have borrowed this mechanical figure from Paley, Paley's political philosophy of natural rights has interesting resemblances to Paine's, elaborated in print before most of Paley's works had appeared.

⁹⁹ *Writings*, IV, 360-62.

itself, will diminish into a pantomime of the mind, in which we create images that promote no other purpose than amusement."¹⁰⁰

It is often erroneously supposed that the neo-classicists and the radical rationalists were implacably hostile to the imagination. It is true, as we have seen, that Paine repressed his interest in poetry as "leading too much into the field of imagination";¹⁰¹ his hostility toward what he calls "the vapours of the imagination",¹⁰² however, refers only to the unbalanced and undisciplined use of that faculty. For to Paine, as to many of his contemporaries, the imagination, as he described it above, is the "main-spring" of the mind. We should notice carefully, however, exactly what he means by imagination. To Paine it not so much an Aristotelian faculty, essentially moral, whereby ethical universals are envisaged on the basis of particulars purged of what is accidental or idiosyncratic, a conception held by such men as Burke, Sir Joshua Reynolds, and the mature James Russell Lowell,¹⁰³ as it was a creative arranger of images furnished by memory and controlled by judgment. If we recall how exuberant were Paine's early flights of fancy, how strongly he leaned toward the over-ornate and the Arcadian, we will understand how difficult, and necessary, in his case was self-discipline, and we will perhaps be more charitable toward his frequent and deplorable inability to bring his writing, often done under stress of emergencies which forbade revision, into complete harmony with his ideal of a fruitful and purposeful balance between the Memory, the Judgment and the Imagination. With regard to this ideal, as with others, he was in accord with the main current of his age. For, as Professor F. B. Kaye

¹⁰⁰ *Writings*, II, 69-70.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, IV, 63.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, I, 178. "But priests, preachers, and fanatics, put imagination in the place of faith, and it is the nature of the imagination to believe without evidence." *Ibid.*, IV, 422.

¹⁰³ See Norman Foerster, *American Criticism*, Boston, 1928, on Lowell's imagination; H. H. Clark, "Lowell's Criticism of Romantic Literature," *Publications of the Modern Language Association*, XLI, 209-228, and also "Lowell-Humanitarian, Nationalist, or Humanist?" *Studies in Philology*, XXVII, 411-441 (July, 1930). Paine, of course, had little in common with the contemporary heralds of original genius who used the imagination mainly as a means of escape, or a means of creating what was idiosyncratic or unique. In a paper on "The Romanticism of Edward Young" (*Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters*, XXIV) I have discussed the neo-classical as contrasted with the classical imagination, although I should have given more stress to the idea that the neo-classicists were not hostile to the sort of imagination just described.

reminded us, "The neo-classicist distrusted only the undisciplined use of the faculty [imagination]; the disciplined imagination he required. The following is a typical neo-classic statement: 'In a good poem, whether it be *epic* or *dramatic*; as also in *sonnets*, *epigrams*, and other pieces, both judgment and fancy are required . . .'¹⁰⁴ This was a doctrine preached by Pope and Addison [whom Paine read, admired and quoted]. That the neo-classicists could hardly help respecting the imagination is shown by their conceptions of the creative art. The central psychological theory was that of Hobbes and Locke, according to which the judgment separates the impressions stored in the memory by the senses and the imagination joins and relates them. Imagination, therefore, was as necessary to controlled thinking as judgment, and shared its good repute."¹⁰⁵

Sixth, having advocated this difficult balance of faculties necessary to the writer, Paine aimed to adjust language to thought with such exquisite precision as to create exactly the impression he wished to produce and no other. The ex-soldier knew that ammunition is not more necessary than infallible aiming. As he himself sums the matter up. "To fit the powers of thinking and the turn of language to the subject, so as to bring out a clear conclusion that shall hit the point in question and nothing else, is the true criterion of writing."¹⁰⁶ Conscious of his own earlier weaknesses, he is aware that the means should be always subordinated to the end, the part to the whole, that writing may fail "through an excess of graces", if as in Raynal's case, "the coloring is too high for the original", even though "the conception is lofty and the expression elegant".¹⁰⁷ As he boasted later, reviewing, no doubt, his own struggles for literary self-control and for artistic integrity, "All the world knows, for it cannot help knowing, that to judge *rightly*, and to write *clearly*, and that upon all sorts of subjects, to be able to command thought

¹⁰⁴ Hobbes, *Of Man*, Pt. I, sect. 8.

