John Ruskin: conservative attitudes to the modern 1836-1860

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JOHN RUSKIN:

CONSERVATIVE ATTITUDES TO THE MODERN: 1836 - 1860.

by

Dr. Michael A. Williams

A Doctoral Thesis

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of

Doctor of Philosophy of Loughborough University

1997

AT FURNESS ABBEY

Well have yon Railway Labourers to THIS ground
Withdrawn for noontide rest. They sit, they walk,
Among the Ruins, but no idle talk
Is heard; to grave demeanour all are bound;
And from one voice a Hymn with tuneful sound
Hallows once more the long-deserted Quire
And thrills the old sepulchral earth, around.
Others look up, and with fixed eyes admire
That wide-spanned arch, wondering how it was raised,
To keep, so high in air, its strength and grace:
All seem to feel the spirit of the place,
And by the general reverence God is praised:
Profane Despoilers, stand ye not reproved,
While thus these simple-hearted men are moved?

Wordsworth June 21st. 1845.
I examine the way in which, in his work of the 1840s, Ruskin uses methods and assumptions derived from eighteenth-century Materialist, Mechanist and Vitalist Natural Philosophy, especially his assertion that the meanings which he reads into natural phenomena are objectively present and can be quantified, and the way in which therefore aesthetic concepts, responses and judgements can be quantified, and their values fixed. I examine the ways in which Ruskin seeks to demonstrate the relationship between the unity of Nature and the Multiplicity of Phenomena, not only as existing objectively in the external world, but also as reflected in the paintings of Turner. I suggest that his attempt at demonstration features a problematic relationship between his accounting for a material reality and the spiritual significances which he sees as immanent in it, and that resistance to the dynamism of contemporary industrial and social change is implicit in his celebration of an eternalised natural order. I examine four features of his correspondence during the 1840s: his dealings in the art market, his outright opposition to a number of modern developments, his urgent desires to see his favourite European architectural heritage preserved, and his strident xenophobia, and suggest relationships between the last two and his resistance to the modern. I examine the shift in his interests in the 1840s and 1850s from Nature and Art to Architecture and Man, and thence to Political Economy, and examine available accounts which rely too heavily on references to his psychological development, or on his claims to regular epiphanies, or on a significant shift in focus which can be explained by revealing the internal continuities in his work. I conclude with an attempt to demonstrate that what I have called the "broad sweep" approach obscures the confusions and contradictions in his position in the late 1840s and 1850s, and suggest that his social and intellectual inheritance, which is of a highly conservative and unremittingly paternalistic nature, crucially limits his work as a social critic. I offer three appendices: on the problem of the relationship between the Unity of Nature and the Multiplicity of Phenomena as that had been addressed in the Natural Philosophy on whose assumptions Ruskin draws; on eighteenth century Materialist, Mechanist and Vitalist theories of matter; and on the work of Edmund Burke and Sir Charles Bell. KEYWORDS: Quantification, Adaptation, Association, Infinity, Materialism, Mechanism, Vitalism, Utility, Memory, Obedience.
CONTENTS

Chapter One: Early Scientific Interests: p. 5.

Chapter Two: Modern Painters 1:
  A) The Problem of Unity: p. 15.
  B) Turner's "Unity": p. 19.
  C) Quantification: p. 22.

Chapter Three: A Thing of Beauty is an Object of Negotiation: p. 43.

Chapter Four: Modern Painters 2:
  A) Quantification and Association: p. 51.
  B) Unity and Theories of Matter: p. 57.
  C) Utility and Association: p. 70.

Chapter Five: Xenophobia and Modernisation: p. 88.

Chapter Six: Fixing Values: p. 102.

Chapter Seven: The Seven Lamps of Architecture:
  A) Introduction: p. 110.
  B) Some Continuities: p. 117.
  D) Modes of Persuasion: 130.
  F) The Lamp of Memory: p. 147.

Chapter Eight: Ruskin in the 1840s and 1850s:
  E) Responses to 1848 and beyond: p. 203.
  F) Contented Manhood: 212.

Appendix A: Unity and Multiplicity in the History of Science: p. 236.
Appendix B: Eighteenth Century Natural Philosophies: p. 245.
Appendix C: Edmund Burke and Sir Charles Bell -
Natural Philosophy and Aesthetics: p. 254.

Bibliography: p. 278.
CHAPTER ONE: EARLY SCIENTIFIC INTERESTS.

In 1837, Ruskin sent a paper "On The Formation and Colour of such Clouds as are caused by the Agency of Mountains" to the Meteorological Society (1: p. 206). It was not printed, but Ruskin wrote to his father that "it only commences the subject, which will be farther treated of in a series of similar papers!" (36: p. 10). Two years later, Ruskin published a precocious eulogy, Meteorology, in which he distinguishes between a minority of scientific specialists whose knowledge allows them to demonstrate the "beauty" of a particular science and to evaluate its "utility"; and laymen, an amateur majority benefiting, in a utilitarian sense, from the sciences, but quite unable to perceive their beauty. He aligns himself, most surprisingly, with the latter, the "only judges" of the relative importance of the various sciences. In their judgement, and that of "impartial men of learning" (among whom, presumably, Ruskin, having his cake and eating it, includes himself), no science should be unduly pursued, and none unduly rejected (1: pp. 206 - 207).

His alignment with the laymen is most surprising in view of the anti-Utilitarian attitudes which occasionally feature explicitly in the first two volumes of Modern Painters and the letters of the 1840s, and the anti-Utilitarian attitudes which are implicit in his dealings with the significance and beauty of landscape art. When he aligns himself with those who can appreciate the practical benefits of a science without perceiving its beauty, his remarks sit oddly with his later assertion that "pure" chemistry is to be

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1Unless otherwise specified, all quotations from Ruskin are from the Library Edition of The Works of John Ruskin, edited by Cook and Wedderburn (1903 - 1912), and will be cited in the manner just indicated. A group of closely related passages occurring on the same page or on contiguous pages will frequently be cited in one note.
preferred to a chemistry which leads to the discovery of a cheap way of refining sugar (4: pp. 34/35).

On the other hand, it is not surprising that he should align himself with the laymen, the amateurs, because that is part of the stance which he adopts for Modern Painters I, in which he declares himself as a "Graduate of Oxford": i.e., as Elizabeth K. Helsinger points out, "an educated gentleman ... an amateur ... publishing at his own expense." 2 Of course, in that volume he is distinguishing himself from the older generation of periodical reviewers like the Reverend John Eagles, whose work appeared in "Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine".3 And there is his dismissal of the "the tribe of critics ... well acquainted with the technical qualities of every master's touch" (identified by Helsinger as including Sir Charles Eastlake, Keeper of the National Gallery, and Gustav Friedrich Waagen, Director of the Berlin Gallery, "museum men", so to speak 4) in favour of "men of general knowledge and unbiased habits of thought" able to recognise in Turner's work "a record and illustration of facts before unseized" (3: p. 646; and 3: p. 15).

The Reverend Eagles was judging the status of a painter by comparison with an established canon (see 3: pp. 14 - 15), and Eastlake and Waagen specialised in the analysis of paints and canvases, styles and subject, to establish such matters as dates and authenticity, and Ruskin makes clear his attitude towards such specialists in a letter to "Matilda Y." in January, 1844:

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3For a brief account of Eagles's attack on Turner, Ruskin's reaction, the subsequent attack by Eagles on Modern Painters I in "Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine" (October 1843), and a letter from John James Ruskin to W.H. Harrison, commenting on the subject, see Van Akin Burd (1973): pp. 741/743.

We are overwhelmed with a tribe of critics who are fully imbued with every kind of knowledge which is useful to the picture-dealer, but with none that is important to the artist. They know where a picture has been retouched, but not where it ought to have been ... They are unquestionable authorities in all matters relating to the panel or the canvass, to the varnish or the vehicle, while they remain in entire ignorance of that which the vehicle conveys ... whatever, under the present system of study, the connoisseur of the gallery may learn or know, there is one thing that he does not know, - and that is nature. It is a pitiable thing to hear a man like Dr. Waagen, about to set the seal of his approbation, or the brand of his reprobation, on all the pictures in our island, expressing his insipid astonishment on his first acquaintance with the sea (3: pp. 646 - 647).

Waagen's "sin" had been to declare, in a comparison between sea-storm canvasses by Turner and Vandevelde, that Turner's was inferior, that it appeared "like a successful piece of scene - painting", and that "the great crowd of amateurs, who ask nothing more of the art, will always prefer Turner's pictures".5

The "amateur's response to such criticism which, as he sees it, is grounded in ignorance of the "truths of clouds and waves", is to appeal to minority interest:

Alas for Art, while such judges sit enthroned on their apathy to the beautiful, and their ignorance of the true, and with a canopy of canvas between them and the sky, and a wall of tradition, which may not be broken through, concealing from them the horizon, hurl their darkened verdicts against the works of men, whose night and noon have been wet with the dew of heaven, - dwelling on the deep sea, or wandering among the solitary places of the earth, until they have "made the mountains, waves, and skies a part of them and their soul" (3: p. 647).6

And yet, despite his dismissal of professional critics and art historians, his apparent preference of laymen and educated non-specialists, and his declared objective "to spread the love and knowledge of art among all classes", Ruskin does align himself, in the opening of Modern Painters 1 with "those few who are in reality competent judges", and have determined the Canons of Excellence for the many; and he does produce a very


6 Ruskin is here drawing on a notion of the emergence of great artists from a scriptural wilderness, a notion which he employs frequently in the 1840s and 1850s. See below pp. 148 - 150, and pp. 160 - 163.
exclusive view of the critic/connoisseur/lover of art, when he suggests that only a very few are capable of appreciating the greatest art, whose meaning must be "sealed to thousands" (3: p. 49). The "amateur" stance which Ruskin professes appeals to an authority which, in his view, overrules certain specialists in techniques and dates and canonical tradition in favour of a privileged insight into the content and meaning of landscape art - technique is deliberately divorced from content to guarantee his own authority as a commentator. Further, as indicated in the last quotation, the artists whose work the professionals maul, but which the amateur promotes, are not the product of tradition and convention, but of the Wilderness, an essentially Scriptural concept which places the great artist beyond the kind of historical explanation and accountability involved in convention and tradition.

At this point in Ruskin's development, the major factor determining his view of those to whom great art is accessible is his Evangelicalism, and later in the text of Modern Painters 1 he produces a very exclusive, and depressingly hierarchical model of artistic reception:

It is possible to represent the body without the spirit; and this shall be like, to those whose senses are only cognizant of body. It is possible to represent the spirit in its ordinary and inferior manifestations; and this shall be like, to those who have not watched for its moments of power. It is possible to represent the spirit in its secret and high operations; and this shall be like only to those to whose watching they have been revealed (3: p. 148).

Here, the Saints come marching in with a vengeance. Even Nature is invoked to support Ruskin's promotion of elitist perception: "Her finest touches are things which must be watched for; her most perfect passages of beauty are the most evanescent" (3: p.156).

But then, in Ruskin's account, Turner, as Nature's foremost artistic interpreter, engages in a special effects programme which, in its intensity, denies any general
accessibility to the "finer" (a key term ironically associated with "infinity") experience offered by his canvases:

Words are not accurate enough, nor delicate enough, to express or trace the constant, all-pervading influence of the finer and vaguer shadows throughout his works, that thrilling influence which gives to the light they leave its passion and its power...

There is the motion, the actual wave and radiation of the darted beam: not the dull universal daylight, which falls on the landscape without life, or direction, or speculation, equal on all things and dead on all things (3: p. 308).

Perhaps one of the most potent factors which undermined Ruskin's Evangelical beliefs was the incompatibility of his desire to spread the word regarding the importance of the right kind of artistic activity and reception among the general populace and the Evangelical insistence that salvation is for the few. But for the moment, as the passage just quoted indicates, Ruskin is not in favour of the democratisation of aesthetic experience.

There is clearly a problem here of the stance which Ruskin is seeking to adopt not only towards his subject-matter, but also to his readers, as recognised and discussed by Helsinger.7 Perhaps, this is no more significant than that, at this early stage, Ruskin is seeking to establish his authority. Certainly, the major switch in Modern Painters 2 to the immensely forbidding idioms of Richard Hooker suggests an attempt precisely to be authoritative.

However, when Ruskin operates as a preacher, in an extreme Evangelical mode, that would suggest a connection to a defined middle-class audience, a relationship which the Ruskins experienced frequently, given their avid consumption of the live deliveries of contemporary Evangelical thunderers like Henry Melville (1798 - 1894), incumbent, in

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the 1840s, of Camden Chapel, Camberwell. But Ruskin's operations as an Evangelical preacher mark a distinction between himself as prophetic writer and his assumed audience, as does his frequent identification of himself with Turner as one of the few who are possessed with, or, indeed, blest by, the right kind of vision.

For the moment, there is a certain inconsistency in stance, exemplified by the way in which, as the early essay Meteorology develops, his attempt to be an ideologue for the newly established Meteorological Society soon pushes aside his professed impartiality. In enumerating the qualities of Meteorology as a science, he produces a piece of scientific idealism which is firmly in the contemporary idiom, and which seems to downgrade other scientific pursuits: Meteorology, he claims, is not calculated to harden the mind it strengthens, and bind it down to the measurement of magnitudes and estimation of quantities, destroying all higher feelings, all finer sensibilities; it is not to be learned among the gaseous exhalations of the deathful laboratory ... it is a science of pure air and the bright heaven ... It is indeed a knowledge which must be felt to be, in its very essence, full of the soul of the beautiful. For its interest, it is universal, unabated in every place, and in all time ... while the geologist yearns for the mountain, the botanist for the field, and the mathematician for the study, the meteorologist, like a spirit of a higher order than any, rejoices in the kingdoms of the air (1: pp. 207-208).

Ruskin's claims that meteorology is "not calculated to harden the mind it strengthens, and bind it down to the measurement of magnitudes and estimation of quantities" are actually quite ironic given the way in which in the first two volumes of Modern Painters he himself so extensively quantifies the material with which he is dealing (see below: pp. 22-29).

In Praeterita, however, Ruskin testifies to his youthful ambitions in another science - Geology:

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8See Van Akin Burd (1973), p. 744, for Margaret Ruskin's account of a sermon by Melville on the subject of "Whosoever denieth the Son the same hath not the Father".
And so on to Llanberis and up Snowdon, of which ascent I remember as the most exciting event, the finding for the first time in my life a real "mineral" for myself, a piece of copper pyrites; But the general impression of Welsh mountain form was so true and clear that subsequent journeys little changed or deepened it.

And if only then my father and mother had seen the real strengths and weaknesses of their little John; - if they had given me but a shaggy scrap of a Welsh pony, and left me in charge of a good Welsh guide, and of his wife, if I needed any coddling, they would have made a man of me there and then, and afterwards the comfort of their own hearts, and probably the first geologist of my time in Europe (35: p. 96).

And this is not, perhaps, with the exception of that last prognosis, wishful thinking on Ruskin's part in his old age, even though the source is, given the various youthful "epiphanies" offered in Praeterita, always to be treated with a certain amount of circumspection.

The majority of the diary entries for 1835, for instance, are accounts of his fieldwork for his naturalist's studies, and, certainly, include a number of readings on the cyanometer, an instrument for measuring the blue of the sky which he had constructed according to de Saussure's instructions. The diaries for 1836, and subsequent years to 1839, were destroyed because of the painful record of his abortive love for Adele Domecq. But we do know that during those years he developed his obsession with Turner's work, and its seemingly inexhaustible expression of the lessons to be learnt from natural phenomena. However, neither before nor after Meteorology does he display any obvious bias towards that new science; and it is, perhaps, stretching a point, to claim that, during his formative period, Ruskin's interest in Meteorology was "almost obsessional," a judgement by John Dixon Hunt offered largely on the evidence of the Continental Tour of 1835. If he displays a preference for any one science, it is for Geology.

9See below pp. 182 - 191.

The diary for 1842, for instance, when the Ruskins went to Switzerland, is a natural scientist's notebook with a very heavy emphasis on geological recording. But then, his first boyhood ambition had been to emulate Charles Lyell, and become President of the Geological Society. (There is, however, an interesting early comment by Ruskin on Lyell. In a letter to his father from March 1836, he suggests that "Lyell asserts his well grounded geological facts, upon very vague conjecture." However, at the time, Lyell's Principles of Geology had been attacked, and in 1833, he had resigned from King's College.11)

Ruskin was encouraged, often preposterously, by his father, who was given to the assertion that his son may have been an artist from childhood, but had been a geologist from infancy! In fact, Ruskin had progressed quite precociously, in the period preceding Meteorology, from the simple collection and classification of mineralogical specimens, to constructing his own mineralogical dictionary at the age of twelve, and then to studying "the broader aspects of geology ... [which] ... led him early to intellectual life".12 A letter to his father from 24th. December, 1836, records a conversation with his tutor, Mr. Dale, about his reading, and after a most impressive listing of classical authors for a seventeen-years old, he refers, quite airily, to his "light" reading - Saussure's Voyage Dans Les Alpes and Humboldt's Personal Narrative of Travels to the Equinoctial Regions of America, during the years 1799-1804 as well as other works on Natural Philosophy and Geology.13


His ambitions were, perhaps, deflated by the impact of his joining the Geological Society before going up to Oxford, and being exposed to the big guns of that science, Lyell himself, Sedgwick, Buckland, and Darwin; and were, perhaps, temporarily transferred by an obviously ambitious young man to Meteorology which, in the 1830s, was still in its infancy.

Consideration of Ruskin's career at Oxford further suggests that the inflated rhetoric of Meteorology can be discounted as youthful and perhaps foolish pretension. When the separate honours examination was introduced at Oxford in 1830, the exclusion of the Natural Sciences from honours competition resulted in an immediate fall in attendance at Natural Science lectures. In 1835 and 1838, Professor Rigaud lectured on Natural Philosophy only to those who attended compulsorily from Ruskin's own college, Christ Church.14 Buckland, who regularly supplied Ruskin with illustration work, seems to have been the only scientist to keep his attendance figures up, despite the further competition from the Tractarian movement.15

Ruskin himself joined and attended the Geological Society before going up to Oxford, and continued his active membership while he was in residence. He continued his study of the Natural Sciences despite the competition for honours and the mistaken decision to compete for the Newdigate Prize. His very bitter remarks on the Classical Tripos16 suggest that the creative centre of his life at Oxford was the kind of activity recorded in a letter to his father. This describes the evening of April 22nd, 1837, which

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began with a conversation with Lord Cole and Sir Philip Egerton, and concluded with a long conversation with Charles Darwin:

I found a note on my table from Dr Buckland, requesting the pleasure of my company to dinner, at 6, to meet two celebrated Geologists, - Lord Cole and Sir Philip Egerton. I immediately sent a note of thanks and acceptance, dressed and was there a minute after the last stroke of Tom - Alone, for five minutes in Dr B's drawing room, who soon afterwards came in with Lord Cole, introduced me, and said that as we were both geologists, he did not hesitate to leave us together, ... Lord Cole and I were talking about some fossils newly arrived from India ... While we were sitting over our wine, after Dinner, in came Mr Daubeny - one of the most celebrated Geologists of the day - ... and Mr Darwin, whom I had heard read a paper at the Geological Society. He and I got together, and talked all the evening.  

Although the rhetoric of Meteorology can be discounted, its conclusion has a value for the future development of his thought. This envisages a Baconian system of worldwide observers sending their findings back to a central society. This is not remarkable; it is the extension of contemporary hopes to an infant science. When the British Association for the Advancement of Science was established in 1832, the intention, inspired mainly by the leading geologists, was to create both "a popular forum" and "a Baconian clearing-house": "the founders expected to avail themselves of a host of amateur observers". 

17 Van Akin Burd (1973): pp. 462/3. There is also a fairly sneering remark by John James Ruskin on the results of a classical education. He writes to Margaret Ruskin (22nd. January, 1839):

A very droll old Buck travelled with me to day before Dayli(ght) - talked of his Son a Curate at Trinity Oxford - says the Examiners put before a set of youths up for Degree a paper [ ] a Carte Blanche desiring them to draw Europe & put all principal Towns & say for what celebrated. Only one could do it. The others declared it unfair as they could write Greek by the hour but knew nothing of Europe or its towns. This may be a tale. (Van Akin Burd (1973): p. 561.)

18 Gillispie (1969): p. 188.
The idea of a clearing-house of natural facts occurs in a surprising form, later in Ruskin's work. For, as has not, to my knowledge, so far been recognised, one of the major problems which Ruskin is facing in *Modern Painters* 1, even though he himself does not seem to recognise it as such, is a problem which is not only one created by his own particular approach to the myriad natural details which are the subject of landscape painting, but is also one which had exercised Natural Philosophers for several centuries: as you observe and accumulate masses of data about the world of observable phenomena, you then, of course, categorise and classify and catalogue the data, and there is always the pressure to make sense of the data not only by deducing or inferring specific causes for specific effects, but also by constructing verifiable laws. These activities then take place within a more ambitious enterprise - to construct comprehensive explanations for everything which is being observed. The difficulty is not in the accumulation and classification of the data - taxonomy is comparatively easy. The difficulties occur in questions concerning the desired unity of the external world, its myriad details, and coherence in its interpretation (See Appendix A: pp. 236 - 243).

As I see it, for Ruskin, commenting on Turner's work in *Modern Painters* 1, unity and coherence are precisely a major assumption, not recognised as a problem: he refers, for instance, to "the unity and multiplicity which are in nature" (3: p. 319); and claims that a picture is complete only when it has "both the general wholeness and the effect of nature, and the inexhaustible perfection of nature's details" (3: p. 446). But there is a problem here - Turner produces this many works, and if they are not to be viewed as discrete
productions, but are to form a coherent whole; and if each painting, viewed separately, is to have its own individual unity, where is the principle of coherence, particularly important to someone like Ruskin who views the external world as the production of a Supreme Being, and great landscape art as a truthful representation of that world? As a believer, he assumes consistency and order, but as the author of Modern Painters 1 he has committed himself to demonstrate what he assumes.

This is the same problem, is it not, for a great many literary critics who need to shape not only the works of an individual writer, but also groups of writers, genres, whole "periods", and even "epochs," into an account which guarantees consistency and coherence. Two modern commentators on Ruskin quote Proust to assert precisely that there is an ultimate unity in Ruskin's work: "If reality is one and undivided, and if the man of genius is he who perceives it, what does it matter whether the material in which he expresses his vision is paint, stone, music, laws or actions?" 19 Raymond Fitch claims that: "In its content and style the book [i.e. Modern Painters I] reveals the duality of Ruskin's work and an ambivalence of his aesthetic that continues throughout his later works. The prophet, poet, and phenomenologist remains one with the geologist, economist, and general systematiser." 20 And J.C. Sherburne claims that Ruskin's persistent search for Unity, while ultimately unsuccessful, nevertheless gives to the "chaotic surface" of his writings a "deeper unity which justifies his efforts". 21

Inconsistency, incoherence, fragmentation, contradictions, and even a simple change of mind cannot, for a number of Ruskin's commentators, enter the account which they


offer of his work, and like some of the commentators on his own work, Ruskin assumes that Turner's work has a proper "unity". Furthermore, he needs to demonstrate that unity as a response to a Providentially designed order and consistency.

J.C. Sherburne has suggested that "Unity", in Ruskin's case, because he is so determined to see all things in relationship to each other, might be more appropriately described as "organicism." That term, of course, points to Ruskin's relationship to a well-established Romantic tradition, as well as Sherburne's acceptance of a well-established tradition in Ruskinian criticism. Indeed, he claims that Carlyle's Tree metaphor "captures the essence of Ruskin's attempt to relate the chief counters of his discussion - nature, art, society, man." He also points to Ruskin's indebtedness to his religious inheritance, and the key position of Richard Hooker in Ruskin's thought. "Organic", he claims, is never, for Ruskin a purely physical relationship, but has always a spiritual dimension.22

However, as Sherburne points out, the most important word in the vocabulary of organicism is "Purity", and Ruskin's concept of Purity acknowledges the Materialistic basis of that particular phenomenon. Consideration of that leads Sherburne to acknowledge, but only partially, the importance of Ruskin's early engagement in the Romantic resistance to the "Mechanico-corpuscular Philosophy."23

I would like to suggest that the concept of Unity (and such concepts as Purity), while they owe much to particular literary and religious traditions, also owe much to traditions of conservative Natural Philosophy24 which have affinities with Ruskin's early Christian beliefs, and which are clearly at work in his writings.

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24As exemplified in The Bridgewater Treatises (1833 - 1837).
Ruskin comments, in a letter to the Rev. W.L. Brown (27th. November, 1843) on the myriad facts and lessons which the landscape painter seeks to interpret, and their relationship to the great "system" of which each painting is a part. He writes of unity as a "sine qua non" in art, and defines it as "a binding together of objects", which results from "the habit of the artist to regard his works not as individually perfect, but as each, part of a great system illustrative of each other".

Some painters choose to specialise in their subject-matter; Dutch painters, for instance, who choose to paint cocks and hens, and nothing else. By contrast with them, Turner "conceives it to be more fitting for man to receive all nature's lessons - those which he likes and those which he doesn't - than to choose for himself and repeat one for ever". Turner chooses a subject once "in order that he may know his subject thoroughly".

Ruskin pushes his claim for Turner further:

I am aware of nothing in nature that Turner has not earnestly painted .... You cannot name any object, element, or effect - you can name no time, no season, no incident of weather - of which I cannot name you a study, not accidentally or incidentally made, but earnestly, and with reference to itself alone, and most laboriously.

This a very comprehensive claim, and, in this, Turner paints according to Nature's own laws, for, whether "she" exhibits "rock character", "tree character", or "pastoral character", all her details are thrown in with reference to the particular influence or spirit of the place (36: pp. 34 - 35). But this is to be expected, for as Patricia Ball has pointed out,
to the early Victorian the criterion of accurate visual perception was paramount, encouraged in art and science alike ... Ruskin belonged to his age in this respect ... What he looked at so scrupulously himself, he realised Turner had seen with clarity also. Nature and Turner's pictures confirmed each other to Ruskin's eye. His diaries in 1841 display the intimate association always ready in his mind.

On an Italian journey he notes of the scenery near Naples that "it was a Turner"; and of the sea, "with the infinite delicacy of multitudinous touches of light", he observes that one cannot look at it "without remembering Turner". A view along the road makes him "quite sick with delight", and it is "as bright as a first-rate Turner". Nature can surpass the painter - the light in St. Mark's square on 12 May is "such as Turner in his maddest moments never came up to" - but the effects of nature and his art are always comparable to Ruskin's responsive gaze. The sky shows "Turner clouds", or "minute Turner detail in subdued white and melting blue", and flashes of lightning are "Turner's own".25

The local and the particular are Romantic criteria, but there is also in Ruskin's work an emphasis on natural phenomena which belongs also to an empirical, fact-finding Natural Philosophy, and which is suspicious of an artificially structured unity in composition. The artificialities of Claudian composition in the Grand Style are rejected in favour of composition which "cleaves", in a Baconian manner, "to the very marrow of things".26

To some extent, Turner works in the letter to the Rev. Brown as a clearing-house of natural facts in much the same way as Ruskin had hoped the Meteorological Society would work, and he himself worked in his diaries. The "system" is the overall context in which the detailed appreciation and recording of local scenes takes place; but Ruskin's obvious and easily conjugated indebtedness to the Romantic literary movement should not be allowed to obscure the place in his aesthetic theory and criticism of his Natural Philosophy.

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In the letter to Brown, there is a suggestion that Turner's achievement fulfils demands which are only partially "aesthetic". The Meteorological Society will bring together a host of observations from all over the world; Turner's work brings together "a mass of various impressions which may all work together as a great whole, fully detailed in every part" (36: p. 34). He does not specialise, nor does the Ruskinian philosopher described in Meteorology. Both see all that nature has to offer, and both record the lessons faithfully.

The patient field-work of the diaries and the detailed classifications of the first two volumes of Modern Painters can be regarded as Ruskin's version of the multiplicity of phenomena. In this context, the myriad details are given a theoretical unity by the way in which Ruskin classifies them ("Truths of Colour", "Truths of Earth", "Truths of Sky"). But the precise manner in which the details work together "as a great whole, fully detailed in every part", especially in a painter's complete output, needs further examination.

For instance, if each painting is done with "reference to itself alone", this might imply that "unity" is a mystifying term obscuring an inability to articulate the "system" in the inter-relationships of its separate and fully detailed parts.
CHAPTER TWO: MODERN PAINTERS I:

C) QUANTIFICATION.

One major assumption which Ruskin makes in *Modern Painters I* is that so many aspects of what he is dealing with can be quantified, and this habit of quantification, common in the work of Materialist Natural Philosophers,\(^27\) in some ways supports his claims for Turner's greatness and is an important element in his attempt to demonstrate Turner's unity. However, the observations which he offers here are essentially crude - a question of over-simplistic calculation. A person of taste, for instance, is one who derives from that which is providentially designed to elicit a pleasurable response, "the greatest possible sum of pleasure" (3: p. 30).\(^28\)

Having defined Tone (3: p. 149), he marks the difference between his own definition, and what is commonly called aerial perspective. He comments:

aerial perspective ... requires only that objects should be detached from each other by degrees of intensity in proportion to their distance, without requiring that the difference between the farthest and nearest should be in positive quantity the same that nature has put (my emphases).

By contrast, "what I have called 'tone' requires that there should be the same sum of difference, as well as the same division of differences" (3: p. 150: my emphases).

In dealing with Ideas of Power in art, Ruskin, prejudiced against any display of technical perfection (and implicitly placing artistic activity beyond any merely industrial

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\(^{27}\)See below: Appendix B: pp. 244 - 247.

\(^{28}\) Interestingly, there is John James's Ruskin's comment on his son's attempts to win the Newdigate Prize at Oxford. In a letter to W.H. Harrison, he comments: "I cannot get him to correct or revise anything, and if he ever aspires to contend for a Poetry Prize at Oxford, he must fail, for this reason, that there it is not the poem having the greatest number of beauties but that which betrays the fewest faults, that carries the day". (2: p. xxv.)
definition of productivity and value) argues that Power should be appreciated as process, and not as product. So "we" will gain a greater sense of power from the "half-hewn limbs" of Michelangelo's "Twilight" in the Medici Chapel than from the "polished limbs" of the "Apollo". Ruskin formulates the principle which this observation supports as a mathematical formula: "the sensation of power is in proportion to the apparent inadequacy of the means to the end". The implication of this is clear - the nearer a work of art approaches to technical perfection, and hence a display of technique, the more that approach obscures the effect of power invested in it, an implication which can be quantified:

in all art, every touch or effort does individually less in proportion as the work approaches perfection. The first five chalk touches bring a head into existence out of nothing. No five touches in the whole course of the work will ever do as much as these, and the difference made by each touch is more and more imperceptible as the work approaches completion. Consequently, the ratio between the means employed and the effect produced is constantly decreasing, and therefore the least sensation of power is received from the most perfect work (3: p. 37).

If the most perfect work gives the least sensation of the power which produced it, technical perfection must therefore obscure the individuality of the producer, and such a notion would sit easily with Ruskin's later contrasts between medieval and modern modes of production. The final sentence in the passage just quoted might well apply to nineteenth-century manufacturing activity in which the volume and variety of human creative energies invested in factory production by any one individual directly decreases in proportion to the mechanisation of productive means, a mechanisation which promotes a greater degree of technical finish in the manufactured product, but which abolishes any expression of individual powers in its mass-produced commodities.

Power can be quantified - so can Truth which is to be "measured" only by "close comparison of actual facts" (3: p. 169).
It is not only that such matters as truth, power and tone, among others, can be quantified as part of Ruskin's demonstration of his beliefs - the comparative status of artists can be determined through a process of quantification. Developing the notion that truth can be quantified, Ruskin claims that the "real truthfulness" of a painter, for instance, is

in proportion to the number and variety of facts he has [so] illustrated ... The quantity of truth is in proportion to the number of such facts, and its value and instructiveness in proportion to their rarity. All really great pictures, therefore, exhibit the general habits of nature, manifested in some peculiar, rare, and beautiful way (3: p. 70).

Just as "facts", which at this point in Ruskin's work seem to be natural phenomena which have been verified beyond any question, can, when present in different works of art in different quantities and degrees of rarity, determine comparative artistic status, so too can "thoughts", which are simply the correct response, as envisaged by Ruskin, to the phenomena being represented. (This is another area of difficulty in Ruskin's propositions - a too easy assumption of a comfortable relationship between what he perceives as "fact" and "thought". I'm sure that the presence of a Conservative Government in the U.K. is a verifiable fact of the last seventeen years, but whether their "economic success" is a correct "thought" in response to such a phenomenon is surely debatable.)

Taking for granted that "facts" are verifiable, and that "thoughts" can be correct, Ruskin is prepared to value Landseer's "The Shepherd's Chief-mourner" as a work of high art, because of the thoughts which it offers to the spectator. But this offers further difficulty, because "thoughts", a term which seems to refer both to the artist's perception of his subject, as well as the spectator's perception of the artist's perception, begins to assume the status of verifiable fact, a something which is actually present in the painting.
and determining the spectator's response, rather than something negotiated in a reading of the painting.

Here, Ruskin's employment of quantification as an aesthetic principle connects with the major developments in the science of optics during the period preceding the publication of *Modern Painters*. In "Of Truth of Space" (Part II, Sec. II, Ch. IV of *Modern Painters 1*), Ruskin points out that the eye is "like any other lens", and that therefore it needs to have its focus altered to "convey a distinct image of objects at different distances". He asks the reader to undertake a simple practical task to demonstrate that the difference of focus necessary is greatest within five hundred yards, and to verify his assertion that you cannot simultaneously see distinctly one object ten yards away, and one a quarter of a mile beyond that, but that you can simultaneously see an object a quarter of a mile away, and one which is five miles beyond that:

The consequence of this is, practically, that in a real landscape, we can see the whole of what would be called the middle distance and distance together, with facility and clearness; but while we do so, we can see nothing in the foreground beyond a vague and indistinct arrangement of lines and colours; and that if, on the contrary, we look at any foreground object, so as to receive a distinct impression of it, the distance and middle distance become all disorder and mystery.

And therefore, if in a painting our foreground is anything, our distance must be nothing, and vice versâ; for if we represent our near and distant objects as giving both at once that distinct image to the eye, which we receive in nature from each when we look at them separately; and if we distinguish them from each other by the air-tone and indistinctness dependent on positive distance, we violate one of the most essential principles of nature; we represent that as seen at once which can only be seen by two separate acts of seeing, and tell a falsehood as gross as if we had represented four sides of a cubic object visible together (3: pp. 320/321).

Wolfgang Kemp points to the significance of this when he argues that:

Ruskin is demanding that the image depicted must conform to the image seen - an idea which belongs entirely to the nineteenth century. Before then, the rule had been that pictures gave you something to see; now they were supposed to do your seeing for you.29

Basically, Kemp argues that the commitment of Renaissance painters to a geometric model of perception was replaced in the nineteenth century by a physiological model in which physiological optics, spearheaded in Britain by Thomas Young, shifted the emphasis on the eye away from the notion of it as "a mechanical construct" towards the idea of it as "a highly individual sense".30

Ruskin's earlier emphases on the "truth of mental impression", and the primary importance of sight in giving access to such truth do not encourage a subjective seeing but insist on the particular truth or truths being in the object or scene itself. Hence, for instance, his interest, while touring, in visiting scenes which Turner had already depicted.

There is a characteristic example in a letter to his father from the 14th. September, 1845.31 He is writing from Venice, and the first half of the letter is a series of bitter comments on the deleterious effects of the modernisers on the city's architecture. But he finds a consolation amid all the destruction - "the finding, among the wrecks of Venice, authority for all that Turner has done of her". Apart from Turner's skill in using "every atom of material", Ruskin notes a particular instance - a fishing boat with a "painted" sail, which he describes most enthusiastically as

the most gorgeous orange and red, in everything, form, colour, & feeling, the very counterpart of the Sol di Venezia32 - it is impossible that any model could be more rigidly exact than the painting, even to the height of the sail above the desk.

Ruskin's insistence on the truths of art being present in the canvas as verifiable thoughts or facts which were present in the scene or object being depicted does not

30Ibid.


32Turner's "The Sun of Venice Going to Sea" (R.A. 1843)
make any the less problematic his definition of greatness in art, which can, also, seemingly be quantified. Calling into play his characteristic down-grading of any display of technical finish, he asserts that: "The picture which has the nobler and more numerous ideas, however awkwardly expressed, is a greater and a better picture than that which has the less noble and less numerous ideas, however beautifully expressed". Logically, such a definition extends not only to the greatest art "which conveys to the mind of the spectator, by any means whatsoever, the greatest number of the greatest ideas", but also to the spectator because an idea is "great in proportion as it is received by a higher faculty of the mind, and as it more fully occupies, and in occupying, exercises and exalts, the faculty by which it is received" (3: p. 11).

Having seemingly subjected the responses of the spectator to determination by the ideas presented by the work of art, Ruskin can then confidently define the greatest artist as he "who has embodied, in the sum of his works, the greatest number of the greatest ideas" (3: pp. 11/13), where "ideas" combine "facts" and "thoughts", but the formula does not solve the problem of how the accumulation of "ideas" in Turner's works can constitute a unity. In fact, at this point, the counting-house and the accounts books are overbearing criteria, but, perhaps, in their emphasis on accumulation, and the related habit of quantification, reveal how much Ruskin is carrying on the collecting habits of contemporary scientists and the assumptions of the Materialist Natural Philosophers.33

Whereas quantification can apparently demonstrate comparative, as well as undisputed, greatness, it can also reveal deficiencies. Ruskin's strictures on Gainsborough and Constable's practice are presented as "deductions" (3: pp. 98/99), and the inferiority

33See below: pp. 238 -239 and pp. 245 - 246.
of the Old Masters to Nature and the Modern Painters is carefully quantified. Where, for instance, Claude and Poussin, painting clouds, present "three" masses of cloud similar to each other, Nature presents "fifty ... made up each of millions of minor thoughts" (again that unacknowledged sliding from facts to thoughts), and Turner, operating as a Vitalist,\(^{34}\) gives precisely the "exhaustless living energy with which the universe is filled" (3: pp. 249/51). The Old Masters "libel the Creation which they represent in their accumulated multitude of pure, broad, bold falsehoods which are admissible, in pictures meant only to deceive" (3: p. 80). Even where they are not dealing necessarily in falsehoods, the Old Masters do not stand the test of Ruskin's application of the principle of quantification, because they "are prodigals, and foolish prodigals in art; they lavish their whole means to get one truth, and leave themselves powerless when they should seize a thousand" (3: p. 152). By contrast, Turner, in sacrificing richness of effect as found in the work of the Old Masters, "gains ... a thousand more essential truths" (3: p. 158).

Even Modern Painters are not immune from Ruskin's counting-house procedures. Copley Fielding is praised for having produced "some of the most perfect and faultless passages of mist and rain-cloud which art has ever seen", but instead of being content to produce only five such studies, he has spoiled it all by painting five hundred (3: p. 265) - again a suggestion of a mass-production of similar products, by contrast with Turner's production of a "thousand" individual, but connected, truths.

