THE LONG REVOLUTION

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science, religion, family life and the other categories we speak of as absolutes, belong in a whole world of active and interacting relationships, which is our common associative life. If we begin from the whole texture, we can go on to study particular activities, and their bearings on other kinds. Yet we begin, normally, from the categories themselves, and this has led again and again to a very damaging suppression of relationships. Each kind of activity in fact suffers, if it is wholly abstracted and separated. Politics, for example, has gravely suffered by its separation from ordinary relationships, and we have seen the same process in economics, science, religion, and education. The abstraction of art has been its promotion or relegation to an area of special experience (emotion, beauty, phantasy, the imagination, the unconscious), which art in practice has never confined itself to, ranging in fact from the most ordinary daily activities to exceptional crises and intensities, and using a range of means from the words of the street and common popular stories to strange systems and images which it has yet been able to make common property. It has been the purpose of this review of creative activity to allow us to acknowledge this, which is the real history of art and yet which we are kept from by definitions and formulas that were stages in its interpretation but that we must now move beyond. A further consequence of this sense of creative activity is that we are helped, by what it shows of communication and community, to review the nature of our whole common life: the terms of this review are the terms of the definition of culture. When we have grasped the fundamental relation between meanings arrived at by creative interpretation and description, and meanings embodied by conventions and institutions, we are in a position to reconcile the meanings of culture as 'creative activity' and 'a whole way of life', and this reconciliation is then a real extension of our powers to understand ourselves and our societies.

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THE ANALYSIS OF CULTURE

I

THERE are three general categories in the definition of culture. There is, first, the 'ideal', in which culture is a state or process of human perfection, in terms of certain absolute or universal values. The analysis of culture, if such a definition is accepted, is essentially the discovery and description, in lives and works, of those values which can be seen to compose a timeless order, or to have permanent reference to the universal human condition. Then, second, there is the 'documentary', in which culture is the body of intellectual and imaginative work, in which, in a detailed way, human thought and experience are variously recorded. The analysis of culture, from such a definition, is the activity of criticism, by which the nature of the thought and experience, the details of the language, form and convention in which these are active, are described and valued. Such criticism can range from a process very similar to the 'ideal' analysis, the discovery of 'the best that has been thought and written in the world', through a process which, while interested in tradition, takes as its primary emphasis the particular work being studied (its clarification and valuation being the principal end in view) to a kind of historical criticism which, after analysis of particular works, seeks to relate them to the particular traditions and societies in which they appeared. Finally, third, there is the 'social' definition of culture, in which culture is a description of a particular way of life, which expresses certain meanings and values not only in art and learning but also in institutions and ordinary behaviour. The analysis of culture, from such a definition, is the clarification of the meanings and values implicit and explicit in a particular way of life, a particular culture. Such analysis will include the historical criticism already referred to, in

which intellectual and imaginative works are analysed in relation to particular traditions and societies, but will also include analysis of elements in the way of life that to followers of the other definitions are not 'culture' at all: the organization of production, the structure of the family, the structure of institutions which express or govern social relationships, the characteristic forms through which members of the society communicate. Again, such analysis ranges from an 'ideal' emphasis, the discovery of certain absolute or universal, or at least higher and lower, meanings and values, through the 'documentary' emphasis, in which clarification of a particular way of life is the main end in view, to an emphasis which, from studying particular meanings and values, seeks not so much to compare these, as a way of establishing a scale, but by studying their modes of change to discover certain general 'laws' or 'trends', by which social and cultural development as a whole can be better understood.'

It seems to me that there is value in each of these kinds of definition. For it certainly seems necessary to look for meanings and values, the record of creative human activity, not only in art and intellectual work, but also in institutions and forms of behaviour. At the same time, the degree to which we depend, in our knowledge of many past societies and past stages of our own, on the body of intellectual and imaginative work which has retained its major communicative power, makes the description of culture in these terms, if not complete, at least reasonable. It can indeed be argued that since we have 'society' for the broader description, we can properly restrict 'culture' to this more limited reference. Yet there are elements in the 'ideal' definition which also seem to me valuable, and which encourage the retention of the broad reference. I find it very difficult, after the many comparative studies now on record, to identify the process of human perfection with the discovery of 'absolute' values, as these have been ordinarily defined. I accept the criticism that these are normally an extension of the values of a particular tradition or society. Yet, if we call the process, not

human perfection, which implies a known ideal towards which we can move, but human evolution, to mean a process of general growth of man as a kind, we are able to recognize areas of fact which the other definitions might exclude. For it seems to me to be true that meanings and values, discovered in particular societies and by particular individuals, and kept alive by social inheritance and by embodiment in particular kinds of work, have proved to be universal in the sense that when they are learned, in any particular situation, they can contribute radically to the growth of man's powers to enrich his life, to regulate his society, and to control his environment. We are most aware of these elements in the form of particular techniques, in medicine, production, and communications, but it is clear not only that these depend on more purely intellectual disciplines, which had to be wrought out in the creative handling of experience, but also that these disciplines in themselves, together with certain basic ethical assumptions and certain major art forms, have proved similarly capable of being gathered into a general tradition which seems to represent, through many variations and conflicts, a line of common growth. It seems reasonable to speak of this tradition as a general human culture, while adding that it can only become active within particular societies, being shaped, as it does so, by more local and temporary systems.

The variations of meaning and reference, in the use of culture as a term, must be seen, I am arguing, not simply as a disadvantage, which prevents any kind of neat and exclusive definition, but as a genuine complexity, corresponding to real elements in experience. There is a significant reference in each of the three main kinds of definition, and, if this is so, it is the relations between them that should claim our attention. It seems to me that any adequate theory of culture must include the three areas of fact to which the definitions point, and conversely that any particular definition, within any of the categories, which would exclude reference to the others, is inadequate. Thus an 'ideal' definition which attempts to abstract the process it describes from its detailed

embodiment and shaping by particular societies – regarding man's ideal development as something separate from and even opposed to his 'animal nature' or the satisfaction of material needs – seems to me unacceptable. A 'documentary' definition which sees value only in the written and painted records, and marks this area off from the rest of man's life in society, is equally unacceptable. Again, a 'social' definition, which treats either the general process or the body of art and learning as a mere by-product, a passive reflection of the real interests of the society, seems to me equally wrong. However difficult it may be in practice, we have to try to see the process as a whole, and to relate our particular studies, if not explicitly at least by ultimate reference, to the actual and complex organization.