¹⁰⁵ In the *Philological Quarterly*, VII, 178. See also, Charles Gildon, *The Complete Art of Poetry*, 1718, I, 125; "For Fancy and Judgment must join in every great Poet, as Courage and Judgement in every great General; for where either is wanting, the other is useless, or of small Value. Fancy is what we generally call *Nature*, or a *Genius*, *Judgment* is what we mean by *Art*, the union of which in one Man makes a complete Poet."

¹⁰⁶ *Writings*, II, 110.

¹⁰⁷ *Writings*, II, 110.

and as it were to play with it at pleasure, and be always master of one's temper in writing, is the faculty only of a serene mind, and the attribute of a happy and philosophical temperament."¹⁰⁸

Like Milton, whose work he read,¹⁰⁹ Paine recognized that literary success depends upon far more than verbal carpentry and astute craftsmanship, important as these are; he recognized, like the greater and more profound radical, the organic relation between character and literary creation, the fact that the life of a poet must itself be a genuine and living poem. The deist, grossly libelled as an atheist or infidel, who spent his life ringing the changes on his master-theme that "It is only in the Creation [nature] that all our ideas and conceptions of a *word of God* can unite,"¹¹⁰ was not slow to grasp the parallel idea that the literary creation of man is a revelation of its human creator, noble or ignoble in proportion as the deeper springs of his character are in fruitful harmony with what Emerson, like Paine in this respect, called "the law alive and beautiful",¹¹¹ the Oversoul. And if Paine's writing is not flawless, if he wanders far at times from the high-road he charted, it is perhaps not unrelated to the fact that he never completely achieved the "happy and philosophical" self-command he sought,¹¹² that he did not escape what

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, III, 402.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, I, 91. John Adams, Works, II, 508, records that Paine came "to my lodgings and spent an evening with me," and in discussing the portion of *Common Sense* dealing with monarchy, he "said he had taken his ideas in that part from Milton".

¹¹⁰ *Writings*, IV, 46. He was the champion, unlike Rousseau, of representative government (*Ibid.*, II, 414-429) and he was among the first to see that "the union of America is the foundation-stone of her independence; the rock on which it is built . . ." (*Ibid.*, I, 340; see all of *Crisis*, XIII).

¹¹¹ Emerson, *Complete Works* (Centenary Edition), III, 283. See H. H. Clark, "Emerson and Science", *Philological Quarterly*, X, 225-260, where evidence is presented to show that on one side Emerson's thought had a strong kinship with that of the deists.

¹¹² Of course Paine has been unpardonably libelled as regards his personal character, especially by such biographers as Cheetham. His sympathetic champion, however, M. D. Conway, was obliged to accept the fact that he was dismissed from the excise for a violation of his trust, and his best friends have reluctantly admitted that in later life he "gave in to the too frequent indulgence of drinking, neglected his appearance, and retired, mortified and disgusted, from an ill-judging, unkind, unjust world, into coarse obscurity, and the association of characters in inferior life." This is the testimony of Rickman, (*Life of Paine*, London, 1819, p. 11), and it is substantiated by other friends such as Barlow (C. B. Todd, *Life and Letters of Joel Barlow*, New York, 1886, see Barlow's long letter on Paine quoted pp. 236-39). See also C. Wilmont, *An Irish Peer on the Continent* (1801-3), pp. 26-27. James Monroe, who had Paine released from prison and who nursed him back to health in his own ambassadorial residence, was grieved that Paine "would commit such a breach of confidence as well as of gratitude", as that