Without any sense of irony, Ruskin is quite prepared to turn the quantification principle around and use it for a different purpose - to defend great art against it. In the

\(^{34}\)See below Appendix B: pp. 247 - 252.
chapter "On the Truth of Chiaroscuro", he attacks other contemporary writers on art for talking of "deep shadow as a thing that may be given in quantity" and derides the manufacture of "agreeable patterns in the shape of pyramids, and crosses, and zig-zags, into which arms and legs are to be persuaded, and passion and emotion arranged, for the promotion and encouragement of the cant of criticism" (3: p. 191). Similarly (with an explicit reference to contemporary industrial processes) he attacks works with great names attached to them, in which "the sky is a sheer piece of plumber's and glazier's work, and should be valued per yard, with extra heavy charge for ultramarine" (3: p. 177).
Ruskin's employment of an accounting vocabulary ("sum", "deduction", "quantity", "proportion") to assert greatness, or lack of it, in art; and the strong distaste for allowing any kind of art to descend into what, for him, is a vulgar utilitarianism, are not elements in an explicitly articulated coherent theory - the latter is a very self-conscious stance towards experience, asserting what he sees to be a finer order of truth and utility against a disdained modern materialism; but the former suggests his inability to escape from the sheer materiality of what he is dealing with. For, no matter how strongly felt his opposition to contemporary materialism, the alternative world of experience which he is promoting and defending and demonstrating, is itself a world of objects - trees, mountains, clouds, paintings. The difference is, of course, that he claims that the world with which he is dealing has a clear spiritual dimension. As a result, when dealing with the deepest values of that world, he is forced to move away from its materiality, and to rework his accounting concepts.

For instance, while the greatest painting might be the one which offers the greatest number of facts or thoughts, the notion that this is merely a gross (industrial ?) accumulation is avoided by Ruskin's notions that no one natural truth is the same as another (i.e. they are not mass-produced); that each new fact or thought represented by a painter is a further revelation of providential design; that natural truths, in a formula which implicitly opposes the actual social order with its dynamic industrial and social change and monotonous sameness of manufactured goods, compose "one eternal change - one infinite variety" (3: p. 58). And it is Infinity which is the key concept in Modern
Painters I, a phenomenon which may be immanent in the material creation, but which is surely beyond quantification. Despite his confident assertions, the question is problematic.

It is easy to see how, in fact, Repetition, which Ruskin opposes to Infinity, can exist as a mechanical reproduction, akin to mechanised production, of the same thoughts and facts:

What should we think of a poet who should keep all his life repeating the same thought in different words? and why should we be more lenient to the parrot painter, who has learned one lesson from the page of nature, and keeps stammering it out in eternal repetition, without turning the leaf? (3: p. 69).

But is Ruskin's presentation of Turner's practice, while it suggests a richer and more varied experience than the repetitive artists whom Ruskin berates, an exemplification of the key concept of Infinity? He argues that, perhaps, in forming a judgement about the truth of a painting, the first step is to look for "the expression of infinity always and everywhere, in all parts and division of parts". The major difference between the painter who expresses Infinity and the painter who merely repeats the same truth, is that the former has gone to nature, and the latter is trusting to himself:

Turner does not trust to himself. He has gone to nature, and he "never repeats himself. One picture is allotted to one truth; the statement is perfectly and gloriously made, and he passes on to speak of a fresh portion of God's revelation" (3: pp. 266/7).

No matter how perfect or glorious the statement, however, there has to be something oddly mechanical about this careful allotment of one picture to one truth, and in "passing on", Turner is imagined as behaving in the excursive mode of a tourist, an image consistent with Ruskin's invitations to his readers not only to look at, read, and interpret a landscape painting, but also to walk through it.
The significance of this has been developed by Helsinger: Ruskin

developed from the middle-class tourist's and reader's characteristic experience of scenery - as a succession of unfolding views offering opportunities for close study of details - a programme for the perceptual reform of his audience. In place of awed confrontation with a romantic sublime, Ruskin urged the value of progressive discovery... the tourist's way of looking at landscapes becomes the avenue to reforming contemporary culture.  

And Ruskin, commenting on Turner's influence on Copley Fielding's "brown moorland foregrounds", writes that the "spectator" is "compelled to go forward into the waste of hills; there, where the sun broke wide upon the moor, he must walk and wander; he could not stumble and hesitate over the near rocks, nor stop to botanize on the first inches of his path" (3: p. 324). Similarly, commenting on Turner's "The Fall of the Trees", he writes that

The articulation of such a passage as the nearest bank ... might serve us for a day's study if we were to go into it part by part ... you are everywhere kept upon round surfaces, and you go back on these you cannot tell how, never taking a leap, but progressing imperceptibly along the unbroken bank, till you find yourself a quarter of a mile into the picture, beside the figure at the bottom of the waterfall (3: pp. 490/491).

The progression from truth to truth is a formalisation of the act of walking through a non-urbanised, non-industrialised environment.

But how perfect is any one single painting by Turner, and how does a critical spectator assess the expression of infinity? Discussing the "Truth of Colour", Ruskin analyses the variation in tones in a mass of mountain seen against the light. The natural unity is this: that "every bush, every stone, every tuft of moss has its voice in the matter, and joins with individual character in the universal will". Ruskin assures the reader that in painting such a scene, the Old Master would have offered a "transparent, agreeable, but monotonous grey". But Turner only "would give the uncertainty; the palpitating,

perpetual change; the subjection of all to a great influence, without one part or portion being lost or merged in it; the unity of action with infinity of agent" (3: p. 178).

In this, and similar statements, potentially antagonistic elements in Ruskin's particular ideological formation relate comfortably. His bourgeois emphasis on the individual and the particular having each "its voice in the matter" sits unproblematically with his Romantic and paternalistic emphases on the organicist view of nature in "a great influence" and "the universal will". As long as the myriad individual details are indeed subject to a central control, there is no problem. But the relationship between multiple individual details and overall unity is not always so apparently easy.

Undoubtedly, in his depiction of objects, and in his presentation of fore-, middle-, back-, and far back-grounds, Turner uses "indistinctness" in a radically new way, and Ruskin recognises this. He argues that the Old Masters give measurable extensions "from sky to foliage, or from clouds to hills", and give these "their precise pitch of difference in shade". But Turner is operating quite differently. To create the effect of extensive space, he fills his canvas with light and shade and colour, with "pure white" for his "highest light" and "lampblack" for his "deepest shade", and between these, "he makes every degree of shade indicative of a separate degree of distance".

Ruskin duly quantifies the results when he claims that Turner gives "each step of approach, not the exact difference in pitch which it would have in nature, but a difference bearing the same proportion to that which his sum of possible shade bears to the sum of nature's shade". He also quantifies the difference between Turner and the Old Masters, for, where they express "one distance", he expresses "a hundred"; where they say "furlongs", he says "leagues". Finally, where the Old Masters offer spatial relationships
"like the scenes of a theatre", Turner gives "the imperceptible, multitudinous, symmetrical retirement of nature" (3: pp. 262/263).36

Of course, it is possible to argue that Ruskin is defending Turner against a frequent contemporary criticism of the painter's methods - that Turner paints against the grain by blurring his fore-grounds as well as his middle- and back-grounds. Helsinger offers such an interpretation of Ruskin's comments on Turner. She points out that Ruskin justifies Turner's use of indistinctness on the basis of selective focus - you simply can't see everything in focus simultaneously. She argues that, for Ruskin, Turner achieves a greater effect of extended space by blurring both his fore-grounds and far back-grounds without reducing the amount of detail being suggested, and that, for Ruskin, this avoidance of any loss of suggested detail is "a central part of Turner's technique of representing space".37

She further argues that, by contrast with the Old Masters, Turner's depiction of objects may be less distinct, but that he is "more precise in his visual indication of them". This leads Helsinger to offer three important observations.

Firstly, Turner makes greater co-operative demands on the viewer because of his greater suggestiveness in his use of line, light, and colour. But, secondly, although he does not depict objects with a high degree of definition, that does not mean that he leaves any room for free association. His fore- and back-grounds remain "full"; in Ruskin's words,

throughout the picture, the expression of space and size is dependent on obscurity, united with, or rather resultant from, exceeding fullness. We destroy both space and size,

36 Possibly Ruskin is here replying directly to Waagen's criticism of Turner (See p. 7 above.)
either by the vacancy which affords us no measure of space, or by the distinctness which gives us a false one (3: p. 339).

Thirdly, in dealing with "indistinctness", we are dealing with "a visual version of the familiar romantic interest in the unfinished or incomplete", but Ruskin's version of "romantic incompleteness ... places particular emphasis on the precise directions for imaginative activity which paintings and texts can provide".38

As an example, she instances Ruskin's comments on Turner's "Mercury and Argus". The passage below occurs in the "Truth of Space", where Ruskin is writing about how such a truth is dependent on the power of the eye, and he instances Turner's representations of distances in the painting:

Abundant beyond the power of the eye to embrace or follow, vast and various beyond the power of the mind to comprehend, there is yet not one atom in its whole extent and mass which does not suggest more than it represents; nor does it suggest vaguely, but in such a manner as to prove that the conception of each individual inch of that distance is absolutely clear and complete in the master's mind, a separate picture fully worked out: but yet, clearly and fully as the idea is formed, just so much of it is given, and no more, as nature would have allowed us to see; just so much as would enable a spectator of experience and knowledge to understand almost every minute fragment of separate detail, but appears, to the unpractised and careless eye, just what a distance of nature's own would appear, an unintelligible mass. Not one line out of the millions there is without meaning, yet there is not one which is not affected and disguised by the dazzle and indecision of distance. No form is made out, and yet no form is unknown (3: p. 210).

But how precise are the directions which this passage is giving? I think that the relationship between the multiple details of a painting and its overall unity is not being demonstrated but obfuscated in the sheerly extravagant and contradictory claims which Ruskin is making. To make a simple point, if the detail is too abundant for the eye, and too various for the mind, by what authority, other than his personal status as a "spectator of experience and knowledge", on both of which qualifications he has already placed a

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severe limitation, does Ruskin state so confidently that every detail suggests more than it represents, and that every one of the millions of lines has meaning?

Even more troublesome is the example which Ruskin advances to support the argument in the paragraph quoted above. He suggests that the truth of the system of drawing which he is describing might be better understood by considering the possibilities in the drawing of "the distant character of rich architecture". The example he gives is Westminster Abbey seen from the top of Highgate Hill on a clear summer's morning at five o'clock. The visual problem is that, at such a distance, the eye cannot distinguish the many vertical lines of the building, and any attempt to do so is self-defeating; but if you look at the building "generally", there is an impression of symmetry and arrangement. So far, there is no problem with Ruskin's argument, but when he comes to speculate on how Turner, as opposed to an Old Master, would represent such a scene, he swiftly dismisses any potential efforts of an Old Master as undoubtedly "broad caricature of the delicate building, felt at once to be false, ridiculous and offensive". Turner, however, (and as a speculation, is this extravagant praise actually any fairer to him than the ridicule is to the Old Master?); Turner,

and Turner only, would follow and render on canvas that mystery of decided line, that distinct, sharp, visible, but unintelligible and inextricable richness, which, examined part by part, is to the eye nothing but confusion and defeat, which, taken as a whole, is all unity, symmetry, and truth (3: pp. 210/11).

The latter part of this conjecture presents no problems - what you see of the Abbey at the distance proposed is what you see - an overall impression in which distance forbids the discrimination of fine detail. This simple observation, with which Ruskin begins his speculation, robs the word "inextricable" of the rhetorical force with which he seeks to invest it by appending it to the word "unintelligible", because he has already signalled to
us the impossibility created by distance of extricating the detail of the Abbey's rich surface detail. But then how can the material detail of one canvas be both "distinct, sharp, visible" - and "inextricable" and "unintelligible"? Equally, how can such richness be "unintelligible", when we know that all that prevents us from having intelligence of it is no more than the distance from which we are looking at it? And what is this "mystery of decided line"?

The point, I think, is not that this is "bad" writing. The difficulties which it presents originate from the enterprise which is Modern Painters 1. On the one hand, Ruskin is committed to demonstrating Turner's greatness as a landscape artist. That cannot be taken for granted in his readers. However, he does take for granted in his readers a particular view of nature as a divinely ordained multiplicity of phenomena to which the very best instincts of human beings have been providentially adapted.

It is always divinely created external phenomena first, and human response, constituting human "nobleness", second. But Providence, in the very conservative traditions which Ruskin inherits, is essentially and ultimately arcana, unknowable, and its mystery is not for demonstration. How therefore can an artistic enterprise which, according to Ruskin, is dedicated to representing the myriad truths of that ultimately mysterious creation, be demonstrated to have succeeded in its aims? Part of Ruskin's answer to this question is to offset the Materialistic accounting vocabulary which he employs throughout the first volume of Modern Painters with a vocabulary which refers to a metaphysical dimension which defies accounting and explanation. (This is the established procedure of the Vitalist Natural Philosopher - see below: pp. 246 - 252.)

The same problems are there as Ruskin seeks to define the unity of Turner's whole output, rather than single paintings. One such attempt appears at the end of the first
section of part two. According to Ruskin, the Old Masters never approach any idea of nature as a great system, and simply take from the natural world whatever images suit their purpose at any particular moment. It is not until the emergence of the modern school of landscape painting that an attempt is made to give an "an entire statement of truth", to reveal, in fact, the "links" of what Ruskin calls "this mighty chain" of the truth. The judgement on the Old Masters is, perhaps, dubious, but the advice which he offers to the reader regarding the productions of contemporary landscape art is very interesting:

That then which I would have the reader inquire respecting every work of art of undetermined merit submitted to his judgement, is, not whether it be a work of especial grandeur, importance, or power, but whether it have any virtue or substance as a link in this chain of truth; whether it have recorded or interpreted anything before unknown; whether it have added one single stone to our heaven-pointing pyramid, cut away one dark bough, or levelled one rugged hillock in our path (3: pp. 82/85).

This is, undoubtedly, one element of Ruskin's concept of infinity made clear in a very material way - landscape art, exemplified of course in Turner's practice, as a continual revelation of the natural world, an ideal not very far from Joseph Priestley's call for the "complete discovery of the face of the earth" (see below p.238), and it reflects Ruskin's hopes for a system of world-wide observers who would send their findings back to the Meteorological Society (see above: p. 14). Ruskin's advice, as with so many of his comments on Turner and modern landscape painting, comes close to suggesting that art exists in one respect as a branch of Natural Philosophy.

But an art which constantly adds to the sum of knowledge is, like any Natural Philosophy which does so, faced with the age-old problem of interpreting the data so being accumulated, and, given Ruskin's insistence on coherence and unity, he is faced with the problem of demonstrating its unity and coherence.
There are difficulties in Ruskin's attempts to account for coherence in single paintings by Turner - there are difficulties in his attempts to demonstrate coherence in Turner's works taken as a whole. Echoing the letter to the Rev. W.L. Brown, he claims that in Modern Painters 1 he has shown "the perfect system of all truth ... formed by Turner's works" (3: p. 406), and that the painter "is the only man who has ever given an entire transcript of the whole system of nature, and is, in this point of view, the only perfect landscape painter whom the world has ever seen (3: 441). The claims are excessive, but that is not what is at point here. Rather, what disables Ruskin's argument is this: he devotes an enormous amount of time and energy to the careful classification of the observable phenomena, clouds, earth, water, and vegetation, which are the subject of landscape painting, to demonstrate the truth of Turner's representation of them. If you accept the detailed cataloguing section by section, and the detailed reference to individual paintings, then at least Ruskin has made a convincing case for Turner having achieved a fairly comprehensive representation of natural phenomena. But he pushes his argument beyond what is strictly observable, beyond the level of the knowable.

In "Of the Region of the Rain-cloud", Ruskin is commenting on the drawing of transparent vapour in Turner's "Long Ship's Lighthouse, Land's End". His reading of the painting rests on the relationship between multiplicity of detail and a unifying principle, in this case, "the independent passion, the tumultuous separate existence, of every wreath of writhing vapour", and the "one omnipotence of storm". But Ruskin's comment on why this painting is representative of the way in which Turner's achievements mark him off from the rest creates difficulties: "It is this untraceable, unconnected, yet perpetual form, this fullness of character absorbed in universal energy, which distinguish nature and Turner from all their imitators" (3: p. 269). "Fullness of character" and "universal
energy" point precisely to that contradiction within Ruskin's ideological stance which it would be convenient to refer to as a tension between bourgeois individualism and Romantic organicism, a tension resolved for Ruskin in the subjection of individual detail to a centre of overall and undisputed (and unelected) control. But the importation of the "untraceable", the "unconnected", confuses matters and leaves Ruskin grasping for a metaphysical significance which he cannot demonstrate, but must assert.

The problem occurs early in Modern Painters, when Ruskin is discussing "Ideas of Power". In writing about execution, he makes what is a reasonable point - execution is at its most effective when it produces meaning without drawing attention to itself; execution which draws attention to itself at the expense of meaning can be condemned as ostentation or pretension. But what follows is hardly reasonable:

Nature is always mysterious and secret in her use of means; and art is always likest her when it is most inexplicable. That execution which is least comprehensible, and which therefore defies imitation (other qualities being supposed alike), is the best (3: p. 40).

First, he seems to be contradicting what he has asserted four pages earlier regarding artistic execution. There he argues (3: p. 37) that it takes only the "first five chalk touches" to bring "a head into existence out of nothing", but that, as the work starts to move towards technical perfection, the sensation of the amount of power which has been invested in the productive process is more and more obscured. This notion has clear relationships with his assertion that "The picture which has the nobler and more numerous ideas, however awkwardly expressed, is a greater and better picture than that which has the less noble and less numerous ideas, however beautifully expressed" (3: p. 11). Both have clear lines of relationship to his later condemnations of modern manufacturing processes which sacrifice the work of the hand to the work of the
machine. There is nothing mysterious, or inexplicable, or incomprehensible here. But, perhaps, in the passage which I quoted above, Ruskin is seeking another strategy which will, implicitly, mark off the world of Nature and Art from contemporary manufacturing. Certainly, if Nature is "always mysterious and secret in her use of means", then you are as far as you can get, in some senses, from a cheap process for refining sugar which, despite any secrecy or mystery generated by industrial patents, is a process available for rational explanation. Similarly, if artistic execution "defies imitation", then it is far removed from the activity of mass production. But by the time Ruskin comes to write about the "Truth of Chiaroscuro", he seems to have forgotten the principle of the mystery and secrecy in Nature's operations which has been so carefully enunciated. He directs the reader's attention to the ways in which nature arranges light and shade. His discussion leads into an attack on other writers on art who have noticed the "great principle of nature in this respect". But then, he offers this comment in which nature's means are by no means "mysterious", "secret" or "inexplicable":

I believe I shall be perfectly well able to prove, in following parts of the work, that "mere natural light and shade" is the only fit and faithful attendant of the highest art; and that all tricks, all visible intended arrangement, all extended shadows and narrow lights, everything, in fact, in the least degree artificial, or tending to make the mind dwell upon light and shade as such, is an injury, instead of an aid, to conceptions of high ideal dignity. I believe I shall be able also to show, that nature manages her chiaroscuro a great deal more neatly and cleverly than people fancy; that "mere natural light and shade" is a very much finer thing than most artists can put together, and that none think that they can improve upon it but those who never understood it (3: p. 192).

Apart from a further claim to special "experience and knowledge" (see above p. 34), there is here a contradiction between the very material natural truths which Ruskin is classifying and the metaphysical dimension and purpose which he asserts to be manifest in the observable phenomena; just as there is a contradiction, in Ruskin's comments, between Turner's very material representation of those unending natural truths and his
representations of nature's infinity - its perpetual variation. Ruskin's careful, even laborious, categorisation of the truths of the natural world produces that world in its unquestionable solidity, but yokes to it a subjectivity of belief and response which not only insistently offers itself as dealing in the inexplicable and mysterious, but also claims that it is dealing in divinely sanctioned and objectively verifiable qualities and truths. Whereas, in fact, Ruskin's references to the inexplicable and the mysterious are offered as a reference to a higher order of meaning which will redeem his, and Turner's, observations from the merely material, the overall effect of Modern Painters 1 is the exact reverse. It is the unremitting materiality of the observed phenomena, as they troop in an orderly fashion through Ruskin's counting-house, which calls into question the mysterious and opaque metaphysics of the text; and the more insistent that Ruskin is on elevating observable data to a metaphysical status, the less and less convincing are the metaphysics.

Ruskin produces the detail of the natural world in its solidity, individuality and particularity; but the inexplicable and mysterious metaphysical world of significance which he invokes eclipses the particularity of the natural phenomena which he so values, by subjecting it to overall centres of control, a metaphysical, organicist paternalism which, in one form and another, does not disappear from his work. Where Ruskin seeks to raise the world of observable phenomena and its greatest interpreter to the status of an indisputably cosmic vision, in fact, he confounds his own enterprise in a mystification ("infinity", "perpetual variation") of the careful and finite material accounting in which the negotiations of the text are essentially grounded.

But as I have tried to suggest several times already, his assertions concerning the unity of art, the particularity of the lessons which it offers, the preference of process and
technical imperfections over finished products repeating the same lesson over and over, and his preference of thought over mere grammar, can also be seen as an implicit attempt to rescue artistic products from the unremitting commercialism and industrial production of the day.
CHAPTER THREE:

A THING OF BEAUTY IS AN OBJECT OF NEGOTIATION.

It is interesting to note, in this context, that what is not on the agenda in Ruskin's material accounting is the market value of the paintings by Turner and others for which John James Ruskin regularly paid out, a process by which, of course, artistic products are transformed through the creation of a market value into commodities and which led to a number of tensions between Ruskin and his father.

Elements in the family correspondence in the 1830's and 1840's sit oddly with the financially innocent view of landscape painting offered in the first two volumes of Modern Painters, in which Ruskin asserts an autonomy for Turner which not only explicitly rejects convention and tradition, and the particular social conditions of the painter's life, but also suppresses such matters as the patron, the agent and the studio. In fact, one could be forgiven, when reading Ruskin, for taking away an impression that Turner's landscapes were painted in situ.

In 1839, John James Ruskin wrote to Margaret Ruskin about his activities in "snatching" water-colours, and details for her his purchases.39 As he does so, he casually mixes aesthetic appreciation and financial calculation. He has, for instance, engaged in a moment of impulse buying and acquired "On the Thames off Purfleet" by Edward Duncan for "only 5 Gs", but really it is "too fine" for him. A fortnight later he records, apologetically, his purchase of "Ruins of Monastery of Alcobaca" by James Holland. He assures Margaret that it is "very cheap", and, without specifying the price, he comments

39Van Akin Burd (1973): p. 599. Further references in this section to Van Akin Burd will, for ease, be given in the text as (p. -).
on its "high fine work" and "fine figures" (p. 606). In fact, the one work by Holland cost him twenty-five guineas, exactly what he had paid a fortnight earlier for four watercolours.

A year earlier, he is complaining about losing the chance to acquire "Ulverstone" by William C. Evans ("only 10 Gs"); being "sorely tempted" by a J.D. Harding but finding it "priced 15 Gs. too much by 5"; losing the chance to acquire Prout's "Louvain" because he "grudged 12 gns more"; and worrying about losing any pleasure in what he is doing because he is caught between "the fear of doing wrong - being extravagant" and "the desire to buy a picture or two" (p. 515). A few days later, he is complaining about the new Queen buying works by Prout, Copley Fielding, Frederick Tayler, and Peter DeWint, and threatening to inflate prices (p. 518).

But then Ruskin himself was also caught in this desire to buy but not to lean too heavily on the family purse. Sometime around 1843, he acquired a portfolio of Blake's drawings, but writes to George Richmond with various reservations about the purchase, trying to balance his apprehension about his father's reactions, and Richmond's response to Ruskin's wish to economise by retaining only a few drawings from the portfolio.

Ostensibly, Ruskin is seeking to avoid disappointing his father who had been fairly generous in the matter of commissions to Turner after Ruskin had conceived the notion that Turner would not be able to work for very much longer. He tells Richmond that his father has been "very good" to him, and he has been assuring him that he will not allow himself to be so "captived" by any other painter as he has been by Turner. Clearly asking his father to foot the 100 guineas bill for the Blake is very daunting, but, in fact, he managed to negotiate a satisfactory arrangement with the agent and eventually bought only a few of the drawings, which, according to his Library Editors, he disposed of at
some later date - which makes one passage from the letter to Richmond quite ironic. Clearly motivated by a desire to avoid both a wrangle with his father, and giving Richmond some offence over what his action might imply with regard to his attitude to Blake's work, he writes as follows: "Forgive me this [i.e. wanting to retain only four or five drawings]. I do assure you I love the memory of your friend, and I shall love these drawings, and never part with them, but I am afraid of giving pain to my Father" (36: p. 32). It is also worth noting, at this point, Ruskin's assertion in a passage from the manuscript of The Seven Lamps that Blake stands with Turner as one of the two undoubted geniuses of the early nineteenth century (See below pp: 160 - 162).

There is another side to John James Ruskin's activities in the water-colour market. He records that, at the Exhibition of the Society of Painters in Water-Colours of 1837, he has bought a piece by Prout as an act of "charity" because Prout is ill with "an awful Discharge from side" (p. 515). Several days later, he has bought "a small 6 Gns bit of Frankfort after hearing more of Prout's sufferings" (p. 518). A year later, writing from London on the 27th. April, 1839, he still feels "sorry for Prout", but he buys nothing because the painter offers only "small pictures finer & higher priced & his manner <is> on the <dec>line" (p. 607).

In the same letter, he states openly: "I do rejoice in the power of buying a living artists [sic] picture".

Six years later, while Ruskin was engaged in his first independent tour of Italy, his father sent him a review from The Athenaeum of the Old Water Colour Society Exhibition and received in return a comment which mixes aesthetic response and financial concerns in the paternal manner:

There is a sort of Harrisonian sound about the Athenaeum extract, but come from whom it will, I am very grateful & glad to see it in the paper, and to find that really I
have done some definite good, besides getting compliments. I expected not so much. I don't understand the sales at all - my book hasn't had much to do with that, for it praised none of the artists who sold so high. I am very glad to see Harding's sky noticed, for he was afraid of it, & I pushed him on, and told him to put more fire and smoke into it, and you see it has done him good.  

Ruskin's disclaimer of any influence on the art market is nevertheless accompanied by a claim for a different kind of patronal influence on the final artistic product.

Three months later, on July 26th, 1845, John James Ruskin wrote to his son about the impact of Modern Painters I on the sale of Turner's work. "Griffith," he writes, "told me yesterday that Turner's Gallery is clearing ... You sell his pictures". On the 20th August, he informs him that "Foord says, he has packed off 1 Large picture to America & another large one to Munich ... you have cleared him out as I told you".

Ruskin's reply is another disclaimer, but more pronounced. He tells his father that he is both "glad & sorry" that Turner's gallery has been cleared, and then clears himself of any possibly questionable motives for the praise offered to Turner in Modern Painters I: "I am sure nobody ever worked for less selfish ends than I". He then reassures his father that "I will do all I can in the next book to extinguish the former one" (No. 117: p. 192).

Perhaps the more pronounced disclaimer is to be put down to the painter in question and Ruskin's extravagant praise of him, but no matter how highly esteemed Turner may have been by both father and son, he does not escape their financial calculations.

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40 "Berne, Switzerland" by J.D. Harding.

41 Shapiro (1972): No. 47: p. 91. All further references to Shapiro in this section will, for ease, be given in the text as (No. - : p. -).

42 Turner's agent.

43 Ruskin's frame-maker.
At the beginning of 1840, John James Ruskin acquired Turner's "Winchelsea" for his son. It was priced at £57.5s, but he paid only £45 for it, and traded in Aaron Penley's "Our Village" in part-purchase (p. 635 - 636). When he acquired Turner's "Slavers Throwing Overboard the Dead and Dying" in 1843, he part-exchanged a Cattermole to reduce the price from 250 guineas to £241.10s (p. 745). And while Ruskin was in Venice in 1845, his father was haggling about three drawings commissioned for his son from Turner. Originally the deal had been that Ruskin would take one at 80 guineas, and the other two only if he liked them. John James Ruskin complains about Turner trying to raise the price to 100 guineas each. In the end he paid only 80 guineas each. If the father was heavily involved in the art market, then the son is not in any way distanced from financial considerations where Turner is concerned.

Early in his Italian tour of 1845, Ruskin repeats to his father a set of instructions for any transactions regarding his Turner watercolours:

I still say exactly what I said before leaving - that with the exception of Dudley, Winchelsea, Gosport, Richmond, & Llanthony, I should also be willing to take new lamps for old ones; but on no sacrifice, never giving two for one, or anything of that kind, but only adding the esteemed value of the new work to the price we paid - but that I should be sorry to lose any of my drawings for oils, or for anything in the world but what Turner is now doing or has done within two years of watercolours from his own sketches.

I rather value Derwent because it was at Keswick that I first recollect ever feeling nature or loving it, but even that should go for a good Swiss drawing - but I don't want to part with any - and pray let nothing make you sacrifice 10s. of their value (No. 42: p. 83).

It is interesting that Ruskin is prepared to part-exchange Turner water-colours for new ones in terms ("adding the esteemed value of the new work to the price which we paid") which are to do with the market value of the water-colours, and yet connect with his obviously high appreciation of Turner's later drawings.
His later attitude over Turner's water-colour, "Christ Church, Oxford", is, however, questionable. He writes to his father that he is pleased that the "Oxford" has not been sold for 50 guineas for I was provoked with Jennings\(^{44}\) for always sneaking & worming about what we paid as if we wanted to make a profit on it - now I don't want to make a farthing of profit on it, but I told him over & over again - <that> "Oxford is worth 70 guineas to me, and it shall not go for less - if it were offered at 65 I should buy it" - and I should have been horribly vexed if you had let it go [at] a low mark to anybody (No. 68: p. 125).

John James Ruskin had bought the "Oxford" in August, 1840, for £50. Ironically, in the light of Ruskin's comments, his father part-exchanged it for £50 in February, 1846. At least, there was no profit from the water-colour.

There are several other comments home by Ruskin during his 1845 tour worth quoting here. He confesses himself "exceedingly amazed" at the high prices fetched by modern pictures and the low prices fetched by old pictures during a Christie's sale in April. Clarkson Stanfield, David Roberts and William Mulready had all fetched higher prices than expected, whereas a Corregio, expected to fetch 3,000 guineas, had sold for only 150, and a Parmegiano, expected to fetch 500, had been bought in for 36. Ruskin is particularly scathing about Sir Augustus Wall Callcott's "An English Landscape". Expected to fetch 565 guineas, it had been the star of the sale, and went for 950. According to Ruskin, however, "Callcott's cattle piece is not worth 50£" (sic) (No. 41: p. 80).

Earlier, he had complained to his father about the National Gallery's purchase of two paintings by Guido for £940, paintings which he considers "not worth sixpence" (No. 32: p. 63). But Giotto is a different kettle of fish - driven by his anxiety over what is

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\(^{44}\)Robert Jennings, publisher, book and print seller, and publisher of Turner's engravings of "England and Wales".
happening to Italian art, he proposes to set up a subscription fund to save the art which he sees as in danger of complete destruction from Italian neglect and French vandalism; and even values one of his own drawings from a Giotto fresco, "Patience of Job", as "worth any money", it being "as Giottoesque as can be" (No. 37: p. 71).

Perhaps the most ironic comment in the correspondence between father and son comes from the former. Writing from London in 1845, he recounts a quarrel going on between Turner and Bicknell:45

Bicknell is quarrelling with Turner on two points - He gave him 120 Gs for loan of Temeraire to engrave & Turner besides demands 50 proofs. Bicknell resists & sends 8. Then he found Water Colour in Whalers & rubbed out some with Handky. He went to Turner who looked Daggers & refused to do anything, but at last he has taken it back to alter. [David] Roberts admires the picture but all say it is not finished.46

This all sounds fairly petty and John James Ruskin pins the blame firmly on Turner's haste. He has already in this letter commented on the water-colours commissioned from Turner as not being properly "executed", and therefore to be reckoned in "pecuniary value" as lower than previous Turnerian water-colours which he has acquired. This connection between an aesthetic judgement and market values, and his reservations about Turner's lack of full execution becomes a fairly severe criticism of the painter in which he quotes Bicknell and Roberts who "account for [Turner's] hurry and disregard for future fame by putting Water Colours by his stronger passion, love of money". He then tells his son that he is "sorry" that Turner "sacrifices his great fame to present effect of object".47

45Elhanan Bicknell (1788 - 1861), an important collector of Turner and other British painters, lived near the Ruskins at Herne Hill*: Shapiro (1972): No. 6: p. 11: n. 3.


47Ibid.
John James Ruskin's remarks on Turner reflect remarks made by Ruskin six months earlier in a letter from Paris, in which he compares French and English painters:

As a general thing, the difference between our french (sic) and English Schools seems to me to be, that the French are working for fame, & not for money, and every man does his utmost and does what he thinks and feels to be best - but as most of them think wrongly & feel coarsely, the result is still very painful.

In our schools, every man is working for money, is doing as little as he possibly can to gain it, and is not doing what he thinks best, but what he thinks the public will like. Hence the result is commonly an utter abortion ... (No. 5: p. 8). 48

It does seem a pity that such trenchant comments on actual painterly practice should remain buried inside a private correspondence, and not feature in the pages of Modern Painters 1 and 2.

48Interestingly, Constable had launched the same criticism years earlier: "Could you but see the folly and ruin exhibited at the British Gallery, you would go mad. Van der Velde, and Gaspar Poussin, and Titian, are made to spawn multitudes of abortions: and for what are the great masters brought into this disgrace? only to serve the purpose of sale": Leslie (1843): p. 113.
Modern Painters 2 is, initially, despite its style being modelled on Hooker, couched in a "scientific idiom" which owes much to the Natural Philosophy described in Appendices A and B (see below pp. 236 - 252). Nominally, the third part of Ruskin's project, "Of Ideas of Beauty" begins with a cautious Newtonian pragmatism. Whereas Modern Painters 1 had dealt with things "demonstrably sensible", the new work will deal with "the value and meaning of mental impressions", and the enterprise must therefore be undertaken with a modesty and caution "proportioned" (that characteristic Ruskinian participle) to the "difficulty of determining the likeness, or community, of such impressions [i.e. of Beauty], as they are received by different men" (4: p. 25).

Despite this difficulty, however, Ruskin sets himself and his readers an agenda which is far from cautious - it is to examine the "qualities of material objects" which are "calculated" to inspire responses to the Beautiful, and to determine what is "demonstrably constant in their address to human nature" by divesting "every object of that which makes it accidentally or temporarily pleasant and [by stripping] it of distinctive qualities". The grand objective of such a programme is to reason through to what any beautiful object has "in common with all other beautiful things", and to determine "the cause of its ultimate and true delightfulness" (4: p. 62).

The programme is remarkably similar to that of Eighteenth Century Mechanist and Materialist Natural Philosophy which relied on observed regularities in property and reaction; the Mechanist used such regularities to reason through to the ultimate particles and forces which cause natural phenomena; the Materialist regarded such regularities as
caused by unique substances, present in a body, which produced some characteristic presence in proportion to (that characteristic Ruskinian modifier again) the quantity of substance present.⁴⁹

Ruskin shares the Materialist and Mechanist reliance on observed regularities which, for him, are quite simply what all beautiful things have in common; and he shares the Mechanist belief that such regularities can be used to reason through to ultimate causes; in his case, the cause of all beautiful objects' "ultimate and true delightfulness" (4: p. 62). This is not, however, a case of chasing the epitome of the Beautiful in One.

Ruskin relies also on the Materialist assumption that effect-causing substances are present in a body, an assumption which supports his quantification procedures. He constantly emphasises, for instance, that what he is observing inheres in the body or object. He refers to the "inherent worthiness and glory of God's works" (4: p. 143. n.1.); a plant's "emanation of inherent life", and our ideas of its "inherent happiness" (4: p. 153). And one of the observed regularities which he adduces is the "inherent power of all representations of infinity on the human heart" (4: p. 81).

As regards Infinity, he argues for that as a "presence" in paintings (4: p. 81), as he does for Repose (4: pp. 117/119). Divinity, also, is presented as a presence in anything which is an object of life, and so are pleasures of sight (4: pp. 46/47).

Given Ruskin's typological inheritance from his Evangelical beliefs, then, of course the connections which I am suggesting between his theorising about Beauty, and Mechanist and Materialist Natural Philosophy, could be described as tenuous since anyone who believes in a God who inheres in His material creation, has a central

⁴⁹See Appendix B: pp. 245 - 246.
principle to inform particular observations, such as that on Infinity. But when, in the first
two volumes of Modern Painters, Ruskin goes much further than regarding Infinity as
"the Type of Divine Incomprehensibility" (4: p. 13), and regards it as a "presence" in a
painting which can be quantified, and, further, asserts that its power over human
response is in proportion to its presence, then he is definitely adopting the assumptions
and approaches of a Materialist Natural Philosopher.

Infinity (4: p. 81), Symmetry (4: p. 125), Curves (4: p. 106), Variety and Unity (4: p. 96), and Proportion (4: p. 102) are all quantified. For instance,

A forest of all manner of trees is poor, if not disagreeable, in effect; a mass of one
species of tree is sublime. It is therefore only harmonious and chordal variety, that variety
which is necessary to secure and extend unity (for the greater the number of objects
which by their differences become members of one another, the more extended and
sublime is their unity), which is rightly agreeable (4: pp. 96/97).

Furthermore, in disputing Burke's definition of Proportion, Ruskin insists that the
whole meaning of the term has reference to the adjustment and functional
correspondence of infinitely variable "quantities" (4: p. 109); that the delight which
Proportion stimulates is caused by our perception of "the various involutions of these
quantities" (4: p. 111); and that Apparent Proportion can be defined as "the melodious
connection of quantities" (4: p. 112).

Even Vital and Typical Beauty can be quantified. In assessing how well a creature
fulfils its "appointed function", it is necessary to determine whether "if scorpion, it have
poison enough, or if tiger, strength enough, or of dove, innocence enough, to sustain
rightly its place in creation, and come up to the perfect idea of dove, tiger, or scorpion"
(4: p. 163). And in seeking to define what he takes to be Ideality in a species, Ruskin
argues that the ideal form of a species should be regarded as that in which its generic
qualities are most perfectly developed and showing no signs of decline, and "all the
characters of vital and typical beauty are commonly most concentrated in them". However, the arrangement and proportion of these characters vary at different periods. Thus, youth has more vigorous beauty than age, age more repose than youth; youth "more typical outward fairness", age more "expanded and etherealised moral expression" (4: pp. 174/5).

Of course, part of Ruskin's programme is to move aesthetic theorising away from subjective responses to the notion of human responses as determined by Providentially designed external influences. This is clearly behind his insistence (4: pp. 42/3) that an inquiry into the "Pleasures of Sense" should start not with the receiving subject but with the external phenomena which produce pleasure: "We must not assume that man is the nobler animal, and then deduce the nobleness of his delights; but we must prove the nobleness of his delights, and hence the nobleness of the animal" (4: pp. 42/3).

But proving the nobleness of the animal from the nobleness of his delights has its "down-side". This is very evident from a passage which Ruskin did not use in the published version of Modern Painters 2. In this, he attacks erroneous uses of the term "Beauty". He contrasts two scenes. The first, to which he devotes a paragraph, presents a view of the Pontine Marshes, which are characterised as a "poisonous desert", over which a "dull purple haze hangs in the air". There is the merest suggestion of any human presence in odd scatterings of tufa, tiles and bricks. (The description reads rather like a diseased version of an Ann Radcliffe landscape - not only in the haze and the vestigial human presence, but even in the way in which, at the end of the paragraph, the dome of

50In doing so, he avoids any contamination of his own theories by the newer emphases on the influence of external circumstances as introduced, for instance, by the Lamarckians who were specifically targeted by the contributors to the conservative writings on aspects of Natural Philosophy known collectively as The Bridgewater Treatises.
St. Peter's plays the part of a Castle Udolpho by being seen emerging above a swell of the desert.)