We can take one example, from analytic method, to illustrate this. If we take a particular work of art, say the *Antigone* of Sophocles, we can analyse it in ideal terms – the discovery of certain absolute values, or in documentary terms – the communication of certain values by certain artistic means. Much will be gained from either analysis, for the first will point to the absolute value of reverence for the dead; the second will point to the expression of certain basic human tensions through the particular dramatic form of chorus and double *kommos*, and the specific intensity of the verse. Yet it is clear that neither analysis is complete. The reverence, as an absolute value, is limited in the play by the terms of a particular kinship system and its conventional obligations – Antigone would do this for a brother but not for a husband. Similarly, the dramatic form, the metres of the verse, not only have an artistic tradition behind them, the work of many men, but can be seen to have been shaped, not only by the demands of the experience, but by the particular social forms through which the dramatic tradition developed. We can accept such extensions of our original analysis, but we cannot go on to accept that, because of the extensions, the value of reverence, or the dramatic form and the specific verse, have meaning only in the contexts to which we have assigned them. The learning of reverence, through such

intense examples, passes beyond its context into the general growth of human consciousness. The dramatic form passes beyond its context, and becomes an element in a major and general dramatic tradition, in quite different societies. The play itself, a specific communication, survives the society and the religion which helped to shape it, and can be re-created to speak directly to unimagined audiences. Thus, while we could not abstract the ideal value or the specific document, neither could we reduce these to explanation within the local terms of a particular culture. If we study real relations, in any actual analysis, we reach the point where we see that we are studying a general organization in a particular example, and in this general organization there is no element that we can abstract and separate from the rest. It was certainly an error to suppose that values or art-works could be adequately studied without reference to the particular society within which they were expressed, but it is equally an error to suppose that the social explanation is determining, or that the values and works are mere by-products. We have got into the habit, since we realized how deeply works or values could be determined by the whole situation in which they are expressed, of asking about these relationships in a standard form: 'what is the relation of this art to this society?' But 'society', in this question, is a specious whole. If the art is part of the society, there is no solid whole, outside it, to which, by the form of our question, we concede priority. The art is there, as an activity, with the production, the trading, the politics, the raising of families. To study the relations adequately we must study them actively, seeing all the activities as particular and contemporary forms of human energy. If we take any one of these activities, we can see how many of the others are reflected in it, in various ways according to the nature of the whole organization. It seems likely, also, that the very fact that we can distinguish any particular activity, as serving certain specific ends, suggests that without this activity the whole of the human organization at that place and time could not have been realized. Thus art, while clearly related to the other activities, can be seen as expressing

certain elements in the organization which, within that organization's terms, could only have been expressed in this way. It is then not a question of relating the art to the society, but of studying all the activities and their interrelations, without any concession of priority to any one of them we may choose to abstract. If we find, as often, that a particular activity came radically to change the whole organization, we can still not say that it is to this activity that all the others must be related; we can only study the varying ways in which, within the changing organization, the particular activities and their interrelations were affected. Further, since the particular activities will be serving varying and sometimes conflicting ends, the sort of change we must look for will rarely be of a simple kind: elements of persistence, adjustment, unconscious assimilation, active resistance, alternative effort, will all normally be present, in particular activities and in the whole organization.

The analysis of culture, in the documentary sense, is of great importance because it can yield specific evidence about the whole organization within which it was expressed. We cannot say that we know a particular form or period of society, and that we will see how its art and theory relate to it, for until we know these, we cannot really claim to know the society. This is a problem of method, and is mentioned here because a good deal of history has in fact been written on the assumption that the bases of the society, its political, economic, and 'social' arrangements, form the central core of facts, after which the art and theory can be adduced, for marginal illustration or 'correlation'. There has been a neat reversal of this procedure in the histories of literature, art, science, and philosophy, when these are described as developing by their own laws, and then something called the 'background' (what in general history was the central core) is sketched in. Obviously it is necessary, in exposition, to select certain activities for emphasis, and it is entirely reasonable to trace particular lines of development in temporary isolation. But the history of a culture, slowly built up from such particular work, can only be written when the active relations

are restored, and the activities seen in a genuine parity. Cultural history must be more than the sum of the particular histories, for it is with the relations between them, the particular forms of the whole organization, that it is especially concerned. I would then define the theory of culture as the study of relationships between elements in a whole way of life. The analysis of culture is the attempt to discover the nature of the organization which is the complex of these relationships. Analysis of particular works or institutions is, in this context, analysis of their essential kind of organization, the relationships which works or institutions embody as parts of the organization as a whole. A key-word, in such analysis, is pattern: it is with the discovery of patterns of a characteristic kind that any useful cultural analysis begins, and it is with the relationships between these patterns, which sometimes reveal unexpected identities and correspondences in hitherto separately considered activities, sometimes again reveal discontinuities of an unexpected kind, that general cultural analysis is concerned.

It is only in our own time and place that we can expect to know, in any substantial way, the general organization. We can learn a great deal of the life of other places and times, but certain elements, it seems to me, will always be irrecoverable. Even those that can be recovered are recovered in abstraction, and this is of crucial importance. We learn each element as a precipitate, but in the living experience of the time every element was in solution, an inseparable part of a complex whole. The most difficult thing to get hold of, in studying any past period, is this felt sense of the quality of life at a particular place and time: a sense of the ways in which the particular activities combined into a way of thinking and living. We can go some way in restoring the outlines of a particular organization of life; we can even recover what Fromm calls the 'social character' or Benedict the 'pattern of culture'. The social character – a valued system of behaviour and attitudes – is taught formally and informally; it is both an ideal and a mode. The 'pattern of culture' is a selection and configuration of interests and activities, and a

particular valuation of them, producing a distinct organization, a 'way of life'. Yet even these, as we recover them, are usually abstract. Possibly, however, we can gain the sense of a further common element, which is neither the character nor the pattern, but as it were the actual experience through which these were lived. This is potentially of very great importance, and I think the fact is that we are most conscious of such contact in the arts of a period. It can happen that when we have measured these against the external characteristics of the period, and then allowed for individual variations, there is still some important common element that we cannot easily place. I think we can best understand this if we think of any similar analysis of a way of life that we ourselves share. For we find here a particular sense of life, a particular community of experience hardly needing expression, through which the characteristics of our way of life that an external analyst could describe are in some way passed, giving them a particular and characteristic colour. We are usually most aware of this when we notice the contrasts between generations, who never talk quite 'the same language', or when we read an account of our lives by someone from outside the community, or watch the small differences in style, of speech or behaviour, in someone who has learned our ways yet was not bred in them. Almost any formal description would be too crude to express this nevertheless quite distinct sense of a particular and native style. And if this is so, in a way of life we know intimately, it will surely be so when we ourselves are in the position of the visitor, the learner, the guest from a different generation: the position, in fact, that we are all in, when we study any past period. Though it can be turned to trivial account, the fact of such a characteristic is neither trivial nor marginal; it feels quite central.