his defender, Shelley,¹¹³ called the "contagion of the world's slow stain". On the other hand, it should be borne in mind that this ultimate stress upon self-discipline in literary art is in the last analysis the inevitable result, in literary terms, of the contemporary outlook of religious radicals, or deists, culminating with Bolingbroke and Pope, whom Paine admired as "Free-thinkers".¹¹⁴ For, as I hope to show elsewhere, the views of such religious radicals as Paine represents have been somewhat misunderstood, and important political, humanitarian, and literary results of such views largely ignored. Paine was anything but an atheist or an anarchist. If he advocated, like Pope, following nature, the concept "nature" must be interpreted in the light of the contemporary climate of opinion. He did not mean by following nature to return to the actual physical life of a savage in a wilderness. For to Paine, as to most of the deists, nature had a special meaning, confirmed by Newtonian science: as Paine expressly says, "nature is of divine origin. It is the laws by which the universe is governed";¹¹⁵ nature "is no other than the laws the Creator has prescribed to matter", laws operating in "unerring order and universal harmony",¹¹⁶ and perceptible through the study of science by means of "the divine gift of reason".¹¹⁷ *Nature is law, eternal, immutable, universal.*¹¹⁸ Now, whatever were the facts of the personal life of Paine, philosophically, far from preaching lustful license or do-as-you-please, the ultimate virtue to him, as his deist contemporaries in England, was living in harmony with this law which is nature, a conformity involving no little discipline, as has been

involved in publishing from his host's home pamphlets which compromised his host, the United States' ambassador, and according to B. Fay, "Paine shattered his work", (*The Revolutionary Spirit in France and America*, New York, 1927, trans. by R. Guthrie, pp. 379-380; *Writings of James Monroe*, New York, 1898-1903, II, 440-42; III, 20-21; III, 27).

¹¹³ *The Shelley Correspondence in the Bodleian Library*, ed. R. H. Hill, Oxford, 1926, p. 21 ff., Letter XXVI, "Shelley to J. H. Hunt, 3 November, 1819, on the conviction of Richard Carlile for Publishing Paine's 'Age of Reason'." (The first and third sheets only of this letter had been printed, as in editions by Forman and Ingpen).

¹¹⁴ *Writings*, IV 391-93 and 342.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, IV, 311.

¹¹⁶ *Writings*, IV, 339.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, IV, 315-16, and 322.

¹¹⁸ In another study, "Newtonianism and Thomas Paine", I have endeavoured to define and outline Paine's central assumptions in the light of contemporary thought, especially that of Newtonians such as James Ferguson and Benjamin Martin, who were Paine's teachers.

demonstrated in the case of Shaftesbury.¹¹⁹ Thus, to indicate Paine's accord with the spirit of the age, in this matter of a disciplined precision, "the true criterion of writing", we may recall that to Pope, as to Paine, "prayerbooks are the toys of age",¹²⁰ while God is revealed in nature, in "the stupendous whole" harmony of nature's laws, which are universal—"still the same". Thus, unlike the "original genius" naturalists such as Edward Young, whose cult of following nature led to a literary diversitarianism, a quest of the eccentric, of nonconformity, Pope and Paine urge us to "first follow nature, which is still the same",¹²¹ a quest of the concentric or the universal, an ideal, in Pope's case, if less faithfully in practice in Paine's, which involved the most intense literary self-discipline as regards craftsmanship in the interest of finality of expression, of what was "ne'er so well expressed". The crowning stress, then, which Paine lays upon harmonizing a writer's powers by allegiance to a judgment which "corrects and regulates", and upon being able "to command thought and as it were to play with it at pleasure", to hit the point in question and nothing else", this crowning stress upon control in writing was but a reflection of the central philosophy of that day, wherein man found his salvation by a self-disciplined conformity to nature's law, the "unerring order and universal harmony", and it can be only inadequately, if not falsely, interpreted when divorced from that philosophic background of deism and Newtonian law.¹²²

¹¹⁹ Esther Tiffany, "Shaftesbury as Stoic", *Publications of the Modern Language Association*, XXXVIII (1923), 642-84.