The second scene is of the Lake of Brienz; the Gothic allusion is reversed: "The crags [tower?] up above our head with purple clusters of violets nestling in their crannies, and starry moss gleaming upon their sides". According to Ruskin, the Lake excites "joy, hope, trust in the Divine Love", but the Marshes excite "fear and pity, keen sense of human weakness, depravity, transitoriness, and fearful apprehension of Divine Justice".

The point of the contrast is to refute Alison's concept of "sublime delight" which fails to allow a distinction between two such scenes and will attribute Beauty to the first because of the false syllogism which lies at the basis of his theory, i.e. "Beauty causes some kind of emotion, therefore anything that causes any kind of emotion is beautiful".

Ruskin's attempt to refute this error is representative of his thinking at this time. He argues that it might appear strange that such false arguments could be maintained against the "strong sentiment of nature". The explanation which he offers connects his sense of a correctly determined aesthetic response as very much an esoteric activity with the operations of that activity being determined by qualities inherent in beautiful phenomena:

The fact is that the power of perceiving beauty is like that of an ear for music, totally wanting in many individuals from their cradle, nor will all the advantages of education ever bestow it; while on the other hand in those who naturally possess it, it may be totally destroyed, and is usually blunted and injured in a very great degree by disadvantageous education, so that it is no wonder if, hearing others talking about qualities in objects of which they themselves have no perception, they attach to the terms such meanings as their own pleasures may suggest or supply, and take it for granted that there can be no qualities whatever in material things, but those intellectual relations which alone they themselves are capable of receiving (4: pp. 367/368).

51The colour is redeemed.
Hence his rejection of Association; in the paragraph which immediately follows the famous definition of Typical and Vital Beauty, he explicitly rejects Association as interfering with "the attractiveness of inherent beauty" (4: p. 64).

Association also contradicts his quantifying methods. As Helsinger points out, "Ruskin's definition of great art in Modern Painters I ... contradicts the associationist demand that painting express a single powerful idea or emotion to stimulate imaginative association in the mind of the viewer." Great art, after all, according to Ruskin, is that which offers "the greatest number of the greatest ideas" (3: p. 92).

I would like to suggest in this section that Ruskin's anti-Utilitarianism, which is sometimes explicit in attitudes which he announces to modern developments, and always implicit in his presentation of things which are positively non-Utilitarian in a sense which would be understood by the Benthamites, is related to the eclectic way in which he draws on Eighteenth Century theories of matter.

I refer particularly to the division which he makes between the technical considerations involved in the production of art and the meanings which art offers to its spectators. This particular division seems to be related to his distaste for the notion that any kind of Beauty can actually inhere in the internal mechanisms and anatomical arrangements of creatures and the practical and socially beneficial functions of creatures and plants, and his distaste for the attribution of the appearances of Beauty to internal mechanisms and practical functions, both of which distastes seem to be related to the anti-Utilitarian positions which he occupies.53

In advancing these arguments, Ruskin engages in what I take to be not simply eclectic but inconsistent, because eclectic, theories of how matter is organised.

Here, Ruskin's famous definition of Vital and Typical Beauty can be located in a new context - as the central statement of a theory of matter:

By the term, Beauty, then, properly are signified two things. First, that external quality of bodies already so often spoken of, and which, whether it occur in a stone, flower, beast, or in man, is absolutely identical, which, as I have already asserted, may be shown in some sort to be typical of the divine attributes, and which therefore I shall, for

53The attitudes described here can be traced through to his rejections of machine-work and the use of cast-iron and other modern materials in such works as The Seven Lamps and The Opening of the Crystal Palace.
distinction's sake, call Typical Beauty; and, secondarily, the appearance of felicitous fulfilment of function in living things, more especially of the joyous and right exertion of perfect life in man; and this kind of beauty I shall call Vital Beauty. (4: p. 64.)

Of course, in the first place, we have here yet another formula for resolving the problem of the unity of nature and the multiplicity of phenomena. Typical Beauty, which is "absolutely identical" as it appears in all phenomena, represents a Unity; Vital Beauty appears to allow for each individual phenomenon to assert precisely its individuality, although within an overall control, since the "exertion of perfect life" has to be "right". In this sense, the formula broadens the implications of his earlier observations on the way in which the individual details of a canvas are subject to an overall control.

The famous definition also serves as a formula to resolve a related problem. Ruskin is distinguishing between the manner in which the vegetable and animal creations share a vitality which is the impression upon them of their creator's energy; and the manner in which each member of the animate creation displays an energy characteristic of its species. The impression of divine energy on the material world creates specific form which is animated by individual energy. In the work of a committed Christian, the compromise offered by this formula is hardly surprising - the ghost in this particular machine is clearly none other than the vexed theological question of squaring the assumption of a Divine Providence with the obvious phenomenon of individual Free Will.

In Modern Painters: Volume 1, Ruskin, revaluing the notion of Excellence, offers a formula which is the prototype for the definition of Typical Beauty: "Whatever has been the subject of great power, bears about with it the image of that which created it, is what is commonly called 'excellent' " (3: p. 96). The impression of power on materials becomes a major component of Ruskin's aesthetic, particularly with reference to
architecture in *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, and *The Stones of Venice*, where it is, of course, one of the bases of his developing opposition to contemporary modes of industrial production, but is in itself an "industrial" concept of production rescued for high art from notions of the lower order of manufacturing utility.

In its initial formulations, and in its later developments, this component is connected with a second major component - Ruskin's Theory of Form.

There is an interesting omission in Ruskin's early arguments: he makes no reference to the characteristically Romantic theory of Organic Form. M.H. Abrams has demonstrated how organic form is consistently opposed by Romantic theorists to mechanic form, the latter resembling the theory of form implicit in Ruskin's notions of Power and Excellence. Coleridge, for instance, in his *Shakespearean Criticism*, distinguishes between organic form which is "innate" and "shapes as it develops itself from within", and mechanic form which is the impression on material of a "predetermined form"; A.W. Schlegel, in his *Essays on Dramatic Art and Literature*, also contrasts organic form, which is innate, "unfolds itself from within", and "reaches its determination simultaneously with the fullest development of the seed"; and mechanical form which is "imparted to any material through an external force, merely as an accidental addition, without reference to its character."^54

Ruskin would certainly agree with this emphasis on an appropriate form for a material, but, initially, his theory of form, with its stress on the energetic impression of form on material, is probably derived from his readings of Locke, Aristotle and Plato, and that especially English combination of Evangelical Theology and Conservative

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Natural Philosophy in which he was steeped. But, in fact, as his theory of form developed through the 1840s and 1850s, it began to bifurcate precisely in the terms indicated by Coleridge and Schlegel. In the famous definition quoted above, the bifurcation is already implicit in that Typical Beauty corresponds to Mechanic Form, and Vital Beauty to Organic.

As Ruskin has already argued, the one positive phenomenon which the painter can represent is specific form, which results, at this point in his theorising, from the impression of divine energy on the material world. The painter, like the naturalist, works sui generis, a term readily applicable to Ruskin's field-work. Further, examined from this point of view, the definition of Vital and Typical Beauty reveals Ruskin as neo-Aristotelian rather than Platonist in his attitude to the material creation. An informed response to beauty is very much dependent upon first-hand, minutely detailed observation and classification of forms by specific characteristics which result from the impression of specific forms on a homogeneous undifferentiated matter. Since the publication of Linnaeus' *Systema Naturae* (1735), a neo-Aristotelian approach to natural phenomena had been very popular among Natural Philosophers. But Linnaeus' work was also involved in the development of scientific Materialism; the formal characteristics which were the basis for classification became material substances in which the characteristics actually inhered. 55

Ruskin's interests in formal characteristics, as I have suggested, do develop to some extent in this direction, for he insists that qualities and quantities do inhere in the phenomena, and he proposes to use such formal characteristics to investigate Beauty -

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but he is primarily and consciously concerned to see such characteristics as the manifestations of Vital and Typical Beauty, which he is very careful not to reify as secondary material agents such as light, heat, electricity, or magnetism, a position common to Materialist and Mechanist Natural Philosophers.56

Because of this, it must be emphasised that Ruskin's concern with "external qualities" and "appearances" in the material world, his "science of aspects" was, by the 1840s, scientifically old-fashioned. The definition of Vital and Typical Beauty relies on a system of priorities with which contemporary scientists would not have agreed. While Ruskin places a "science of appearances" above the study of internal structures and mechanical operations, contemporary science had already made the extensions from the classic pursuits of the naturalist to the more professional interests of the scientific specialist, but his old-fashioned emphasis has, however, an important function where one of the inherited problems of Natural Philosophy was concerned: the creation of the Cartesian dualism between the vital and physical forces of the universe. Newton's ethereal hypothesis had offered a possibility of overcoming this dualism. Ruskin's "felicitous fulfilment of function in living things" serves a similar purpose. External form is the physical expression not only of divine energy, but also of the internal forces and mechanisms of the individual creatures.

Interestingly, the first two volumes of Modern Painters propose a definition of form which belongs in an orthodox manner to the biological sciences:

As used in biology, form is a quality derived from the analysis of an object whereby its underlying structure is represented. It is not a chance projection like a shadow but is congruent with its object in constant lawful ways. It is subject to empirical verification by

56Ibid, and see also Appendix B: pp. 244 - 252.
measuring the object. Most importantly, it represents the processes governing the achieved structure of the plant or animal.\textsuperscript{57}

In his full definition of form, Ruskin, of course, insists on the objective verification of light which this modern definition rejects as "a chance projection". Yet his emphasis on beautiful appearances is connected also with his sense that Mechanist or Materialist explanations of natural phenomena are inadequate. He is later very near to a Vitalist theory of matter, but, at this early point in his work, his eclectic theories accept a corpuscularian substratum in which not only can vital qualities inhere, but in which particulate interactions themselves are actually responsible for vitality.

Matter "may remind us of moral perfections", but in his discussion of the material representation of Infinity, and of the particular organisations of matter as Types of Divine or Typical Beauty, Ruskin is concerned primarily not with an aesthetic question such as the appropriateness of this or that material in the representation of Infinity or Unity, but with the way these qualities inhere in matter as the evidence of the Intelligence which created the world. And this is both the problem and the affirmation of a Christian Natural Philosophy.

Unity, for instance, comprises unproblematically "the necessity of His inherence in all things that be, without which no creature of any kind could hold existence for a moment". All matter, apparently, is capable of unity, but in varying degrees. The unity of "men", for instance, (and the political implications of this endure in Ruskin's work) is in their fellowship, their "inseparable dependency on each other's being", and their "essential and perfect depending on their Creator's".

\textsuperscript{57}Ritterbush in Rousseau (1972): p. 32.
This is the highest form of material organisation which builds up "temples for the spirit". There is a lower form of organisation in the organic processes and structures of the non-human creation, and an even lower form of organisation in the "working and walking and clinging together" of matter which gives to every creature "whatsoever operation is for its glory and for others' good", weight to the waves, burning to the sunbeams, and power to the winds (4: pp. 93/94).

From this it is reasonable to infer, as I suggested above, that Ruskin regards matter as a homogeneous substratum which is fitted for its specific purposes by the kind of organisation imposed on it. The highest form is called simply "organisation"; the lower form is "affinity", "change and assimilation", after the manner of Eighteenth Century chemistry; and the lowest form of all, "walking and working and clinging together", suggests mechanical bases for observable phenomena. These, weight, burning, stability, and power, are specifically mentioned, and are explicable as the manifestations of certain organisations of matter. They are not qualities to be explained by the presence of quality-bearing substances, although Ruskin accepts Materialistic explanations of colour a few years later. 58 Here, however, he avoids the difficulties of a purely Mechanistic explanation in arguing that all forms of organisation are the product of divine intelligence; and, although the material substratum appears to be homogeneous, this in itself does not constitute unity, which has to be imposed.

In a very simple syllogistic move, Ruskin argues that Unity is necessary to the perfection of all things, and all that is necessary to perfection must be beautiful, and therefore some kind of Unity is essential to all forms of Beauty (4: p. 94). So he extends

58"Blue does not mean the sensation caused by a gentian on the human eye; but it means the power of producing that sensation; and this power is always there, in the thing, whether we are there to experience it or not" (5: p.202).
his theory of matter into an aesthetic criterion essential to any further enumeration of the 
appearances of Unity. The enumeration reveals further ramifications of the matter theory.

The action of one being on another creates Subjectional Unity; the action of the 
winds creates the unity of the clouds. The Unity of Sequence relies on the hallowed 
notion of the "great chain of being" which had been given an authoritative boost in 
Linnaeus' neo-Aristotelianism.59 This unity is imposed on things to form "links in chains, 
and steps in ascents, and stages in journeys" and manifests other forms of organisation:

... in matter ... the unity of communicable forces in their continuance from one thing 
to another ... the passing upwards and downwards of beneficent effects among all things, 
the melody of sounds, the continuity of lines, and the orderly succession of motions and 
times ... in spiritual creatures ... their own constant building up ... to higher perfection, 
and the singleness and straightforwardness of their tendencies to more complete 
communion with God (4: pp. 94/5).

Ruskin enumerates the unities hierarchically, and the highest unity is the unity of 
Membership, or Essential Unity,

which is the unity of things separately imperfect into a perfect whole; and this is the 
great unity of which other unities are bit parts and means; it is in matter the harmony of 
sounds and the consistencies of bodies, and among spiritual creatures their love and 
happiness and very life in God (4: p. 95).

His elaboration of the content of this Unity explains further his notion, expressed in the 
letter to the Rev. W.L. Brown, that each of Turner's paintings is done "with reference to 
itself alone", and yet manages to function as part of a great system. The geologist 
separates rocks according to their general and specific characters, and so obtains a more 
perfect unity. This unity can be based only on the recognition of difference between the 
objects observed and classified according to their external appearance, for the greatest 
Unity, that of Membership, cannot exist between things which are similar. The Unity,

therefore, is an objective property of the external world which has to be discovered, and not an abstract scheme imposed by a scientific discipline.

Unity can exist only between things different in their Variety. Here, Variety, a conventional notion in contemporary aesthetics, is being re-interpreted according to an observation of natural phenomena. Only the structures of lower creatures exhibit the combinations of many things which are similar, "as the many legs of a caterpillar, and the many arms and suckers of the radiata" (4: p. 95). Higher creatures do not exhibit a multiplicity of similar members, but their structures seem "commonly based on the principle of the unity of two things by a third" (4: p. 96).

On the basis of this, Ruskin rejects Alison's identification of Unity and Uniformity, and offers his own definition of Variety which is, of course, quantified:

It is therefore only harmonious and chordal variety, that variety which is necessary to secure and extend unity (for the greater number of objects which by their differences become members of one another, the more extended and sublime is their unity) which is rightly agreeable (4: pp. 96/7).

The redefinition of Variety prepares for a redefinition of Proportion consistent with the argument so far, but which leads to an arbitrary division between those old war-horses of literary criticism - Form and Content, Technique and Meaning. In the Unity of Sequence, Variety is excellently exemplified in musical melodies, which are connected by the differences of notes, and this connection is Proportion, of which there two kinds, Apparent and Constructive. The first exists "between quantities for the sake of connection only, without any ultimate object or causal necessity" and relates to content and meaning; the second has reference to "some function to be discharged by the quantities depending on their proportion", and relates to form and technique (4: p. 102).
This continues the divisions which he has already made between the mechanics of grammar and the nobility of thought, and between the lower and higher orders of utility. Apparent Proportion is a means of imposing Unity on things "distinct in similarity", may "consist with every other kind of unity", and may be considered as "lying at the root of most of our impressions of the beautiful" (4: pp. 102/3). It has, however, no connection with "utility, propriety, or expediency", and, from a Utilitarian point of view, exists gratuitously.

Whereas Apparent Proportion has essential connections with Beauty, Constructive Proportion, or, in its "scientific description", "the adaptation of quantities to functions", involves "mechanical considerations which have no more connections with ideas of beauty than the relation between the arms of a lever adapted to the raising of a given weight" (4: pp. 103/4).

The only aesthetic response which Ruskin's distaste for purely mechanical functions will allow to Constructive Proportion is a sense of "agreeableness", a sense that it is fitted for its purpose and congruent with the intelligence of its artificer.

At this point, Ruskin confronts, in characteristic manner, the traditions of aesthetic theory of which his early work is a continual revision, and cautions his reader against three conventional errors: denying the power of Apparent Proportion; attributing Beauty to the appearance of Constructive Proportion; and yet denying value to Constructive Proportion. The confrontation signals a further creation of aesthetic criteria from his Natural Philosophy, a process which begins with his consideration of beauty in curves.

For reasons derived from his various theories of matter and its organisation, Ruskin considers curves more beautiful than straight lines. Curves may be considered as composed of infinitely small straight lines, and the primary constituent of their beauty is
the relationship in any curve of these straight lines. The determining factor in the comparative beauty of curves is the manner in which the relationships of the small straight lines allows any of the qualities previously identified as "unities" to inhere in them. In the circle, for instance, the lines are equal, contain equal angles, and exclude the Unities of Connection and Sequence. The circle is, therefore, the least beautiful of curves, for the comparative beauty of curves depends on "the constant qualities involved in their equations", and "the adjustment and functional correspondence of infinitely variable quantities" (4: p. 109). This observation is verified by reference to the "universal forces of nature" on the "individual energies of the matter submitted to them". These are so "appointed and balanced" that their constant action is to create beautiful curves in all visible forms and virtually to exclude all circles. Once again, the external form and the appearances of Beauty are dependent on ways of organising matter, can be quantified, and are interpreted by Ruskin as exhibiting a crucial relationship between individual vitalities and a unifying overall control.

It is possible to talk of the comparative beauty of curves, and call the Apparent Proportion of one animal's form more beautiful than another's, because there are appointed degrees in the appearances of beauty. This, however, applies only to the purposes to which matter, structure, and functions are adapted, and cannot apply to Constructive Proportion since "everything that God has made is equally well constructed with reference to its intended functions" (4: p. 110).60

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60See below Appendix C: pp. 253 - 276 on Sir Charles Bell, the early nineteenth century anatomist. The key principle in Ruskin's view of Constructive Proportion is not shared by Bell and this may well be one of the reasons why Ruskin found so much "wrong" in Bell's work.
At this point, Ruskin denies again that Constructive Proportion can have any connection with manifestations of Beauty. Next, in discussing the proportions of a plant's stalk to its head, he lists the facts which are a pre-requisite for any opinion on the subject: the scale of the plant, the toughness of the materials of the stem and their mechanical structure, the specific gravity of the head, the position of the head for "fructification", and the ecological situation of the plant. In seeking a single word to define all of these factors, Ruskin writes of the variety of results which the "Divine Intelligence has attained in the various involutions of these quantities (4: pp. 110-11). However, the discussion of Symmetry in chapter eight refers to the "elements" and "constituents" of beauty, and defines Symmetry as a "mode of arrangement of qualities" (4: p. 126). Part of the difficulty in the inconsistent terminology with which he refers to the material world may be accounted for by his commitment to a very conservative Christian Natural Philosophy which, in seeking to explain the phenomena, does not deal exclusively in a Mechanistic, or a Materialistic, or a Vitalistic, or a neo-Aristotelian theory of matter. The chapter on Purity illustrates this point.

Purity is the Type of Divine Energy, and Ruskin begins his examination of it by referring to light as the most visible and scriptural of divine attributes: "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all". He concedes that, since light is the most obvious of the Types of divine attributes, it must seem strange that he has not so far included it in his enumeration of Types. He pleads this in justification:

I could not logically class the presence of a substance or motion with mere conditions or modes of being; neither could I logically separate from any of these, that which is evidently necessary to the perception of all. And it is also to be observed that, though the love of light is more instinctive in the human heart than any of the other desires connected with beauty, we can hardly separate its agreeableness in its own nature from the sense of its necessity and value for the purposes of life" (4: p. 128).
Light, as a phenomenon, is subservient to life, not an object of it; consequently, it cannot be elevated to the status of a substance or motion, i.e. treated as a quality-bearing substance, or a quality-creating reaction between internal forces; it cannot be given preference over all else that is subservient to life, a function in which it is itself inextricably involved; and any appearance of beauty in light carries with it the taint of its involvement in the lower order of utility.

Ruskin concedes that his readers may be surprised by his statement that the notion of Purity is material in origin and is attributed to light when it suggests the condition of the material which originally suggested the notion. For he has called his chapter "Purity, or the Type of Divine Energy". He substantiates this connection by employing a Mechanistic explanation of energy. Impurity, or corruption, is a condition of matter in which healthy functioning is seriously inhibited or vitality is negated. In elaborating this position, Ruskin employs a notion essential to Mechanistic science - a particulate substratum. This is not simply a substratum in which energy can inhere, for, surprisingly, given Ruskin's constant emphasis in the first two volumes of Modern Painters on the inherence of qualities in the phenomena as the impress of Divine Beauty, he now presents a dynamic substratum, dynamic in that its own interactions create the vitality, and corruption can then be defined as a state in which previously dynamic material is reduced to passivity:

... particles, which once, by their operation on each other, produced a living and energetic whole, are reduced to a condition of perfect passiveness, in which they are seized upon and appropriated, one by one, piecemeal, by whatever has need of them, without any power of resistance or energy of their own.
This corpuscularianism is not only a way of organising matter; it is also a hierarchical principle in that the order and arrangement of particles is responsible for rock being regarded as superior to marble, and marble to chalk (4: p. 129).  

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61Ruskin's corpuscularianism appears again in The Seven Lamps where he remodels it to suggest the difference between authentic and inauthentic human living. See below pp. 229 - 231.
The foregoing arguments are influenced by Ruskin's versions of "Utility". Art can be morally justified, and can be shown to have "functions of usefulness addressed to the weightiest of human interests". There is here no vulgar identification of Morality and Utility. For Ruskin, to assert his version of "utility" against the pride and vanity of the age is to "summon the moral energies of the nation to a forgotten duty". The authentic content of this utility, especially in its associations with Beauty, depends primarily on the correct use and function of man which is "to be the witness of the glory of God, and to advance that glory by his reasonable obedience, and resultant happiness". Whatever assists this is useful in the noblest sense of the word; but "things that only help us to exist are, [only] in a secondary and mean sense, useful" (4: pp. 28 - 9).

Ruskin's responses to contemporary Utilitarianism in Modern Painters: Volume 2 divide the useful into a substratum of functions necessary to sustain ordinary material living, and a higher order of utility associated with Beauty; these responses derive largely from a deeply conservative Christian Natural Philosophy.

At this point, he uses the notion of the two orders of utility to assess the authentic utility of Art and Science. The geologist is acknowledged as superior to the miner, and the architect to the builder. However, Ruskin distinguishes between two kinds of scientific achievement - a chemist may spend years tracing "the greater part of the combinations of matter to their ultimate atoms"; he may also discover a cheap way to refine sugar. Ruskin is in no doubt as to which is the greater achievement, because the lower order of utility in scientific pursuits is the creation of practical material benefits.
Although such benefits can follow providentially from the advances gained in the higher
order of utility, the precise relationship of the two orders is stated in terms of *Modern
Painters: Volume 1*:

It would appear, therefore, that those pursuits which are altogether theoretic, whose
results are desirable and admirable in themselves and for their own sake, and in which no
farther end to which their productions and discoveries are referred can interrupt the
contemplation of things as they are, by the endeavour to discover of what selfish uses
they are capable (and of this order are painting and sculpture), ought to take rank above
all pursuits which have any taint in them of subserviency to life, in so far as all such
tendency is the sign of less eternal and less holy function (4: pp. 34/5).

Ruskin is here suggesting that what he calls in a footnote "the accidental utility of a
theoretic pursuit" (4: p. 5: n.), is not necessarily simply a providential benefit. It can
become an active interference with the higher order of utility by introducing selfish
considerations. This is, perhaps, the clearest statement in the first two volumes of
*Modern Painters* of the main purposes motivating Ruskin's cultural intervention. The
"contemplation of things as they are" carries with it a deeply conservative implication.
Contemplating "things they are" has to be a very conservative position and "selfish uses"
have to refer to the dynamic exploitation of resources in economic growth. If the highest
order of activity is precisely contemplation, then the calculation of self-interest and the
exploitation of the material world, "productions and discoveries", have to include the
expenditure of human energies in social production, which must then be seen as an active
interference with what Ruskin wants to see as settled realities resistant to change,
whether that be nature distorted by the compositional artificiality of a Claude or Salvator
Rosa, or the architectural heritage of Venice threatened by the introduction of the
railroad and gas lighting.

In the chapter on "The Pleasures of Sense", Ruskin develops these ideas from what
he claims to be an empirical basis: "We must not assume that man is the nobler animal,
and then deduce the nobleness of his delights; but we must prove the nobleness of the delights, and thence the nobleness of the animal" (4: pp. 42/3). Implicitly this opposes the ideas on Adaptation given currency in the early nineteenth century by the Lamarckians, and yet shadows Lamarckianism - their newer emphases on external circumstances as determining evolutionary changes are shadowed in Ruskin's conservative emphasis on human responses to external phenomena being determined by the Providential provision of beautiful phenomena to which human beings must respond. Of course, they do not respond as they should and, for Ruskin, this results in a false life in which, in another shadowing of Lamarckianism, they are overwhelmed by external circumstances.62

Certain pleasures, because they are incapable of prolongation and of co-existence with higher delights, are inferior, and are connected, through their description as "subservient to life", with the lower orders of Utility. However, the pleasures of sight and hearing are gifts which "answer not any purpose of mere existence". These pleasures have no function to perform so there is no limit to their continuance in the accomplishment of their end, for they are an end in themselves, and so may be perpetual with all of us; being in no way destructive, but rather increasing in exquisiteness by repetition (4: pp. 45/6).

The division established in Modern Painters: Volume 1 between mere language and grammar, and the expression of higher qualities, impressions, and thoughts, is here assisting the development of Ruskin's theory of the two orders of Utility. It may be that the earlier relationship between grammar and thought is being straightforwardly transformed into a new formulation, for while the lower order answers the purposes of mere existence, the higher order is expressive of the divine: "In whatever is an object of

62See above p. 69 and below pp. 228 - 231.
life, in whatever may be infinitely and for itself desired, we may be sure there is something of divine".

This leads to a version of the Beautiful as "a gift of God; a gift not necessary to our being, but added to, and elevating it, and twofold: first, of desire, and secondly of the thing desired" (4: pp. 46 - 7). Consistently with the emphases of Modern Painters: Volume 1, and with the preface to the second edition of that work, Beautiful phenomena, and human responses to them, are being objectified as a relationship beyond human control.

In this instance, the objectification operates through Ruskin's version of the providential adaptation of intellectual and physiological phenomena to the material world. For, when pleasures of sight

are gathered together, and so arranged to enhance each other, as by chance they could not be, there is caused by them, not only a feeling of strong affection towards the object in which they exist, but a perception of purpose and adaptation of it to our desires; a perception, therefore, of the operation of the Intelligence which so formed us, and so feeds us (4: pp. 46/7).

It is scarcely necessary to stress that the pleasures of sight are here being presented in the manner of the Materialist's substances, efficient causes of the phenomena actually existing in the object, whose operation may be calculable, but whose final explanation Ruskin, in the manner of a Vitalist, will not allow to be either Materialistic or Mechanistic.

In his distinctions between the two orders of Utility, Ruskin regards only certain elements of the material world as expressive of Divine Intelligence and adapted to the highest order of human response. Though "all things may be elevated by affection", "men have no right to remain apathetic with regard to others" (4: p. 52).
The discussion which follows of received notions of Beauty follows consistently from the above. He subjects four current notions of Beauty to judgement by the aesthetic criteria which he has so far elaborated.

1. The Beautiful Is The True.

Since he has already distinguished between Beauty as a property of matter, and truth as a property of propositions, he infers first from this notion that "propositions are matter, and matter propositions". On further consideration, he understands the idea in a manner which suggests Leigh Hunt's interpretation: "Whatever is, is." Whatever touches us, whatever moves us, does touch us, and move us. We recognise the reality of it. But he understands according to the demands which he has himself already made: i.e. the creation of Beauty is inconsistent with any attempt to make a thing appear to be what it is not, and Beauty is hierarchically structured:

A stone looks as truly a stone as a rose looks a rose, and yet is not so beautiful ... I am at a loss to know how any so untenable position could ever have been advanced; but it may, perhaps, have arisen from some confusion of the beauty of art with the beauty of nature, and from an illogical expression of the very certain truth, that nothing is beautiful in art, which, professing to be an imitation, or a statement, is not as such in some sort true (4: p. 52).

2. The Beautiful Is The Useful.

The confusing factor for me in Ruskin's brief treatment of this proposition is his assumption of an aesthetic which does not belong to what I recognise as the major traditions bearing on the question of the usefulness of art during the Romantic period. The apologists for Poetry, for instance, deny in any case that Poetry has any practicable value. Their opponents agree, asserting a variety of propositions from "Ledgers do not
keep well in rhyme" to Bentham's "Homer is the greatest of poets ... Can any great advantage be derived from the imitation of his gods and heroes?"63

Ruskin's own notion of the two orders of Utility certainly has Shelley behind it, but he may be going back beyond Shelley, and Bentham, to aesthetic theories rejected by Burke, according to which "not only artificial, but natural objects took their beauty from the fitness of their parts for their several purposes".64 These traditions, to which Burke, and possibly Ruskin, directly or indirectly, refer, is that represented by Shaftesbury and Hume. In his Inquiry Concerning The Principles of Morals, for instance, Hume argues that

one considerable source of beauty in all animals is the advantage which they reap from the particular structure of their limbs and members, suitable to the particular manner of life to which by nature they are destined. The just proportions of a horse described by Xenophon and Virgil are the same that are received at this day by our modern jockeys, because the foundation of them is the same - namely, experience of what is detrimental or useful in the animal. Broad shoulders, a lank belly, firm joints, taper legs, - all these are beautiful in our species, because signs of force and vigour. Ideas of utility and its contrary, though they do not entirely determine what is handsome or deformed, are evidently the source of a considerable part of approbation or dislike.65

Much of Ruskin's argument in this early work is concerned to promote his ideas on the ways in which Beauty inheres in the natural world, but this involves a rejection of the notion of beauty inhering in the naked adaptation of matter to function. This, in Modern Painters: Volume 2, is particularly so in Part III, chapter twelve. In the chapter under consideration here, Part III, chapter 4, Ruskin seems to be referring to a cruder identification of the Beautiful and the Useful, which is not so much an aesthetic tradition

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as actual social practice, rather in the manner of his preferring pure chemical science to
the discovery of cheap methods of refining sugar:

That the Beautiful is the Useful, is ... based on that limited and false sense of the latter
term which I have already deprecated ... is the most degrading and dangerous
supposition which can be advanced on the subject ... is to confound admiration with
hunger, love with lust, and life with sensation; it is to assert that the human creature has
no ideas and no feelings except those ultimately referable to its brutal appetites. It has not
a single fact, nor appearance of fact to support it, and needs no combating; at least until
its advocates have obtained the consent of the majority of mankind, that the most
beautiful productions of nature are seeds and roots; and of art, spades and millstones (4:
p. 67).

It goes without saying that in this passage Ruskin is beginning to articulate a view of
political economy which will get a fuller development in the late 1850s with Unto This
Last. In embryo this is the re-definition of capital which he will insist on in "Ad
Valorem":

Capital ... is a root, which does not enter into vital function till it produces something
else than a root: namely, fruit. That fruit will in time again produce roots; and so all living
capital issues in reproduction of capital; but capital which produces nothing but capital is
only root producing root; bulb issuing in bulb, never tulip; seed issuing in seed, never
bread (17: p. 98).

As I have suggested already, the first two volumes of Modern Painters are not as
politically innocent as some have assumed.

3. That Beauty Results From Custom.

Ruskin is prepared to allow Custom an effective rôle in the life of the senses, but in a
very limited manner - it is able to deaden the impact of ugliness (4: pp. 68/9).

4. That Beauty Depends on the Association of Ideas.

A letter of 1845 provides a gloss on this section. It is the more interesting in that it
was written to Henry Acland while Ruskin was preparing the manuscript for this section.

He insists to Acland on a distinction between two kinds of Association, constant and
accidental, and suggests that constant association would be better spoken of as
"Expression" and that "Association" is a term properly applied to the "arbitrary and accidental connection of ideas". Black, for instance, may appear to be arbitrarily associated with melancholy, but has, in fact, an inalienably "melancholy" expression. However, this does provide a cause of Beauty: "For there is a cheerful beauty, and a melancholy beauty. It is that which is common to both, and which makes both beautiful, which is in reality to be investigated under the term beauty" (3: pp. 58 - 59).

Clearly, the aesthetician is here concerned with observed regularities in members of the same species and mirrors the practice of the Materialist Philosopher; and, as one might expect from an aesthetic which has consistently objectified Beauty as a positive quality in bodies, the notion of Association is in no way acceptable as an efficient cause of Beauty.

Ruskin is here following Burke, but with important modifications. Burke had argued that it would be

to little purpose to look for the cause of our passions in associations, until we fail of it in the natural properties of things ... [but] ... it is no small bar in the way of our inquiry into the cause of our passions, that the occasions of many of them are given, and that their governing motions are communicated at a time when we have not capacity to reflect on them; at a time of which all sort of memory is worn out of our minds.66

Ruskin takes both points, and, in elaborating the second, begins to develop a benign, sympathetic, and tolerant aesthetic which is a recurring statement, in his work, of possibilities, and, which, unfortunately, is so often squeezed into the margin when he finds his central doctrines being challenged or ignored.

He agrees with Burke, that, since we have no control over "Accidental Association", we have to accept that "there is probably no one opinion which is formed by any of us, in

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matters of taste, which is not in some degree influenced by unconscious association" (4: p. 73). In a letter to his father, he records that he found himself looking indifferently at a "very lovely chain of the Apennines", and that when he examined his indifference, he discovered the cause - the Apennines did not remind him of Scotland or Cumberland. However, Chamouni has early associations for him, and he "loves" the place. There is, however, a crucial qualification: "I love Chamouni so much - ( that ) I have very early associations there - but isn't this a great change in me? I don't know i(f it) b(e) a good one. I think I am getting altogeth(er) more co(mmonpla)ce".67 But there are advantages to be gained from this circumstance, for the Associative Faculty exists

not to add beauty to material things, but to add force to the conscience ... Therefore it has received the power of enlisting external and unmeaning things in its aid, and transmitting to all that is indifferent its own authority to reprove or reward; so that, as we travel the way of life, we have the choice, according to our working, of turning all the voices of nature into one song of rejoicing, and all her lifeless creatures into a glad company, whereof the meanest shall be beautiful in our eyes by its kind message, or of withering and quenching her sympathy into a fearful withdrawn silence of condemnation, or into a crying out of her stones, and a shaking of her dust against us (4: p. 73).

The Associative Faculty is responsible not simply for this subjective but preferably enlivening treatment of the external world; it adds, to the positive order of beauty which the Theoretic Faculty perceives, "the unconscious undertaking of indefinite association" peculiar to the individual, and so creates a mix of "universal and peculiar principles" in each of us. The result of this, according to Ruskin, is a Wordsworthian version of Dugald Stewart's attempt to free the intellectual analysis of Beautiful phenomena from the long-standing desire of aesthetic theorists to compete with their scientific colleagues in the pursuit of the ultimate single efficient cause:

The harmony of God's good work is not in us interrupted by this mingling of universal and peculiar principles: for by these such difference is secured in the feelings as

shall make fellowship itself more delightful, by its intercommunicate character; and such
variety of feelings also in each of us separately as shall make us capable of enjoying
scenes of different kinds and orders, instead of morbidly seeking for some perfect
epitome of the Beautiful in one.

This issues in a major qualification of Ruskin's confidence in the workings of the
Theoretic Faculty:

... every one of us has peculiar sources of enjoyment opened to him in certain scenes
and things, sources which are sealed to others; and we must be wary, on the one hand, of
confounding these in ourselves with ultimate conclusions of taste, and so forcing them
upon all as authoritative, and on the other, of supposing that the enjoyments of others
which we cannot share are shallow or unwarrantable because incommunicable.

So far, so good. However, this kind of benign policy is, unfortunately, marginal in
Ruskin's work, and, indeed, is contradicted by the appeal which follows immediately to
Divine Intelligence as a guarantee of objective perception:

For by the very nature of these beautiful qualities, which I have defined to be the
signature of God on his works, it is evident that in what we altogether dislike, we see not
at all; that the keenness of our love is to be tested by the expansiveness of our love (4: p.
74 - 75).

He had seemed to be accepting a plurality of tastes, and rejecting his earlier assertions
that only a chosen few can really "see". But that is cancelled by his definition of what
constitutes beauty, i.e. "the signature of God on his works", and his denial of the ability
to see to those who cannot respond positively to that signature, and his subjection of
human responses to a means test which favours the emotionally better off.

Ruskin's explication of the "beautiful qualities" proceeds by the enumeration of
Types, signs of beauty and individual examples which will allow him to suggest some
general conclusions. This is the formula which he uses in Modern Painters: Volume 1,
and The Seven Lamps, and the interest is not in the enumeration but in the argument
which accompanies it.
Ruskin, in making his division of Utility into two orders, associates the lower order with selfish considerations, and when he introduces his discussion of Relative Vital Beauty, emphasises the rôle of charity in the operations of the Theoretic Faculty.

The first perfection of this faculty in its response to Vital Beauty is "the kindness and unselfish fullness of heart, which receives the utmost pleasure from the happiness of all things" (4: p. 148). This enjoyment of others' happiness, which extends to the vegetable creation, belongs to the higher order of Utility, and can exist in its pure form only if the "appearance of healthy vital energy" is contemplated with reference to the plant alone, and every wider context ignored; just as a chemist's achievements in "pure science" are of a far superior order to any discovery of cheap processes for the refining of sugar, so the fact of photosynthesis is to be excluded from any response to plant beauty:

Every leaf and stalk [of a rose tree] is seen to have a function, and as it seems, solely for the good and enjoyment of the plant. It is true that reflection will show us that the plant is not living for itself alone, that its life is one of benefaction, that it gives as well as receives; but no sense of this whatsoevermingles with our perception of physical beauty in its forms (4: p. 151).

He carefully qualifies this by emphasising that he is referring only to the sympathetic operation of the Theoretic Faculty; this develops into an anti-mechanical and anti-utilitarian position as he extends the notion of the two orders of Utility into a criterion of Beauty.

Ruskin insists that no part of the animate or inanimate creation is isolated. All are related ideally through mutual charity, by the impress of Typical Beauty, and through the impression, by the active elements of the creation, of their vital energies on the passive, or dormant, states of matter. He makes Charity such a supreme motive that the theoretic enjoyment of the material creation depends on the complete absence of self-interest:

... all these sensations of beauty in the plant arise from our unselfish sympathy with its happiness, and not from any view of the qualities in it which may bring good to us, nor
even from our acknowledgement in it of any moral condition beyond that of mere felicity.

Therefore, if the lower operation of the theoretic faculty acknowledges the process of photo-synthesis, the joy of the higher sympathetic operation is adulterated by the self-interest which is your sense of a benefit which you gain from a function of the plant's existence which belongs to the lower order of Utility. Similarly, a pliable tree trunk, "waving to and fro in the wind above the waterfall", excites the Theoretic Faculty by its individual happiness and vitality. The lower order of Utility has no claim on its happiness. But, once chopped down, and made into a bridge, it retains only a suggestion of Typical Beauty in its lines and colours. Its Vital Beauty is completely destroyed (4: pp. 152 - 153). But Ruskin's very conservative insistence on "the contemplation of things as they are" is distorting his aesthetic theorising.