The term I would suggest to describe it is *structure of feeling*: it is as firm and definite as 'structure' suggests, yet it operates in the most delicate and least tangible parts of our activity. In one sense, this structure of feeling is the culture of a period: it is the particular living result of all the elements in the general organization. And it is in this respect that the arts of

a period, taking these to include characteristic approaches and tones in argument, are of major importance. For here, if anywhere, this characteristic is likely to be expressed; often not consciously, but by the fact that here, in the only examples we have of recorded communication that outlives its bearers, the actual living sense, the deep community that makes the communication possible, is naturally drawn upon. I do not mean that the structure of feeling, any more than the social character, is possessed in the same way by the many individuals in the community. But I think it is a very deep and very wide possession, in all actual communities, precisely because it is on it that communication depends. And what is particularly interesting is that it does not seem to be, in any formal sense, learned. One generation may train its successor, with reasonable success, in the social character or the general cultural pattern, but the new generation will have its own structure of feeling, which will not appear to have come 'from' anywhere. For here, most distinctly, the changing organization is enacted in the organism: the new generation responds in its own ways to the unique world it is inheriting, taking up many continuities, that can be traced, and reproducing many aspects of the organization, which can be separately described, yet feeling its whole life in certain ways differently, and shaping its creative response into a new structure of feeling.

Once the carriers of such a structure die, the nearest we can get to this vital element is in the documentary culture, from poems to buildings and dress-fashions, and it is this relation that gives significance to the definition of culture in documentary terms. This in no way means that the documents are autonomous. It is simply that, as previously argued, the significance of an activity must be sought in terms of the whole organization, which is more than the sum of its separable parts. What we are looking for, always, is the actual life that the whole organization is there to express. The significance of documentary culture is that, more clearly than anything else, it expresses that life to us in direct terms, when the living witnesses are silent. At the same time, if we reflect

on the nature of a structure of feeling, and see how it can fail to be fully understood even by living people in close contact with it, with ample material at their disposal, including the contemporary arts, we shall not suppose that we can ever do more than make an approach, an approximation, using any channels.

We need to distinguish three levels of culture, even in its most general definition. There is the lived culture of a particular time and place, only fully accessible to those living in that time and place. There is the recorded culture, of every kind, from art to the most everyday facts: the culture of a period. There is also, as the factor connecting lived culture and period cultures, the culture of the selective tradition.

When it is no longer being lived, but in a narrower way survives in its records, the culture of a period can be very carefully studied, until we feel that we have reasonably clear ideas of its cultural work, its social character, its general patterns of activity and value, and in part of its structure of feeling. Yet the survival is governed, not by the period itself, but by new periods, which gradually compose a tradition. Even most specialists in a period know only a part of even its records. One can say with confidence, for example, that nobody really knows the nineteenth-century novel; nobody has read, or could have read, all its examples, over the whole range from printed volumes to penny serials. The real specialist may know some hundreds; the ordinary specialist somewhat less; educated readers a decreasing number: though all will have clear ideas on the subject. A selective process, of a quite drastic kind, is at once evident, and this is true of every field of activity. Equally, of course, no nineteenth-century reader would have read all the novels; no individual in the society would have known more than a selection of its facts. But everyone living in the period would have had something which, I have argued, no later individual can wholly recover: that sense of the life within which the novels were written, and which we now approach through our selection. Theoretically, a period is recorded; in practice, this record is

absorbed into a selective tradition; and both are different from the culture as lived.

It is very important to try to understand the operation of a selective tradition. To some extent, the selection begins within the period itself; from the whole body of activities, certain things are selected for value and emphasis. In general this selection will reflect the organization of the period as a whole, though this does not mean that the values and emphases will later be confirmed. We see this clearly enough in the case of past periods, but we never really believe it about our own. We can take an example from the novels of the last decade. Nobody has read all the English novels of the nineteen-fifties; the fastest reader, giving twenty hours a day to this activity alone, could not do it. Yet it is clear, in print and in education, not only that certain general characteristics of the novel in this period have been set down, but also that a reasonably agreed short list has been made, of what seem to be the best and most relevant works. If we take the list as containing perhaps thirty titles (already a very drastic selection indeed) we may suppose that in fifty years the specialist in the novel of the 1950s will know these thirty, and the general reader will know perhaps five or six. Yet we can surely be quite certain that, once the 1950s have passed, another selective process will be begun. As well as reducing the number of works, this new process will also alter, in some cases drastically, the expressed valuations. It is true that when fifty years have passed it is likely that reasonably permanent valuations will have been arrived at, though these may continue to fluctuate. Yet to any of us who had lived this long process through, it would remain true that elements important to us had been neglected. We would say, in a vulnerable elderly way, 'I don't understand why these young people don't read X any more', but also, more firmly, 'No, that isn't really what it was like; it is your version'.* Since any period includes at least three generations, we are always seeing examples of this, and one complicating factor is that none of us stay still, even in our most significant period: many of the adjustments we should not protest against,

many of the omissions, distortions and reinterpretations we should accept or not even notice, because we had been part of the change which brought them about. But then, when living witnesses had gone, a further change would occur. The lived culture would not only have been fined down to selected documents; it would be used, in its reduced form, partly as a contribution (inevitably quite small) to the general line of human growth; partly for historical reconstruction; partly, again, as a way of having done with us, of naming and placing a particular stage of the past. The selective tradition thus creates, at one level, a general human culture; at another level, the historical record of a particular society; at a third level, most difficult to accept and assess, a rejection of considerable areas of what was once a living culture.

Within a given society, selection will be governed by many kinds of special interest, including class interests. Just as the actual social situation will largely govern contemporary selection, so the development of the society, the process of historical change, will largely determine the selective tradition. The traditional culture of a society will always tend to correspond to its *contemporary* system of interests and values, for it is not an absolute body of work but a continual selection and interpretation. In theory, and to a limited extent in practice, those institutions which are formally concerned with keeping the tradition alive (in particular the institutions of education and scholarship) are committed to the tradition as a whole, and not to some selection from it according to contemporary interests. The importance of this commitment is very great, because we see again and again, in the workings of a selective tradition, reversals and re-discoveries, returns to work apparently abandoned as dead, and clearly this is only possible if there are institutions whose business it is to keep large areas of past culture, if not alive, at least available. It is natural and inevitable that the selective tradition should follow the lines of growth of a society, but because such growth is complex and continuous, the relevance of past work, in any future situation, is unforeseeable. There is a natural pressure on academic institutions to follow the lines

of growth of a society, but a wise society, while ensuring this kind of relevance, will encourage the institutions to give sufficient resources to the ordinary work of preservation, and to resist the criticism, which any particular period may make with great confidence, that much of this activity is irrelevant and useless. It is often an obstacle to the growth of a society that so many academic institutions are, to an important extent, self-perpetuating and resistant to change. The changes have to be made, in new institutions if necessary, but if we properly understand the process of the selective tradition, and look at it over a sufficiently long period to get a real sense of historical change and fluctuation, the corresponding value of such perpetuation will be appreciated.