¹²⁰ "Essay on Man" (1734).

¹²¹ "Essay on Criticism". Mary Segar has recently argued, inconclusively, as it seems to me, that Pope's deism may be reconciled with his nominal Catholicism. ("Some Notes on Pope's Religion", *Dublin Review*, No. 381, April, 1932).

¹²² This vastly important subject of the relation between literary ideals and Newtonian deism awaits, so far as I am aware, thorough investigation, both in England and America. A suggestive but very brief tabulation of meanings of the term "nature" in criticism of the seventeenth and eighteenth century will be found in a paper on "'Nature' as Aesthetic Norm" by A. O. Lovejoy (*Modern Language Notes*, XLII, 1927, pp. 444-50). As regards America, Carl Becker has admirably shown how important were widespread Newtonian naturalism and deism in moulding political theory and history; he does not mention Paine, but it should be evident that if Paine imbibed Newtonianism earlier in England through indirect sources, he must have had his faith reinforced by breathing its prevailing atmosphere in America. (*The Declaration of Independence. A Study in the History of Political Ideas*, New York, 1922, Ch. II). And see B. F. Wright, Jr., "American Interpretations of Natural Law", *American Political Science Review*, XX, (1926), 524-47; and A. O. Lovejoy (*Modern Philology*, XXIX, Feb. 1932,

Having satisfied himself as to the perfection of the units of his composition, striving, as we have seen, for candour, simplicity, and clarity, for boldness, for wit, for an appeal not only to reason but to feeling, for a balance between judgement and imagination, and for a purposeful and precise adjustment between language and ideas with reference to a definite audience, Paine strove, finally, to arrange his units, his carefully constructed sentences, in an architectonic pattern designed to give them their maximum effectiveness. He worshipped order in everything, but especially in literary composition, and as a critic he is especially sensitive to faults in order and method. His friend Rickman testifies that "he used to speak highly of the sentimental parts of Raynal's History",¹²³ and he acknowledged that the Frenchman who cloaked humanitarianism under history "displays great powers of genius, and is a master of style and language".¹²⁴ Yet as an apostle of orderly method in the development of an argument, he cannot overlook the fact that "the greater part of the abbé's writings, (if he will pardon me the remark) appear to me uncentral, and burdened with variety. They represent a beautiful wilderness without paths; in which the eye is diverted by everything, without being particularly directed to anything . . ." ¹²⁵ The same fault loomed large to him in the writing of "Cato", whose attack on *Common Sense* called forth Paine's Forester papers: "Cato's manner of writing has as much order in it as the motion of a squirrel. He frequently writes as if he knew not what to write next, just as the other jumps about, only because it cannot stand still".¹²⁶ And especially, in answering Burke's *Reflections*, he lamented the difficulty of imposing an orderly pattern upon the *Rights of Man*, since, as he remarked in one of his happy phrases, he had to tread "a

pp. 281-299) "The Parallel of Deism and Classicism". A. Bosker, *Literary Criticism in the Age of Johnson* (The Hague, 1930), surveys his subject in the light of the stock interpretations and romantic assumptions.

¹²³ Rickman, *Life of Paine*, 136. See also p. 32: "Distinctness and arrangement are the peculiar characteristics of his writings: this reflection brings to mind an observation once made to him by an American girl, that his head was like an orange—it had a separate apartment for every thing it contained."

¹²⁴ *Writings*, II, 79.

¹²⁵ *Writings*, II, 110. See also *ibid.*, IV, 379: "Isaiah is, upon the whole, a wild disorderly writer, preserving in general no clear chain of perception in the arrangement of his ideas, and consequently producing no definite conclusions from them."