Beauty, such as the appearance of Purity, can inhere in a particulate substratum, a key element in the Mechanistic philosophy, but to achieve an authentic response to the material creation, the sympathetic operation of the Theoretic Faculty selects only the appearances of vitality, and performs a self-deceit in which it ignores both the utilitarian properties of the material, and the mechanical functions which are beneficial to the rest of the creation. The example of the tree trunk is consistent with the initial statement of selfishness in the lower order of Utility, for the Theoretic Faculty is repulsed by

all utility to one creature which is based on the pain or destruction of another ... [and] ... in such services as are consistent with the essence and energy of both it takes delight, as in the clothing of the rock by herbiage, and the feeding of the herbiage by the stream (4: pp. 153/4).

But the denial of beauty to mechanical structures and functions originates not simply in the conflict between mutual charity and utilitarian self-interest. Making a bridge can be interpreted as an exploitative destruction of natural beauty, but the argument is less...
obvious with regard to photosynthesis, and even less obvious with regard to the argument which follows.

In this, the two orders of Utility play no part, and Ruskin's main emphasis is on "the expression of happiness to which we look for our first pleasure in organic form". This happiness is not necessarily connected with beneficent functions of creatures and the utilitarian properties of matter:

... it is to be noted that whenever we dissect the animal frame, or conceive it as dissected, and substitute in our thoughts the neatness of mechanical contrivance for the pleasure of the animal; the moment we reduce enjoyment to ingenuity, and volition to leverage, that instant all sense of beauty ceases (4: p. 154).

The idea of dissection continues the idea of how repulsive is the benefit to one creature based on the pain caused to, or destruction of, another. But the emphasis on selfishness is now replaced by the necessarily selecting and distorting demands of the Theoretic Faculty, which will not allow mechanism any purchase on Beauty because it is mechanism, and which necessarily and instinctively prefers the external appearance of energy to the mechanical or anatomical substratum which supports the appearance. The action of the limb of the ostrich seems to be beautiful as long as the mind is unaware of the "spring ligament playing backwards and forwards in alternate jerks over the tubercle at the hock joint"; the action of the shark's dorsal fin seems beautiful as long as it is imagined as moving "apparently by its own will alone". This dualism between internal mechanisms and anatomies, and external appearances is objectified by Ruskin as an observable and divinely instituted phenomenon in a statement which divorces the work of the Supreme Artist, so to speak, from any mechanical or workman-like processes:

It is by a beautiful ordinance of the creator that all these mechanisms are concealed from sight, though open to investigation, and that in all which is outwardly manifested, we seem to see His presence rather than His workmanship, and the mysterious breath of life rather than the adaptation of matter (4: p. 154/5).
This way of seeing the world is qualified by Ruskin's adherence to a hierarchy of Beauty in the animal and vegetable creations. There are, he claims, gradations of Beauty from the "foul occupation of the vulture" to the "fair and kingly sensibility of man ". These gradations are decided according to three key notions in Ruskin's early theorising: quantification, hierarchy, and Adaptation (as he understands that term); i.e. the amount of Beauty which is exhibited, for the most beautiful forms are those which "exhibit most of power" and seem capable of "most quick and joyous sensation"; the nobility of function, for those animals are most beautiful "whose functions are most noble"; and the adaptation of matter to function, "moral perfections" which are "causes of beauty in proportion to their expression". Ruskin illustrates this last point from the eye and the mouth. The eye is least beautiful when it is most nakedly adapted to function and is an "external optical instrument"; it is most beautiful when it is a bodily member "through which emotion and virtue of soul may be expressed". The mouth is least beautiful when it is a "formidable destructive instrument" as in the alligator, and most beautiful in man where it is "a means of expression, beyond and above its lower functions" (4: pp. 155 - 159).

This last suggests the question of Idealism in art which Ruskin takes up in the chapter "Of Generic Vital Beauty", and while continuing to maintain the adaptation of matter to function as a basic assumption, combines with it a key assumption from Materialist Natural Philosophy.

The belief in quality-bearing substances to account for phenomena such as heat and cold implies a basic structure of matter to which a certain quantity of quality-bearing substances has been added to create and sustain life in the structure. Ruskin, despite his avoidance of the Materialist's identification of vitality with secondary agents such as
electricity, employs this method of quantifying quality. A crude example of this occurs in Modern Painters: Volume 1, on "The Definition of Greatness In Art" (3: pp. 87-92).

Here, he instances Landseer's "The Old Shepherd's Chief-Mourner" as an example of great art.

The basic structure is "the exquisite execution of the glossy and crisp hair of the dog, the bright sharp touching of the green bow beside it, the clear painting of the wood of the coffin and the folds of the blanket". Although these are "language clear and expressive in the highest degree", language, though invaluable as a vehicle of thought, is "by itself nothing". What distinguishes "The Chief-Mourner" from hundreds of other paintings of equal technical merit, is that it contains thought: "the quiet and gloom of the chamber, the spectacles marking the place where the bible was last closed, indicating how lonely has been the life, how unwatched the departure of him who is now laid solitary in his sleep" (3: pp. 88-89). The relationship between the basic technical structure, and the thoughts which it mediates, is defined quantitatively; not surprisingly, the dignity of, and the praise due to, any work is in "exact proportion" to the independence of the thoughts from the technical structure. So important is this independence (again the judgement is quantified) that "the picture which has the nobler and more numerous ideas, however awkwardly expressed, is a greater and better picture than that which has the less noble and less numerous ideas, however beautifully expressed". Greatness in art can be defined quantitatively and in a manner consistent with the letter to the Reverend Brown: "the art is greatest which conveys to the mind of the spectator, by any means whatsoever, the greatest number of the greatest ideas" (4: p. 92: my emphasis).
There are further examples of this in Modern Painters: Volume 2: the importance of types of infinity in the material creation is to be estimated "rather by their frequency than their distinctness"; there is a marked difference between "the opposition of unequal quantities to each other" and "connection of unequal quantities with each other"; "the pleasure afforded by every organic form is in proportion to its appearance of healthy vital energy"; and the most beautiful organic forms are those which display the most vitality (4: p. 91; pp. 125 - 126; p. 151; p. 155).

Ruskin's revision of the traditional definitions of Idealism employs this quantitative technique extensively, particularly in his elaboration of Vital Beauty as "the felicitous fulfilment of function in living things". This central point in his aesthetic theory is concerned not with degrees of beauty in different orders of the organic creation, but with "the impressions of beauty ... connected with more or less perfect fulfilment of the appointed function by different individuals of the same species"; and the degree to which a creature fulfils its function is determined rather crudely according to Materialist criteria - whether it has in it enough of its peculiar quality: "whether, if scorpion, it have poison enough, or if tiger, strength enough, or if dove, innocence enough, to sustain rightly its place in creation, and come up to the perfect idea of dove, tiger, or scorpion" (4: p. 163). The perfect idea of a creature is the Ideal of a species, that condition in which all the qualities of the species are fully developed. But the word "ideal" refers also to works of art which represent the "mental conception of a material object", and are dependent upon the health of the imagination which creates them. Such a form of art is to be carefully distinguished from realist art which represents material objects and depends for its success upon the fidelity of its representation. This is Ruskin's re-definition of Idealism in art, for the traditional Academic notion "rests on the assumption that the assemblage of
all characters of a species in their perfect development cannot exist but in the imagination" (4: p. 166).

For the purposes of the argument which follows, Ruskin would prefer to use his own definition, but since the Academic tradition is hallowed by usage, he proposes to employ that - on his own terms. In the Academic tradition, the ideal form is created by selecting for a composition the best features from a variety of models; but the "traditional" definition which Ruskin employs is different. He defines Idealism as "expressive of the noble generic form which indicates the full perfection of the creature in all its functions". This firmly qualifies the earlier dependence of the "mental conception" on the health of the imagination, and rejects, in its implication that Ideality has an objective existence, the Academic definition.

In any fully grown group of healthy oysters, there will be many that comprehensively fulfil the condition of their species, so much so that "we could not, by combining the features of two or more together, produce a more perfect oyster than any that we see" (4: p. 167). The "entire generic form" is represented by the many, and art can effect no improvement.

Wild or cultivated oak trees and their widely differing appearances suggest that the ecological situation has to be taken into account in determining whether there is an ideal oak. Its lack of culture can hardly be held against the wild oak, which has ideality, if, in unfavourable conditions, it still displays the ideality of the wild oak.

This suggests a further reflection on the importance of the ecological situation. Some plants are appointed to unfavourable conditions as alone able to survive there. Any cultivation may produce "a magnificently developed example of the plant, colossal in
size, and splendid in organisation; but we shall utterly lose in it that moral ideal which is
dependent on its right fulfilment of its appointed functions" (4: p. 171).

The implications of this for painting refute traditional Academic theory and practice
and suggest the extension into his theory of landscape painting of Ruskin's Natural
Philosophy:

Therefore the task of the painter, in his pursuit of ideal form, is to attain accurate
knowledge, so far as may be in his power, of the peculiar virtues, duties, and characters
of every species of being; ... it is in the utmost and exalted exhibition of such individual
character, order, and use, that all ideality of art consists ... in marking the definite and
characteristic leaf, blossom, seed, fracture, colour and inward anatomy of everything, the
more truly ideal his work becomes. All confusion of species, all careless rendering of
character, all unnatural and arbitrary association, are vulgar and unideal in proportion to
their degree (4: pp. 173 -174).

Ruskin's stand against the effects of cultivation is consistent with his insistence on "the
contemplation of things as they are" and with his separation of the work of God, Nature,
and Great Artists from all other productive processes, a separation which pervades

Modern Painters 1 and 2.
CHAPTER FIVE: XENOPHOBIA AND MODERNISATION.

Modern Painters 2: Section III is a fairly consistent continuation of the first volume in its emphasis on the infinite variety and change to be seen in Nature and Turner.

That emphasis is very much at the centre of Ruskin's enterprise, but exactly what is that enterprise? As conventionally interpreted Modern Painters 1 and 2 are an attempt to demonstrate what Ruskin sees as "truth" in Nature and Landscape Painting, especially Turner. As such they are an attempt to promote particular, and alternative modes of perception.

At the same time, these works are self-consciously anti-modern, anti-utilitarian, and implicitly anti-industrial, and seek to insert into a particular culture (no matter how vexed a term that is in Ruskin's earlier works) alternative structures of feeling and response, and to promote an investment of energies in a world of numinous meaning far removed from and distinctly hostile to all that is represented by, say, modern Venetian gas-piping, an emblem in Ruskin's letters to his parents from Venice in 1845 of his distaste for modern industrial developments.

Here, I think, it is worth quoting substantially from one of those letters from Venice to his father in 1845 as representing his carefully held aesthetic commitments and fine disdain for modern developments.

He begins with a sneering attack on modern Italians, claiming that music must be the "lowest" of "ignoble faculties and pursuits" because they can still sing very sweetly - "one hears very perfect music through the casements". The reason the Italians are so "rascally" is that they are busily destroying their own history:

I am tired of writing, as doubtless you are of receiving accounts of calamities - how painful it is to be in Venice now I cannot tell you. There is no single spot, east or west,
up or down, where her spirit remains - the modern work has set its plague spot everywhere - the moment you begin to feel, some gaspipe business forces itself on the eye, and you are thrust into the 19th century, until you dream, as Mr. Harding did last night, that your very gondola has become a steamer.\textsuperscript{68}

As is quite clear from this, and other letters home during the 1845 stay in Venice, Ruskin's response is heavily against the barbarism of a modernising industrial tendency which not only is removing the accumulated evidence of a specific non-industrial history, in which he is developing interests, but is also threatening the natural beauties which, in \textit{Modern Painters}, he seeks to demonstrate and celebrate as an alternative to that same barbarism.

Ruskin and his father clearly shared an opposition to modernity. Writing to Margaret Ruskin from Leeds, on the 28th. January, 1839, John James declares that "These railroads are the most thorough nuisance that ever a Country was infested with", and on the 22nd. March, 1840, he writes to her with an irony which would have been much appreciated within the family- "I am going to Bed - being tired. One bad effect Railroads have they make other travelling seem more tedious"! In 1841, he offered his son advice on not reading "The Times" on the grounds that it was steam-printed (since 1814), and hurt the eyes.\textsuperscript{69}

In June, 1841, Ruskin writes to W.H. Harrison, with a similar resistance to the railroad. He has

thoroughly examined every hole and corner of the canals [in Venice] for I shall have no heart to go to Venice when they have got a railroad there. It will spoil my pet Verona too, so I shall keep to the Alps; nothing can spoil them but the Day of Judgement (36: p. 27).

\textsuperscript{68}Shapiro (1972): Letter 123: p. 201. All further references to Shapiro in this section are given as "Letter -: p. -".

\textsuperscript{69}Van Akin Burd (1973): p. 573; p. 671; and p. 681.
In 1846, writing to Dr. John Brown, he expresses a quite extreme opposition not only to the new means of transport but also to a traditional one:

I wish you would let me know why, of all things in the world, you should differ with me upon railroads; I am quite at a loss to conjecture what can be said in their defence; granting that their effect on natural scenery is trivial, that their interference with the rest and character of rural life is of no moment, and that sometimes the power of rapid locomotion may be of much service to us or save us from some bitter pain or accident which our absence at the moment must have involved ... I can safely say that my only profitable travelling has been on foot, and that I think it admits of much doubt whether not only railroads but even carriages and horses, except for rich people or conveyance of letters and merchandise, be not inventions of the Evil one. How much of the indolence, ill-health, discomfort, thoughtlessness, selfishness, sin and misery of this life do you suppose may be ultimately referable altogether to the invention of those two articles alone, the carriage and the bridle? I am not jesting. (36: pp. 61 - 62).

In 1845, it is not only the railroad which is beginning to ruin Venice for him and he writes to his father:

Just below the bridge of sighs, a bright brick house is building, square as a Margate lodging house. I am but barely in time to see the last of dear old St. Mark's. They have ordered him to be "pulito", and after whitewashing the Doges [sic] palace, and daubing it with the Austrian national distillation of coffins & jaundice, they are scraping St. Mark's clean. Off go all the glorious old weather stains, the rich hues of the marble which nature, mighty as she is, has taken ten centuries to bestow - and already the noble corner farthest from the sea, that on which the sixth part of the age of the generations of man was dyed in gold, is reduced to the colour of magnesia, the old marbles displaced & torn down - what is coming in their stead I know not - you know there used to be a noble old house at a, in the corner, falling in with the façade of St Mark's place. I was going to draw it once & was driven away by the rain. It is stuccoed over and painted with calico stripes to imitate alabaster. Another loss that I bitterly regret is of the old bridges. They have laid gaspipes over them, and in so doing have performed the following transformation on them, the new one having, as you see, patent iron railings.

Here, modernisation is introducing unwelcome features into an urban landscape; is superimposing unwelcome features onto elements in that landscape; and, most importantly, is removing the accreted history which is the result of the operations of

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70Here Ruskin refers to an illustration which he provides for his father.

71Letter 123: pp. 201 - 202. Again Ruskin provides his father with illustrations, in the manner of Pugin, of the before and after effect.
natural forces on human artifacts. The key term in Ruskin's response is "transformation" (gondola into steamer) rather than preservation, and the transformation is essentially modern. It is clearly presented as change for the worse, and there are multiple examples of protests against such by Ruskin in the 1840s. In fact, his letters home from his Tour of 1845, the proper context for the letter from which I have been quoting, provide a significant account of the ways in which his attitudes to the Modern are developing.

The letters are extensively concerned to record what he sees as contemporary Barbarism, whatever the cause. Here, for instance, is an extract from his second letter home from Florence, where he records his horror at the effects of modern urban developments:

The first thing I set eyes on here were workmen chipping about the Ponte Vecchio. I hoped to myself that my evil spirit would be content with that, & would let me alone. Not a bit - the next thing I saw was a great piece of matting round the pedestal of Benvenuto's Perseus, and the next - woe is me - two tiers of scaffolding on two sides of Giotto's campanile. Still I kept my temper, for the campanile is so vast that this does not very much hurt it, & the workmen are not doing - as far as I can see - harm, but cleaning the mosaics. But when I went a step farther - Do you recollect the street that used to run from the post office to the cathedral, or baptistery - very narrow & Italian, all full of crimson draperies & dark with old roofs ? Judge of my horror, when on turning the corner, I beheld, as it seemed, the Rue St Honore at Paris - with a whole row of confectioners' shops fresh gilt, & barbers between, and "Parfumerie et Quincaillerie" - within ten yards of Brunelleschi's monument ! They have actually pulled down the whole street & built a new one instead - and a fit one it is for these Italians as they now are - full of bonbons, segars, and pomatum.72

Here, insensitive "restoration" and modern commercial development are the evil agents. In other passages, it is the Italian mania for whitewashing everything which is obliterating architectural features and frescoes, and the indolent neglect of Italian priests who are destroying frescoes and canvases with their incessant burning of candles; or it is the introduction of modern technology. Here, for instance, is his initial response to Venice:

We turned the corner of the bastion, where Venice once appeared, & behold - the Greenwich railway, only with less arches and more dead wall, entirely cutting off the whole open sea & half the city, which now looks as nearly as possible like Liverpool at the end of the dockyard wall. The railway covered with busy workmen, scaffolding & heaps of stones, an iron station where the Madonna dell'Acqua used to be, and a group of omnibus gondolas ... When we entered the grand canal, I was yet more struck, if possible, by the fearful dilapidation which it has suffered in these last five years. Not only are two thirds of the palaces under repair - we know what that means - but they could not stand without it - they are mouldering down as if they were all leaves & autumn had come suddenly. Few boats about - all deathlike & quiet, save for the scaffolding & plastering ... But to return to the grand canal, it began to look a little better as we got up to the Rialto, but, it being just solemn twilight, as we turned under the arch, behold, all up to the Foscari palace - gas lamps! on each side, in grand new iron posts of the last Birmingham fashion, and sure enough, they have them all up the narrow canals, and there is a grand one, with more flourishes than usual, just under the bridge of sighs.

Imagine the new style of serenades - by gas light. Add to this, that they are repairing the front of St. Mark's, and appear to be destroying its mosaics.73

And there is more in this particular letter in similar vein, including a claim that "there is now no pleasure in being in Venice". A comment by Fitch is relevant here. He points out that it is a central principle in Ruskin's work that "Beauty can never be perceived by those who have become alienated from the life of God through any hardening of the heart, as, for instance, by materialism of 'false taste' (taste built on mere fastidiousness or lust for novelty)".74

Another letter written on the evening of the same day as the last contains what is perhaps Ruskin's most personal reaction to a particular destruction as recorded in this sequence of letters. He responds to news that his father has an inflammation of the eyes, and advises him not to overwork them, and then comments,

I am very cautious of mine, but find they depend more on stomach than on work. I cannot draw here for the tears in them. Tyre was nothing to this. I never was so violently affected in all my life by anything not immediately relating to myself, as by landing at a palace today now turned into a timber yard.75

73Letter 121: pp. 198/199.


In fact, his responses to changes, loss, and deterioration in the frescoes, paintings, sculptures and buildings which are the main subject of his tour, dominate this particular collection of letters. 76

Ruskin's encounter with the results of ancient neglect and barbarous modernisation (the former minor in comparison to the latter) results at various points in an urgency to get things recorded before they disappear. In Letter 122, the last quoted, after he has described the radical damage being done to the palace, he tells his father: "The front of the palace is I believe only propped by the timber, & will be gone for ever before I come again. I must positively get a few of the materials of them, or else, when I can paint well, Venice is lost to me". 77

In this context, a letter from Padua to his father connects both his need to record and preserve images of what is being lost, and his attitude towards the modern:

Well, among all the mechanical poison that this terrible 19th century has poured on men, it has given us at any rate one antidote, the Daguerreotype. It's a most blessed invention, that's what it is. I have been walking all over St Mark's place today, and found a lot of things in the Daguerreotype that I had never noticed in the place itself. It is such a happy thing to be able to depend on everything - to be sure not only that the painter is perfectly honest, but that he can't make a mistake. I have got the Palazzo Foscari to its last brick, and booked St Mark's up, down, and round about. 78

There is also in these letters an assertion that nothing changes for the better. From Genoa, for instance, he writes that "Every time one goes anywhere, one finds something altered for the worse, never for the better", 79 and from Pisa, "I am perpetually torn to bits

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76See, for instance, Letters 24, 44, 46, 47, 52, 54, 111, 121, 122, 124, 128, 130, 135, 141, and 148.

77Letter 122: p. 201.


79Letter 17: pp. 42/3.
by conflicting demands upon me, for everything architectural is tumbling to pieces, and
everything artistical fading away.80

Connected with this, there is also a fairly raw, unmediated record of first impressions
being very quickly checked by dismaying discoveries. Letter 23 and 24, for instance,
from Lucca record exactly this process.

The first, written on the evening of Ruskin's arrival, and continued the following day,
is fairly ecstatic, in the first section, about sculptures which he has encountered at
Carrara, about how "divine" the countryside is at the moment, and about how
"exceedingly fine" is the countenance of a wooden image of Christ.81

The second letter, to step out of sequence, for a reason which will become clear,
reaches an extremity of reaction whose elements figure prominently in other letters, and,
although there are moments when Ruskin seems to be fashioning a self-image of the
Young Aesthete on Tour specifically for his father's consumption, his complaint here
seems to be motivated by the destruction which he has observed, despite the posed
quality of the opening generalisation:

It is a woeful thing to take interest in anything that man has done. Such sorrow as I
have had this morning in examining the marble works on the fronts of the churches.
Eaten away by the salt winds from the sea, splintered by frost getting under the mosaics,
rent open by the roots of weeds (never <taken> cleared away), fallen down from the
rusting of the iron bolts that hold them, cut open to make room for brick vaultings and
modern chapels, plastered over in restorations, fired at by the French, nothing but wrecks
remaining - & those wrecks - so beautiful. The Roman amphitheatre built over into a
circular fishmarket. The palace of Paul Guinigi turned into shops & warehouses. I shall
have to go back to M[onte] Rosa, I think, or I shall get to hate the human species, [of]
our days, worse than any Timon.82

80Letter 37: p. 71
81Letters 23 and 24: pp. 49/50.
82Letter 24: p. 52
Most of the elements in this statement are common to similar statements in many other letters: the introduction of modern features destroying artistic treasures; so-called "restoration"; French barbarism; and the deleterious effects of modern commercial development. However, the unmediated quality of Ruskin's comment is indicated in the surprising way in which the weathering effects of natural forces are swept up into the general complaint without discrimination. This is, after all, the same Ruskin who, in other letters complains that the restorers are destroying a specific history by scraping off the accretion of hundreds of years of weathering.

The second section of the first letter, written the day after he arrived in Venice, fleshes out the general observations on "humanity" offered in the second letter:

I don't know when I shall get away, and all the church fronts charged with heavenly sculpture and inlaid with whole histories in marble - only half of them have been destroyed by the Godless, soulless, devil hearted and <sap> brutebrained barbarians of French - and the people here seem bad enough for anything too, talking all church time too & idling all day - one sees nothing but subjects for lamentation, wrecks of lovely things destroyed, remains of them unrespected, all going to decay, nothing rising but ugliness & meanness, nothing done or conceived by man but evil, irremediable, self multiplying, all swallowing evil, vice and folly everywhere, idleness and infidelily, & filth, and misery, and desecration, dissipated youth & wicked manhood & withered, sickly, hopeless age. I don't know what I shall do. 83

There is no doubt that Ruskin's observations on the destructions resulting from French military actions are justified, 84 although there is also no doubt that his presentation of the French in this letter owes as much to a specifically very conservative English reaction to the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic period as to his observation of the

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84See, for instance, Letter 27: pp. 56 - 57: "There is an exquisite star window at the end of the church St Micheile (Lucca), carved like lace. The French nailed up against it, destroying all the centre for ever, a great Louis-Quatorze escutcheon (which these wretches of Lucchese haven't spirit enough to pull down), with "Libertas" upon it, and they have mosaiced a tricolor into the middle of an inscription of the 15th century in the cathedral. I'm only afraid they haven't human soul enough ever to be damned".
contemporary French. In fact, his view of the Revolution is quite dismissive: "Nothing can come of nothing - the French revolution brought out all the little interest they had, and it was all froth and fury". 85

In an earlier letter, he compares English and French sensibilities, and concludes that, whereas the English are too much under the influence of Utilitarianism to allow of sensibilities at all, "the french (sic) blunders are those of minds which have actual disease mixed with their sensibility". The English are "vulgar from want of training", but the French are "vulgar from innate corruption". 86

However, when Ruskin turns to the Italians, he does so with an Evangelical vengeance which surely owes more to post-lapsarian theology than to actual sustained observation. 87 There is clearly a case for regarding the French military as destructive. Ruskin also has a case against the negligence of Italian priests ruining art treasures with their incessant burning of candles, and against Italian modernisers, "restorers" and "conservators". But the presentation of the Italians generally in these letters is extreme.

The Austrians may live in an "exhausted and cruelty hardened brute" of a country, and the French may be godless barbarians who are beyond not only redemption, but even damnation (see footnote 84, p. 96 above), but even France is preferable to the "sulkiness & filth of Italy": "I never felt the contrast so forcible between a living & a dead nation. I

85Letter 112: p. 185.

86Letter 4: p. 6

87It's also worth noting here that John James Ruskin described all Italian couriers as "rogues" (18th. June, 1838), and complained to Margaret Ruskin (2nd. May, 1839), "I am overwhelmed with Paris Correspondence in consequence of suspicions & manoeuvres among all these foreigners that I have not a minute": Van Akin Burd (1973): p. 533 & p. 612.
had rather by half travel on this dull Dijon road than <on> through the loveliest district of Italy, merely on account of the inhabitants".88

The Italians are insistently presented as post-lapsarian. In letter 92, for instance, he comments on the "fearful state to which Italy has fallen", refuses to recognise Italians as being "of the same order of beings" as himself, and considers that the only creatures actually fit to enter the churches are the dogs. In fact, he claims that even to think of Italians as human beings involves him in an "exercise of the most deep Christian humility"! 89 In letter 71, he characterises the modern Florentines as "pale, effeminate, animal eyed, listless sensualists", a sad contrast to the great men of Dante's time, whom, on the evidence of the portraiture which he has looked at in Florence, he characterises as "grand, thoughtful, self commanding men", surely an astonishingly naive response from a self-appointed art critic when he can so easily ignore the sycophantic functions of much portraiture.90 In another letter, the Florentines are quiet and happy - like their frogs and lice, and "there is about as much mind & worthiness in the one as in the other".91

The Venetians are given a rather back-handed compliment. Ruskin actually considers them as far superior to the rest of the Italians, but then claims that "as for brains, or feeling for anything good or venerable about them, it is quite hopeless".92 In fact, the Venetians are characterised by a "hopeless sensuality" and have lost "all national

90Letter 71: p. 129.
91Letter 112: p. 186.
character whatsoever" 93 - although what Italians were like in their pre-lapsarian state is not something that Ruskin defines to any great extent, apart from his remarks on the Florentines from Dante's time.

It is the post-lapsarian Italian national character which most exercises him in these letters, and, towards the end of his tour, the abuse actually gets worse. Writing from Desenzano, he tells his father that Italians are "a nation of malignant idiots, with just enough brains to make them responsible for their vices". He characterises their upper class women as "brazen faced viragos", with "black, immoral, unwomanish beads of eyes", and detects "not a single shade of womanly feeling" in their faces.94 But the most comprehensive catalogue of modern Italian vices occurs in a letter written after he had left Italy. Writing from Martigny, he characterises the Italians as "lazy, lousy, scurrilous, cheating, lying, thieving, hypocritical, brutal, blasphemous, obscene, cowardly, earthly, sensual, devilish".95 Quite a catalogue, and it carries with it a sense of relief as he moves without a pause into the next sentence: "I felt on the Simplon as if I were escaping to the mountain out of Gomorrah".

That there is in the raw material of these letters a distortion created by Ruskin's response to what he sees as an unwholesome sensuality among Italians is fairly clear. Indeed, such references as the last one to Gomorrah, and earlier ones to effeminacy, suggest homophobia,96 but, at this point, I would like merely to note that Ruskin's

93Letter 131: p. 211.
94Letter 119. p. 194.
95Letter 153: p. 228.
96There is an interesting comment by John James Ruskin writing to W.H. Harrison (30th. April, 1838) about a line from "A Scythian Banquet Song", one of the poems which
attitude to the South, as displayed in these letters, remains a constant feature of his work. It will reappear, for instance, in The Stones of Venice, and The Two Paths.

What, I suggest, is more important here is the sense of relief at escaping from a corrupt human, urban, and rapidly changing environment, to an innocent, natural, and stable environment. After his comment on escaping from "Gomorrah", a Biblical reference which carries with it the irony of not looking back, he moves without a pause into an account of his morning walk, a passage worth quoting at length:

But such a walk as I had this morning up from the village. I was out before breakfast to see the dawn on the Fletschhorn, and there isn't the least doubt that if anyone wants to see the Alps in perfect glory, he must come in October. There hasn't been a cloud nor a shadow all day - every peak radiant, and the low sun keeps touching them all day with morning effects - long slanting rays catching the red forests along the tops and gleaming & glancing over the edges of the snowy summits - not the garish, see everything, downright summer sun, but just what one wants, mysterious & dewy & bringing out all the promontories one behind another. I hadn't any idea of the Valais till today - now I've seen it for the first time. And at the Simplon top, though it was hard frost, and all the rocks covered with ice, it wasn't a bit cold - no wind, and the most lustrous, paradise like panorama you ever dreamed of.

The movement recorded in this letter from an Evangelical disgust with human beings to an enjoyment of natural beauty (or the beauties offered by architecture, sculpture, canvases and frescoes) is a feature of this collection of letters.

Writing from Lucca, he is full of praise for the artistic treasures which he has found at Massa and Carrara, and the "exquisite" mountain scenery around Carrara. But within a couple of paragraphs, he is fulminating against the local people.97 Slashing condemnations of the French and the Italians are not, I think, simply the chauvinism or xenophobia of the period. After all, some of the changes against which he

Ruskin entered for the Newdigate Prize at Oxford - "There is to me a double dose of Disgust in Kiss Me, mine Enemy - The Living enemy being a man": Van Akin Burd (1973): p. 532.

is protesting are caused by the introduction into Italy of features which, in Ruskin's view, are English. In a minor key, one of the indications that Venetians have lost all national character is that they have no indigenous costume - only "vulgar imitations of France & England". But imitating in a vulgar fashion does not necessarily say very much for what is English. After all, when Ruskin records the calamitous modernisation of Venice itself, he does so with sneering swipes at things English: the new railway is the "Greenwich" railway; building work makes Venice look like Liverpool; and the deglamorising provision of street gas lighting is in the Birmingham fashion.

Clearly, however, his extreme Evangelical attitudes to human corruption are being brought fully into play, and there is no doubt that, in writing to his father from Italy, he assumes a shared anti-Catholicism. Ruskin's parents, after all, were virulently anti-Catholic, and had been very much against the Catholic Emancipation Act. In fact, John James Ruskin had claimed, in a newspaper article published during Ruskin's second year at Oxford, that the British Constitution, and, indeed, the whole nation was in serious danger from Catholic Emancipation.99

However, the really interesting connection is between visions of human corruption and observed processes of radical change and decay, and that connection clearly exists in the letters, even though Ruskin does not offer the connection as a formal proposition, but, rather, as one might expect in a private correspondence between parents and son, he makes assumptions, undoubtedly shared, which he does not feel obliged to articulate formally.

98Letter 131: p. 211.
He does, however, at several points, make specific connections between his Italian experience (both positive and negative) and the order of experience celebrated in *Modern Painters* 1, and the letters from Italy suggest what kind of cultural intervention he is attempting in both *Modern Painters* 1 and *Modern Painters: 2: Section III*. 
CHAPTER SIX: FIXING VALUES.

Modern Painters 1 and 2 have often been seen as a defence of, and a celebration of the
work of Turner and of Natural Phenomena. In that Ruskin celebrates the work of
Turner, he also self-consciously promotes radical innovation, and a break with academic
tradition. In 1840, he wrote to Henry Acland, offering him advice on how he might best
progress in his artistic activities (36: pp. 19 - 21). The letter is astonishingly patronising
considering that it is written by a twenty-years old. The immediate occasion of Ruskin's
remarks is to do with Acland not using yellow ochre to make a grey which would help
him in the representation of solid form.

Ruskin suggests that Acland has paid scant attention to what he calls the "why's and
wherefore's", but he compliments him on having acquired a "very great power of
drawing by feeling, and a high degree of natural taste and intellect, and by the study of
the best masters". He recommends Acland to ignore "dry or degraded technicality" and
to inquire into the why's and wherefore's of natural phenomena. In doing so, he is
recommending a course of action which will lead the painter away from academic
tradition and to the more beneficial study of nature:

your success in this study will depend far more on yourself, and on the education you
give your own mind, than any instruction from men or books, if you accustom yourself,
with every shadow and colour you notice, to inquire - Why is this shadow of such a
form, and such a depth? ...

You will gradually acquire an acquaintance with facts and principles, which will
render your drawings not merely pieces of fine feeling, but embodied systems of beauty,
with the stamp of truth on every line.

Ruskin then assures Acland that he knows of no published work which will assist in this
course of study, and then offers him the following quite astonishing comment: "Most
artists learn their rules mechanically, and never trouble themselves about the reason of
them. You had much better arrive at the rules by a process of reasoning - you will then feel as well as know them”.

But while Ruskin celebrates the radicalism of Turner’s work, this is inextricably connected with Ruskin’s own celebration of Nature, and, while on the one hand, he celebrates Nature as an infinite change and variety, a state of constant motion, he also celebrates Nature as Order. The Multiplicity of Phenomena are always accountable to a central control, as indeed, according to Ruskin, are the myriad details of a Turnerian canvas. From this point of view, Turner’s radicalism is rescued by Ruskin for a conservative cause. And the Phenomena are accounted for. They are classified and catalogued in carefully constructed chapter sequences which resemble the display cabinets of a Natural History Museum:

SECTION III
OF TRUTH OF SKIES

CHAPTER I. - OF THE OPEN SKY

CHAPTER II. - OF TRUTH OF CLOUDS: - FIRST, OF THE REGION OF THE CIRRUS

CHAPTER III. - OF TRUTH OF CLOUDS: - SECONDLY, OF THE CENTRAL CLOUD REGION.

For, no matter how radical Turner’s innovations, and despite Ruskin’s promotion of his work, that promotion is, in fact, dependent on a very conservative Theology and Natural Philosophy, and a very determined purpose - to fix values.

The value of the Type is securely fixed. Infinity is the Type of Divine Incomprehensibility, Unity the Type of the Divine Comprehensiveness, Repose the Type of Divine Permanence, Symmetry the Type of Divine Justice, Purity the Type of Divine
Energy, and Moderation the Type of Government by Law. Ruskin even fixes the value of the ideal Type of a species: Veronese's treatment of dogs, for instance gives "the entire, magnificent, generic animal type, muscular and living, and with broad, pure, sunny daylight upon him, and bearing his true and harmonious relation of colour to all colour about him. This is ideal treatment" (4: pp. 302 - 303). These values are fixed in a changing world. Infinity has to be an expression of God's work in the universe. It is not allowed to be anything else. In what is a deeply conservative enterprise, both aesthetically and scientifically, and, when you consider his imitations of Hooker, rhetorically, any response which does not accept Ruskin's fixing of value is dismissed as wayward subjectiveness.

The values of aesthetic terminology are fixed: greatness in art; power; imitation; truth; beauty; relation:

I say that art is greatest which conveys to the mind of the spectator, by any means whatsoever, the greatest number of the greatest ideas ...

If this, then, be the definition of great art, that of a great artist naturally follows. He is the greatest artist who has embodied, in the sum of his works, the greatest number of the greatest ideas (3: p. 92).

That is the leading definition of Modern Painters 1, and Ruskin follows this by fixing the definitions of five leading ancillary ideas which, he states, represent the sources of the pleasure and the good to be gained from works of art:

1. Ideas of Power.- The perception or conception of the mental or bodily powers by which the work has been produced.

11. Ideas of Imitation.- The perception that the thing produced resembles something else.

111. Ideas of Truth.- The perception of faithfulness in a statement of facts by the thing produced.

IV. Ideas of Beauty.- The perception of beauty, either in the thing produced, or in what it suggests or resembles.

V. Ideas of Relation.- The perception of intellectual relations in the thing produced, or in what it suggests or resembles (3: p. 92).
The "nobleness" in the subjects of art is fixed.

What is seen in a painting is securely fixed. In writing about the products of the Associative Imagination, for instance, Ruskin lists the criteria by which they are to be judged - "intense simplicity", "perfect harmony", and "absolute truth". The harmony achieved by any such painting may be "majestic or humble, abrupt or prolonged", but "it is always a governed and perfect whole; evidencing in all its relations the weight, prevalence, and universal dominion of an awful inexplicable Power; a chastising, animating, and disposing Mind" (4: p. 248).

This is clearly related to his presentation of the way in which the myriad individual details of a Turner painting are subject to a "universal will". The connection is explicit in the original version of this sentence. After "governed and perfect whole", Ruskin had written: "and in its government, whether it be a work of art, or a scene of nature, there is felt the weight, prevalence and universal dominion of an awful and inexplicable Power, a chastising, animating, and all-absorbing mind" (4: p. 248: n. 2). It would be difficult to separate divine and human productivity in this statement. The choice of "all-absorbing" is also important in this context (See below: pp. 107 - 108).

But then Ruskin is very determined in Modern Painters 2 to assert artistic authority. He argues, for instance, that "the virtue of the imagination is its reaching, by intuition and intensity of gaze (not by reasoning, but by its authoritative and revealing power), a more essential truth than is seen at the surface of things" (4: p. 284). This, he says, is what he would want to be understood to mean whenever he speaks of imagination. He adds that the basis of the imagination's authority is its "perpetual thirst for truth and purpose to be true". But a phrase which appears in the first edition of Modern Painters 2 is quite revealing, for, in this, Ruskin refers to the "intuition and intensity of gaze" and "its
authoritative opening and revealing power" as "the true foundation of all art which exercises eternal authority over men's minds".

The problem, however, is the way in which human beings, according to Ruskin, perceive works of art. In discussing this question, or, rather, in promulgating the truth about perception, he manipulates the term "vacancy", by which he means the space left by a painting for the exercise of the beholder's imagination. He claims that works are sometimes called "imaginative" when all that is being indicated is that the artist has left room for the imagination to act, but that, after all, a purely unimaginative thing, such as "accidental stains on a wall", can stimulate the imagination. However,

The vacancy [by which he actually means what he has already called "suggestiveness"] of a truly imaginative work results not from absence of ideas, or incapability of grasping and detailing them, but from the painter having told the whole pith and power of his subject, and disdaining to tell more; and the sign of this being the case is, that the mind of the beholder is forced to act in a certain mode, and feels itself overpowered and borne away by that of the painter, and not able to defend itself, nor go which way it will: and the value of the work depends on the truth, authority, and inevitability of this suggestiveness [and on the absolute right choice of the critical moment 100] (4: p. 260).

Clearly, this is not a vacancy. The beholder's response is absolutely determined by the painter. That determination is itself justified by the need for, and guaranteed by the presence in the beholder of, the right "moral feelings". According to Ruskin, imagination is dependent on "acuteness of moral feeling". But what does this mean in practice?

The mental sight becomes sharper with every full beat of the heart: and, therefore, all egotism, and selfish care, or regard are, in proportion to their constancy, destructive of imagination; whose play and power depend altogether on our being able to forget ourselves and enter, like possessing spirits, into the bodies of things about us (4: p. 287).