In a society as a whole, and in all its particular activities, the cultural tradition can be seen as a continual selection and re-selection of ancestors. Particular lines will be drawn, often for as long as a century, and then suddenly with some new stage in growth these will be cancelled or weakened, and new lines drawn. In the analysis of contemporary culture, the existing state of the selective tradition is of vital importance, for it is often true that some change in this tradition – establishing new lines with the past, breaking or re-drawing existing lines – is a radical kind of *contemporary* change. We tend to underestimate the extent to which the cultural tradition is not only a selection but also an interpretation. We see most past work through our own experience, without even making the effort to see it in something like its original terms. What analysis can do is not so much to reverse this, returning a work to its period, as to make the interpretation conscious, by showing historical alternatives; to relate the interpretation to the particular contemporary values on which it rests; and, by exploring the real patterns of the work, confront us with the real nature of the choices we are making. We shall find, in some cases, that we are keeping the work alive because it is a genuine contribution to cultural growth. We shall find, in other cases, that we are using the work in a particular way for our own reasons, and it is better to know this than to

surrender to the mysticism of the 'great valuer, Time'. To put on to Time, the abstraction, the responsibility for our own active choices is to suppress a central part of our experience. The more actively all cultural work can be related, either to the whole organization within which it was expressed, or to the contemporary organization within which it is used, the more clearly shall we see its true values. Thus 'documentary' analysis will lead out to 'social' analysis, whether in a lived culture, a past period, or in the selective tradition which is itself a social organization. And the discovery of permanent contributions will lead to the same kind of general analysis, if we accept the process at this level, not as human perfection (a movement towards determined values), but as a part of man's general evolution, to which many individuals and groups contribute. Every element that we analyse will be in this sense active: that it will be seen in certain real relations, at many different levels. In describing these relations, the real cultural process will emerge.

II

Any theoretical account of the analysis of culture must submit to be tested in the course of actual analysis. I propose to take one period, the 1840s in England, and to examine, in the context of its culture, the theoretical methods and concepts I have been discussing.

The first and most striking fact, as we begin to study the 1840s in a direct way, is the degree to which the selective tradition has worked on it. A simple example is in the field of newspapers, for it is customary to think of *The Times* as the characteristic paper of the period, and to draw our ideas of early Victorian journalism from its practice. Certainly *The Times* was the leading daily paper, but the most widely read newspapers in this decade were the Sunday papers, *Dispatch*, *Chronicle*, *Lloyd's Weekly* and *News of the World*. These had what we can now recognize as a distinctly 'Sunday paper' selection of news: *Bell's Penny Dispatch* (1842) is sub-titled *Sporting and Police Gazette, and Newspaper of Romance*, and a characteristic headline is 'Daring Conspiracy and Attempted

Violation', illustrated by a large woodcut and backed by a detailed story. The total circulation of newspapers of this kind, at the end of the decade, was about 275,000, as compared with a total of 60,000 for the daily papers. If we are examining the actual culture of the period, we must begin from this fact, rather than from the isolation of *The Times* which its continuing importance in a tradition of high politics has brought about.

In the case of literature, the working of the selective tradition is similarly obvious. We think of the period as that of Dickens, Thackeray, Charlotte and Emily Brontë, at the upper levels of the novel, and of Elizabeth Gaskell, Kingsley, Disraeli, in a subsidiary range. We know also, as 'period' authors, Lytton, Marryat, Reade. Dickens, of course, was very widely read at the time. *Pickwick*, to take one example, had sold 40,000 copies a number in periodical publication, and later examples climbed to 70,000 and above. Yet if we look at the other most widely read writers of the period, we find the following list, in order of popularity, given by W. H. Smith's bookstalls, opened in 1848: Lytton, Marryat, G. P. R. James, James Grant, Miss Sinclair, Haliburton, Mrs Trollope, Lever, Mrs Gaskell, Jane Austen. The two most popular series of cheap novels, the Parlour and Railway Libraries (1847 and 1849), included as their leading authors G. P. R. James (47 titles), Lytton (19), Mrs Marsh (16), Marryat (15), Ainsworth (14), Mrs Gore (10), Grant (8), Grattan (8), Maxwell (7), Mrs Trollope (7), Emma Robinson (6), Mayne Reid (6), W. Carleton (6), Jane Austen (6), Mrs Grey (6). A list of titles from these authors gives an idea of the range: *Agincourt*, *Last Days of Pompeii*, *Midshipman Easy*, *Tower of London*, *Romance of War*, *Heiress of Bruges*, *Stories from Waterloo*, *Refugee in America*, *Scalp Hunters*, *Rody the Rover*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *The Little Wife*. In 1851 *The Times* commented:

> Every addition to the stock was positively made on the assumption that persons of the better class who constitute the larger portion of railway readers lose their accustomed taste the moment they enter the station.

However this may be, it is clear that the fiction mentioned was not merely the reading of the degraded poor, but that, at least for railway journeys, this was the taste of 'persons of the better class'. If we take the whole range of readers, we must include an author not yet mentioned, G. W. M. Reynolds, of whom *The Bookseller* at his death said that he was 'the most popular writer of our time', having previously said that he had written more and sold in far greater numbers than Dickens. Reynolds was at his height in the new popular periodicals of the 1840s, the *London Journal* and his own *Reynolds' Miscellany*, in which appeared such typical works as *Mysteries of the Inquisition* and *Mysteries of the Court of London*. We must add to this list of the reading of the period what has been described as a 'huge trade' in pornographic books, illegally produced and distributed from the 'filthy cellars of Holywell Street'. We must also add the works of Carlyle, Ruskin, Macaulay, Mill, Thomas Arnold, Pugin, and of Tennyson, Browning, Clough, Matthew Arnold and Rossetti, as selections from a great body of philosophical, historical, religious and poetic writing. The operation of the selective tradition, to compose what we now think of as the characteristic work of the period, hardly needs stressing.

Already, from looking at the documents, we are necessarily led out to the social history of the period. We come to see certain crucial changes in cultural institutions: the effective establishment of a popular Sunday press as the most successful element in journalism; the growth of new kinds of periodical, combining sensational and romantic fiction with recipes, household hints, and advice to correspondents, as opposed to the more sober 'popular education' journals of the previous decade (the *Penny Magazine* ceased publication in 1845, the year in which the new-type *London Journal* began); the coming of cheap fiction, at one level with the 'penny dreadful', from 1841, at another with half-crown and shilling Parlour and Railway Libraries; important changes in the theatre, with the ending of the monopoly of the Patent Theatres in 1843, the development of minor theatres and,

from 1849, the rise of the music-halls. Moreover, these changes at the institutional level, in distribution, relate to a variety of causes that take us far out into the whole history of the period. Thus, technical changes (in newspapers, developed steam-printing and rotary presses; in books, ink-blocking on cloth) provided part of the basis of the printed expansion. The railway boom led to new reading needs and, more centrally, to new points of distribution. Yet the kind of people who made use of these technical opportunities must equally attract our attention. There is an important increase, in this decade, in the entry of pure speculators into these profitable businesses: Lloyd and Bell, in newspapers and periodicals, combining (as did Reynolds more seriously) a generalized radicalism with a sharp commercial instinct; or, in the theatre, the essential beginning of the ownership of theatres by men not directly concerned with the drama, but finding commercial opportunity in building and letting to actor-managers and companies, a method that has had a profound effect on English theatrical development. Again, a large part of the impetus to cheap periodical publishing was the desire to control the development of working-class opinion, and in this the observable shift from popular educational journals to family magazines (the latter the immediate ancestors of the women's magazines of our own time) is significant. Respectable schemes of moral and domestic improvement became deeply entangled with the teaching and implication of particular social values, in the interests of the existing class society. These changes, in a wide field, are necessary parts of the real cultural process that we must examine.