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, I, 138.

pathless wilderness of rhapsodies".¹²⁷ In common with the main figures of his era, devoted to the beauty of symmetry and the progressive unfolding of a rationalistic argument, Paine exclaims, "I love method, because I see and am convinced of its beauty and advantage. It is that which makes all business easy and understood, and without which, everything becomes embarrassed and difficult."¹²⁸ For "it is only by reducing complicated things to method and orderly connexion that they can be understood with advantage, or pursued with success."¹²⁹ Paine's own practice of this theory is, as everyone knows, imperfect. He never succeeded in bringing his compositions into that faultless harmony with geometrical method illustrated so finely by the structure of Godwin's *Political Justice*. Nevertheless, as he remarks regarding one subject, he "endeavoured to give it as systematical an investigation as the short time allowed."¹³⁰ His manner of lighting the way through his compositions is simple: in general, at his best, he follows the old playwright's advice of telling us what he is going to do, of telling us he is doing it, and then telling us he has done it. Thus we find him making use, regularly, of what one may call "signpost" sentences,¹³¹ and "flash-backs" such as the "Recapitulation" at the end of Part I of *The Age of Reason*.¹³² Such a method of securing method, added to his "damnable iteration" of his master-ideas, made it practically impossible for even the most unliterary reader to miss his meaning, so clear did he make it. Thus we are eventually come full circle, his last ideal of method serving to make possible his first ideal of clear simplicity. Just as the first is ultimately grounded on his deistic faith that "man must go back to nature for information", since "perfection consists in simplicity", so his last ideal, that of order, is also grounded on his deistic faith that the test of the revelation even of God himself is that "harmonious, magnificent order that reigns throughout the visible universe," an order

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, II, 302.

¹²⁸ *Writings*, I.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, I.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, II, 24. Watson (*Apology*, p. 8) taxes *The Age of Reason*, Part II, with "much repetition, and a defect of proper arrangement," a criticism also made by T. Meek, *Sophistry Detected, or, a Refutation of T. Paine's Age of Reason*, Newcastle, *MDCXCXCV*, p. 28.

¹³¹ Such as, "Having done A, we will now turn to B," etc. See especially, for examples, *Writings* II, 520; II, 83-4; III, 331; IV, 62; I, 290; I, 329.

¹³² *Ibid.*, IV, 83-84.

which is "the standard to which everything must be brought."¹³³ Like his theories political, economic, humanitarian, and educational, his theories of rhetoric ultimately stem from and are fully explainable only in the light of Newtonian science and deism. *The pivot round which his thought revolved was scientific deism.* As I have suggested, in espousing orderly method in writing Paine was in full accord with his contemporaries; witness his idol, Franklin, giving typically prosaic and practical suggestions whereby his friend Benjamin Vaughan could overcome his want of "perspicuity" which Franklin traced "principally to a neglect of method".¹³⁴ If there are splendours and glooms of the human soul which the eighteenth century seldom cared to explore, if in general, as compared with the Age of Wordsworth, the Age of Pope is inferior in moral and imaginative sublimity, it is well to remember that the latter is pre-eminent in its regard for form and for exquisiteness of literary order. Deism, with its belief in God, man, and nature as sharply distinct, its belief in what Paine called divinely "unerring order", is paralleled in literature and art and landscape gardening by order;¹³⁵ whereas pantheism, with its belief in unity, or the fusion of God, man, and nature, is paralleled in these same fields, by comparative disorder. "Order," said Pope, "is Heav'n's first law." The apotheosis of order, and this is the point I would stress, whether or not a result of deism, was characteristic of Paine's age. Loving "unerring order" and

¹³³ *Writings*, IV, 339-40.