Here, I suggest, is an essential contradiction - the beholders of art do not "possess" in the sense that they have the necessary freedom to receive and interpret a work of art

100 In the first edition only.
according to their own needs - to "possess" in the sense of reading and producing and internalising meaning. On the contrary, it is they who are possessed. They are, to use the verb in the adjectival phrase cancelled from the passage quoted above on the Associative Imagination, "absorbed" by the painter's insights and purposes, and actually become powerless before the "play and power" of his imagination. In Modern Painters 1 he quantifies the greatness of an idea in a painting as being "in proportion as it is received by a higher faculty of the mind, and as it more fully occupies, and in occupying, exercises and exalts, the faculty by which it is received" (3: p. 11).

The theological justification which Ruskin offers, that "all egotism, and selfish care or regard" destroy imagination, is exactly that which he offers earlier regarding human responses to manifestations of vitality, whereby, for instance, he argues that calculating the benefits of photosynthesis can only destroy the operations of the Theoretic Faculty which responds quite unselfishly to others' vitality. But this is also Ruskin in his ultra-Tory mode promoting the essentially conservative "contemplation of things as they are", a position which actually abdicates any responsibility for fixing the values which are being promoted by assigning responsibility to extra-human agencies such as God and Nature, but which claims the right to articulate those values both accurately in their detail as a conservative Natural Philosopher working in a neo-Aristotelian mode and prophetically in their general significance as one gifted with a special insight.

In all of this, however, while Ruskin is fixing value, he is also promoting values which are an alternative to the calculation of self-interest. Here, I think, is a significant element in these early works which will support his later enterprise in trying to rewrite the definitions and values of contemporary commercial and industrial practice.
It is this fixing of values which indicates the kind of cultural intervention represented by Modern Painters 1 and 2. The external world of the natural phenomena is presented as eternal and unchanging, and, therefore, not so much a-historical, as anti-historical. Ruskin's value-fixing is the explicit expression in his two published volumes of his resistance to contemporary Utilitarian thought and practice, and the implicit expression of his resistance to modern industrial and commercial developments which he explicitly attacks in his correspondence. This fixing of values is also part of his redefinition of Orders of Utility in which he seeks to isolate what he regards as the most significant artistic activities from ordinary processes of social production. This is clear from the very first draft of Modern Painters 1, the full text of which is given in the Library Edition at pp. 680/681.

Proceeding characteristically, Ruskin claims, in the first of the five paragraphs, that all landscape painting has two ends: truth and accuracy in the "representation of objects"; and the communication of "the peculiar impression those objects made on the mind of the painter himself". This then leads to two classes of painters - "painters of facts" and "painters of emotion".

Much of the remaining four paragraphs is concerned with painters of facts and their leading motive, which is to "please ... by the manifestation of [their] own power of simple imitation", and painters of fact become imitative painters. Ruskin is determined to put them firmly in their place. He concesses that they do deserve some of the praise which they receive from "the uneducated and childish", from those many members of the public who "chase flies, dewdrops, lace and satin through an exhibition", and even from "connoisseurs" who "measure the merit of a crucifixion by the corpse colour of the..."
wounded flesh". But the imitative painter, for Ruskin, belongs to a lower order than the painter of emotion, and his status is defined in terms of "ordinary" productive processes:

Great industry, long practice, and perfect knowledge of all that is mechanical, of all that can be really taught, in art, are necessary to his success. And as a mechanic, as a clever workman, he is deserving of high praise, - of the same kind of praise which we bestow on a tapestry-worker or turner, or any kind of artificer who is ready and dextrous with both eyes and fingers, but of no other kind, and of no more praise than these.

Value-fixing is at the centre of Modern Painters 1 and 2 but the contradiction lies in the fact that Ruskin himself is a consumer of artistic works whose financial value is subject to negotiation, a fact not recognised in the published works, but a plus in that it is an implicit attack on a commercial and mercantile system, an attack which will become explicit in the 1850s. Perhaps the major shift of interests in Ruskin's work from Nature to Society involves not only a shift from the impression of the power of the artist on his work, to the expenditure of labour in the process of social production, an expenditure which Modern Painters 1 and 2 implicitly recognises, but does not consider; but also a shift from fixing the existing values in what he sees as the Divine Production of an eternal, eternalised, Nature, to an attempt to fix new values in the Human Production of commodities.

Perhaps the real significance of "The True Nature of Gothic" is an assertion that the "ordinary" medieval craftsman could work at a creative level which Modern Painters 1 and 2 deny to "ordinary" nineteenth-century productive processes. Such an extension of the artistic franchise only, however, goes to support his growingly explicit attack on those contemporary processes.
As I have tried to argue, early nineteenth-century industrialisation and modernisation are important factors in Ruskin's early work, perhaps more important than has sometimes been recognised: either as developments to which he alludes in his published work in the first two volumes of *Modern Painters* and from which the world of Nature and the art of Landscape Painting are quite separate areas of experience not accountable to the dynamics of much resisted modern change; or as developments to which he explicitly refers in his private correspondence of the 1840s, especially as he records his anger at what modernisation is doing to the architectural and artistic heritage, and the development of the railroad system is doing both to heritage and to contemporary sensibilities.

In *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, published in 1849, Ruskin turns to the question of contemporary architectural practice, and seeks to legislate not only for the preservation of architectural heritage, but also for future building projects, both domestic and institutional. He is also offering a particular view of the social conditions which produced what he regards as the greatest achievements in European architecture to date, and he relates that to what he sees as the root cause of the upheavals of 1848, and seeks to map a way forward to a harmony which will replace the existing antagonism between the social classes.

His general approach to the organisation of his statement is familiar from the first two volumes of *Modern Painters*. The "laws of irrefragable right" which should govern architectural enterprises are catalogued under seven headings, or "Lamps" - Sacrifice,
Truth, Power, Beauty, Life, Memory and Obedience. But there the similarity with the earlier works ends. For instance, as I shall argue below, the scriptural thunder begins to recede not only as his Evangelical commitments begin to weaken, but also as it becomes clear that he can no longer operate within a hermetically sealed area of spiritual and aesthetic experience. Because architecture is a very public investment of resources, he now has to confront explicitly the modern laissez-faire social, financial and industrial practices to which he is opposed, and he begins to develop a rhetoric which does not leave his well-established Scriptural bases behind but begins to draw on a different kind of experience. In this sense, The Seven Lamps begins a long process of trying to formulate the exact bases on which he can persuade his audiences\(^{101}\) to reject the values and certain of the practices, if not the governing structure of social relationships, of modern capitalist developments.

However, while the field of architectural (and, by constant implication, general social) practices in which he is attempting to make a significant cultural intervention, is open to such an intervention, what he proposes is ultimately restricted by his own position as a member of a very wealthy and very conservative family, and by continuities in his own thought.

Intervention is possible precisely not only because of the very confused state of taste among the patrons of contemporary architectural enterprise in the first half of the nineteenth century, reflecting, perhaps, the laissez-faire practices of the manufacturers who constituted the most significant of the new patrons, but also because of the contemporary status of architects, and to introduce what I wish to offer on The Seven

\(^{101}\)In using the term "audiences" I have in mind Ruskin's activities as a lecturer as well as a writer in the 1850s and 1860s.
Lamps, I would like to address both of these issues selectively in a manner which, I suggest, places the text in a relevant context. Clearly, the next few paragraphs are no more than a convenient summation of published work which I acknowledge in the footnote.102

The Industrial Revolution had created new architectural patrons. For instance, the need for factories, warehouses, railway stations, gas works, office buildings, exhibition halls, city halls, and large stores necessitated the formation of commercial and manufacturing committees who, having no particular unanimity where taste was concerned, had an astonishing agreement on the need to restrict costs, and getting the best value for their money. This is a social practice which Ruskin attacks in "The Lamp of Sacrifice".

But the Revolution had also created a class of private patrons, in effect the same people who constituted the commercial and manufacturing committees, the newly wealthy middle classes with a desire for conspicuous consumption, but uncertain about what tasteful things to spend their surplus values on. As early as 1837, the precocious young Ruskin, operating confidently from within his own class experience, was satirising what I might be permitted to call his own people in the articles published as The Poetry of Architecture, according to which the private patron offers the architect the following schedule for his house:

This, sir, is a slight note: I made it on the spot: approach to Villa Reale, near Pozzuoli. Dancing nymphs, you perceive; cypresses, shell fountain. I think I should like something for this approach: classical, you perceive, sir; elegant, graceful. Then, sir, this is a sketch, made by an American friend of mine: Whee - whaw - Kantamaraw's wigwam, King of the - Cannibal islands, I think he said, sir. Log, you observe; scalps and boa-constrictor skins: curious. Something like this, sir, would look neat, I think, for the front door ... I should like my windows Egyptian, with hieroglyphics, sir ... the corners

102See Clark (1962); Eastlake (1872); Ferriday (1963); Buckley (1951); Garrigan (1973).
may be turned by octagonal towers, like the centre one in Kenilworth Castle; with Gothic doors, portcullis, and all, quite perfect.

Ruskin comments:

The architect is, without doubt, a little astonished by these ideas and combinations; yet he calmly sits down to draw his elevations; as if he were a stone-mason, or his employer an architect; and the fabric rises to electrify its beholders, and confer immortality on its perpetrator. This is no exaggeration (1: pp. 129 - 130).

With the experience of the later 1840s and his work of the 1850s behind him, Ruskin returned to the subject of middle-class aspirations in The Crown of Wild Olive, but his need to do so suggests something of his powerlessness in the face of the dominant social practices:

Your ideal of human life then is, I think, that it should be passed in a pleasant undulating world, with iron and coal everywhere underneath it. On each pleasant bank of this world is to be a beautiful mansion, with two wings; and stables, and coach-houses; a moderately-sized park; a large garden and hot-houses; and pleasant carriage drives through the shrubberies. In this mansion are to live the votaries of the Goddess; the English gentleman, with his gracious wife, and his beautiful family; he always able to have the boudoir and the jewels for his wife, and the beautiful ball dresses for the daughters, and hunters for the sons, and a shooting in the Highlands for himself. At the bottom of the bank, is to be the mill; not less than a quarter of a mile long, with one steam engine at each end, and two in the middle, and a chimney three hundred feet high. In this mill are to be in constant employment from eight hundred to a thousand workers, who never drink, never strike, always go to church on Sunday, and always express themselves in respectful language (18: p. 453).

Looking beyond the questions which Ruskin begins to ask in The Seven Lamps, I cannot resist the observation that he is still asking the wrong questions. It really does not matter whether the work-force drinks, swears, or doesn't go to church. It does matter whether they strike or not, and that points to questions he doesn't ask - Are they in secure employment? Are they paid enough? Do they have enough to eat? In any event, the antagonism between a formally free waged labour force and capitalist enterprises is hardly to be envisaged as an arrangement of topographical features in the manner of a water-colour landscape by Thomas Cook Bourne. What is also worrying about such a
passage is that the irony might easily be mistaken - as directed against the socially inconvenient habits of the operatives rather than against their employers' ordering of social relationships.

It would, however, be difficult to be uncertain about Ruskin's attitudes towards architects as articulated in *The Seven Lamps*, and, in one sense, he has an easy target. Throughout the nineteenth century, architects did not constitute a profession so much as a fairly disparate service relying on an informal system of training, and a very inefficient system of articled pupillage. The first Master of Architecture at the Royal Academy was not appointed until 1870, and the first full-time university course in architecture was not inaugurated until 1892 (at King's College, London). The Institute of British Architects was founded in 1834, but by 1841 only 9% of practising architects belonged to it, and it was not recognised as "royal" until 1866.

In any event, opposition to the statutory registration and examination of architects was very strong. People like Burne-Jones, Holman Hunt, and Morris, who were influenced by Ruskin in many important respects, opposed such moves on the grounds that you cannot fairly test anyone's capacity for architectural design, and, anyway, architectural practice is an artistic practice, and professional accreditation would only compromise it.

Ruskin had already opposed the idea of professional architects in the Preface to the Second Edition of *The Seven Lamps*: "I saw that the idea of an independent architectural profession was a mere modern fallacy, the thought of which had never so much as entered the heads of the great nations of earlier times". However, his objections are based on his view that there is "architecture" and that there is mere "building", and that
"the architect who [is] not a sculptor or a painter, [is] nothing better than a framemaker on a large scale" (8: p. 10).

You seem to have then a gloriously English phenomenon, a widespread amateurism resisting professional and institutional definition and organisation, and vulnerable to the dictates of a largely uninformed system of patronage, something which the young aesthete was only too happy to attack in The Poetry of Architecture:

Though much of the degradation of our present school of architecture is owing to the want or the unfitness of patrons, surely it is yet more attributable to the lamentable deficiency of taste and talent among our architects themselves ... [Their] energy ... is expended in raising "neat" poor-houses, and "pretty" charity schools; and, if they ever enter upon a work of a higher rank, economy is the order of the day: plaster and stucco are substituted for granite and marble; rods of splashed iron for columns of verd-antique; and in the wild struggle after novelty, the fantastic is mistaken for the graceful, the complicated for the imposing, superfluity of ornament for beauty, and its total absence for simplicity (1: p. 8).

Ruskin continues to attack architects in The Seven Lamps, accusing them of "lazy compliance with low conditions" and of "preferring always what is good of a lower order of work or material, to what is bad of a higher" (8: p. 44).

There is clearly no justification for shifting the primary responsibility for the alleged degradation from the patrons to their employees, other than Ruskin's paternalistic bias, and ,in the first passage from The Poetry of Architecture quoted above, he acknowledges the influence of patronage on architectural activity. It is also worth noting at this point that his earlier resistance to the establishment of an architectural profession is at odds with his later calls for the creation of a national school of architecture, the introduction of traditional professional values into the capitalist enterprise, and a professionalisation of the remunerative arrangements for the waged labour force.

But, then, Ruskin himself, operates from an anti-institutional bias, attacking committees as mobs, and appealing to private patrons, the very people whom he is quick
to satirise and whose tastes he would clearly like to reform. As a result, his proposals for
domestic architecture are very much a question of each good man building for himself
and his own posterity, so promoting generational emphases and continuities in domestic
life, and distinctively anti-revolutionary social arrangements.
Modern Painters 1 and 2 present, and celebrate the work of Turner and certain other landscape painters, as a distinctively anti-modern art form. According to Ruskin, their work presents a natural world which, while it offers an infinite variety and local changefulness, is not characterised by any kind of dynamic progress - nature is a complex of given eternal truths which are classified and catalogued in those volumes. Ruskin's refusal to allow for any dynamic progress in the natural world explains why, when geological phenomena are entered into the account, they are presented as appearances which can be observed, and not, despite Ruskin's awareness of the work of Sir Charles Lyell, for instance, as the products of dynamic structural changes in the Earth's evolution.

Implicitly, as I have already tried to suggest, the natural world, and its representation in landscape painting, are redeemed from a modernising world of dynamic industrial production to which Ruskin refers obliquely from time to time in the two published volumes of Modern Painters, but often quite explicitly in private correspondence, mostly in a mood of fine aesthetic disdain and rejection for its artifacts. Those attitudes appear several times in The Seven Lamps. "Tudor architecture", for instance, is criticised for adopting "for its leading feature, an entanglement of cross bars and verticals, showing about as much invention or skill of design as the reticulation of a bricklayer's sieve" (8: p. 182). Similarly, the "entire plan and decoration" of the lantern of St. Ouen at Rouen, which Ruskin regards as the "basest" and "most degraded" example of post-lapsarian Gothic, resembles, and deserves little "more credit than, the burnt sugar ornaments of elaborate confectionery" (8: pp. 64 - 65).
Modern cast-iron ornaments are condemned not only as "vulgar and cheap substitutes for real decoration" (8: p. 86), but also as morally deteriorative. In a manner reminiscent of his condemnation of the effect of the railways (see above: p. 90), he presents machine ornament and cast-iron work as inevitably making "us shallower in our understanding, colder in our hearts, and feeble in our wits" (8: p. 219). His opposition is, of course, part of his promotion of the essentiality of hand-work, a promotion which translates into architectural ornament some of the assumptions of Modern Painters 1 and 2.

There he condemns any artistic practice or theory which places the self-conscious display of technique between the artist and his subject. Of course, between the artist and his canvas, there are a number of objects which don't enter the account, such as brushes and palette, etc., but these do not have, for Ruskin, an autonomous life, as have tradition and machines. Brushes, like the chisel, are an extension of the hand, and, thereby, of the human consciousness engaged in creative activity.

It is not, however, just the modern which Ruskin opposes. Continuing certain emphases from Modern Painters 1 and 2, he frequently attacks tradition and custom and those who would place them between the artist and his subject, and his dealings, in The Seven Lamps, with "the confused mass of partial traditions and dogmata" which are, in his view, a positive hindrance to the emergence of any genuinely creative architectural practice, are worth considering at this point.

He opens The Seven Lamps with an ambitious programme similar to that of Modern Painters 1 and 2, i.e. to rescue from the "confusion" those "large principles of right" which are universally applicable. Parading his anti-modern attitudes, he describes what is wrong with contemporary architecture as another form of contemporary "materialism"
which is "increasing with the advance of the age" and producing "necessities" which "rise, strange and impatient, out of every modern shadow of change". The idiom is elliptical, and comes no closer to a specific definition of "necessities" than a reference to "the arising of a new condition, or the invention of a new material" (8: p. 21). There is here a careful avoidance of any reference to specific developments. This is surprising because, according to Conner, during the 1840s, Ruskin kept up with the latest building developments and the associated literature.103

At the same time, he pays Custom and Tradition a back-handed compliment by claiming that they represent, at the moment, the only "laws" capable of resisting new developments - however, such developments can overthrow those laws "in a moment". They are vulnerable because their basis is in "past practice", but he asserts the need to prevent "an utter dissolution of all that is systematic and consistent in our practice, or of ancient authority in our judgement". To effect this, he suggests a moratorium on all attempts to deal with contemporary developments, or "abuses, restraints, or requirements" as he prefers to call them, and instead to deduce "irrefragable laws of right" from a particular version of human nature which features essentially "unchangeableness" (8: p. 21).

It is worth noting at this point that he has already employed another version. For, earlier, he had argued that Architecture unites "technical and imaginative elements as essentially as humanity does soul and body". He expands the analogy using emphases familiar from Modern Painters 1 and 2: "it [i.e. Architecture] shows the same infirmly balanced liability to the prevalence of the lower part over the higher, to the interference
of the constructive, with the purity and simplicity of the reflective, element" (8: p. 20).

This is not, I suggest, an inconsistency or even a contradiction, but a taking for granted that the reader is clear as to Ruskin's employment of the distinction between pre- and post-lapsarian human nature. The latter, in one limited sense, belongs quite firmly to historical development, which offers ample evidence of the interference of the "lower" elements of human activity with the "higher" - corruption of all sorts is an all too obvious fact. The former ideal human nature belongs mostly to non-history - in fact, in a very obvious sense, to myth. But then, much of Ruskin's earlier published work takes the reader away from specific historical developments into a mythical realm of universalised and eternalised meanings. And where his architectural work is concerned, it is worth noting that he does not explore the problematical relationship between the poverty of contemporary architecture which he assigns to a specific set of social circumstances and, on the one hand, the greatness of mediaeval public architecture which he attributes to the vitality of domestic mediaeval architecture (based on his extraordinarily tenuous notion of contented mediaeval "manhood"), and on the other, his veneration of Giotto's Campanile which he attributes to Giotto's emerging Merlin-like from the Wilderness and having little, if any, relationship to the Florentine urban complex.

For the moment, however, he cannot insist on myth, for if existing practices are a hindrance to the development of a vital architecture, Ruskin has to engage in an actual history and present his proposals for the alternative practices which would implement the "irrefragable laws of right". And, by implication, he has to propose an alternative mode of production as well as modes of persuasion and coercion to support it.
The Seven Lamps opens with an alternative motive to govern not only the production of architecture, but any kind of human project: "Know what you have to do, and do it" (8: p. 19). Ruskin attributes the principle to the artist, Mulready.

Elaborating the idea, he argues for the need to determine "what is absolutely desirable and just", a policy which involves the "apprehension of duty" and the "acknowledgement of right". This alternative is opposed to what Ruskin sees as erroneous contemporary practice which he characterises as "the inquiry into the doubtful, and in some sort inexplicable, relations of capability, chance, resistance, and inconvenience", and which he presents as a "too cold calculation of our powers" (8: p. 20).

Specifically, he is arguing that contemporary architectural practices in the deployment of available resources are in need of reform. For instance, if an architect working with limited resources is aiming to create a building which is "markedly sublime", then, according to Ruskin, he should avoid the dominant contemporary practice of dividing the available funds in such a way as to achieve the whole range of architectural features (painting, gilding, fitting up, painted windows, small steeples, ornaments) in a futile attempt to create a "universal excellence". Instead, the architect, to achieve the effect of size, should abandon decoration, since, "unless they are concentrated, and numerous enough to make their concentration conspicuous, all his ornaments together will not be worth one huge stone" (8: p. 105).

Ruskin's concern here is with a different way of balancing available funds and the desired effect. In a letter to his father from Venice in 1845, he had claimed that money
was at the root of all the problems encountered in contemporary English art\(^{104}\), and, in

*The Seven Lamps*, he attacks modern architectural practice as being, unlike medieval practice, accountable to financial, rather than moral, considerations:

We are none of us so good architects as to be able to work habitually beneath our strength; and yet there is not a building that I know of, lately raised, wherein it is not sufficiently evident that neither architect nor builder has done his best. It is the special characteristic of modern work. All old work nearly has been hard work. It may be the hard work of children, of barbarians, of rustics; but it is always their utmost. Ours has as constantly the look of money's worth, of a stopping short wherever and whenever we can, of a lazy compliance with low conditions; never of a fair putting forth of our strength. Let us have done with this kind of work at once: cast off every temptation to it: do not let us degrade ourselves voluntarily, and then mutter and mourn over our shortcomings; let us confess our poverty or our parsimony, but not belie our human intellect.

Ruskin's response to this is to call for quality rather than quantity in modern building design. If an architect has just so much to spend on decoration, then he should employ the contemporary equivalent of Flaxman and insist that he produce the best he can (8: pp. 43 - 44).

Even where resources are not limited, Ruskin insists on an alternative to contemporary penny-pinching - i.e. "The Lamp of Sacrifice" - the spirit which will always choose the costlier of two marbles because it is the costlier, and enables the architect and those who are footing the bill to present "in the same compass ... more cost and more thought". Sacrifice, defined in what for Ruskin is an authentically Biblical tradition, is precisely the opposite of what he regards as "the prevalent feeling of modern times, which desires to produce the largest results at the least cost" (8: p. 31).

Since the habit of Sacrifice which Ruskin is calling for is scripturally sanctioned, he even suggests that tithes could be paid from contemporary expenditure on domestic

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ornamentation to furnish a marble church for every town in England (8: p. 39). This may well be a response to the existence of "Commissioners' Gothic". In 1818, the Church Building Act had allowed a million pounds for the building of new churches. Of the 214 that were built, 174 were in the "Gothic" style. However, the building was done on the cheap to provide as many churches as possible for the new industrial areas.

As he elaborates the implications of his proposal, Ruskin reveals how radical, in one respect, his alternatives are. Having suggested the tithe on domestic ornamentation expenditure, he retreats from the practical implications of actually building the churches, and emphasises instead the alternative feelings which his suggestion is seeking to install: "It is not the church we want, but the sacrifice; not the emotion of adoration, but the act of adoration; not the gift but the giving" (8: pp. 39 - 40). Of course, as Conner and others suggest, this is probably the Evangelical Ruskin side-stepping possible charges of Romanist idolatry by not promoting the gorgeous expenditure evident in the continental churches which he so admired and by not suggesting that God would appreciate artistry, but suggesting instead that He would welcome work whose products might well prove to be "almost invisible".105

It is not, ultimately, the actual mode of production which Ruskin is seeking to radicalise - that is why he advances no proposals to replace the dominant capitalist practice of exploiting a formally free waged labour force. Such a move would take him in the direction of Marx and Weber. Rather, he is seeking to radicalise the motives which drive the dominant productive mode, and this characterises The Seven Lamps as not so much an attempt to reconstruct the relationships between general workmen, the

specialist craftsmen and workmen, the commissioned builders and architects, and their patrons, as an attempt to lay out the groundwork for a general artistic and moral renewal of existing practices, with the exclusion from the system of cast-iron and machine work. "Was the carver happy?" is the crucial question, but the question relates not to the carver's relationship to the system which employs and pays him, but to the motives which inspire his work, in a manner which, as far as the carver is concerned, neglects questions concerning his relationship to the power system which bears heavily on his conditions of service, but wants from him an expression of abstract power which derives from the eternal, unchanging, infinitely variable world of natural phenomena which Ruskin has already presented in the first two volumes of Modern Painters. But can you escape from a life spent among "vulgar use and unhappy position" (8: p. 156) simply by learning to allow your work to be inspired by the very best which Nature has to offer?

Conner points to something of the limits on Ruskin's vision at this point by suggesting that he is more interested here in whether a piece of workmanship looks as if the carver were happy when doing it rather than whether it indicates anything about his actual working conditions.¹⁰⁶

That, in the 1840s, Ruskin should, apparently, be so concerned with the moral well-being of such a traditional minority, and, for the moment, leave aside the question of the situation of the new masses of operatives, points to the uneasy relationships in the opening of The Seven Lamps between his proposals for a specific field of social practice and his references to the broader question of the total "polity". While there is no desire on Ruskin's part to radicalise the relationship of the artists and handicraftsmen to the

wage-labour system, or, indeed, radicalise, and even replace the waged labour system, he
is concerned to radicalise their motives. "The Lamp of Truth", for instance, opens with a
dissertation on the deleterious effects of falsehood and the benefits of speaking the truth.
This is a prelude to an assertion that, for some hundreds of years, architecture has, along
with the other arts, been characterised by violations of the truth - a "moral delinquency"
which has "destroyed the arts themselves" (8: p. 59). Ruskin's alternative programme
links the arguments advanced in the two Lamps of "Sacrifice" and "Truth":

For, as I advocated the expression of the Spirit of Sacrifice in the acts and pleasures
of men, not as if thereby those acts could further the cause of religion, but because most
assuredly they might therein be infinitely ennobled themselves, so I would have the Spirit
or Lamp of Truth clear in the hearts of our artists and handicraftsmen, not as if the
truthful practice of handicrafts could far advance the cause of truth, but because I would
fain see the handicrafts themselves urged by the spurs of chivalry: and it is, indeed,
marvellous to see what power and universality there are in this single principle, and how
in the consulting or forgetting of it lies half the dignity or decline of every art and act of
man (8: p. 57).

The third Lamp, of Power, identifies in architecture two species of buildings, the
Beautiful and the Sublime, a distinction between what the architect derives from the
natural world and what he invents. Developing the key principle from Modern Painters 1
that "Whatever has been the subject of great power, bears about with it the image of that
which created it, is what is commonly called 'excellent' " (3: p. 96), and anticipating
"The Lamp of Obedience", as well as continuing the division between Vital and Typical
Beauty established in Modern Painters 2, he describes the two outstanding intellectual
features of architecture as "gathering" and "governing", "the one consisting in a just and
humble veneration for the works of God upon the earth, and the other in an
understanding of the dominion over those works which has been vested in man" (8: p.
102).
Ruskin then regrets the absence of "any aim at the expression of abstract power" in contemporary architectural enterprises, which he characterises as a contest between those attempting to be original and those attempting to adapt received traditions (8: p. 102). Neither is adequate, and, at the end of "The Lamp of Power", he calls for no less than an alternative mode of perception. Having earlier characterised contemporary English architecture as woefully distorted by the desire to achieve the greatest number of effects at the least possible expense, he now attributes the weakness of English architecture since the thirteenth century to the paucity of the urban environment, in a passage reminiscent of the invective with which he regales his father in his diatribes against the Central European nations in his 1845 letters from Venice:

But I know not how it is, unless that our English hearts have more oak than stone in them, and have more filial sympathy with acorns than Alps; but all that we do is small and mean, if not worse - thin, wasted, and unsubstantial. It is not modern work only; we have built like frogs and mice since the thirteenth century (except only in our castles). What a contrast between the pitiful little pigeon-holes which stand for doors in the east front of Salisbury, looking like the entrances to a beehive or a wasp's nest, and the soaring arches and kingly crowning of the gates of Abbeville, Rouen, and Rheims, or the rock-hewn piers of Chartres, or the dark and vaulted porches and writhed piers of Verona ! Of domestic architecture what need is there to speak ? How small, how cramped, how poor, how miserable in its petty neatness is our best ! how beneath the mark of attack, and the level of contempt, that which is common with us! What a strange sense of formalised deformity, of shrivelled precision, of starved accuracy, of minute misanthropy have we, as we leave even the rude streets of Picardy for the market towns of Kent !

The proposed alternative is to send English architects out from the cities into the hills to study "what nature understands by a buttress, and what by a dome" (8: pp. 135 - 136).

This, of course, supports the extraordinary claim which Ruskin makes for the inspiration behind his favourite building, Giotto's Campanile in Florence - the emergence of Giotto, like David, from the pastoral wilderness, an idea which testifies to Ruskin's intensely anti-urban attitudes (8: p. 189).
Sending English architects out into the Wilderness would assist in the creation of an alternative (and the right) system of ornamentation, since, in Ruskin's definition, ornament

must consist of such studious arrangements of form as are imitative or suggestive of those which are commonest among natural existences, that being of course the noblest ornament which represents the highest orders of existence. Imitated flowers are nobler than imitated stones; imitated animals, than flowers; imitated human form, of all animal forms the noblest (8: p. 154).

This is consistent with his proposals to promote handwork and reject all machine-work and cast-iron (8: p. 214, and p. 219), but as Ruskin develops his definition of ornament, he moves in a direction which directly confronts and rejects modern commercial practices. He takes up a Romantic commonplace, that frequency, repetition, and familiarity deaden response, and adds to it, in a concession to the power of Association, the suggestion that if you present beautiful forms to minds which are "painfully affected or disturbed", or "associate the expression of pleasant thought with incongruous circumstances", the result will inevitably be to attach an enduring "painful colour" to those beautiful forms.

Furthermore, and the passage is worth quoting in full,

Remember that the eye is at your mercy more than the ear. "The eye, it cannot choose but see."107 Its nerve is not so easily numbed as that of the ear, and it is often busied in tracing and watching forms when the ear is at rest. Now if you present lovely forms to it when it cannot call the mind to help it in its work, and among objects of vulgar use and unhappy position, you will neither please the eye nor elevate the vulgar object. But you will fill and weary the eye with the beautiful form, and you will infect that form itself with the vulgarity of the thing to which you have violently attached it. It will never be of much use to you any more; you have killed, or defiled it; its freshness and purity are gone. You will have to pass it through the fire of much thought before you will cleanse it, and warm it with much love before it will revive (8: p. 156).

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This is problematic. I argued above (pp: 124-125) that Ruskin, in his very privileged position, has no idea that unhappy workmen might well be the product of a system one of whose essential constituents is the antagonism between a formally free waged labour population and the holders of capital, and seeks only to install alternative inspirations and motives. Here, the limits of his concern with the condition of the workman are even clearer. Rather than propose alternatives to working among "objects of vulgar use and unhappy position", he proposes to leave untouched the work situation to which he has pointed and to restrict the presence of "lovely forms" to an area artificially insulated from the world of work. His concern here is not with the Vital Beauty of human beings, who are only "wearied", but with the redemption of the "beautiful form", which has been "infected", and "killed" or "defiled", but which is itself a product of human labour, from the work place. His concern here is not primarily with the condition of the workmen - it is with the artifact, and positive aspects of human activity, "thought" and "love" are here being valued only as instrumental to the redemption of a beautiful object.

He argues that beautiful ornamentation should be restricted to places of leisure, arguing, as he does so, against urban street marketing, which, in his view, treats the customer as an idiot (8: p. 158), and the railroad system which transforms a traveller into a "living parcel" (8: p. 159). This last insight is an example of how so often Ruskin can frustrate the expectations of a radically-minded reader, since it points to the commodification of the person under capitalism, but the insight is not developed. It exists, in this context, as an isolated and disdainful bon mot.

His acceptance that modern, as opposed to medieval practice, is to separate "the shop from the dwelling-house" (8: p. 158) will re-emerge later in The Seven Lamps in proposals for an alternative domestic architecture (8: p. 227), and the implication that
architectural Heritage is now ousting, in his own work, Eternal, Unchanging Nature as what needs to be carefully preserved in the face of modern developments and failures (8: p. 242). But then appealing to Heritage is a not uncommon reflex from those of a conservative persuasion. This will be connected to his later assertions that Obedience should substitute for Liberty (8: p. 249), and Work for the Idleness which is responsible, allegedly, for unwelcome revolutionary discontent and agitation (8: p. 260).

These are issues which I intend to address in the final section of this chapter, but I now want to turn to the two matters with which any proposals for an alternative mode of production, whether this concern motives or actual practices, need to be accompanied - alternative modes of persuasion and coercion.
CHAPTER SEVEN: THE SEVEN LAMPS OF ARCHITECTURE:

D) MODES OF PERSUASION.

Having apologised in "The Introductory" for the inadequacy of the theses to be put forward, on the grounds that any attempt to pursue his architectural studies would have distracted him from the continuing enterprise of Modern Painters, Ruskin offers what a modern sensibility must receive as a quite astonishing apology for his introduction of references to Scripture into his previously published arguments. The astonishing quality of this apology, which quickly turns into a justification annihilating any apology, is this - that the original introduction of Scriptural references is "an apparently graver fault" than a distraction which means that he is unable to deal with the finer points of architectural theory and practice. His justification is this:

I have been blamed for the introduction of its [i.e. Scripture's] sacred words. I am grieved to have given pain by so doing; but my excuse must be that those words were made the ground of every argument and the test of every action. We have them not often enough on our lips, nor deeply enough in our memories, nor loyally enough in our lives. The snow, the vapour, and the stormy wind fulfil His words. Are our acts and thoughts lighter and wilder than these - that we should forget it? (8: p. 24).

The final paragraph of "The Introductory" relates his use of scriptural idiom to the events of 1848, and the need for "every good man" (the exclusion policy is clear, but who is included is another question) to acknowledge the principles which the volume will articulate.

And it becomes clear, as the volume proceeds, that, while in the previous volumes most key principles may well have been related to Scripture, in The Seven Lamps much of the material which Ruskin is taking on is only tangentially related to Scripture.
His opposition to contemporary machine work, however, in "The Lamp of Life" concludes with a characteristic burst of conservative Biblical thunder:

There is dreaming enough, and earthiness enough, and sensuality enough in human existence, without our turning the few glowing moments of it into mechanism; and since our life must at best be but a vapour that appears for a little time and then vanishes away, let it at least appear as a cloud in the height of Heaven, not as the thick darkness that broods over the blast of the Furnace, and rolling of the Wheel (8: pp. 219 - 220).

The peroration is constructed around a quotation from "James: IV: 14".

Landow has pointed to the significance of Ruskin's employment of Biblical quotations, references and idioms.108 In a chapter on "Ruskin and Allegory", which includes comments on Ruskin's typology, he argues, as others have done,109 that the empirical approaches to language of Hobbes and Locke effectively removed the reference of language from metaphysics to psychology, and, in so doing, undermined for Evangelical Christians the linguistic foundations of allegory. However, as he further points out, the Evangelical Anglicans did not in any sense combat Lockean theories and those of the Scottish empiricists who followed his lead - Reid, Dugald Stewart and Adam Smith (all read by Ruskin). Rather, Smith's Theory of the Moral Sentiments was actually cited "approvingly" by Wilberforce in his Practical Christianity (1797). The Evangelical tactic for dealing with the implications of scientific theories, Biblical scholarship, and comparative philology, was exemplified by one of the Ruskins' favourite preachers, Melvill, in a passage from a sermon quoted by Landow: "The Bible is as actually a divine communication as though its words came to us in the voice of Almighty, mysteriously syllabled, and breathed from the firmament".110

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109But I quote here from Landow as a commentator specifically on Ruskin.

Landow is explaining the pressures undermining Ruskin's Evangelical faith, and it is in that context that he cites Melvill. But his suggestion that the Evangelicals sought to privilege the Bible as Divinely communicated, and, therefore, beyond the reach of empirical science, is available in another context - that of Ruskin's employment of Biblical quotations, references and idioms.

Time and again, at what he senses as crucial moments in the arguments which he is advancing, Ruskin reaches for his scriptural repertoire, as in the peroration to "The Lamp of Life". What is happening here is, I think, that he is seeking to give his arguments a purchase on a metaphysical reality which transcends actual history. This in effect means that he is not so much offering an argument as proclaiming an authoritative revelation which goes beyond analysis, interpretation, argument, counter-argument, controversy, and the other features of "normal" intellectual discourse, and, particularly, beyond the Lockean anchoring of experience in sense data. Obviously such a procedure can work in Modern Painters 1 and 2 where Ruskin is dealing with a Natural Order luminous with Typical Beauty and its representations in landscape art - the rhetorical Scriptural procedures of the text are authenticated by the content of the text since both Nature and Scripture are a divine creation. And that authentication can be extended to Turner's canvasses. The result, as I argued above, is undoubtedly a mystification in which the unremitting materiality of the natural phenomena with which he is dealing forces Ruskin into a language of the "immeasurable", the "inexhaustible" and the "imperceptible". However, when he comes to deal with architecture as a massive investment of public and private human resources, the sheer weight of human experience which it embodies and the impossibility, not necessarily recognised by Ruskin, of extracting buildings from an actual history makes it that more difficult to appeal to a transcendental reality. I am not
here implying that you can take paintings out of their historical context, but Ruskin does so in the first two volumes of *Modern Painters* as he shields them from any contamination by non-artistic contemporary modes of production and values. However, he does try to isolate the architectural heritage, though not contemporary building, from an actual history, and argues in *The Seven Lamps* that the bases of great work in architecture are instinctual social practices, structures of feeling and motive, which are not subject to processes of analysis and interpretation which might articulate them in a form appropriate for teaching to, and learning by, contemporary architectural workmen (8: p. 195, and p. 209), and that the greatest of all the works, Giotto's Campanile, has its genesis in Giotto's emergence from the anti-urban Scriptural Wilderness (8: p. 189).

The use of Biblical idioms serves another, and connected purpose. It de-personalises Ruskin's arguments and he becomes not so much an author - an individual voice in a specific historical situation contributing to a general debate about architectural styles, a debate about practices and developments which he has already stigmatised as "confusion" and "abuses" - as a spokesman - or prophet, if you prefer, whose voice, scripturally sanctioned, is placed beyond and above the specific details of the architectural discourse and architectural institutions, and is articulating universalised principles. And this empties his arguments at crucial points of any subjective element. How conscious he is of this effect I am not certain, but clearly, throughout *Modern Painters 1 and 2* and *The Seven Lamps*, Ruskin is either rejecting or heavily qualifying subjective elements in human responses, particularly, of course, varieties of Association.\(^\text{111}\) Obviously, it is possible to regard his employment of Biblical idioms as a

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\(^{111}\) The opening of "The Lamp of Memory" is a major exception to this. See below pp. 148 - 149.
form of Authority by Association as his text invokes the text, but I would like to suggest that his procedures run deeper than this, and that he is implicitly claiming for his text a revelatory and objective truth removed from the vagaries of history. For, for Evangelical Christians, the Bible is the text which stands outside of History and is ever-contemporary. It is simply not subject to historical genesis and change. But, then, in *Modern Painters 1 and 2*, nor is the natural world which is there being classified and catalogued.

Architecture, however, is a different matter, and Ruskin cannot, despite the continuation of his cataloguing procedures in the enumeration of the Seven Lamps, avoid questions of historical change, change which his habit of fixing values and types resists.