As we move into this wider field, we see, of course, that the selective tradition operates here as in the documents. The institutional developments just noted, representing a critical phase in the commercial organization of popular culture, interest us primarily because they relate to a subsequent major trend. So also do developments of a different kind, in the same field; the beginnings of public museums (a limited Bill in 1845), public libraries (limited provisions in 1850),

and public parks (allowed from the rates in 1847). The fierce controversy surrounding these innovations (from the charges of extravagance to the anxious pleas that the working people must be 'civilized') tends to drop away, in our minds, according to subsequent interpretations. The complexity we have to grasp, in the field of cultural institutions, is that this decade brought crucial developments in the commercial exploitation of culture, in its valuable popular expansion, and in enlightened public provision. This is the reality that various strands of the selective tradition tend to reduce, seeking always a single line of development.

This is true also of the general political and social history of the period. As I see it, it is dominated by seven features. There is the crucial Free Trade victory in the Repeal of the Corn Laws, in 1846. There is the virtual re-creation of a new-style Tory Party, under Disraeli, with some influence from the ideas of Young England. There is the Chartist movement, among other things a major stage in the development of working-class political consciousness. There is the factory legislation, culminating in the Ten Hours Bill of 1847. There is the complicated story of the punitive Poor Law and the attempts to amend its operation in 1844 and 1847, and, linked with this by Chadwick, the fight for the Public Health Act of 1848. There is the important re-involvement of the churches, in different ways, in social conflict. There is the major expansion in heavy industries and in capital investment, notably in the railways. Other factors might easily be added, but already from these we can observe two points in analysis. First, that these 'factors' compose a single story, though one of great complexity and conflict: several of them are obviously linked, and none of them, in the real life of the period, can be considered in isolation. Second, that each is subject to highly selective interpretation, according to subsequent directions and commitments. The case of Chartism is the most obvious example. Few would now regard it as dangerous and wicked, as it was widely regarded at the time: too many of its principles have been subsequently built into the 'British way of life' for it to be easy openly to agree

with Macaulay, for example, that universal suffrage is 'incompatible with the very existence of civilization'. Yet other selective images of the movement remain powerful: that, like the General Strike of 1926, it was a tragic example of 'the wrong way to get change', the right way being the actually succeeding phase; or, again, that it was muddled and even ridiculous, with its oddly mixed supporters and its monster petitions which were simply disregarded. But the fact is that we have no adequate history of Chartism; we have substitutes for such a history, on one or other of the partial versions thrown up by the selective tradition. We see from this, also, the importance of our theoretical observation on one aspect of the working of the selective tradition: that it is not only affected, even governed, by subsequent main lines of growth, but also changes, as it were retrospectively, in terms of subsequent change. The attention now given to the growth of working-class movements in the nineteenth century would have seemed absurd in 1880, and is governed, now, less by the material itself than by the knowledge of the fruition of these movements, or commitment to them. The stress on economic history has a similar basis of retrospective change.

In the case of literature, the working of the selective tradition needs separate examination. To a considerable extent it is true that the work we now know from the 1840s is the best work of the period: that repeated reading, in a variety of situations, has sifted the good from the less good and bad. Yet there are other factors. Mrs Gaskell and probably Disraeli survive by this criterion, but in both their cases there are other affecting elements: in Mrs Gaskell the documentary interest that is useful to a social history preoccupied by this period; in Disraeli, the fact of his subsequent fame in politics. Kingsley's novels, in my view, would not have survived on literary merit at all, but again they have some documentary interest, and his contribution to intellectual history, in Christian Socialism, has been thought important. Thackeray, Dickens, and Charlotte Brontë survive on strict literary merit, but we see that their best works have carried inferior works that in other authors would have vanished. Emily Brontë

would now be said by many critics to be the finest novelist of the decade, but *Wuthering Heights*, for a long time, was carried by the fame of Charlotte, and its major importance, now, is related to changes in twentieth-century literature, moving towards the theme and language of *Wuthering Heights* and away from the main fictional tradition of the decade in which it was written. In verse, we read Tennyson and Browning for their intrinsic interest, though their reputations have violently fluctuated, but I do not think we should read many of Matthew Arnold's 1849 poems if he had not subsequently acquired a reputation of a different kind. We read Carlyle, Ruskin, and Mill because, in spite of obvious faults, they are major writers and additionally belong to living intellectual traditions. But, where we read Thomas Arnold, it is because of his educational importance; where we read Pugin, we have had to remake his significance, with our own emphasis on the relations between art and society; where we read Macaulay, we read perhaps with less interest, not because his ability seems less, but because his way of thinking seems increasingly irrelevant. Thus the selective tradition, which we can be certain will continue to change, is in part the emphasis of works of general value, in part the use of past work in terms of our own growth. The selective tradition which relates to this period is different from the period itself, just as the period culture, consciously studied, is necessarily different from the culture as lived.

The work of conscious reconstruction, and of the selective tradition, tends to specialization of different classes of activity, and we must look now at the area of relations between these, to see if our theoretical description of such relations is valid. We have already seen one important class of relationships, in the field of cultural institutions. Such factors in the society as the class situation (particularly the range of middle-class attitudes to the dissident working class), the technical expansion which followed from the growth of an industrial economy, and the kinds of ownership and distribution natural to such an economy, can be seen to have affected such institutions as the press, book publishing, and the

theatre, and the form of these institutions, with the purposes they expressed, had observable effects on some cultural work: new styles in journalism, changes in the novel because of serial publication, some adaptation of material in terms of the new publics being reached. With this kind of interrelation we are reasonably familiar, but it is not the only kind.