¹³⁴ "What I would therefore recommend to you is, that, before you sit down to write on any subject, you would spend some days in considering it, putting down at the same time, in short hints, every thought which occurs to you as proper to make a part of your intended piece. When you have thus obtained a collection of the thoughts, examine them carefully with this view, to find which of them is properest to be presented *first* to the mind of the reader that he, being possessed of that, may the more easily understand it, and be better disposed to receive what you intend for the second; and thus I would have you put a figure before each thought, to mark its future place in your composition. For so, every preceding proposition preparing the mind for that which is to follow, and the reader often anticipating it, he proceeds with ease, and pleasure, and approbation, as seemingly continually to meet with his own thoughts. In this mode you have a better chance for a perfect production; because the mind attending first to the sentiments alone, next to the method alone, each part is likely to be better performed, and I think too in less time." Quoted by W. C. Bruce, *Franklin Self-Revealed*, II, 441. It is interesting to observe that Franklin, who read "Shaftesbury and Collins", was the friend of Henry Pemberton, author of *A View of Sir Isaac Newton's Philosophy*, (London, 1729), and who confessed that he "became a thorough deist", placed high among his cardinal virtues the virtue of order.

¹³⁵ See Myra Reynolds, *The Treatment of Nature in English Poetry*, Chicago, 1919, p. 327 ff.

finding it sublimely present in the "eternal harmony" of the stars, symbols of light and law, Paine said that "my belief in the perfection of the Deity will not permit me to believe that a book [the Bible] so manifestly obscure, disorderly, and contradictory can be his work",¹³⁶ but Thomas Burnet in 1759 deplored the "disorder", even of the stars, because they did not conform to the neo-classic demand for a symmetrical pattern:

"They lie carelessly scattered as if they had been sown in the heaven like seed, by handfuls, and not by a skilful hand neither. What a beautiful hemisphere they would have made if they had been placed in rank and order; if they had all been disposed into regular figures, and the little ones set with due regard to the greater, and then all finished and made up into one fair piece or great composition according to the rules of art and symmetry!"¹³⁷

Could a passion for order go beyond this?

If Paine suffered many disappointments, was the object of much public and private malice, and was ultimately disillusioned with the French Revolution, and obliged to "despair of seeing the great object of European liberty accomplished,"¹³⁸ Jefferson, his great idol, the father of democracy, recognized the precious services of his pen:

"No writer", Jefferson wrote, "has exceeded Paine in ease and familiarity of style, in perspicuity of expression, happiness in elucidation, and in simple and unassuming language. In this he may be compared with Dr. Franklin; and indeed his *Common Sense* was, for a while, believed to have been written by Dr. Franklin."¹³⁹

And as he wrote Paine himself, "You must not be too much elated and set up when I tell you my belief that you are the only writer in America who can write better than your obliged and obedient servant—Thomas Jefferson."¹⁴⁰

"I am in hopes," he wrote Paine in 1801, "you will find us returned generally to sentiments worthy of former times. In these it will be your glory to have steadily laboured and with as much effect as any man living."¹⁴¹

¹³⁶ *Writings*, IV, 222 and 216.

¹³⁷ Thomas Burnet, *The Sacred Theory of the Earth*, London, 1759. See the chapter entitled "Stars".

¹³⁸ *Writings*, III, 135.

¹³⁹ Jefferson's *Works*, ed. Ford, X, 183.

¹⁴⁰ Quoted in D. E. Wheller's *Life and Writings of Thomas Paine*, I, 327.

¹⁴¹ Jefferson's *Works*, VIII, 19, and proudly quoted by Paine himself, *Writings*, III, 428.

And in the attainment of this superlative "glory", Paine was guided by literary theories which, if by no means ideal, at least bore the test of practice. For he commanded the attention of half a million readers, vigorously stirring them to contemplate the political, religious, and social doctrines which helped to call into being the American and French Revolutions as well as many humanitarian movements of later days, doctrines forcefully and clearly presented in a style which served as a trusty tool and was occasionally not without elements of beauty.