Nevertheless, the cataloguing procedures of *The Seven Lamps* are accompanied, as they are in *Modern Painters 1 and 2*, by the method of quantification\(^{112}\) - a method which relies on the assumption that what he is observing in the buildings is measurable and objective. However, where quantification generally "works" in *Modern Painters 1 and 2*, its application to architecture is not so straightforward. With landscape painting, Ruskin can avoid contact with actual historical change and, at the risk of a slight bathos, financial considerations, and operate in an innocent "aesthetic" sphere. But with architecture, it would be very difficult indeed to apply a catheter to the discourse and empty it of all historical and financial considerations. The mediaeval public buildings which are the primary subject of his attention are only too obviously an investment of individual, and social, and largely anonymous, energies and resources.

\(^{112}\) Magnitude in architecture (p. 104); magnificence (p. 114); nobility and ignobility (p. 190); shadow (p. 116); Obedience (p. 250); the Picturesque (p. 236); Comparative Beauty (p. 135); and even Vitality (p. 200).
Financial considerations, which produce what are, in some respects, the most practicable aspects of The Seven Lamps, in fact modify drastically the habit of quantification which was a most confident procedure in the earlier volumes. When, for instance, Ruskin deals with Magnitude in a building, he begins with the kind of formula used so extensively in Modern Painters 1 and 2: "While, therefore, it is not to be supposed that mere size will enoble a mean design, yet every increase of magnitude will bestow upon it a certain degree of nobleness" (8: p. 104). Such a formula, as employed in the previous volumes, would have led through the stages of the argument to this kind of triumphalist final formula:

I say that art is greatest which conveys to the mind of the spectator, by any means whatsoever, the greatest number of the greatest ideas ... If this, then, be the definition of great art, that of a great artist naturally follows. He is the greatest artist who has embodied, in the sum of his works, the greatest number of the greatest ideas (3: p. 92).

But here the formula is developed as a series of practicable recommendations to an architect short of funds.

Ruskin begins with the observation that contemporary building practices are too concerned with distributing available resources across a whole range of features - painting, gilding, painted windows, small steeple, ornaments - all of which, in the end, are not "worth their materials". Further on in this paragraph, therefore, he urges the architect to create "nobleness" by increasing the "magnitude" of a building, and to effect this within limited resources by making the necessary sacrifices. For instance, if the architect cannot afford elaborate ornamentations which would be conspicuous enough to justify their existence, then he should abandon them in favour of "one huge stone"; and he should prefer greater size in his capitals rather than a little carving, taller arches rather
than richer architraves, a wider nave than a tessellated pavement, and "another fathom of outer wall, than an army of pinnacles" (8: pp. 105 - 106).

Left at this, we have little more than observations and recommendations on responding to limited resources. But the paragraph is about more than this, and its real significance has to do precisely with Ruskin's choice of an architect who is working on limited resources, and the possibilities which this offers for radicalising human responses to architecture. Between the initial observation and the recommendations, there occurs a remarkable passage worth quoting in full:

... there is a crust about the impressible part of men's minds, which must be pierced through before they can be touched to the quick; and though we may prick at it and scratch it in a thousand separate places, we might as well have let it alone if we do not come through somewhere with a deep thrust; and if we can give such a thrust anywhere, there is no need of another; it need not be even so "wide as a church door", so that it be enough. And mere weight will do this; it is a clumsy way of doing it, but an effectual one, too; and the apathy which cannot be pierced through by a small steeple, nor shone through by a small window, can be broken though in a moment by the mere weight of a great wall (8: p.105).

Ruskin's modes of persuasion are often so aggressive as to slide into a mode of coercion.

Although the quantifying procedure is used less extensively and less intensely in The Seven Lamps than in Modern Painters 1 and 2, it serves the same purpose as the purchase on scriptural authority in underpinning Ruskin's arguments with a claim to objectivity - we have not only the seemingly impersonal revelations of scriptural inspiration, but also the confidence of the Materialist Natural Philosopher that the qualities being observed and quantified are actually present in the object - a confidence which, when translated into responses to landscape painting and architecture, takes Ruskin even further from any accountability to the Lockean tradition. The qualities which Ruskin enumerates are not the product of one person's visual dialogue with the
buildings, for his assertion is that the qualities are objectively present, and clearly therefore, in looking at buildings, we are actually contemplating "things as they are".

Also supporting Ruskin's claims to impersonality and objectivity are his attacks on tradition which place his arguments beyond any historical specificity in that he claims to be responding to laws which are based on human nature (8: p. 22), a universalisation of experience which yields natural principles which are superior to human authority (8: p. 178). He also opposes Custom and Tradition to "true vitality" in architecture.

I have suggested that much of Ruskin's early published writing avoids actual history and that is clear in his identification of the moment at which Gothic architecture "fell" (8: p. 87 and pp. 98/99). He relies on the well-established notion that a nation's life-style can be mediated as a personal life-cycle, a principle which necessarily distracts from the examination of specific social formations with specific social practices producing their own phenotypic effects. Unfortunately, he generalises the basis of the greatness of Gothic architecture as "contented manhood" (8: p. 228) and then fails to draw out any possible connections between that thesis and the connections he begins to make between contemporary urban housing practices and social discontent. (See next paragraph). The "Fall" of Gothic architecture is attributed to a specific architectural practice, and divorced, in fact, from any wider contexts - not surprising - the model is Evangelical and mythical - it is Adam and Eve mediated via Romantic historicism, and not an examination of specific historical developments.

But Ruskin's attack on urban housing and social discontent in the late 1840s seems to me to offer the best of The Seven Lamps as he identifies a specific development, cheap-jack suburban housing, and a specific result in the loss of generational emphases. It is clear that he is beginning to confront an actual history, and when this is related to his
attacks on calculated self-interest and his assertion that monetary considerations are at the root of contemporary architectural failure (8: p. 44 and p. 46), what is emerging is an ever more explicit critique of the actual social practices which militate against the values which, he insists, are mediated by great art, and which are derived ultimately from Revelation and not from social practice.

One existing practice which Ruskin opposes, though with some reservations, is the aim to achieve a perfect finish in imitative form. He deals with this in "The Lamp of Beauty" in a manner which suggests that his thoughts on the subject of architectural practice are, in many ways, at an early stage of formation, and that he is not finding it always possible to sustain the grandly confident enunciation of principles which features so strongly in the first two volumes of *Modern Painters*.

The specific issue is the degree to which architectural ornamentation should approach absolute completion. He has, in the earlier published volumes, argued against perfect finish, and, in *The Seven Lamps*, he has already argued that a mark of vitality is "Frankness" which is contemptuous of refinement in execution (8: p. 197), and called on architects to achieve weight and vigour, no matter how clumsily they do it (8: p. 134). Here, however, he is not quite so confident.

In addressing this issue, Ruskin relies on the analogy between an individual life-cycle and the national life-cycle, whereby he can assert confidently that in the early stages of social development, ornamentation is necessarily "abstract and incomplete" (and this presumably applies to social development), and has gone into decline when it reaches "absolute completion". Ruskin, however, disagrees with a common supposition that absolute completion is wrong. He prefers to see it as "dangerous". At this point, although he sustains the analogy between the individual and the nation, he avoids the
enunciation of any general laws regarding finish in ornamentation, although the isolation and definition of such laws are, after all, the declared purpose of The Seven Lamps as an architectural thesis. Instead, he refers the determination of how far ornamentation should approach absolute imitative completion to a pragmatic consideration of "place and office" (8: p. 170).

Contemporary practices regarding finance are something which Ruskin addresses in the first chapter, "The Lamp of Sacrifice", referring as he does to the "prevalent feeling of modern times, which desires to produce the largest results at the least cost" (8: p. 31).

That definition is perhaps as close to an explicit statement of what he is opposing as he is prepared to make in the opening shots which he is firing, for the elliptical and allusory nature of much of what he writes leaves a reader to pick up the implications and to wonder whether the application of his remarks to Architecture is intended to go no further than that, or whether he is suppressing a desire to have a go, as he will later, at the whole system.

For instance, the maxim with which he opens - "Know what you have to do, and do it" - is offered not just as a principle to be applied to painting, but as "expressing the great principle of success in every direction of human effort" (8: p. 19). As to failure, Ruskin attributes that, in the first place, to a practice which he has already condemned in the first two volumes of Modern Painters - allowing technical considerations to interfere with the conception of the Good and the Perfect. But he is decidedly moving on in The Seven Lamps as demonstrated in his amplified definition of what he sees as the single most important social practice producing failure:

... the inquiry into the doubtful, and in some sort inexplicable, relations of capability, chance, resistance, and inconvenience, invariably precedes, even if it do not altogether supersede, the determination of what is absolutely desirable and just. Nor is it any wonder that sometimes the too cold calculation of our powers should reconcile us too
easily to our shortcomings, and even lead us into the fatal error of supposing that our conjectural utmost is in itself well, or, in other words, that the necessity of offences renders them inoffensive (8: p. 20).

The failures which are due to this most important factor occur "more especially in matters political", and the generalisation is "true of human polity". However, although he prioritises the general implications of his statement, Ruskin does not produce any specific examples of political failure. And yet the connection between what he has to say of architecture, and of a contemporary political crisis, is carefully foregrounded at the start of The Seven Lamps, and indicates the book's intended audience. At the end of the "Introductory", he makes a reference which, by common agreement among commentators, is to the 1848 "Revolutions" and to Chartist "agitation", which he stigmatises as "the weight of evil against which we have to contend". That "we" takes an awful lot for granted. But he is also referring under the blanket term, "evil", to social misery and makes a clear distinction between "revolutionary" actions and harsh social conditions: "The blasphemies of the earth are sounding louder, and its miseries heaped heavier every day". Ruskin takes two solutions for granted - that it is the duty of "every good man" to repress the revolutionary or relieve the miserable (8: p. 25) - which, of course, ignores the connections between the two, and assumes that the right course of action is to eradicate from the system anything which threatens radical change and to promote any kind of charitable activity which will bring some comfort to the victims of the very social practices which produce both the misery, through the exploitation of the formally free waged labour market, and the surplus values so produced which are available to relieve the misery so produced; and which, at this point, Ruskin has seemingly no desire, or freedom, or vision, to confront.
On the contrary, he is primarily concerned to educate an audience whom he is taking for granted - the "good man". His programme for this is to avoid both "the idleness of metaphysics, or the entertainment of the arts" and to take up an hour of the "good man's" time to teach him "how even those things which seemed mechanical, indifferent, or contemptible, depend for their perfection upon the acknowledgement of the sacred principles of faith, truth, and obedience, for which it has become the occupation of his life to contend" (8: p. 25). If this is the grand aim of The Seven Lamps, then it really is a question of sermons on stones.
CHAPTER SEVEN: THE SEVEN LAMPS OF ARCHITECTURE:

E) MODES OF COERCION.

The Seven Lamps, Sacrifice, Truth, Power, Beauty, Life, Memory and Obedience, which Ruskin puts forward as the "guiding lights" for architectural enterprise, are not exactly a proffered facility to guide architects, builders, masons, craftsmen, or even unskilled assistants (if they even come within his purview) to the ends which they desire - as you might light a traveller through the dark to a destination which the traveller has chosen. Rather, they are a highly prescriptive clarification of the correct alternative motives and practices which will rescue contemporary architectural practice from the "confused mass of partial traditions and dogmata" and the currently "multiplying host of particular abuses, restraints, or requirements", and will "determine ... some constant, general, and irrefragable laws of right", such laws to be "the guides of every effort" (8: pp. 20 - 21: my emphasis). But what is the basis of Ruskin's authority to prescribe practice?

In the 1840's Ruskin (and his father) occupy a position of semi-institutional authority in the art market as patrons buying the work of, and commissioning work from, various landscape artists. In this sense, Modern Painters 1 and 2 are, perhaps, as much a justification of the Ruskins's investment in paintings as a treatise on landscape art - perhaps even a justification by the younger Ruskin of his father's expenditure, something of which he was very conscious. But, then, so, of course, was his father (See above p. 44). As far as architecture is concerned, Ruskin is a non-institutional figure. He was a member of the Oxford Society for Promoting the Studies of Gothic Architecture from 1842 - 1847, but not a particularly active member,113 and in The Seven Lamps he is

attempting an intervention whose authority must necessarily be based on a series of propositions which are proffered not for negotiation in any significant institutional forum but very much on the assumption that here is something important which, hopefully, the right people will listen to, and even, perhaps, act on. As a result, many of the arguments put forward in *The Seven Lamps* claim an authority which is outside of, and, perhaps unintentionally, beyond institutional sanction.

For instance, in "The Introductory", Ruskin reflects on his own methods of persuasion/coercion, which he describes, I think, rather disingenuously, as "the pressing or recommending of any act or manner of acting" - the word "pressing", connected, as it must be, to his use of the word "irrefragable", gives the game away. *The Seven Lamps* doesn't recommend - it presses its assumed audience into the correct way of doing things; and Ruskin mostly assumes that "what you have to do" is something which he is empowered to define by virtue of the scriptural authority which he invokes to start with, but on which he relies less and less as the volume develops.

In introducing his proposals, he typically distinguishes between two levels of argument - higher and lower. The lower relates to the value of actual contemporary architectural practice - that "expediency or inherent value of the work, which is often small, and always disputable" (8: p. 23). The dismissiveness of the italicised phrases is indicative of the way in which, so often, in *The Seven Lamps*, Ruskin avoids detailed negotiation with actual practice. The second line of argument, the higher, claiming its purchase on the "irrefragable laws of right", refers architectural practice to the "highest orders of human virtue", and is accountable to "Him who is the origin of virtue". Ruskin concedes that the lower level of argument is commonly the "more persuasive", but the higher is the "more conclusive" - and, by implication, non-disputable. But, of course, the
authority to which Ruskin is appealing is not any architectural forum, but a metaphysical reality beyond any such, and at the end of "The Introductory", in a peroration which, because of the elliptical and allusory nature of the prose, wavers between specific references to "good" architects and "every good man" (my emphasis), he calls for an hour to be set aside by potential, and presumably interested, readers, to discover how the purely mechanical considerations of their trade are accountable to the higher order of virtue. The coercive element here is in Ruskin's quite unqualified assumption that the "good" architect, like every "good" man, is already contending for "the sacred principles of faith, truth and obedience" (8: p. 25). In that this is a description which refers to actual social practice, rather than a prescription for ideal social practice, I am left wondering exactly who these "good" men are who are contending, and what they are practising and producing, especially since Ruskin roundly condemns most recently produced contemporary buildings, especially churches (8: p. 30).

The grand enterprise which Ruskin announces in "The Introductory" as the determination of "irrefragable laws of right" is developed throughout The Seven Lamps in a language which is often apologetic and even tentative, but no amount of apology and tentativeness can outweigh the predominantly uncompromising tone of Ruskin's major statements. That only the very best materials should be employed in ecclesiastical buildings is "infallibly concluded" (8: p. 34), and, in condemning contemporary work as having "constantly the look of money's worth", he launches into the following exhortatory passage:

Let us have done with this kind of work at once; cast off every temptation to it; do not let us degrade ourselves voluntarily, and then mutter and mourn over our shortcomings; let us confess our poverty or our parsimony, but not belie our human intellect ... Do not let us boss our roofs ... do not let us flank our gates ... let us go to the Flaxman of his time ... choose, then, a less developed style, as also, if you will, rougher material ... (8: p. 44).
Throughout the passage, Ruskin's use of the first person plural pronoun is consistent with his exhortatory purpose until the rest of the last sentence quoted: "the law which we are enforcing requires only that what we pretend to do and to give, shall both be the best of their kind".

The different significations of "we", the authorial voice and the assumed identity with the architectural community, point to the problem. Ruskin is not recording and endorsing contemporary architectural practice, but legislatively reform from a position isolated from any institutional or constitutional authority which would make the legislation structurally effective.

This, perhaps, is why "The Lamp of Truth" opens with an admission of difficulty which is, in effect, an admission of powerlessness:

Truth ... that pillar of the earth, yet a cloudy pillar; that golden and narrow line, which the very powers and virtues that lean upon it bend, which policy and prudence conceal, which kindness and courtesy modify, which courage overshadows with his shield, imagination covers with her wings, and charity dims with her tears. How difficult must the maintenance of that authority be, which, while it has to restrain the hostility of all the worst principles of man, has also to restrain the disorders of his best - which is continually assaulted by the one and betrayed by the other, and which regards with the same severity the lightest and boldest violations of its law! There are some faults slight in the sight of love, some errors slight in the estimate of wisdom; but truth forgives no insult, and endures no stain. (8: pp. 54 - 55).

Faced as an Evangelical Christian with the obvious and pervasive fact of post-lapsarian behaviour, Ruskin can here only issue a threat against that which will not be tolerated or forgiven - but not tolerated and not forgiven by whom? If architects are refusing to respect the authority of the Truth, who is to coerce them into such respect? And where are the sanctions? The answer, in one respect, is beyond history in the final settling of accounts known in Christian mythology as the Last Judgement when Truth will demonstrate its unforgiving nature and consign lying architects to the exterior darkness
and the gnashing of finials and fillets. But Ruskin is faced with the here-and-now, and no matter how much Scripture he cares to invoke in an attempt to coerce morally his audience, he has to address contemporary practicalities, and the coercion of architectural taste and practice is perhaps the main issue which he addresses in the last two chapters of "The Seven Lamps".
CHAPTER SEVEN: THE SEVEN LAMPS OF ARCHITECTURE:

F) THE LAMP OF MEMORY.

When Ruskin turns to focus particularly on the historical dimension of architecture, the demands which he makes on both public and private building are similar. Where public buildings are concerned, he seeks to impose two duties - that contemporary architecture should feature a historical dimension, and that the architecture of the past should be preserved as "the most precious of inheritances". The introduction to these proposals is worth examining because Ruskin opens "The Lamp of Memory" with a passage which would not be out of place in Modern Painters 1 and 2 - a recording of some hours spent in the pine forest above the village of Champagnole in the Jura. With the experience of the first two volumes of Modern Painters behind him, the rendering of the significances of the landscape which he has observed is very assured:

there is a sense of a great power beginning to be manifested in the earth, and of a deep and majestic concord in the rise of the long low lines of piny hills; the first utterance of those mighty mountain symphonies, soon to be more loudly lifted and wildly broken along the battlements of the Alps (8: p. 222).

The reconstructed epiphany which follows would not, however, be appropriate to the earlier volumes as Ruskin tries to connect his interests in landscape with his interests in architecture, and, in so doing, adds a dimension to his response to nature in which historical experience is defined as of a higher order than the natural order, and re-instates Association and memories as, perhaps, the most powerful element in his, and by implication, anyone's response to nature.

In his diary for April 19th, 1846, he records that he had realised that if the Jura landscape were to be transposed to a "strange land ... without history", the impression of
the scene would be quite different: "I have allowed too little weight to these deep sympathies, for I think that if that pine forest had been among the Alleghenys, or if the stream had been Niagara, I should only have looked at them with intense melancholy and desire for home".\textsuperscript{114} As so often with Ruskin, a moment of insight is transformed in the published work into a key epiphanic experience:

... the writer well remembers the sudden blankness and chill which were cast upon it [i.e. the scene in the Jura] when he endeavoured, in order more strictly to arrive at the sources of its impressiveness, to imagine it, for a moment, a scene in some aboriginal forest of the New Continent. The flowers in an instant lost their light, the river its music; the hills became oppressively desolate; a heaviness in the boughs of the darkened forest showed how much of their former power had been dependent upon a life which was not theirs, how much of the glory of the imperishable, or continually renewed, creation is reflected from things more precious in their memories than it, in its renewing [MS alternative: things whose memorial is more precious than their being]. Those ever springing flowers and ever flowing streams had been dyed by the deep colours of human endurance, valour, and virtue; and the crests of the sable hills that rose against the evening sky received a deeper worship, because their far shadows fell eastward over the iron walls of Joux, and the four-square keep of Granson (8: pp. 223 - 224: my emphases).

Obviously, this passage, and its first draft from the Diaries, indicate the major shift in Ruskin's emphases which has been frequently commented on - from Art to Society, from Nature to Man, and so on. In the specific context of The Seven Lamps, however, it points to a remarkable inconsistency operating within that general shift.

Earlier, he argues that the inspiration for the greatness of his favourite building, Giotto's Campanile in Florence, can be attributed to Giotto's importation into an urban environment of his experience in the Wilderness, a non-urbanised natural environment. He also argues that English architects should be sent into the Wilderness to learn what nature means by a buttress, and thereby have access to radically alternative means of perception which would then inform their practice and renew it. Here, however, he shifts

the Wilderness to Australasia, clearly a non-European location, and the European "wilderness" now emerges as tamed - "dyed by the deep colours of human endurance". In so far as ornamentation, which constitutes Architecture as opposed to mere Building, should be inspired by naturally occurring forms, this is consistent as an argument - what better source for architects seeking to create buildings which will act as "the centralisation and protectress of [the] sacred influence" of human experience over the non-urban world than a natural order already "dyed by the deep colours of human endurance"? (8: p. 224)

But the rôle model for English architects who are to be sent into the Wilderness is Giotto, and, as presented in "The Lamp of Beauty", he is, given Ruskin's odd typology in which the Biblical David becomes a Type of Giotto, a distinctly pastoral figure from the Wilderness - in itself a contradiction since the wilderness is not peopled by pastoral figures such as shepherds. The pastoral is essentially a mythical landscape which has been humanised and tamed - the Wilderness is an equally mythical landscape in which natural forces under divine direction transform the person who has retreated into it from society and history. In any event, the non-urban environment from which, according to Ruskin, Giotto emerged to grace Florence with his Campanile is the immanent natural world of Modern Painters 1 and 2, and not the humanised landscape of "The Lamp of Memory" which memorialises human experience:

I said that the Power of human mind had its growth in the Wilderness; much more must the love and the conception of that beauty, whose every line and hue we have seen to be, at the best, a faded image of God's daily work, and an arrested ray of some star of creation, be given chiefly in the places which He has gladdened by planting there the fir-tree and the pine. Not within the walls of Florence, but among the far away fields of her lilies, was the child trained who was to raise that headstone of Beauty above her towers of watch and war (8: p. 189).
There is an inconsistency here because while, in "The Lamp of Life", Giotto comes out of the pastoral wilderness to raise a "headstone of beauty" above Florence's "towers of watch and war", in The Lamp of Memory", the pastoral wilderness of the Jura receives a "deeper worship" because the shadows of its hills fall eastwards over the Fort de Joux and the castle of Granson (8: p. 224). The reciprocity of the latter is denied in the former.

The point, I think, is that by the time Ruskin comes to write the last two Lamps, the relationship between the world of natural phenomena and the world of human projects is no longer at the centre of his concerns, and the significance of architecture within a specific historical moment has taken centre stage, and History and Heritage, as National Memorial or Domestic Monument, are now his main concerns.

The introduction to "The Lamp of Memory" is followed almost immediately by a quite urgent and intense attack on contemporary practices in suburban building, whose urgency is inspired precisely by Ruskin's reaction to the events of 1848. The general argument is against cheap-jack suburban developments which parade their obsolescence, and in favour of domestic building of a quality which will ensure a relative permanence. He interprets contemporary, and designedly temporary, domestic building as the manifestation of a contemporary social mobility which he condemns as social discontent; and he offers his alternative policy as a way of engineering social stability, i.e. "contented manhood", which, he asserts, was "beyond dispute ... the very primal source of the great architecture of old Italy and France" (8: pp. 227 - 228).

Two features of Ruskin's argument suggest how far he is now moving away at the end of The Seven Lamps from positions advanced in the earlier chapters and in Modern Painters 1 and 2. Certainly he argues from a scriptural basis, but almost as an afterthought. At the end of paragraph three (8: pp. 226 -227), he wades into cheap-jack
"comfortless and unhonoured dwellings" as "the signs of a great and spreading popular discontent", and goes on to argue that

they mark the time when every man's aim is to be in some more elevated sphere than his natural one, and every man's past life is his habitual scorn; when men build in the hope of leaving the places they have built, and live in the hope of forgetting the years that they have lived; when the comfort, the peace, the religion of home have ceased to be felt; and the crowded tenements of a struggling and restless population differ only from the tents of the Arab or the Gypsy by their less healthy openness to the air of heaven, and less happy choice of their spot of earth; by their sacrifice of liberty without the gain of rest, and of stability without the luxury of change (8: pp. 226 - 227).

I intend to take up later the question of Ruskin's opposition to the gentrification sought by the new classes created by the Industrial Revolution, but, for the moment, I would like to concentrate on the way in which this passage undoubtedly represents a new development in Ruskin's published work. As he begins to confront directly contemporary social motives and practices and their phenotypic effects (the desire to get on, the consequent down-grading of domestic building, and the widespread social discontent, which is both motive and effect), the predominantly scriptural mode of persuasion, whose idioms seek a purchase on a metaphysical sanction which is beyond accountability to historical development, gives way to a mode of persuasion which is not seeking to look beyond the here-and-now, but deals almost exclusively in generational emphases, which, in the above paragraph, for instance, are severely limiting the reference to the "religion of home".

Admittedly, in paragraph 4 (8: p. 227), Ruskin does briefly refer the matter to Scripture ("Our God is a household God ... pour out its ashes."), but, in context, the reference is almost perfunctory, following, as it does, a quite intense opening comment on contemporary practices in domestic building: "This is no slight, consequenceless evil; it is ominous, infectious, and fecund of other fault and misfortune". And the brief
reference of the matter to religious authority is not then developed. On the contrary, he continues to develop his argument in terms of social duties and benefits which he is valuing for their own sakes and not as an immanent manifestation of Vital and/or Typical Beauty:

It is not a question of mere ocular delight, it is no question of intellectual pride, or cultivated and critical fancy, how, and with what aspect of durability and completeness, the domestic buildings of a nation shall be raised. It is one of those moral duties, not with more impunity to be neglected because the perception of these depends on a finely toned and balanced conscientiousness, to build our dwellings with care, and patience, and fondness, and diligent completion, and with a view to their duration at least for such a period as, in the ordinary course of national revolutions, might be supposed likely to extend to the entire alteration of the direction of local interests. This at the least; but it would be better if, in every possible instance, men built their own houses on a scale commensurate rather with their condition at the commencement, than their attainments at the termination, of their worldly career; and built them to stand as long as human work at its strongest can be hoped to stand; recording to their children what they had been and from what, if so it had been permittted them, they had risen. And when houses are thus built, we may have that domestic architecture, the beginning of all other, which does not disdain to treat with respect and thoughtfulness the small habitation as well as the large, and which invests with the dignity of contented manhood the narrowness of worldly circumstance (8: pp. 227 - 228).

According to Ruskin, but mistakenly, "contented manhood", which he would like to see installed as the alternative to the widespread social discontent which he so deplores, was in fact the "primal source of the great architecture of Old Italy and France".

The section on domestic architecture ends with another gesture towards what are beginning to be marginal religious motives and acknowledgements - the quotation of an inscription from a recently built Swiss cottage, an inscription which dedicates the building as the place in which its inhabitants will complete their spiritual journey through life towards eternity. Ruskin quotes the inscription in German (in itself an oddly distancing procedure) and consigns the English translation to a footnote. This is some distance from the highly amplified scriptural perorations characteristic of Modern Painters 1 and 2, and some of the earlier sections of The Seven Lamps.
If the scriptural idioms in Ruskin's prose are starting to appear marginal in the arguments of the final sections of The Seven Lamps, so too are the "aesthetic" concepts with which he has so far been concerned. When he turns to the subject of public buildings, he produces an urgent argument about the need for contemporary public building to memorialise public, historical experience, and the urgent need to preserve past records of such experience. He begins (8: pp. 229 - 235) with a sustained argument for public architecture to be based on generational emphases, emphases which he is carrying through from what he has already asserted to be the correct basis for domestic architecture, and ends (8: pp. 242 - 247) with an impassioned argument for the preservation of architectural heritage.

To stamp his argument about public building, past and present, as an argument which there is no gainsaying, he relies neither on Scripture nor on "aesthetic" concepts carried over from earlier works, but on galvanising his own reactions to the restoration/destruction of architectural heritage as recorded, for instance, in his letters to his father from Venice in 1845. Nor are we here dealing with a souped-up epiphanic version of moments of recorded experiences, but a rhetorical re-ordering of reactions to actual destruction, a re-ordering which is underpinned by an unremitting emphasis on generational continuities and/or lack of them.

The peroration to "The Lamp of Memory" eschews specific scriptural reference and relies instead on a direct attack, which echoes Dickens in Dombey and Son, on the modern railroad and features of the modern city, and the need to preserve, for a few, some aspects of architectural heritage:

All vitality is concentrated through those throbbing arteries into the central cities; the country is passed over like a green sea by narrow bridges, and we are thrown back in continually closer crowds upon the city gates. The only influence which can in any wise there take the place of that of the woods and fields, is the power of ancient architecture.
Do not part with it for the sake of the formal square, or of the fenced and planted walk, nor of the goodly street nor opened quay. The pride of a city is not in these. Leave them to the crowd; but remember that there will surely be some within the circuit of the disquieted walls who would ask for some other spots than these wherein to walk; for some other forms to meet their sight familiarly; like him who sat so often where the sun struck from the west, to watch the lines of the dome of Florence drawn on the deep sky, or like those his Hosts, who could bear daily to behold, from their palace chambers, the places where their fathers lay at rest, at the meeting of the dark streets of Verona (8: pp. 246 - 247).
CHAPTER SEVEN: THE SEVEN LAMPS OF ARCHITECTURE:

G) THE LAMP OF OBEDIENCE.

The final chapter of "The Seven Lamps" opens with a sustained explication of the mode of coercion which will support the alternative modes of architectural production which Ruskin is advocating.

Given that previously, in both *The Seven Lamps* and the first two volumes of *Modern Painters*, Ruskin has invested his argument at critical points with the scriptural idioms, references and allusions which are designed to suggest an unchallengeable authority, it has to be quite surprising that scriptural authority is present here only in a refracted form - as an implicit assumption, for instance, behind his reliance on analogies for human conformity to the laws which govern the natural world. But then his reference to *Natural Laws* is secondary to his concerns with contemporary social practice and is there to support his arguments in favour of Obedience as opposed to Liberty. This may, superficially, refer to the wide variety of architectural styles being practised and the pressure on contemporary architects to innovate. But, in fact, Ruskin's deeper concern is with the events of 1848 and the spectre of social discontent which, in many ways, *The Seven Lamps* is designed to combat.

Scriptural authority is also present in his argument in certain idioms derived from the traditions of the Established Church when he borrows from the Sixteenth Century *Book of Common Prayer* its notion of Uniformity which will abolish autonomous local traditions. Ruskin is prepared to allow for local variations, significantly "dialects", but only as variations from what has been nationally imposed and established. And his insistence on the necessity for a national school is unremitting:
We might, therefore, without the light of experience, conclude, that Architecture never could flourish except when it was subjected to a national law as strict and as minutely authoritative as the laws which regulate religion, policy, and social relations; nay, even more authoritative than these, because capable of more enforcement, as over more passive matter; and needing more enforcement, as the purest type not of one law nor of another, but of the common authority of all (8: p. 251).

Of course, as with any system such as is being proposed, there is the obvious problem of non-conformist activity - Ruskin has already allowed for, significantly, "provincial" differences (or "dialects"), but, although he is prepared to allow for the occasional major innovator in the history of art (in this case, Van Eyck), he will not allow to the architect either originality or change as practices worth pursuing for their own sake. Rather, changes will be instructive, natural, facile, though sometimes marvellous; they will never be sought after as things necessary to his dignity or to his independence; and those liberties will be like the liberties that a great speaker takes with the language, not a defiance of its rules for the sake of singularity; but inevitable, uncalculated, and brilliant consequences of an effort to express what the language, without such infraction, could not (8: p. 255).

But the purpose of Ruskin's argument at this point is not to make room for individual developments of, and variations on, and brilliant inventions within, a set of known conventions, but to return an argument about architecture, via an analogy with the insect world, to the social concerns stimulated by the events of 1848.

Arguing that it would be foolish for a caterpillar to turn itself into a chrysalis, and for a chrysalis to try to turn itself prematurely into a moth, and moving, without any sense of absurdity, from a useful analogy to an identification between caterpillars and architectural enterprise, Ruskin argues that an architecture should accept what it naturally is, and not seek to change its own nature.

Of course, architecture, or architectural movements, schools, and styles, cannot be abstracted in this manner as having in some way an autonomy distinct from their human
creators, and architecture is not a natural development - it belongs to that order of individuated and collective enterprise and variegated culture which marks the human world off from the natural world of repetitive instinctual behaviour. By presenting architecture in this spuriously autonomous manner, Ruskin not only implicitly denies one of the most important principles of his work of the 1840s, i.e. that at the centre of artistic activity is the impression of human energies on materials; he takes away the key notion of human control which is surely at the heart of his proposals for imposing and establishing an alternative mode of architectural production - the peroration to paragraph 4, designed as it is to counter the dangerous revolutionary upsets of 1848, cathetically drains "The Lamp of Obedience" of its key element - the role of the human agency, however defined, in establishing alternative social practices - and subjects all forms of human enterprise to a control mechanism beyond human planning in his own (unacknowledged) version of the evolutionary blueprints advocated by Sir Charles Bell. 115

And though it is the nobility of the highest creatures to look forward to, and partly to understand the changes which are appointed for them, preparing for them beforehand; and if, as is usual with appointed changes, they be into a higher state, even desiring them, and rejoicing in the hope of them, yet it is the strength of every creature, be it changeful or not, to rest, for the time being, contented with the conditions of its existence, and striving only to bring about the changes which it desires, by fulfilling to the uttermost the duties for which its present state is appointed and continued (8: p. 254).

The final pages (255-266) of "The Seven Lamps" are shot through with this essential contradiction between the need to get things done, and the reference of control and power to unidentified forces. For instance, Ruskin asserts boldly the need for Obedience, Unity, Fellowship and Order as opposed to "all the struggling and raving in the world",

115See below Appendix C: pp. 253 - 276.
and dismisses institutional forces such as Schools of Design, committees, academies and journals as quite useless "unless we are contented to submit architecture and all art, like other things, to English law". But, despite his assertion of the need for an "understood and strongly administered legal government", the question remains as to who is legislating. Similarly, when he asserts that English architecture will never flourish "until the first principle of common sense be manfully obeyed, and an universal system of form and workmanship be everywhere adopted and enforced", there is no clear explanation of exactly who is doing the adoption and enforcement (8: p. 255).

Yet the adoption and enforcement are envisaged as total, even if the liberal use of the first person plural pronoun continues to suggest awkward questions. "Our" architects would have to be taught to work in the "accepted style" ("accepted" in this instance suggesting an acquiescence in what are, in fact, very coercive proposals); "we" would determine what that style is to be, would ensure that its modes of construction and laws of proportion were studied with the greatest of care and that the different forms and functions of its decorations were meticulously catalogued, and would impose a forbidding set of restrictive parameters on the whole enterprise: "under this absolute, irrefragable authority, we are to begin to work; admitting not so much as an alteration in the depth of a cavetto, or the breadth of a fillet".

But, of course, the problems of development and innovation, which would guarantee that the project would be dynamic and not simply stagnate as a simple mechanical copyism, remain, and here Ruskin is so determined to coerce contemporary architectural practices that he is prepared to allow what he calls "licence" and "individual authority" to operate only and "always, within certain limits" (8: p. 257).

At this point, I would like to offer two points about the closure of The Seven Lamps.
In the first place, Ruskin's proposals, which, from the very beginning, implicitly include not simply architecture but the whole "human polity", are clearly, at the end of the 1840s, part of the piecemeal rejection of laissez-faire practices as represented in the attempts by central government to ameliorate the worst effects of contemporary industrial working conditions.

In this sense, they are similar to certain features of the late Soviet organisation of the economy. Like that, they are based upon deeply authoritarian principles, calling for a total industrialisation in one mode, and marginalising the individual inventiveness which is essential to the dynamic of progress. One of the key factors in the collapse of the Soviet economy was precisely that, in trying to construct practices which would be a viable alternative to the practices of western capitalism, Soviet leaders stifled innovation and inventiveness in technology and electronics. But, of course, they did the same, in many ways less successfully, to Soviet artistic activity. I cannot help feeling that the Soviet experience points exactly to the central weaknesses of Ruskin's proposals regarding English architecture. He simply cannot find room for what he would recognise as individual genius - or, to put it another way, he does not seem able to trust the architectural community to produce the goods if they are allowed to work outside the overbearingly restrictive parameters which he has set.

In this context, a passage from the manuscript of *The Seven Lamps* takes on a special interest, and is worth quoting in full. Arguing that contemporary practices will never amount to more than the "merest dilettantism ... a mere gulph in which genius after genius will be swallowed up", he originally offered the following depressing comments on the works of two such geniuses:

We have had two in the present century, two magnificent and mighty - William Blake and J.M.W. Turner. I do not speak of the average genius of the higher ranks of human
mind, of that glitter and play of dominant capacity which in all ages is the adornment and light of each living department of literature and art. We have seen many of those light waves of the wide human sea, and we shall have their like again in the renewed swellings of its tides. I speak not of them, but of the Great Pharoses of the moving wilderness, those towering and solitary beacons whose tops are seen from above, and beyond the morning cloud and the evening horizon. We have had only two of these built for us; two men who if they had been given to us in a time of law, and recognised discipline, if they had had either teaching in their youth, or reverence in their manhood, might have placed our age on a level with the proudest periods of creative art. But what have they done for us? The influence of the one is felt as much the weight of last winter's snow: and that of the other has been so shortened by our dullness, and distorted by our misapprehension, that it may be doubted whether it has wrought among us more of good or of evil (8: p. 256: n. 1).

Of course, Ruskin's early recognition of Blake's work is interesting, but the significance of this passage is surely not in that. Rather, it is in Ruskin's failure to relate what he recognises as genius to what he sees as a general condition which inhibits the emergence and recognition of the highest possible achievement in art by such genius. For Ruskin, two matters are beyond dispute: that Blake and Turner are of the highest order of genius, and that they have not been generally recognised as such. Now, "dullness" and "misapprehension" may well be adequate to explain the English public's failure to recognise genius, but in an argument which is seeking to legislate for the conditions which will renew English architecture and art and, perhaps, create, as one might expect, the conditions in which genius would be recognised and have a positive influence, genius is placed beyond social genesis and accountability.

Blake and Turner, like Giotto, are presented as the products of the Wilderness, not of conformity to a national artistic law "as strictly and as minutely authoritative as the laws which regulate religion, policy, and social relations" (8: p. 251). Ruskin quite simply at

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116 Ruskin probably got to know Blake's work through one of the Apostles, George Richmond, whom he met in Rome in December 1840, with whom he became very close friends, and from whom he acquired a portfolio of Blake's drawings in 1843. See above pp. 44 - 45.
this point is unable to situate such artists in a specific social formation which would be available for a careful and detailed analysis which might then account for their power. And if such an analysis revealed that in some way the achievements of such men of genius were actually related to the prevalence of a nationally prescribed style with which they had taken "liberties" as "inevitable, uncalculated, and brilliant consequences of an effort to express what the language without such infraction, could not" (8: p. 254), it simply wouldn't matter, because they are, for him, the products of a mythical/Biblical landscape. In Ruskin's view, it clearly does not matter that William Blake was born into a family of London Dissenters engaged in the hosiery trade and interested in radical politics. That kind of specific urban history is erased in his description of Blake as a Pharos of the non-urban Wilderness, and instead, to understand Blake in Ruskin's way, we have to look at Scripture and Modern Painters 1 and 2. For instance, from Scripture, there is this on Elijah:

But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper-tree; and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough: now, O Lord, take away my life: for I am not better than my fathers (1 Kings xix. 4).