A second kind, in which, knowing the society, we look for its direct reflection in cultural work, is, in this period, quite clear. Of the seven general features listed, from the political and social history of the 1840s, all are extensively reflected in contemporary literature, particularly in the novel. If we read only *Mary Barton*, *Sybil*, *Coningsby*, *Dombey and Son*, *Yeast*, *Alton Locke*, *Past and Present*, we move directly into the world of Chartism, factory legislation, the Poor Law, the railways, the involvement of the churches (the decade produced several novels of the crisis of religious belief and affiliation), and the politics of Free Trade and Young England. The interrelation is important, but again it is not the only kind, and indeed, if we limit relationships to this direct description and discussion, we shall find it difficult to estimate even these.

The further area of relations, that we must now examine, is that described and interpreted by such concepts as the social character and the structure of feeling. The dominant social character of the period can be briefly outlined. There is the belief in the value of work, and this is seen in relation to individual effort, with a strong attachment to success gained in these terms. A class society is assumed, but social position is increasingly defined by actual status rather than by birth. The poor are seen as the victims of their own failings, and it is strongly held that the best among them will climb out of their class. A punitive Poor Law is necessary in order to stimulate effort; if a man could fall back on relief, without grave hardship in the form of separation from his family, minimum sustenance, and such work as stone-breaking or oakum-picking, he would not make the necessary effort to provide for himself. In this and a wider field, suffering is in one sense ennobling, in that it teaches humility and courage, and leads

to the hard dedication to duty. Thrift, sobriety, and piety are the principal virtues, and the family is their central institution. The sanctity of marriage is absolute, and adultery and fornication are unpardonable. Duty includes helping the weak provided that the help is not of such a kind as to confirm the weakness: condoning sexual error, and comforting the poor, are weaknesses by this definition. Training to the prevailing virtues must be necessarily severe, but there is an obligation to see that the institutions for such training are strengthened.

This can be fairly called the dominant social character of the period, if we look at its characteristic legislation, the terms in which this was argued, the majority content of public writing and speaking, and the characters of the men most admired. Yet, of course, as a social character, it varied considerably in success of transmission, and was subject to many personal variations. The more serious difficulty arises as we look more closely at the period and realize that alternative social characters were in fact active, and that these affected, in important ways, the whole life of the time. A social character is the abstract of a dominant group, and there can be no doubt that the character described – a developed form of the morality of the industrial and commercial middle class – was at this time the most powerful. At the same time, there were other social characters with substantial bases in the society. The aristocratic character was visibly weakening, but its variations – that birth mattered more than money; that work was not the sole social value and that civilization involved play; that sobriety and chastity, at least in young men, were not cardinal virtues but might even be a sign of meanness or dullness – are still alive in the period, all in practice, some in theory. In attitudes to the poor, this character is ambiguous: it includes a stress on charity, as part of one's station, very different from punitive rehabilitation, but also a brutality, a willingness to cut down troublemakers, a natural habit of repression, which again differ from the middle-class attitude. The 1840s are very interesting in this respect, for they show the interaction of different social

characters: Tory charity against Whig rehabilitation; brutality and repression against positive civilization through institution. Some of the best criticism of the Whig Poor Law came from Tories with a conscious aristocratic ideal, as most notably in Young England. Brutality and repression are ready, in crisis, but as compared with the twenties and thirties, are being steadily abandoned in favour of positive legislation. Play may be frowned on by the social character, but the decade shows a large increase in light entertainment, from cheap novels to the music-halls. Not only is the dominant social character different, in many ways, from the life lived in its shadow, but alternative social characters lead to the real conflicts of the time. This is a central difficulty of the social character concept, for in stressing a dominant abstraction it seriously underestimates the historical process of change and conflict, which are found even when, as in the 1840s, such a social character is very strong. For we must add another alternative, of major importance: the developing social character of the working class, different in important respects from its competitors. As the victims of repression and punitive rehabilitation, of the gospel of success and the pride of birth, of the real nature of work and the exposure to suffering, working-class people were beginning to formulate alternative ideals. They had important allies from the interaction of the other systems, and could be a major force either in the Corn Laws repeal or in the Factory legislation, when these were sponsored by different sections of the ruling class. But the 1840s show an important development of independent aims, though these are to be realized, mainly, through alliance with other groups. Thus Chartism is an ideal beyond the terms of any dominant group in the society, and is more than an expression of democratic aspirations; is also an assertion of an individual dignity transcending class. The Ten Hours Bill, in working-class minds, was more than a good piece of paternal legislation on work: it was also the claim to leisure, and hence again to a wider life. At the same time, in their own developing organizations, the most radical criticism of all was being made: the refusal of

a society based either on birth or on individual success, the conception of a society based on mutual aid and co-operation.

We can then distinguish three social characters operative in the period, and it is with the study of relations between them that we enter the reality of the whole life. All contribute to the growth of the society: the aristocratic ideals tempering the harshness of middle-class ideals at their worst; working-class ideals entering into a fruitful and decisive combination with middle-class ideals at their best. The middle-class social character remains dominant, and both aristocrats and working people, in many respects, come to terms with it. But equally, the middle-class social character as it entered the forties is in many respects modified as the forties end. The values of work and self-help, of social position by status rather than birth, of the sanctity of marriage and the emphasis on thrift, sobriety and charity, are still dominant. But punitive rehabilitation, and the attitudes to weakness and suffering on which it rests, have been, while not rejected, joined by a major ideal of public service, in which the effort towards civilization is actively promoted by a genuine altruism and the making of positive institutions.

This is one level of change, and such analysis is necessary if we are to explore the reality of the social character. In some respects, the structure of feeling corresponds to the dominant social character, but it is also an expression of the interaction described. Again, however, the structure of feeling is not uniform throughout the society; it is primarily evident in the dominant productive group. At this level, however, it is different from any of the distinguishable social characters, for it has to deal not only with the public ideals but with their omissions and consequences, as lived. If we look at the fiction of the forties, we shall see this clearly.

The popular fiction of the periodicals, so carefully studied by Dalziel, is very interesting in this context. At first sight we find what we expect: the unshakeable assumptions of a class society, but with the stress on wealth rather than birth (aristocrats, indeed, being often personally vicious); the conviction that the poor are so by their own faults – their stupidity and depravity stressed, their mutual help ignored; the absolute sanctity of marriage, the manipulation of plot to bring sexual offenders to actual suffering; the fight against weakness, however terrible, as one of the main creators of humble virtue. All this, often consciously didactic, is the direct expression of the dominant social character, and the assumptions tend to be shared by the pious 'improving' fiction (cf. Mrs Tonna's *Helen Fleetwood*) and by the sensational fiction which the improvers condemned. But then we are reminded of the extent to which popular fiction retains older systems of value, often through stereotyped conventions of character. The 'fashionable novel' of high life only became unfashionable late in the decade. The typical hero is sometimes the successful exponent of self-help, but often he is an older type, the cultivated gentleman, the soldier governed by a code of honour, even the man who finds pleasure a blessing and work a curse. To the earlier hero, loss of income and the need to work were misfortunes to be endured; to have a safe fortune was undoubtedly best. The new attitude to work came in only slowly, for understandable reasons. (Ordinary middle-class life was still thought too plain and dull for a really interesting novel.) Further, heroes of either kind are capable of strong overt emotion; they can burst into public tears, or even swoon, as strong men used to do but were soon to do no more. Heroines have more continuity: they are weak, dependent, and shown as glad to be so, and of course they are beautiful and chaste. One interesting factor, obviously related to a continuing general attitude in the period, is that schools, almost without exception, are shown as terrible: not only are they places of temptation and wickedness, mean, cruel and educationally ridiculous, but also they are inferior to the home and family, as a way of bringing up children. This is perhaps the last period in which a majority of English public opinion believed that home education was the ideal. From the sixteenth century, this belief had been gaining ground, and its complete reversal, with the new public-school ethos after Arnold, is of considerable general

importance. But the new attitude does not appear in fiction until *Tom Brown's Schooldays* in 1857.

In the popular fiction of the forties, then, we find many marks of older ways of feeling, as well as faithful reproduction of certain standard feelings of the approved social character. We find also, in an interesting way, the interaction between these and actual experience. The crucial point, in this period, is in the field of success and money. The confident assertions of the social character, that success followed effort, and that wealth was the mark of respect, had to contend, if only unconsciously, with a practical world in which things were not so simple. The confidence of this fiction is often only superficial. What comes through with great force is a pervasive atmosphere of instability and debt. A normal element, in these stories, is the loss of fortune, and this is hardly ever presented in terms consistent with the social character: that success or failure correspond to personal quality. Debt and ruin haunt this apparently confident world, and in a majority of cases simply happen to the characters, as a result of a process outside them. At one level, the assumptions of the social character are maintained: if you lose your fortune, you get out of the way – you cannot embarrass yourself or your friends by staying. But this ruthless code is ordinarily confined to subsidiary characters: the parents of hero or heroine. For the people who matter, some other expedient is necessary. It is found, over the whole range of fiction, by two devices: the unexpected legacy, and the Empire. These devices are extremely interesting, both at the level of magic and at the level of developing attitudes necessary to the society.

Magic is indeed necessary, to postpone the conflict between the ethic and the experience. It is widely used in sexual situations, where hero or heroine is tied to an unloved wife or husband, while the true lover waits in the wings. Solutions involving infidelity or breaking the marriage are normally unthinkable, and so a formula is evolved, for standard use: the unsuitable partner is not merely unloved, but alcoholic or insane; at a given point, and after the required amount of

resigned suffering, there is a convenient, often spectacular death, in which the unloving partner shows great qualities of care, duty, and piety; and then, of course, the real love can be consummated. In money, the process is similar: legacies, at the crucial moment, turn up from almost anywhere, and fortunes are restored. Nobody has to go against the principle that money is central to success, but equally very few have to be bound by the ethic preached to the poor: that the deserving prosper by effort. This element of cheating marks one crucial point of difference between the social character and the actual structure of feeling.

The use of the Empire is similar but more complex. Of course there were actual legacies, and these eventually changed the self-help ethic, in its simplest form: the magic, at this stage, lay in their timing. But the Empire was a more universally available escape-route: black sheep could be lost in it; ruined or misunderstood heroes could go out and return with fortunes; the weak of every kind could be transferred to it, to make a new life. Often indeed, the Empire is the source of the unexpected legacy, and the two devices are joined. It is clear that the use of the Empire relates to real factors in the society. At a simple level, going out to the new lands could be seen as self-help and enterprise of the purest kinds. Also, in the new lands, there was a great need for labourers, and emigration as a solution to working-class problems was being widely urged, often by the most humane critics of the existing system. In 1840, 90,000 people a year were emigrating, and in 1850 three times as many. In a different way, in terms of capital and trade, the Empire had been one of the levers of industrialization, and was to prove one major way of keeping the capitalist system viable. These factors are reflected in fiction, though not to the same extent as later in the century, when Imperialism had become a conscious policy. Meanwhile, alongside this reflection of real factors, there was the use as magic: characters whose destinies could not be worked out within the system as given were simply put on the boat, a simpler way of resolving the conflict between ethic and experience than any radical questioning

of the ethic. This method had the additional advantage that it was consonant with another main element of the structure of feeling: that there could be no general solution to the social problems of the time; there could be only individual solutions, the rescue by legacy or emigration, the resolution by some timely change of heart.

Now the fascinating thing about the structure of feeling as described is that it is present in almost all the novels we now read as literature, as well as in the now disregarded popular fiction. This is true of the reflections and of the magic. Disraeli seems daring in dramatizing the two-nation problem in the love of an aristocrat and a Chartist girl, but Sybil, following the pattern of almost all poor heroines in such situations in the periodicals, is discovered in the end to be 'really' a dispossessed aristocrat. (The uniting of the two nations is in fact, in Disraeli, the combination of agricultural and industrial property, a very sanguine political forecast, and the same pattern is followed in *Coningsby*, where the young aristocrat marries the Lancashire manufacturer's daughter, and is elected for an industrial constituency.) Mrs Gaskell, though refusing the popular fiction that the poor suffered by their own faults, succeeds in *Mary Barton* in compromising working-class organization with murder, and steers all her loved characters to Canada. Kingsley, in *Alton Locke*, sends his Chartist hero to America. And these are the humane critics, in many ways dissenting from the social character, but remaining bound by the structure of feeling.

The same correspondence is evident in novels less concerned with the problems of the society. The novels of Charlotte and Anne Brontë are, in terms of plot and structure of feeling, virtually identical with many stories in the periodicals: the governess-heroine, the insane wife or alcoholic husband, the resolution through resignation, duty, and magic. Dickens, similarly, uses the situations, the feelings, and the magic of periodical fiction again and again.

This connexion between the popular structure of feeling and that used in the literature of the time is of major importance in the analysis of culture. It is here, at a level even more important than that of institutions, that the real relations within the whole culture are made clear: relations that can easily be neglected when only the best writing survives, or when this is studied outside its social context. Yet the connexion must be carefully defined. Often it is simply that in the good novel the ordinary situations and feelings are worked through to their maximum intensity. In other cases, though the framework is retained, one element of the experience floods through the work, in such a way as to make it relevant in its own right, outside the conventional terms. This is true of Elizabeth Gaskell, in the early parts of *Mary Barton*; of Charlotte Brontë, taking lonely personal desire to an intensity that really questions the conventions by which it is opposed; of Dickens, certainly, in that the conventional figure of the orphan, or the child exposed by loss of fortune, comes to transcend the system to which he refers, and to embody many of the deepest feelings in the real experience of the time. These are the creative elements, though the connexion with the ordinary structure of feeling is still clear. The orphan, the exposed child, the lonely governess, the girl from a poor family: these are the figures which express the deepest response to the reality of the way of life. In the ordinary fiction, they were conventional figures; in the literature they emerge carrying an irresistible authenticity, not merely as exemplars of the accidents of the social system, but as expressions of a *general* judgement of the human quality of the whole way of life. Here, in the 1840s, is the first body of fiction (apart from occasional earlier examples, in Godwin and perhaps Richardson) expressing, even through the conventional forms, a radical human dissent. At the level of social character, the society might be confident of its assumptions and its future, but these lonely exposed figures seem to us, at least, the personal and social reality of the system which in part the social character rationalized. Man alone, afraid, a victim: this is the enduring experience. The magic solutions will be grasped at, in many cases, in the end, but the intensity of the central experience is on record and survives them. And it is at this point that we find the link with