Frederick Robertson preached a sermon on this text on October 13th 1850, and had this to say about Elijah's experience:

Jehovah calmed his stormy mind by the healing influences of Nature. He commanded the hurricane to sweep the sky, and the earthquake to shake the ground. He lighted up the heavens till they were one mass of fire. All this expressed and reflected Elijah's feelings. The mode in which Nature soothes us is by finding meeter and nobler utterance for our feelings than we can find in words - by expressing and exalting them. In expression there is relief. Elijah's spirit rose with the spirit of the storm.117

This has obvious affinities with Ruskin's attack on Waagen and the "tribe of critics" who attack the work of men like Turner.

whose night and noon have been wet with the dew of heaven, - dwelling on the deep sea, or wandering among the solitary places of the earth, until they have "made the mountains, waves, and skies a part of them and their soul" (3: p. 647).

But then the argument is not actually about phenomena like Blake and Turner. It is not actually about Art as such. It is, as it always has been in The Seven Lamps, about limiting the damage of 1848, and his assertion that the geniuses emerge from an eternalised order of divinely organised natural truth is in itself an anti-revolutionary, anti-urban and anti-industrial thesis and supports his contention for the imposition of a national style and its utterly uniform implementation, with the concomitant suppression of individual variations. He may call for English architects to be sent out into the Wilderness to discover what Nature means by a buttress - but what an extraordinarily, though by no means isolated, reactionary suggestion that is in the age of Paxton and Brunel. In any event, discovering what Nature means by a buttress is to learn a conservative lesson which will support the conservative enterprise which Ruskin is proposing. For, no matter what innovations it may effect, and no matter how its products may fly in the face of contemporary practice and taste, for Ruskin, genius is essentially a conserving force.

Half-way through paragraph 7 of "The Lamp of Obedience" Ruskin's tone switches from the forbiddingly coercive to a more persuasive mode: "I have said that it was immaterial ..." (p. 258). The change in tone accompanies a loss of energy in the writing as he offers a rather diffuse set of proposals for what style might be adopted, but the energy returns in paragraph 8 as he begins to spell out the social benefits of implementing
his proposals. Attacking both a laissez-faire approach to architectural styles as well as an overly academic approach, he offers this:

Freed from the agitation and embarrassment of that liberty of choice which is the cause of half the discomforts of the world; freed from the accompanying necessity of studying all past, present, or even possible styles; and enabled, by concentration of individual, and concentration of multitudinous energy, to penetrate into the uttermost secrets of the adopted style, the architect would find his whole understanding enlarged, his practical knowledge certain and ready to hand, and his imagination playful and vigorous, as a child's would be within a walled garden, who would sit down and shudder if he were left free in a fenceless plain. 118 How many and how bright would be the results in every direction of interest, not to the arts merely, but to national happiness and virtue, it would be as difficult to preconceive as it would seem extravagant to state: ... (8: p. 259).

Here his previous dealings with the question of unity in multiplicity re-emerge in a new form as his proposals for the adoption of a national style to govern all aspects of architectural enterprise rework his modelling of an individual Turner canvas, and the whole of Turner's output as a myriad of detail always subjected to a controlling principle. But I feel that the rhetorical enthusiasm which Ruskin is carefully organising, especially with its promise of "enlarged understanding" and "playful and vigorous" imagination, is actually an offer of compensation for the severe restrictions on inventiveness and innovation which he has called for earlier.

In stating the results of his policy for architects, Ruskin concludes The Seven Lamps in an astonishing manner. He continues the passage quoted above by asserting that the first result, which would be "perhaps the least" (!), would be

an increased sense of fellowship among ourselves, a cementing of every patriotic bond of union, a proud and happy recognition of our affection for and sympathy with each other, and our willingness in all things to submit ourselves to every law that could advance the interest of the community; a barrier, also, the best conceivable, to the unhappy rivalry of the upper and middle classes, in houses, furniture, and establishments;

118 The image suggests one of the difficulties to which I have pointed. The architect walking within walls prospers - but would not do so if put out into a wilderness. What special qualities had Giotto, Blake and Turner that they did not shudder?
and even a check to much of what is vain as it is painful in the oppositions of religious parties respecting matters of ritual (8: p. 260).

This social harmony, "perhaps the least" of the expected results, is the only result with which Ruskin concerns himself in the closing pages of The Seven Lamps, as a key ambiguity finally disappears. "Was the carver happy?" is an ambiguous question in that it is not clear whether, for Ruskin, the production of great architecture is desirable as being instrumental in creating human happiness, or whether "contented manhood" is desirable as instrumental in creating great architecture. But here he seems to be in no doubt that a national architectural enterprise, undertaken on his terms, is desirable for the social benefits which it will create. And here, his earlier statement that it is not the gift which we want but the giving takes on a new lease of life as Ruskin places the emphasis firmly not on the material product of human investment and labour, but on the production of a renewed, or even redeemed, humanity. However, although this is the settlement which Ruskin achieves at the end of The Seven Lamps, he is not consistent in promoting it in the early 1850s. As I point out in the next section, the pamphlets on Pre-Raphaelitism and The Opening of the Crystal Palace raise awkward questions about Ruskin's new found commitment to human happiness.

For the moment, exploiting what he obviously regards as a definitive acquaintance with European practices, he traces the cause of the 1848 disturbances to a single cause which his proposals for a National Architecture would, apparently, combat by introducing a wholesome National Employment:

I know too well the undue importance which the study that every man follows must assume in his own eyes, to trust my own impressions of the dignity of that of Architecture; and yet I think I cannot be utterly mistaken in regarding it as at least as useful in the sense of a National employment. I am confirmed in this impression by what I see passing among the states of Europe at this instant. All the horror, distress, and tumult which oppress the foreign nations, are traceable, among the other secondary causes through which God is working out His will upon them, to the simple one of their
not having enough to do. I am not blind to the distress among their operatives; nor do I deny the nearer and visibly active causes of the movement: the recklessness of villainy in the leaders of revolt, the absence of common moral principle in the upper classes, and of common courage and honesty in the heads of governments. But these causes themselves are ultimately traceable to a deeper and simpler one: the recklessness of the demagogue, the immorality of the middle class, and the effeminacy and treachery of the noble, are traceable in all these nations to the commonest and most fruitful cause of calamity in households - idleness (8: p. 261).

As an analysis of the 1848 Revolutions, this is not, of course, adequate. Nor is the application of it to the English situation. It is surely unacceptable, on the one hand, to clap English commerce and industry on the back for rescuing the country from the paralysis which apparently afflicts France and Italy (the two European nations in which Ruskin spent most of his time during his annual European tours), and, on the other, to condemn a transport system which was in many ways the supreme expression of the new industrial system and absolutely essential to commerce and industry. Nor can it be considered an adequate response to English capitalism in the 1840s to suggest that the millions of pounds invested in the railways should have been spent in building churches and beautiful houses (but for whom ?), that large domestic staffs and horseracing are dubious forms of expenditure, and that the money spent on the cutting of jewels would be better spent on adorning the churches. In a very real sense, the specific examples which Ruskin chooses as the contemporary social practices which he rejects actually trivialise his arguments (8: pp. 261 - 265).

Unfortunately, education as a social force for improvement and advancement is also rejected in the closing pages of The Seven Lamps, and Ruskin redefines the role of the philanthropist as being to provide for the "multitudes of idle semi-gentlemen who ought to be shoemakers and carpenters ... some other employment than disturbing governments" (8: p. 262). Access to reflection on social matters is to be replaced by
involvement in the "mental interest" offered by traditional occupations which the "philanthropists", a social grouping with whom Ruskin is obviously identifying himself, should stimulate for their own benefit and for the benefit of the "men":

It is of no use to tell them they are fools, and that they will only make themselves miserable in the end as well as others: if they have nothing else to do, they will do mischief; and the man who will not work, and who has no means of intellectual pleasure, is as sure to become an instrument of evil as if he had sold himself bodily to Satan (8: p. 262);

Of mechanical ingenuity, there is, I imagine, at least as much required to build a cathedral as to cut a tunnel or contrive a locomotive: we should, therefore, have developed as much science, while the artistical element of intellect would have been added to the gain. Meantime we should ourselves have been made happier and wiser by the interest we should have taken in the work with which we were personally concerned; and when all was done, instead of the very doubtful power of going fast from place to place, we should have had the certain advantage of increased pleasure of stopping at home (8: p. 264);

It is not enough to find men absolute subsistence; we should think of the manner of life which our demands necessitate; and endeavour, as far as may be, to make all our needs such as may, in the supply of them, raise, as well as feed, the poor. It is far better to give work which is above the men, than to educate the men to be above their work (8: p. 264).

Ruskin's modelling of the alternative economic practices which he is advocating is entirely paternalistic, but, then, the basis for the proposals has already been established in his art criticism. It is, perhaps, not so much that Ruskin moved at the end of the 1840s from Nature and Art to Man and Society as that, when he takes on the question of an architectural revival, a political model implicit in the critical comments on the work of Turner becomes explicit when he confronts the "human polity". He had asserted that the greatness of a Turner painting is in the manner in which a myriad individual details, each having their say, are duly subjected to the overall design or general will. Similarly, the greatness of Turner's achievement is that each individual painting has its place in an overall system, and the natural world of which Turner's art is a supreme expression is a
world in which the multiplicity of individual phenomena take their assigned place in the overall unity of nature.

In *The Seven Lamps*, this key notion from *Modern Painters 1 and 2* becomes a key notion in Ruskin's proposed alternatives for architectural production, and, by implication, the productive activities of the whole "polity". Just as, for Ruskin, the myriad details of a painting should be active within and subject to an overall control, so a myriad human details should be actively employed within a system of overall control to which they are subject.
I turn finally to two related questions - why, by the end of the 1840s Ruskin had begun to address "social" questions, and where he had arrived in his understanding of those questions as part of his developing response to the Modern.

His work of the 1840s and 1850s features a shift in interest from landscape painting in Modern Painters 1 and 2 to architecture in The Seven Lamps and The Stones of Venice. While I recognise that in some respects the latter volumes can be seen as delaying the completion of the enterprise begun in the former, nevertheless I do think that the works on architecture constitute a shift from attempts in both his published works and his private patronage of a section of the art market to be an arbiter of individual artistic practice and public taste, to an attempt to legislate for a whole area of social artistic practice and public taste in architectural matters on which he has no patronal purchase.

I have to add to this, however, that the attempts to guide individual artists and to shape public and private taste in painting did continue.\textsuperscript{119} It is also worth noting, of course, that, even though he continued these activities, he was now questioning the value of his own activities as an art critic, as, for instance, when he wrote to Elizabeth Barrett Browning in 1860 that he had

fallen into the lassitude of surrendered effort and the disappointment of discovered uselessness, having come to see the great fact that great Art is of no real use to anybody but the next great Artist; that it is wholly invisible to people in general - for the present - and that to get anybody to see it, one must begin at the other end, with moral education

\textsuperscript{119}See for instance his correspondence with Ellen Heaton in Surtees (1972): pp. 152 - 164.
of the people, and physical, and so I've turned myself quite upside down, and I'm half broken-backed and can't manage it (36: p. 348).

The shift, from Art to Architecture, from the work of Nature to the work of Humanity, has been variously interpreted and has often been suggested as the prime reason for Ruskin's emergence in the 1850s as a "social critic". These interpretations can be arranged under three broad explanatory headings: the psychological; the epiphanic; and the "broad sweep" approach which argues for a major shift in focus, involving either a development of internal continuities in his work and/or the application of the same principles to different areas. Of course, while these distinctions are convenient, the different categories can overlap considerably in any one account.
CHAPTER EIGHT: RUSKIN IN THE 1840S AND 1850S;

B) THE PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACH.

The psychological explanations include an extraordinary assertion, worth quoting, by Larg (1932), that the genesis of Ruskin's social criticism was in his failed marriage, and that he was passing-on "the indictment of Effie, a suit for nullity proclaimed against England".120 This, of course, is part of that unhelpful tradition in Ruskinian commentary which has focused on Ruskin's personal circumstances and problems. Townsend, for instance, in an essay which seeks to draw out the significance of Ruskin's loss of the Landscape Feeling during the years from 1843 - 1856, does not himself engage in a psychological approach, but indicates the effect of Ruskin's personal difficulties on his critical described his work as a mixture of "the ridiculous and the sublime; bombast, pseudo-philosophy, dogmatism, and Puritanism" which "almost obliterate the finer moments of shrewd perception and magnificent cadences", and having claimed that his "inability to organise, to avoid digressions, to take criticism, to reason things through have cost him dearly", he then offers this comment:

Ruskin's personality is even more of a lien on his reputation than his purely literary defects. He was dominated by his parents, who were first cousins; he was thwarted in his early love, disappointed in his marriage, if it can be called a marriage, and overtaken by insanity in his old age. His deference to his overbearing parents was disgusting, his treatment of his wife reprehensible, and his fondness for young girls revolting.121

I cannot help feeling that such issues, once introduced, imply, in the disparagement of the person, a disparagement of his work. They imply limitations on, and distortions in, his artistic and social criticism which are seen as emerging primarily from a distorted psyche

120Larg (1932): p. 95.

121Townsend (1951): pp. 3 - 4.
and not from the pre-eminently conservative intellectual traditions and social position from which he is working.

An example of a psychological approach applied to the shift from landscape to architecture occurs in an essay by David Sonstroem writing in *The Victorian Newsletter*. Sonstroem argues that Ruskin's personal sexual concerns should be part of the account of his work from *Modern Painters 1* to *The Stones of Venice*, and that, once we understand the real significance of those concerns, we will see that Ruskin's work is "deserving of a respect that our own age has not been quick to grant him" (p. 17). According to Sonstroem, there is no break between the earlier art criticism and the social criticism, but a shift associated with a parallel shift which he detects in Ruskin's writings in the 1840s and 1850s - from an ideal of "Gothic" man to an ideal of a foster-father figure. He argues that during this period, which includes his failed marriage, Ruskin is very much concerned with the relationship between the manly ideals of contemporary society, his sense of his own insecure manliness, and the projection of manly qualities into mountain scenes and Gothic architecture. He comments that "it is pitiful to see such an unfortunate man yet abide by a concept of excellence that he could not emulate" (pp. 15 - 16). However, during this period, Ruskin apparently modifies his concept of Gothic manliness. It initially contained brutish elements, but he softens it down to accommodate the "softer virtues of gentleness, generosity, affection and self-sacrifice" which characterise the paternal and paternalistic figures featured in *Unto This Last* (17: pp. 41 - 42). Where, especially after the sexual fiasco of his marriage, Ruskin cannot aspire to the rugged ideal of Gothic manhood, he can certainly aspire to the new

122 David Sonstroem: "John Ruskin and the Nature of Manliness": *The Victorian Newsletter*: Fall 1971: pp. 14 - 17. All further references are given as page references in the text.
ideal of a foster-father figure, especially in his tutelage of aspiring young artists (pp. 16-17).

Despite Sonstroem's initial assertion that "Ruskin's true scope stretches volumes beyond 'The Nature of Gothic' and his achievement beyond mere sexual projection" (p. 14), he nevertheless presents the work of the 1840s and 1850s as very much a personal struggle towards "sanity, toward recognition of personal limitations, towards a functional reconciliation between his nature and the manly ideals of his age" (p. 17). But what of the texts themselves? Here is a passage from The Stones of Venice which Sonstroem quotes in support of his argument: glass beads

are formed by first drawing out the glass into rods; these rods are chopped up into fragments of the size of beads by the human hand, and the fragments are then rounded in the furnace. The men who chop up the rods sit at their work all day, their hands vibrating with a perpetual and exquisitely timed palsy, and the beads dropping beneath their vibration like hail. Neither they, nor the men who draw out the rods or fuse the fragments, have the smallest occasion for the use of any single human faculty; and every young lady, therefore, who buys glass beads is engaged in the slave-trade, and in a much more cruel one than that we have so long been endeavouring to put down (10: p. 197).

No doubt, palsied hands, vibrating rods, and dropping beads may well suggest "guilty masturbation leading to disease"; every young lady's cruelty in buying beads may well be a form of "sexual cruelty"; and there may be here a "strong suggestion of self-castration" (p. 15). But is this relevant to such an important text?

As it happens, there are severe reservations to be put against this passage from The Stones of Venice, but they certainly do not include its being, as is all Ruskin's earlier work, according to Sonstroem, "mined by sexual suggestiveness" (p. 16). Rather, it might be more important to note that, masturbatory allusions aside, Ruskin emphasises the workers' hands and to note that this is a nightmarish reversal of his key emphasis on the importance of creative handwork in the productive process. I suggest that he has
chosen the making of glass beads precisely to make the point that, in this instance, it is not men operating machines but men operating as machines. It might be even more important to note that Blake was rather more generous than Ruskin at this point in his development in making it quite clear that there were no degrees of cruelty as between, say, the African slave trade and the exploitation of young children in the chimney-sweeping trade - for Blake, both were equally horrific. It might be even more important to note the limiting way in which Ruskin selects and isolates a consumer demand and its apparently quite straightforward relationship to the productive process; seems to reduce the responsibility for the exploitation of the waged labouring classes to individual consumer demand; and seems to suggest that giving up buying glass beads might work wonders.

And yet Sonstroem's emphasis on Ruskin's concerns with manliness does point to a crucial element in Ruskin's thinking in the 1840s and 1850s which exposes the limitations on his thought - limitations which stem not from psychic distortions, but from Ruskin's social position. For instance, at the centre of his arguments in *The Seven Lamps* is his radically mistaken notion that "contented [mediaeval] manhood" was the source of the greatness of mediaeval Gothic ecclesiastical building. This is Ruskin combining his readings of Wordsworth with Mediaevalist fantasies derived from such writers as Alexis-François Rio but based on no sound historical evidence. The greatness of mediaeval ecclesiastical architecture cannot be deduced from the assumed greatness of mediaeval domestic architecture. Nor can the quality of a people's life be deduced from the way in which a minority of craftsmen chiselled their materials. Nevertheless, Ruskin offers a contrast between mediaeval buildings and the contentment which they apparently express, and cheap-jack contemporary housing which he sees as symptomatic of a
discontented manhood whose transformation into a revolutionary mob he clearly fears. His call, in such works as Unto This Last, for the Captains of Industry to exercise a benevolent paternalism is precisely a call for them to act as a stabilising, counter-revolutionary force. His images of leaders who behave in essentially gentle, and gentlemanly, ways, is not primarily a projection by Ruskin into his social criticism of his concerns with his own manhood and his unease with aggressive versions of manhood to which he himself cannot aspire. Nor are they, as has also been argued, a paradoxical attempt to escape his father's influence and pay tribute to his father's chosen life-style (see below: p. 179). Rather, they are a key element in his visions of a capitalism which has been feminised and which cares for a work-force which has been tamed. As Conner argues in a passage worth quoting in full from his short but very acute study of Savage Ruskin:

But Unto This Last was not in the final analysis written from humanitarian motives. Ruskin was not fully aware of the appalling conditions which persisted in the manufacturing towns where he lectured. There are occasions when it is hard not to suspect that his hatred of mass industrialisation was, at bottom, aesthetic. (Nearly the whole of the north was a coal-pit, he complained in 1859, and the south could well become a brickfield.) A man concerned with practicalities would not have contrasted the polluted streams of Rochdale with anything so remote as medieval Pisa with its "troops of knights" (19: p. 339). William Morris's vision of utopia by the Thames is much more compelling. Ruskin's ideal was working man fulfilled in his work, docile and respectful to his employer. He did not believe in the power, or potential power, of working people as a class; like Dickens in Hard Times, and George Eliot in Felix Holt the Radical, Ruskin exhibited a fear and distrust of the working-class en masse, whether organised or disorganised. Indeed his ideal of the relationship between classes runs parallel to his ideal of the relationship between the sexes. Both the workman and the woman must always be conscious that thinking is not their sphere. "The first character of the good and wise man at his work [is] to know that he knows very little; - to perceive that there are many above him wiser than he." (18: p. 428.) The workman should be like a trusting child, faithful, cheerful and humble.\footnote{Conner (1979): pp. 137/8.}
I would like to look next at a psychological interpretation which locates the shift in an identifiable set of circumstances, but which, in so doing, actually removes Ruskin's development from a more valuable general historical context to a complex of personal neuroses which seem to explain the very genesis of the social criticism. The account comes from Rosenberg's *The Darkening Glass*, a work well respected among Ruskinian critics. Rosenberg divides his volume into five sections: "Art", "Architecture", "Society", "Wilderness" and "Peace". The first deals with *Modern Painters 1 and 2*; the second deals with *The Seven Lamps* and *The Stones of Venice*; and the third focuses on *Unto This Last* and Ruskin's emergence as a social critic during the 1850s. Rosenberg's interpretation of the Great Shift is there in his headings.

The third section opens with a chapter entitled "My Father's House", which very heavily emphasises the role played by John James and Margaret Ruskin in the formation of Ruskin's social thought. According to Rosenberg, the father dissociated himself from the merchant class to which as a travelling salesman in sherry he belonged, "espoused the taste and politics" of the pre-industrial landed aristocracy, fed his son images of that order in the novels of Walter Scott, and, indeed, brought him up in domestic circumstances which sought to replicate that order: "In defiance of laissez-faire, the Ruskins maintained a small army of superannuated servants; one especially old lady had the sole function of distributing desserts". Rosenberg then suggests that: "From these memories, from what outraged Ruskin in the England of his day, from what he clung to of the England of the past, emerged the most personal and potent of all critiques of

124Rosenberg (1963).

nineteenth-century capitalism". Obviously, you cannot divorce a writer from what is known of his or her personal and social circumstances, and the very tight complex of familial relationships in which Ruskin as an only child was involved have to be important in his formation. That, I think, is almost not worth saying. But there is an implication in Rosenberg's comment that the personal origins of Ruskin's combative social criticism are being privileged and this becomes clear when Rosenberg turns to the particular circumstances in which Unto This Last was produced. He claims that before Ruskin could produce the work, he was forced to come to terms with the tensions between himself and his parents centred basically on his mother's disappointment that he did not become a clergyman, and his father's disappointment that he did not become a bishop or the second Byron. Rosenberg then offers this comment:

Had Ruskin's life been less tortuously bound up in the lives of his parents and theirs less obsessively centred on their son, had there existed within the intimate yet emotionally frigid Ruskin household the authority which guides without thwarting, the love which ministers without maiming, Ruskin might have turned to social criticism unburdened by the anxieties which attended his change of career.  

So far, so good as Rosenberg points to the personal pressures on Ruskin during the 1850s, but he goes much further, and locates the shift to social criticism in parental influence: "... without that heavy, ultimately deranging burden, he would never have become a social critic at all". This has to be an extraordinary claim, that Ruskin's familial inheritance not only drove him mad but also was the pre-condition of his becoming a social critic - as I pointed out above, linking Ruskin's personal problems to his assaults on contemporary social practices must disparage not only the personality but

126 ibid.


128 ibid.
also the social criticism, which in this account is associated with derangement. It may be an obvious point to make, but Ruskin's work, like that of many of his contemporaries, is, in many ways, despite whatever limitations I, or anyone else may wish to emphasise, a very sane attack on an economic and social madness which was condemning millions to the most appalling misery.

Rosenberg goes on to suggest that the social criticism sprang from two sources of familial "discontent": first, that Ruskin could never be happy with his extremely wealthy life-style because of the Calvinistic sense of guilt instilled into him by his mother; and, second, that Ruskin's turning against his father's mercantile principles was basically an attempt to dissipate the older Ruskin's authority. But, "although he bitterly rejected his mother's creed and his father's economics, he remained throughout his life tormented by the temptations which his father made possible and his mother forbade".129 Further, Rosenberg claims that his mother's imposition of the Bible on him from an early age indelibly marks his social criticism as "an impassioned attempt to endow the ethics of capitalism with the Justice taught by [the Old Testament Prophets] and the Mercy enjoined by [the New Testament]".130 He also argues that his father's attacks on his political writings ("Slum Buildings liable to be knocked down") was a "slur" to which "we owe much of the biting intensity, the fierce concentration of language and purpose, which animate Unto This Last", and that, after his father's death, we can see in his social criticism an attempt "to achieve in his books a freedom from paternal control which he could never achieve in life". And finally, while recognising Ruskin's failure to account for


the antagonisms between waged labour and capital, he nevertheless claims that the "unreality" of his social vision

stems from Ruskin's modelling the political economy of a nation on the extraordinary economy of his own home. The strong, paternalistic state which rules in justice and generously distributes its resources among its citizens is a fantasy born in Denmark Hill, an idealised image of John James Ruskin presiding in "fatherly authority" over his citizen-son. ¹³¹

I think that there are a number of things wrong with this approach. Although Rosenberg recognises that Ruskin was not alone in his struggles with an Evangelical upbringing (and he refers to Newman, Eliot and Carlyle in this context), his emphasis on the personal pressures at work on Ruskin's emergence as a social critic are so intensively concentrated on the rôle played by John James Ruskin as to suggest that Ruskin's responses to capitalism are almost exclusively governed by an urgent need to rid himself of his father's mercantile inheritance, and, at the same time, to pay tribute to the old order which John James Ruskin sought to replicate in his family's life-style. There is no doubt that, as others have recognised, the personal battles are a subtext in Ruskin's work of the 1850s, but the effect of Rosenberg's presentation is to place a bubble around a most important response to nineteenth century industrial capitalism and privilege it as something unique. The personal battles are clearly in many important ways being fought through the public onslaughts on a much detested modern development, but they are not the battle itself. That is being fought by Ruskin in a tradition already established by others.

Ruskin wrote of the science of Political Economy that it

is a Lie wholly and to the very root (as hitherto taught). It is also the Damnedest ... that the Devil, or Betrayer of Men, has yet invented. To this "science", and to this alone ... is owing All the evil of modern days. I say All ... It is the Death incarnate of

¹³¹Rosenberg (1963): pp. 116 - 117; p. 119; p. 120.
Modernism ... the most cretinous, speechless, paralysing plague that has yet touched the brains of mankind (17: p. lxxxii).

But then Carlyle called it the "Pig Philosophy", and Wordsworth had described it as "false as monstrous". Similarily, Southey and Cobbett had already put forward paternalistic models of society, and Ruskin's key notion of "contented manhood" is clearly derived from Wordsworth. However, I do not think that I need to concern myself here with conjugating Ruskin's indebtedness to other writers. That has already been done, most notably by Sherburne. Rather, I would want to point to the way in which the emphasis on Ruskin's personal problems permeates the available commentary. Even a work like Sherburne's in which one after another of his key statements on capitalism is traced to possible and actual sources in other works contains this comment:

It is tempting to see the changes in Ruskin's outlook during the fifties only as superficial variations on the theme of his tortured relationship with his parents. His new view of man as "nobly animal, nobly spiritual," his rejection of his mother's Evangelicalism, and his turn to a frequently vitriolic social criticism can, once again, be viewed as strategies in his rebellion against his parents and their values.

Even where an overtly psychological approach is not being offered, Ruskin's combative social criticism can still be seen as resulting from some sort of frustration. Wilenski's suggestion that Ruskin turned to social questions when he failed to become English Art Dictator in the 1850s is followed by Sherburne who claims that Ruskin turned to social questions primarily because he had failed as an art teacher; and by

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133 Sherburne (1972).


Garrigan who claims that his failure to achieve architectural reform produced his commitment to social regeneration.¹³⁷

CHAPTER EIGHT: RUSKIN IN THE 1840S AND 1850S;

C) THE EPIPHANIC APPROACH.

In contrast to those who have offered interpretations of the Great Shift based on neuroses and frustrated ambitions, some commentators have been more positive and have argued that there are a number of special moments, "epiphanies", in Ruskin's career when he suddenly changes direction or takes on new interests. This approach is particularly relevant to the way in which his interests seem to have changed during the 1840s. The key year is 1845 when Ruskin went abroad for the first time without his parents; and the key moments are his discovery of twelfth-century architecture and a piece of fifteenth-century sculpture at Lucca, and his encounter with the paintings of Tintoretto at the Scuola di San Rocco in Venice. Garrigan, for instance, despite the comment quoted at the end of the last section, writes of a "combination of [these] artistic epiphanies, each succeeding more powerfully the next [sic]" experienced on the Italian tour of 1845, and marking "the real beginning of Ruskin's commitment to art and architecture"; and Sherburne argues that on the same tour, standing beside Jacopo della Quercia's tomb for Ilaria di Caretto, Ruskin discovered that "the human mind and body are under the dominion of the laws which govern the forms of nature". This, he argues, "marks the real beginning of his social criticism, for, henceforth, he expects the same nobility in man as in nature".

As to Ruskin's discovery of Tintoretto, Rosenberg claims that this "struck him with the force of a revelation" and that "the second volume of Modern Painters ... is a

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testimony to his new-born love of Italian art; Tintoretto and Fra Angelico nearly usurp the place of Turner and nature". Hewison goes slightly further in describing Ruskin's experience in the Scuola as "a disturbing experience, the culmination of a long and exciting tour ... the necessary personal experience enabling him to understand the inner workings of the creative imagination". But Fitch goes much further:

"Ruskin was swept away by the magnitude of what he saw into a new and deeper life, from the art-life of 'Innocence' to that of 'Experience'. He must become an interpreter of the heights of human art in Venice, epitomised by Tintoretto, but also its diseases and death. For he came to think of Tintoretto as closing the great arts of the world, the consummating talent of an epoch already tainted by death."

Ruskin's own later accounts of his experiences (notably in the Epilogue to the 1883 edition of Modern Painters and Praeterita from 1886 - 1889) have encouraged this need to establish key moments in the Great Shift from Nature to Man, from Art to Architecture, and thence to Society. But the epiphanic approach is as unhelpful as the psychological theorising. Obviously, from one point of view, Ruskin is creating his own Wordsworthian spots of time, and, given his reverence for the poet and his Evangelical upbringing, intense revelatory moments would have been a much desired response to art and nature. But like so much of Ruskin's work, the epiphanic mode flies in the face of actual history. It denies the complex process whereby ideas, theories and attitudes develop in a given set of circumstances; and it abstracts and presents isolated moments as dependent for their significance not on their social context but on a residual Evangelicalism which substitutes Inspiration and Revelation for historical development. It does not operate within history but outside of it, even though it claims to return the


privileged recipient to an actual history. It is in fact a retrospective ordering, into starkly defined key moments and heavily simplified patterns, of a development originally subject to many factors, all of which belong to a specific history.

This becomes clear when you examine what happened at Lucca where he stayed from the 3rd. to the 12th. May, and at Venice where he stayed from the 10th. of September to the 14th. October, during his 1845 tour, and contrast later recollections with the correspondence from that year which records what has been experienced in a very immediate manner. For instance, in the Epilogue to the 1883 edition of Modern Painters 2, he records that what he found at Lucca had struck him dumb with "admiration and amazement", and that "then and there on the instant" he began " in the nave of San Frediano, the course of architectural study which reduced under accurate law the vague enthusiasm of [his] childish taste, and has been ever since a method with [him], guardian of all [his] other work in natural and moral philosophy" (4: p. 347).

In Praeterita he offers the following account of the impact on him of the architecture which he found there:

Here in Lucca I found myself suddenly in the presence of twelfth-century buildings, originally set in such balance of masonry that they could all stand without mortar, and in material so incorruptible, that after six hundred years of sunshine and rain, a lancet could not now be put between their joints.

Absolutely for the first time I now saw what mediaeval builders were, and what they meant. I took the simplest of all facades for analysis, that of the Santa Maria Foris-Portam, and thereon literally began the study of architecture (35: p. 350).

The other key moment at Lucca is his encounter with Quercia's statue of Ilaria di Caretto. In his 1874 lectures at Oxford on The Aesthetic and Mathematic Schools of Art in Florence, he claims that the study of the statue had "forced" him to "leave [his] picturesque mountain work for what was entirely true and human" (23: p. 240), and in the same year he repeated the claim in Letter 45 of Fors Clavigera:
Thirty years ago, I began my true study of Italian, and all other art, - here, beside the statue of Ilaria di Caretto, recumbent on her tomb. It turned me from the study of landscape to that of life, being then myself in the fullest strength of labour, and joy of hope (28: p.146).

In the 1883 Epilogue he returns to the subject and reinforces his earlier claim. He records that, standing beside the statue, he "partly then felt, partly vowed, that [his] life must no more be spent only in the study of rocks and clouds" (4: p. 347). But by the time he comes to deal with the same experience in Praeterita, he presents his initial response to the statue as a moment of discovery in which he sees the connection between his study of the difference between "violent and graceful lines" in the "accurate study of tree branches, growing leaves, and foreground herbiage" and his "purest standards of breathing womanhood":

here suddenly, in the sleeping Ilaria, was the perfectness of these, expressed with harmonies of line which I saw in an instant were under the same laws as the river wave, and the aspen branch, and the stars' rising and setting; but treated with a modesty and severity which read the laws of nature by the light of virtue (35: p. 349).

Clearly the epiphanic moments are being reworked and it is instructive in this context to turn back to the Founding Moments as recorded in the letters home from his 1845 tour.

There are seven letters home to his father from Lucca, dated from May 3rd. to May 12th.143 Apart from extravagant praise for the statue of Ilaria ("truth itself, but truth selected with inconceivable refinement of feeling" (p. 55), there is no suggestion that the stay in Lucca produced any key moments. On the contrary, the letters are consistent in their content with most of this particular correspondence. There is the usual trivial litter about detained letters (p. 49), the quality of his quarters (p. 49, p. 52), and his daily routines (p. 53). And there are comments on the more important subjects which feature

143 Nos. 23 -29 in Shapiro (1972): pp. 49 - 59. Further references to Shapiro are given as page references in the text.
throughout the correspondence, particularly the contrast between two orders of experience: on the one hand, he comments on fine examples of architectural work (p. 49, p. 54), fine sculpture (p. 51, p. 55), and mountain scenery (p. 50, p. 54, p. 56); and on the other, he complains bitterly about the deterioration in architectural works (p. 51, p. 54, p. 55), inveighs against the vicious character of the locals (p. 50, p. 52, pp. 57 - 58), condemns the destruction of beautiful art and architecture through neglect and vandalism, especially on the part of the French occupation forces (p. 52, pp. 56 - 57), and expresses an urgent need to record what is still there before it too is destroyed (p. 51).

However, the remaining key experience on the 1845 tour, the discovery of the power of Tintoretto, as recorded in Praeterita and the Epilogue to Modern Painters 2 is supported in his letters home, but yet again the experience is re-worked. The painter's work was not unknown to Ruskin when he set off for Italy, and on July 10th, he sent his father a list in which he placed the Italian painters known to him in a series of classes. Tintoretto appears seventh in the third class, "The School of Painting as such," below the second class, headed by Michelangelo, and grandly entitled "General Perception of Nature human & divine, accompanied by more or less religious feeling. The School of the Great Men. The School of Intellect". Fra Angelico, incidentally, heads the first class, "Pure Religious art. The School of Love" (pp. 144 - 145).

On September 23rd, Ruskin was in Venice with Harding and visited the Scuola di San Rocco. A letter written home that evening and one written the following day record the impact on him of Tintoretto. In the first he is "overwhelmed", "taken aback", glad that he has avoided the possibility of disgracing himself in the future by speaking lightly of a painter whom he now regards as greater than Titian. Harding, by contrast, is
"crumbled up" by the experience (p. 210). The second letter records an even more intense experience:

I have had a draught of pictures today enough to drown me. I never was so utterly crushed to the earth before any human intellect as I was today, before Tintoret. Just be so good as to take my list of painters, & put him in the school of Art at the top, top, top of everything ... and put him in the school of Intellect, next after Michel Angelo (pp. 211 - 212).

Interestingly, Ruskin enthusiastically employs the same idioms as he employs for suggesting Turner's greatness:

As for painting, I think I didn't know what it meant till today - the fellow outlines you your figure with ten strokes, and colours it with as many more. I don't believe it took him ten minutes to invent & paint a whole length. Away he goes, heaping host on host, multitudes that no man can number - never pausing, never repeating himself - clouds & whirlwinds & fire & infinity of earth & sea, all alike to him (p. 212).

The account of this experience given in the 1883 Epilogue is consistent with the two letters. In the second letter, Harding feels like a "flogged schoolboy"; in the Epilogue like a "whipped schoolboy", Ruskin's claim to his father that he "could do nothing at last but lie on a bench & laugh" is reproduced in the Epilogue's claim that the experience so took it out of himself and Harding that they "couldn't stand". And where in the first letter he contrasts Harding's reaction, "crumbled up", with his own, "encouraged & excited by the good art", he continues that contrast in 1883, but, in doing so, reconstructs what was obviously an exhilarating moment into a key moment which introduced him to a new direction in his career:

When we came away, Harding said that he felt like a whipped schoolboy. I, not having been at school as long as he, felt only that a new world was opened to me, that I had seen that day the Art of Man in its full majesty for the first time; and that there was also a strange and precious gift in myself enabling me to recognise it, and therein ennobling, not crushing me (3: p. 354).
And his account of the same experience in *Praeterita* develops this even further to suggest that his encounter with Tintoretto was more or less the founding moment of his future work:

But, very earnestly, I should have bid myself that day keep out of the School of St. Roch, had I known what was to come of my knocking at its door. But for that porter's opening, I should (so far as one can ever know what they should) have written, The Stones of Chamouni, instead of The Stones of Venice; and the Laws of Fésole, in the full code of them, before beginning to teach in Oxford; and I should have brought out in full distinctness and the use what faculty I had of drawing the human face and form with true expression of their higher beauty.

But Tintoret swept me away at once into the "mare maggiore" of the schools of painting which crowned the power and perished in the fall of Venice; so forcing me into the study of the history of Venice herself; and through that what else I have traced or told of the laws of national strength and virtue (35: p. 372).

No doubt, people do have key moments in their existence which they may or may not recognise at the time, and, no doubt, these can alter their lives forever. But if we are to accept all that the older Ruskin has to tell us of his early development, then we are faced with a career determined by many different epiphanies. His first glimpse of the Alps at Schaffhausen in 1833 gave him a vision of heaven and "a blessed entrance into life", and "fixed" his destiny. He even associates his vision here with Saint Bernard of Clairvaux's vision of the Virgin Mary above Mont Blanc, and Saint Bernard of Talloires' vision of the dead between Martigny and Aosta (35: pp. 114 - 116). In 1837, at Catterick Bridge in Yorkshire he lost the purely childish love of nature, a capacity which was never to return (35: pp. 218 - 219). In 1841, in a visit to Vesuvius, he has a vision of volcanic destructiveness as a visible hell which neatly contrasts with the earlier vision of a visible heaven at Schaffhausen (35: p. 288 - 289). In the following year, while drawing an aspen tree at Fointainebleau, he experiences "an end to all former thoughts", and "an insight into a new sylvan world" (35: pp. 314 - 315). Here he was, in fact, engaged in a drawing exercise suggested by J.D. Harding, at that point his drawing master. But there had been
a rehearsal for this epiphany when previously that year he had drawn a piece of ivy on
the road to Norwood near his London home. He records that once he had drawn it, he
was able to conclude that "no one had ever told me to draw what was really there!" (35:
p. 311). The Fontainebleau experience is an amplified version of the Norwood ivy:

The woods, which I had only looked on as wilderness, fulfilled I then saw, in their
beauty, the same laws which guided the clouds, divided the light, and balanced the wave.
"He hath made everything beautiful, in his time" became for me thenceforward the
interpretation of the bond between the human mind and all visible things" (35: pp. 314 -
315).