a novel like *Wuthering Heights*, which rejects so much more of the conventional structure. Here, at a peak of intensity, the complicated barriers of a system of relationships are broken through, finally, by an absolute human commitment. The commitment is realized through death, and the essential tragedy, embodied elsewhere in individual figures who may, by magic, be rescued from it, becomes the form of the whole work. The creative elements in the other fiction are raised to a wholeness which takes the work right outside the ordinary structure of feeling, and teaches a new feeling.

Art reflects its society and works a social character through to its reality in experience. But also art creates, by new perceptions and responses, elements which the society, as such, is not able to realize. If we compare art with its society, we find a series of real relationships showing its deep and central connexions with the rest of the general life. We find description, discussion, exposition through plot, and experience of the social character. We find also, in certain characteristic forms and devices, evidence of the deadlocks and unsolved problems of the society: often admitted to consciousness for the first time in this way. Part of this evidence will show a false consciousness, designed to prevent any substantial recognition; part again a deep desire, as yet uncharted, to move beyond this. As George Eliot wrote, recording this latter feeling, in 1848:

> The day will come when there will be a temple of white marble, where sweet incense and anthems shall rise to the memory of every man and woman who has had a deep *Ahnung*, a presentiment, a yearning, or a clear vision of the time when this miserable reign of Mammon shall end – when men shall be no longer 'like the fishes of the sea' – society no more like a face one half of which – the side of profession, of lip-faith – is fair and God-like, the other half – the side of deeds and institutions – with a hard old wrinkled skin puckered into the sneer of a Mephistopheles.

Much of the art, much of the magic, of the 1840s, expressed this desire. And at this point we find ourselves moving into a process which cannot be the simple comparison of art and society, but which must start from the recognition that all

the acts of men compose a general reality within which both art and what we ordinarily call society are comprised. We do not now compare the art with the society; we compare both with the whole complex of human actions and feelings. We find some art expressing feelings which the society, in its general character, could not express. These may be the creative responses which bring new feelings to light. They may be also the simple record of omissions: the nourishment or attempted nourishment of human needs unsatisfied. An element in the 1840s that we have not yet noted shows this kind of evidence clearly. The characteristic verse of Tennyson and Arnold in the decade, from *Morte d'Arthur* and *Ulysses* to *The Forsaken Merman*, is a late phase of that part of the Romantic movement which sought to express, through other places and other times, a richness not evident in ordinary contemporary life. That this poetry is weaker than that of Coleridge and Keats, which it formally resembles, seems to mark a further and perhaps disastrous moving away from the energies of the actual life; yet the impulse is characteristic, and in strength and weakness indicates experience that study of the society alone could not adduce. Then again we can link with this the general romanticizing of the past, at a serious level in Carlyle, at a popular level in the form of the historical novel, again a Romantic creation and at a high level of production and popularity in the early 1840s, beginning to fade in the later years. Linking the weak romanticism of exotic colour and richness with the strong romanticism of the vision of a fuller human life is the sense of omission, from the bleak reality and dominant ideals of the period, of certain basic human needs. The magic and tinsel of illegitimate theatre and music-hall, the ornate furnishing, the Gothicism in architecture, belong in the same category. And 1848, the last year of the Chartists, is also the first year of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. It is not that we cannot relate this art to the rest of the general life, but that we see it, by its very contrast with the main features of the society, as an element of the general human organization which found expression in this specific way, and which must be set in

parity with the other elements, if we are to analyse the culture as a whole.

Finally, as we look at the whole period, we recognize that its creative activities are to be found, not only in art but, following the main lines of the society, in industry and engineering, and, questioning the society, in new kinds of social institution. We cannot understand any period of the Industrial Revolution if we fail to recognize the real miracle that was being worked, by human skill and effort. Again and again, even by critics of the society, the excitement of this extraordinary release of man's powers was acknowledged and shared. The society could not have been acceptable to anybody, without that. 'These are our poems', Carlyle said in 1842, looking at one of the new locomotives, and this element, now so easily overlooked, is central to the whole culture.

In a quite different way, in new institutions, the slow creation of different images of community, different forms of relationship, by the newly-organizing workers and by middle-class reformers, marks a reaching-out of the mind of comparable importance. We cannot understand even the creative part of a culture without reference to activities of this kind, in industry and institutions, which are as strong and as valuable an expression of direct human feeling as the major art and thought.

To make a complete analysis of the culture of the 1840s would go far beyond the scope and intention of this chapter. I have simply looked at this fascinating decade as a way of considering what any such analysis involves. I have only indicated the ways in which it might begin, but I think it is clear that analysis of the kind described is feasible, and that the exploration of relations between apparently separate elements of the way of life can be illuminating. In any event, as we follow the analysis through, and as we see the ways in which it could be continued, we can decide for ourselves the extent to which the main theoretical approach, and the theoretical distinctions which follow from it, are valid.

3

INDIVIDUALS AND SOCIETIES

We are seeking to define and consider one central principle: that of the essential relation, the true interaction, between patterns learned and created in the mind and patterns communicated and made active in relationships, conventions, and institutions. Culture is our name for this process and its results, and then within this process we discover problems that have been the subject of traditional debate and that we may look at again in this new way. Among such problems, that of the relationship between an individual and his society is evident and crucial. It has been discussed through the whole series of systems of thinking that compose our tradition, and it is still widely discussed, from current experience, since it seems to be agreed that precisely this issue is at the centre of the conflicts of our time. Yet of course we approach the experience through the descriptions we have learned: in a more or less conscious way if we know parts of the vast body of accumulated theory in the matter; still, in effect, if we know none of the theory directly, yet find it embedded in the very language and forms of relationship through which we are bound to live. When we examine actual relationships, we start from the descriptions we have learned. When we speak of 'the individual' and of 'society', we are using descriptions which embody particular interpretations of the experience to which they refer: interpretations which gained currency at a particular point in history, yet which have now virtually established themselves in our minds as absolutes. By a special effort, we may become conscious of 'the individual' and 'society' as 'no more than descriptions', yet still so much actual experience and behaviour is tied to them that the realization can seem merely academic. There are times, however, when there is so high a tension between experience