As Hewison points out, however, this claim by Ruskin for epiphanic experience in
1842 is dubious. His diary for that year was not available to him when he was writing
about what had happened at Fontainebleau - and the diary describes his stay at
Fontainebleau as "an unprofitable a week as I ever spent in my life". Hewison goes on to
comment:

... the only hint of a change of attitude is "But I got some new ideas in my evening
walk at Fontainebleau". Neither the drawing at Norwood nor that at Fontainebleau
has been positively identified, and we may question how it was that a sketching exercise
in the manner of Harding could have wrought such a change. What is stranger, Harding
himself is said to have had a similar experience. In an article on Harding which appeared
in 1880 there is a description of him in some confusion at the beginning of his career as
to what he should do. (Ruskin was in similar circumstances in 1842.) "In this state of
mind, whilst sketching some trees near Greenwich, the thought at once occurred to him
that the trees obeyed laws in their growth, and if he could ascertain these laws, and put
them on his paper, he would get at the truth he so desired."143

There is a remarkable similarity between these accounts, which makes one wonder
whether Ruskin either saw this version or had heard it from Harding himself.146

In so far as Ruskin's epiphanies are restricted to nature, art, and religion, they are privileged moments because what is appropriate for his developing responses to nature, art, and religion, is not appropriate to two other developments, the loss (ironically) of his Evangelical faith, and his growing awareness of social problems. The first is presented explicitly as the result of a long process, and he specifically denies the possibility of any revelatory moment of loss. He simply pinpoints as the culminating moment a visit to a gallery in Turin in 1858, where Paul Veronese's "Solomon and the Queen of Sheba" was glowing in the afternoon light:

Of course that hour's meditation in the gallery of Turin only concluded the processes of thought which had been leading me to such end through many years. There was no sudden conversion possible to me, either by preacher, picture, or dulcimer. But that day, my evangelical beliefs were put away, to be debated of no more (35: p. 496).

As to his awareness of social problems, his account is circumspect as he points to a specific set of circumstances, i.e., the behaviour and attitudes of the Domecq daughters and their French aristocratic husbands on their visits to London:

the way in which these lords, virtually, of lands both in France and Spain, though men of sense and honour, and their wives, though women of gentle and amiable disposition ... spoke of their Spanish labourers and French tenantry, with no idea whatever respecting them but that, except as producers by their labour of money to be spent in Paris, they were cumberers of the ground, gave me the first clue to the real sources of wrong in the social laws of modern Europe; and led me necessarily into the political work which has been the most earnest of my life (35: p. 409).

While an epiphany, which is essentially a conversion, would obviously, as Ruskin recognises, be most inappropriate to a loss of faith, perhaps he also recognises its inappropriateness to a development in which he begins by celebrating a privileged, universalised and eternalised order of natural experience and what he considers to be its greatest artistic representations, hermetically sealed from the real world not only of the art market but a world dominated by an order of utilitarian motives which he rejects; and
from which he moves on to a confrontation with an actual, if only partially recognised, history.

I say "only partially recognised" because, even in the 1880s, Ruskin's extremely privileged position means that he simply cannot draw out the connection between: the peasants and tenantry whom the Domecq clan regarded as the "cumberers of the ground"; the Domecqs themselves enjoying some of the proceeds of their tenants' labour in subsidising their clearly expensive life-style; the activities of Telford in the U.K. wine and sherry import trade; and the activities of John James Ruskin in promoting Telford's imports - a highly profitable enterprise from which Ruskin himself derived his own privileged position, and from the proceeds of which John James was able to subsidise the publication of his son's earlier works as well as allowing him to dispense artistic patronage. But then it is indicative of the limits on Ruskin's insights that such connections are not fully and properly made, for if they had been, and if he had followed their implications, he would have had to surrender the fortune which represented the labour of those "cumberers of the ground", and he would have had to work from the kind of straitened circumstances in which Marx was forced to work. Instead, he maintained his identity with the classes whose practices he was attacking and whom he spectacularly offended with his articles in the *Cornhill Magazine*. 
As well as the psychological and epiphanic interpretations, there is a third category which argues that Ruskin's work features a number of internal continuities which underlie the shift in his interests. Given that this is the case, it then becomes possible to argue that Ruskin is applying already established principles to new areas of interest. I am not in whole-hearted agreement with some of these interpretations, but, certainly, I prefer developmental accounts to the epiphanic or reductively psychological. However, I would repeat the reservation which I made in Section Two (see pp. 16 - 17 above) that all too frequently commentators have sought to demonstrate that Ruskin's work displays an organic unity and have sought to shape it into comfortable patterns which avoid the possibility of incoherence, contradiction and inconsistency. And this is comparatively easy to do if you pay attention to the "broad sweep" of Ruskin's development rather than its detailed development. The former allows for the creation of internal consistencies in the shift of interest in the late 1840s and early 1850s. These support the thesis that Ruskin's work exhibits an organic quality, that it has a wholeness, which, I suspect, is another way of suggesting that it has a wholesomeness which is not always evident in its detail. But the latter reveals some interesting inconsistencies and some astonishing attitudes which sit uneasily with the notion of Ruskin as a champion of the struggling classes.

Fitch, for instance, argues that since Ruskin could read the comparative quantity of vital or typical beauty in a work as an index of the spiritual condition of its creator, then when he turned to architecture from individual canvasses, he was able to read buildings
as an index to the spiritual condition of a whole society.\textsuperscript{147} Raymond Williams argues that Ruskin's artistic and social criticism are both applications of the same convictions:

Both sides of Ruskin's work are comprised in an allegiance to the same single term, Beauty; and the idea of Beauty ... rests fundamentally on belief in a universal, divinely appointed order. The art criticism and the social criticism, that is to say, are inherently and essentially related, not because one follows from the other, but because both are applications, in particular directions, of a fundamental conviction.\textsuperscript{148}

But how and why does Ruskin move from art and architecture to the combative social criticism which he calls his "real" work? In considering this question, it is, I think, essential to ask what kind of understanding of social problems he was achieving in the 1850s.

In general terms there is a widespread agreement among his commentators that Ruskin's growing awareness of the plight of the workman was a key element. In fact, Landow argues that such a recognition was possibly a pre-condition of Ruskin's turning from art criticism to social problems:

Ruskin, who came to criticism of society through the study of architecture, increasingly concerned himself with the role of the individual worker. As early as The Seven Lamps of Architecture (1848)\textsuperscript{149} he wrote that "the right question to ask, respecting all [architectural] ornament, is simply this: Was it done with enjoyment - was the carver happy while he was about it?"(8.218) Great architecture, then, embodies the happiness, the fulfilment, the human activity of the workman. According to The Stones of Venice, "All art is great, and good, and true, only so far as it is distinctively the work of manhood in its entire and highest sense; that is to say, not the work of limbs and fingers, but of the soul, aided, according to her necessities, by the inferior powers"(11.201). Ruskin, in other words, wishes to solve the problems of Victorian England and Victorian architecture by making the workman an artist. In fact, one might argue that he became increasingly aware of the dilemmas of the modern age once he realised that the average worker, unlike the painter, had no means to express himself, develop his capacities as a man, or engage in truly useful labour.\textsuperscript{150}


\textsuperscript{148} Williams (1961): p. 142.

\textsuperscript{149} Actually 1849.

Rosenberg too places an emphasis on Ruskin's realisation of the plight of the workman, but also argues for a complex realignment of values and interests in which Ruskin's religious faith and his response to nature are weakening, while his social conscience strengthens:

His study of architecture convinced him that all the arts of the nineteenth century would remain barren until its artisans had been freed from the monotony of the machine. The temper of his mind was also changing. His belief in the divinity of art and nature began to yield to his knowledge of the waste and tragedy of life...

In Modern Painters 1 and 2 Ruskin looked at the peaks of mountains and saw God; in Modern Painters 3, 4, and 5 he looks at their bases and sees shattered rocks and impoverished villages. The face of the Creator withdraws from creation and in its place man emerges as a tragic figure in the foreground of a still potent, but flawed, nature. With that withdrawal, Ruskin's interest moves from mountains to men, from art to society...

Ruskin ... experienced a weakening of religious faith associated with a waning love of nature and a waxing social conscience. Each experience interacted with the other and produced that complex realignment of values accompanying his transition from the criticism of art to the criticism of society.151

But how sympathetic is Ruskin to the plight of the workman in the 1850s, and what exactly is the nature of Ruskin's social conscience at this period? A number of commentators suggest that one, perhaps even the, determining element in the development of his social conscience seems to have been his encounter with widespread social discontent and economic misery during his 1848 European tour and certainly the "revolutions" of that year affected him deeply as they did others. But before looking at his responses to those events, I want to look first at some examples of how his conscience was operating when faced with people less fortunate than himself.

During his 1845 tour, he writes to his parents from Switzerland after a mountain walk: "As I came back to my soufflé and sillery, I felt sad at thinking how few were

capable of having such enjoyment, and very doubtful whether it were at all proper in me to have it all to myself".\textsuperscript{152} Someone has to ask the vulgar question - so why not share it with someone? Perhaps with George?\textsuperscript{153} Whatever, this rather priggish and luxurious confession of a guilty frisson sits oddly with his fulminations throughout the 1845 tour against the peoples of Italy and France. To whom would he extend the same privileges which he enjoys? Somehow, I do not think that he would extend them to the modern Italians from whom he has already withdrawn any recognition of a basic humanity, people about whom he states that even to recognise them as human costs him an "exercise of the most deep Christian humility".\textsuperscript{154} There is also in the confession a certain whimsicality which is continued in the diary for the following year: "I began to wonder how God should give me so much for so little self-denial".\textsuperscript{155} The point is obvious, but it needs to be made. The reference to God misses the point and denies his own social circumstance as the only son of a very successful travelling salesman in sherry.

On August 1st. 1847, Ruskin was in Derbyshire, and he records for that date a conversation with the "old man of the baths":

Again I felt ashamed of myself. Here is an old man, whose life has been spent in no more exciting pleasures than can be derived from pumping water into glasses and baths; never stirring out of his melancholy passages and rooms: (I told him the corn was beautiful, he said, 'so he heard', he had not so much as seen a cornfield this summer) and yet healthy and happy and not unintelligent. And this man, with no motive, no prospect, no hope, no pleasure, does not seem gluttonous, nor given to wine, nor to any indulgence; while I, with every hope, every power, every right pleasure at command,
have yet no inconsiderable difficulty in restraining myself from merely sensual pleasures! I thought of this with great shame, and will continue to think of it; it should do me good.156

While this obviously records some movement of sympathy, it also reveals depressing limits to Ruskin's social conscience. He comes very close to treating the old man not as what he is but as a reminder of the uneasy conscience with which, for various reasons, his own affluence is accompanied, and, ultimately, the emphasis is on the personal, presumably spiritual, benefit which he will derive from the encounter. And Ruskin's analysis is short-sighted. Of course, the old man has no temptations to vice; not only has he no motive, prospect, hope or pleasure, he has not, presumably, the financial freedom to provide the temptations, or to enliven the drudgery of pumping water.

Three weeks later, Ruskin was in Dunbar, and on the 20th. August, he wrote to W.H. Harrison:

Still there is a certain amount of spleen, or what else it may more justly be called, mingled with my present feelings which I cannot shake off. I cannot understand how you merry people can smile through the world as you do. It seems to me a sad one - more suffering than pleasure in it, and less of hope than either - at least if the interpretations set by the most pious people on the Bible are true, and if not, then worse still. But it is woeful to see these poor fishermen toiling all night and bringing in a few casks of herring each, twice a week or so, and lying watching their nets dry on the cliffs all day; their wives and children abused and dirty, scolding, fighting and roaring through their unvarying lives. How much more enviable the seagulls that, all this stormy day, have been tossing themselves off and on the crags and winds like flakes of snow, and screaming with very joy. Certainly there must be something very wrong about man when this is so; he could not be the unhappy animal he is but by his own fault (8: p. xxvii.).

There are certain interesting features here. Previous confessions from an uneasy conscience are created by and mediated through his sense of the distance between his own affluence and others' poverty. But here those uneasy feelings have merged into a gloomy Calvinistic view of a fallen world, a general condition of which the poor

fishermen are an example. However, the analysis refers the question of human misery to a universalised human nature which prevents any examination of specific socio-economic causes and circumstances. Further, the concluding sentences suggest that the natural world over which man has no control lives on as a law to itself. And yet, the juxtaposition of the images of the poor fishermen and the seagulls creates an odd suggestion that the seagulls are mocking the human drudgery. There is an irony in the demoniacal effect of "screaming with very joy" because while, no doubt for Ruskin the unconscious instinctually repetitive life of the birds may well seem enviable, one has to assume that for the fishermen what is truly enviable is the freedom from harsh material necessity enjoyed by someone like Ruskin. The observation may be sympathetic, but, if it amounts to anything more than sympathetic observation, then I suggest that he is actually using the fishermen and the seagulls as objective correlatives for his own Calvinistic gloom.

The account is further complicated by Ruskin's concerns with how a painter responds to others' misery. In an additional chapter for *Modern Painters 2*, identified by Raymond Williams as an "extreme" position "characteristic of what was later called 'aestheticism', a body of feeling from which Ruskin is not always distinct", Ruskin wrote the following:

Unless a painter works wholly to please himself, he will please nobody; - he must not be thinking while he is at work of any human creature's likings, but his own. He must not benevolently desire to please any more than ambitiously - neither in kindness, nor in pride, may he defer to other people's sensations. "I alone here, on my inch of earth, paint this thing for my own sole joy, and according to my own sole mind. So I should paint it, if no other human being existed but myself. Let who will get good or ill from this - I am not concerned therewith. Thus I must do it, for thus I see it, and thus I like it, woe be to me if I paint as other people see or like." This is the first law of the painter's being; ruthless and selfish - cutting him entirely away from all love of his fellow-creatures, till the work is done (2: p. 388).

By contrast, the person to whom Ruskin often appeals, the "ordinarily good man" is free to spend his summer evenings on his lawn, listening to the blackbirds or singing hymns with his children. Not so the painter who cannot learn from this kind of activity. If you are a painter, you must be in the wildness of the midnight masque- in the misery of the dark street at dawn - in the crowd when it rages fiercest against law - in the council-chamber when it devises worst (?) against the people - on the moor with the wanderer, or the robber - in the boudoir with the delicate recklessness of female guilt - and all this, without being angry at any of these things - without ever losing your temper so much as to make your hand shake, or getting so much of the mist of sorrow in your eyes, as will at all interfere with your matching of colours; never even allowing yourself to disapprove of anything that anybody enjoys, so far as not to enter into their enjoyment. Does a man get drunk, you must be ready to pledge him ... Does a man die at your feet - your business is not to help him, but to note the colour of his lips~ does a woman embrace her destruction before you, your business is not to save her, but to watch how she bends her arms (2: pp. 388 - 389).

The additional chapter for Modern Painters 2, on "A Painter's Profession as Ending Irreligiously", from which the above is taken, was written after The Stones of Venice and Modern Painters 4. Yet, more than ten years earlier he was questioning such a model of painterly practice. He was in Parma on his solo 1845 Italian tour. His father had written expressing disappointment at the feebleness of his latest attempt at verse, Mont Blanc Revisited. Ruskin accepts his father's verdict, and offers the following as the explanation:

I do not think I have lost the power. I have only lost the exciting circumstances. The life I lead is far too comfortable & regular, too luxurious, too hardening. I see nothing of human life, but waiters, doganerie - & beggars. I get into no scrapes, suffer no inconveniences - and am subject to no species of excitement except that arising from art, which I conceive to be too abstract in its nature to become productive of poetry unless combined with experience of living passion (My emphases).

Unlike similar statements on his own comfortable life-style, this is not a prelude to a contrast with others' misery. Rather, he develops his concern with the impact on his work of his comfortable routines and his artistic and literary ambitions:

I don't see how it is possible for a person who gets up at four, goes to bed at 10, eats ices when he is hot, beef when he is hungry, gets rid of all claims of charity by giving
money which he hasn't earned - and those of compassion by treating all distress more as picturesque than real - I don't see how it is possible for such a person to write good poetry.

The connection between his own comfort and others' misery is in the word "picturesque", for the letter continues with the following anecdote, omitted, interestingly enough, by the editors of the Library Edition (2: p. xxxiv):

<The other day> Yesterday, I came on a poor little child lying flat on the pavement in Bologna - sleeping like a corpse - possibly from too little food. I pulled up immediately - not in pity, but in delight at the folds of its poor little ragged chemise over the thin bosom - and gave the mother money - not in charity, but to keep the flies off it while I made a sketch. I don't see how this is to be avoided, but it is very hardening.\textsuperscript{158}

The "broad sweep" approach to the development of Ruskin's social conscience does overlook the detailed complications. For instance, the sympathy extended to the old man at the baths and to the fishermen is not extended to others during the tour abroad with his parents in 1849, a year after the European tour which, for some commentators, marks the real beginnings of his social conscience. The diary entry for April 30th. contains this rather embarrassing piece of narcissism consistent with the earlier confessions quoted above:

It is deserving of record that at this time, just on the point of coming in sight of the Alps, for the first time in three years - a moment which I had looked forward to, thinking I should be almost fainting with joy, and should want to lie down on the earth and take it in my arms - at this time, I say, I was irrevocably sulky and cross, because George had not got me butter to my bread at Les Rousses.\textsuperscript{159}

In an entry for May 3rd., he records, almost in the same breath, the straitened economic circumstances of a peasant whom he had met, and the size of a quantity of Globularia Cordifolia he had found:

Walked a little about the town and tried to draw gentians at p. 66 - no it was up to the hill that looks towards Aix, with my father and mother - we had a chat with an old

\textsuperscript{158}Shapiro (1972): pp. 142 - 143.

man, a proprietor of some land on the hillside, who complained bitterly that the priests and the revenue seized everything, and that nothing but black bread was left for the peasant; he seemed stirred by a strong spirit of animosity against priests. In coming down, by a round about way to avoid cliff edge, I was struck by the enormous quantities of the globularia Cordifolia and their large size; they were as thick as daisies. There is something fine in the harmony of their subdued colour with the grey limestone rocks.¹⁶⁰

On June 19th., he was at Chamonix, and writes rather callously that he set off to see the beds of calcaire "with Couttet carrying my things all the way, poor fellow!"¹⁶¹ Joseph Marie Couttet was a Chamonix guide whom the Ruskins first employed in 1844. If, as Shapiro suggests¹⁶² this man was born around 1791, then on the 1849 tour he must have been in his very late fifties, nearly twice the age of his young master.

The tour of 1854, begun under the shadow of his divorce, suggests a development in his attitude towards his own affluence and others' poverty. On May 11th., he was in Amiens, and he describes an afternoon walk near the Somme. His descriptions strongly emphasise rotting timber, dead leaves and foul water, and one comment is certainly more mature and sober than earlier attempts to respond to economic misery:

All exquisitely picturesque, and as miserable as picturesque. We delight in seeing the figures in the boats pushing them about the bits of blue water in Prout's drawings, but, as I looked today at the unhealthy face and melancholy, apathetic mien of the man in the boat, pushing his load of peats along the ditch, and of the people, men and women, who sat spinning gloomily in the picturesque cottages, I could not help feeling how many suffering persons must pay for my picturesque subject, and my happy walk.¹⁶³

Such an insight might well be developed into a radical critique of his own social situation and the impact of his own class on the lives of those below them, and it certainly was later to be developed into a limited though very angry assault. But, for the moment, such


¹⁶²Shapiro (1972): p. 6. n.3.

a development is hampered by his insistence on attributing misfortune to "mistakes" which originate in post-lapsarian human nature rather than specific social practices. The diary entry for July 18th., 1854, quotes from Herbert:

Why should I feel another man's mistakes
More than his sicknesses or poverty?\textsuperscript{164}

Ruskin's answer is that a man wishes to be cured of illness, is ashamed of his poverty, but is proud of his mistakes which are contagious. He confesses to William Ward (Feb. 5th. 1855) that he is more oppressed and amazed by foolishness and absurdity than any other human misfortune (36: 185); and in a letter of the 9th. January, 1852, to his father from Venice, he says that, like Ruskin senior, he is "sick of the folly of mankind", and that the "great misery" is that "so much misery is mere folly; that so much grievous harm is done in mere ignorance and stupidity, evermore to be regretted as much as the consequence of actual crime ... The more I watch the world, the more I feel that all men are blind and wandering".\textsuperscript{165}

Before I turn to Ruskin's response to the 1848s, I would like to suggest that perhaps his paternalistic attitudes, even more than his Calvinistic inheritance, prevent the development of a radical critique of contemporary society. Here, for instance, is a diary entry for late 1858, and by contrast with what he is declaring in his published works and lectures, it is quite whimsical but it does exemplify the limitations created by the paternalism which he habitually exercises in an unproblematical manner:

December 3rd 1858. Lovely day. At Crystal Palace. Exquisite sky all day long and precious sunset. Little boy of eleven or twelve sauntering up lane at back of garden, eyes fixed on ground, face and hands black, torn apron.
Dialogue.
R. Isn't the sunset beautiful tonight, my boy?

\textsuperscript{164}Ibid: p. 499.

\textsuperscript{165}Bradley (1955): pp. 129 - 130.
B. What is it, please, Sir? (Looking up in a state of bewilderment; question equivalent to "What's your will?")
R. Look how beautiful the sky is.
B. (Looking) Yes, Sir - white-like.
R. Isn't it more like gold and silver than anything white?
B. Yes, Sir. (Smiling a little).
R. And do you see those colours to the left in that thin cloud? (N.B. Solar halo).
B. Yes, Sir. (More eagerly).
R. Then why were you looking only at the ground when I came up? What were you thinking of?
B. They shut me down in the coalcellar, Sir.
R. Who did?
B. My mate, Sir.
R. Why? Or do you mean by accident?
B. No, Sir, for a lark. He put his finger in my eye, and I didn't like it.
R. So you came down here to sulk. Well, it wasn't right of him. Have you any more work to do this evening?
B. No, Sir; I'm a'goin' home.
R. When do you begin work?
B. Five, morning.
R. And have you done your work already? (It was about 3 afternoon).
B. Yes, Sir.
R. But you haven't got it done every day so soon?
B. No, Sir - Sometimes we're out till ten or eleven at night.
(Colloquy closed by present of sixpence.)

This mini-drama neatly refers to Ruskin's concern with the function of nature (and art) in enriching lives oppressed by the progress of the Industrial Revolution, but the gesture which directs the young boy to look at the sky and then hands him a sixpence is quite paternalistic. And the capitalisation of "Sir" is symptomatic of the way in which Ruskin positions the boy in relationship to himself.

CHAPTER EIGHT: RUSKIN IN THE 1840S AND 1850S:

E) RESPONSES TO 1848 AND BEYOND.

What Ruskin clearly enjoyed at a personal level in dispensing knowledge and largesse he also approved of in the public sphere, as becomes clear in his responses to 1848. On his return journey from his 1848 European tour, before leaving Calais for England, he wrote to W.H. Harrison of what he had experienced while in France, and one paragraph is quoted selectively as follows by Abse:167

At Rouen, where we stayed about three weeks, the distress, though nearly as great [as that he had witnessed in Paris], is not so ghastly, and seems to be confined in its severity to the class of workmen ... [1] ... I do not see how another struggle for pillage is avoidable - a simple fight of the poor against the rich - desperate certainly - and likely to be renewed again and again ... [2] ... Vagabonds and ruffians - undisguised - fill the streets, only waiting - not for an opportunity, but the for the best opportunity of attack. And yet even from the faces of these I have seen the malice and brutality vanish if a few words of ordinary humanity were spoken to them. And if there were enough merciful people in France to soothe without encouraging them, and to give them some - even the slightest sympathy and help in such honest efforts as they make - few though they be - without telling them of their Rights or their injuries - the country might still be saved...


The final section which Abse quotes ("And yet even from the faces ") presents Ruskin in a favourable light as a benevolent paternalist. He has included Ruskin's clear recognition of the fact that the oppressed people to whom he refers do have rights and do have injuries. That is clearly not being denied, even if its significance is not in any way developed, especially in so far as the injuries are actually a denial of basic subsistence rights - and Abse follows Ruskin in his benevolent view:

The widespread destruction and misery, the dreadful effects of the unemployment he had witnessed in France were events which had provoked new ideas. Work was what men needed, as Carlyle so earnestly advocated, but it should be work, he had begun to see, which did not deaden a man but allowed him full rein for all his capacities manual

167 Abse (1980): p. 98. For convenience, I have numbered the passages which Abse omits.
and intellectual, as had the ornamental work of the mediaeval carver. "It is not enough to find men absolute subsistence", he wrote, "we should think of the manner of life which our demands necessitate". The rumblings of "strange notions" were thus first heard by his readers.\footnote{Abse (1980): p. 98.}

But the selectivity of Abse's quotation from this letter is indicative of the way in which some Ruskinian commentators avoid the more awkward aspects of his positions. Here, Abse simply omits the less benign features of Ruskin's view of the political situation in France in 1848.

The first omission is Ruskin's qualified acceptance of counter-revolutionary violence: "There seems, however, everything to be dreaded both there [Rouen] and at Paris - and the only door of escape seems to be the darkest - that which grapeshot opens"[1]. The second omitted sentence combines Ruskin's anti-revolutionary paternalism with a further acceptance of the necessity of anti-revolutionary violence:

And the pity of it is that in the midst of all this there are many signs of the best and most patient dispositions borne down by the crowd - or ruined only for want of common humanity and kindness in their former treatment, for now, there is, I believe, nothing available - nothing to be done but by ball cartridge [2].

The final omission, of the sentence which concludes the paragraph, confirms Ruskin's reactionary responses:

The only hope at present is from the common sense views which have at last been forced on the bourgeoisie - who are, as well as the soldiery, thoroughly sick of the republic, and from the generally clear views of the provincials on the whole subject - they say the king [Louis Philippe] was a bad one, but better than none [3].

Ruskin's comments, written from Calais on October 24th, 1848, implicitly endorse the events of June 1848 in Paris when the National Guard, the newly formed Mobile Guards under General Cavaignac, and the army turned their ball cartridges on the workers' barricades and produced a ferocious massacre followed by executions and other
punishments for eleven thousand prisoners. Ruskin had spent two days in Paris on his way home and his comments in the letter to W.H. Harrison, also omitted by Abse, on what he found there are worth quoting in full as an example of how, in the face of the "mob", whether that be the Parisian workers or architectural committees, his instinctive reaction is to appeal to, or on behalf of the "good" people:

I have been in Paris for two days: it had always a black, rent and patched, vicious and rotten look about its ghastly faubourgs: but to see - as now is seen - all this gloom without the meanest effort at the forced gaiety which once disguised it - deepened by all the open evidences of increasing - universal - and hopeless suffering: and scarred by the unhappy traces of a slaughterous and dishonourable contest - is as about a deep and painful lesson - for those who will receive it - as ever was read by vice in ruin. But the melancholy thing is the piteous complaining of the honest inhabitants - all suffering as much as the most worthless, and not knowing what to do - or where to look. I think the only cheerful face I saw in Paris was that of Marrast the President of the Assembly (whom we saw at the theatre) - a countenance hardly fine, but prepossessing, thoughtful, and hopeful. I saw no other face that did not bear the signs either of melancholy - anxiety - or outworned dissipation - more or less concealed under a dark indifference. However, it is to be remembered that we were in Paris at what would, under any circumstances, have been a dull period; and that we went into its worst quarters. Its best are however nearly deserted, and in the gardens of the Tuileries, where I have seen the people of an afternoon thronged like ants, and mobs of merry children skipping under and about the trees, we counted the passers-by by twos and threes, and saw nothing dancing but dead leaves ( 8: pp. xxxii - xxxiii ).

The movement of consciousness through this letter is extraordinary. His Francophobia begins with a swipe at Parisian buildings and artificial gaiety; acknowledges (as if anyone could not) the misery evident in Paris in late 1848; acknowledges recent events - the "slaughterous and dishonourable contest" presumably of the June Days; actually disguises his judgement on events in the word "contest", even though that may suggest that "slaughterous" and "dishonourable" are aimed at both sides, as might be his reference to "vice in ruin"; and offers a very clear alignment with the "honest inhabitants". This last is consistent with his later comment on "the best and most patient dispositions" in Rouen who have been "borne down by the crowd" or
"ruined only for want of common humanity and kindness in their former treatment". He seems therefore to be opposing both the "mob" and the government of the abdicated Louis Phillipe in favour of the honest and the patient, perhaps the French equivalent of the "every good man" to whom he appeals in "The Lamp of Obedience" in The Seven Lamps. However, the closing comments in the above passage are a remarkable dilution of what has gone before - it is surely quite an extraordinary move to qualify your observations by reminding your reader that you had been in Paris "at what would, under any circumstances, have been a dull period", so insensitively aligning post-revolutionary suppression with seasonable and fashionable factors. But it is even more extraordinary to yoke that with the qualifying comment that you had been in "the worst quarters" - which, after all, had suffered dreadfully during the June Days. The final sentence, with its odd distancing effect, merely compounds the insensitivity of the comments.

But Ruskin's comments in this letter also reveal how very much in touch with French provincial bourgeois feeling he was, as indeed was his then wife. Her verdict on what she had observed in Abbeville - "the poor people here say the revolution has ruined them and they wanted nobody but Louis Philippe and it is only these villains in Paris who caused all the misfortunes" - is echoed in his own suggestion that the bourgeoisie and the military are thoroughly "sick of the republic" and the idea that Louis Phillipe, forced to abdicate during the previous February, was a bad king but better than no king at all. Together with the clear implication that the French bourgeoisie would welcome a restoration of the monarchy, Ruskin's comments anticipate the events of the next two months, when, after the adoption of a new constitution under which supreme executive

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power was to be invested in a directly elected president, Louis Napoleon Bonaparte gained five and a half million votes out of the seven and a half million actually cast. This investment of power in a central authority, no matter that it was done quasi-democratically on the basis of a restricted franchise, is, as a response to a perceived threat of social anarchy in France, or, more particularly, Paris, exactly in line with Ruskin's own authoritarian proposals in the "Lamp of Obedience" for ending the laissez-faire practices in English architectural practices by subjecting all architectural activities to a centralised control over even the most minute details (see above: p. 156). It is not surprising that Ruskin admired Louis Napoleon Bonaparte. In responding to his coup d'état of December 1851, he joined with his father in "rejoicing at L. Napoleon's piece of despotism" (12: p. 421: n. 2). No matter what Ruskinian commentators may have to say of his concern for the plight of the workman, there is no doubt that he is an advocate of the "firm smack of government", not only when that involves legislating for national architectural practice, but also when it involves counter-revolutionary violence. "Was the carver happy?" is an interesting question, but its significance is limited when the person who poses the question can accept both the use of guns against working people expressing their unhappiness by going to the barricades, and a despotic coup d'état.

There is further endorsement for Louis Napoleon Bonaparte (now Napoleon III) in Ruskin's pamphlet on The Opening of the Crystal Palace published in 1854. He describes Louis Napoleon's reign as one of "firm and wise government", with this caveat, however, that the extensive programmes of architectural renovation which are going on in France are basically a destruction of the architectural heritage, a theme familiar, of course, from The Seven Lamps. I would like to offer a comment on this. It might seem in some ways trivial but it does indicate, I think, something of the fluidity, if not actual confusion, of
Ruskin's work at this point. The architectural renovation which he deplores seems, from his own account, to be the responsibility of the new emperor's government, and there is no recognition that, in fact, as he knew only too well, it was an enterprise under way in the late 1840s before the plebiscite which brought Louis Napoleon to power. Here, for instance, is Effie Ruskin on her husband's behaviour in Abbeville on their way home from their 1848 tour:

John is perfectly frantic with the spirit of restoration here and at other places, the men actually before our eyes knocking down the time worn black with age pinnacles and sticking up in their place new stones to be carved at some future time; you could not conceive they could be such idiots and worse if you did not see it. John is going to have some Daguerreotypes taken of the churches as long as they are standing; it is valuable as they are destroying them so fast. John says he is quite happy in seeing I enjoy myself so much, and if it was not for my gentle mediation he would certainly do something desperate and get put in prison for knocking some of the workmen off the scaffolding, but that I always keep him in good humour and he does not know what he should do without me.\textsuperscript{170}

Perhaps this is all an example of Ruskin's selective memory as evidenced more dramatically in his reconstruction and/or invention of epiphanic moments. More importantly, he is able to welcome the restoration of a despotic inheritance which will have a direct impact on the people under its rule, and to deplore the restoration of an architectural inheritance which, in the last analysis, while it may give welcome employment to a few, is marginal to the condition of the many. As Conner suggests, Ruskin's work is not always motivated by the most generous of humanitarian motives (see above p. 125).

This becomes clear as he develops his comments on the official opening of the Crystal Palace in 1854. He is as hostile to the innovation which it represents as he is to the destruction which restoration causes to the architectural heritage. He admits that there

are no doubt many possibilities opened up by the new building and the uses to which it can be put, but this recognition soon gives way to his assertion that it is merely a magnified conservatory, and to another attack on what he sees as the contemporary mania for restoring and therefore destroying Europe's greatest mediaeval architecture. In effect, he argues for Europe (i.e. Western Europe, and even more parochially, the Europe of his tours) to become a museum of past architectural achievement, and for all new developments to be imported to Northern America and Asia. He even suggests that what is today green belt and walking country in the U.K. would be the appropriate place for the "spreadings of power" and the "indulgences of magnificence".

In seeking to give his arguments against the destruction some force, Ruskin produces a passage which indicates some of the limitations on his awareness of social problems. He appeals to those whose study of the architectural heritage should have alerted them to the importance of the contemporary "crisis" in which that heritage is being destroyed. He then offers the following illustration:

But it is one of the strange characters of the human mind, necessary indeed to its peace, but infinitely destructive of its power, that we never thoroughly feel the evils which are not actually set before our eyes. If, suddenly, in the midst of the enjoyment of the palate and lightnesses of heart of a London dinner-party, the walls of the chamber were parted, and through their gap, the nearest human beings who were famishing, and in misery, were borne into the midst of the company - feasting and fancy-free - if, pale with sickness, horrible in destitution, broken by despair, body by body, they were laid upon the soft carpet, beside the chair of every guest, would only the crumbs of the dainties be passed to them - would only a passing glance, a passing thought be vouchsafed to them? Yet the actual facts, the real relations of each Dives and Lazarus, are not altered by the intervention of the house wall between the table and the sick-bed - by the few feet of ground (how few!) which are indeed all that separate the merriment from the misery (12: pp. 429 - 430).

This "if only you could see" thesis is similar, of course, to Dickens's suggestions in A Christmas Carol and Dombey and Son for the possibilities of his own class being given, rather than achieving, social enlightenment: and it is reversed in Mrs. Gaskell's Mary
Barton, where it is the working classes who are led to see the personal difficulties under which the managerial classes labour. But, whichever way round, it is a thesis which limits, and those limits are there in Ruskin writing to W.H. Harrison from Rouen and suggesting that an isolated gesture of paternalistic sympathy and generosity would work wonders in removing "malice and brutality"; or in his suggestion in The Stones of Venice that self-denial by young ladies in refusing to buy glass beads would work wonders. But in this instance, the thesis is advanced not even as a valuable event in itself in terms of enlarging middle class awareness of working class misery, nor are the "real relations" defined other than as a contrast between "merriment" and "misery". Instead, the thesis is being used metaphorically - Ruskin continues from the passage above: "It is the same in the matters of which I have hitherto been speaking", i.e. the restoration/destruction of the European architectural heritage. There must be a severe limit on a sensibility which can align the destruction of human beings with the destruction of pieces of carved stone, no matter how exquisite those carvings may be.

But then, the passage above complements the attitude stated towards human misery in Modern Painters 2 where the "contemplation of things as they are", the on-going principle behind his later desire to see the architecture of the past simply left alone as far as that is possible, issues in a disturbing substitution of art for life:

As the great painter is not allowed to be indignant or exclusive, it is not possible for him to nourish his (so-called) spiritual desires, as it is to an ordinarily virtuous person. Your ordinarily good man absolutely avoids, either for fear of getting harm, or because he has no pleasure in such places or people, all scenes that foster vice, and all companies that delight in it ... But you can't learn to paint of blackbirds, nor by singing hymns. You must be in the wildness of the midnight masque - in the misery of the dark street at dawn ... - on the moor with the wanderer or the robber ... Does a man die at your feet, your business is not to help him, but to note the colour of his lips; does a woman embrace her destruction before you, your business is not to save her, but to watch how she bends her arms (4: pp. 388 - 389).
What makes the passage all the more disturbing is that it was written at a time when Ruskin was heavily exercised about the destruction of buildings in Italian cities, and suggesting action to set up a subscription fund to save Italian art from Italian neglect and French vandalism (see above pp. 49). To make an obvious point, you observe a woman embracing her destruction, and do nothing but contemplate things as they happen, but if you are observing an Italian fresco being destroyed, you rush to make a copy of it, and put forward an action plan to prevent its destruction.
CHAPTER EIGHT: RUSKIN IN THE 1840S AND 1850S:

F) CONTENTED MANHOOD.

Ruskin's attitudes as evidenced in the last paragraph are clearly part of the problem in interpreting the development of his awareness of social problems. The "broad sweep" approach misses a great deal which is awkward and does not square with any generalised model of the Art Critic turned Social Critic. There is an excellent example of this in the following passage which opens his 1851 pamphlet on Pre-Raphaelitism:

It may be proved with much certainty, that God intends no man to live in this world without working; but it seems to me no less evident that He intends every man to be happy in his work. It is written, "in the sweat of thy brow," but it was never written, "in the breaking of thine heart," thou shalt eat bread (12: p. 341).

This is quoted by Garrigan to support the idea that in The Seven Lamps Ruskin had begun to shift his attention away from the buildings to the builders, especially in his question, "Was the carver happy?" 171 But if you attend to the argument which follows in Pre-Raphaelitism, it becomes clear that Ruskin is not actually arguing for an amelioration of general working conditions but for the restoration of "contented manhood" as a conservative social phenomenon which, once in place, will facilitate resistance to what he sees as a dangerous modern social mobility.

Perhaps the crucial question here is the nature of the constituency to whom he is addressing his remarks, and as his argument develops it becomes clear that his range of reference is actually very limited. At first, he refers simply to "people", and states three conditions for happiness in their work: being fit for it; not doing too much; and gaining a sense of success, and therefore being able to judge the value of what they have achieved.

But the specific example which he cites reveals that he is actually concerned with the damaging ambitions of the petit-bourgeoisie. In what must be an intended caricature, he argues that a man should find out what he is fit for, but that, unfortunately,

People usually reason in such fashion as this: "I don't seem quite fit for a head-manager in the firm of ------ & Co., therefore, in all probability, I am fit to be Chancellor of the Exchequer." Whereas, they ought rather to reason thus: "I don't seem quite fit to be the head-manager of ------ & Co., but I dare say I might do something in a small greengrocery business; I used to be a good judge of pease".

What follows is an attack on the ambitions of the petit-bourgeoisie to become gentlemen - and an extraordinary assertion that no greater good could be achieved for the country, than the change in public feeling on this head, which might be brought about by a few benevolent men, undeniably in the class of "gentlemen," who would, on principle, enter into some of our commonest trades, and make them honourable; showing that it was possible for a man to retain his dignity, and remain, in the best sense, a gentleman, though part of his time was every day occupied in manual labour, or even in serving customers over a counter (12: p. 342).

Once again, as with the letter to W.H. Harrison from Calais in 1848, Ruskin proposes individual acts by those of his own class as a means forward - patronage by well-heeled gentlemen as a social panacea - at Rouen dispensing kind words and vanquishing malice and brutality; in this instance, persuading those below them to go on occupying a humble position without feeling any loss of dignity.

His proposals regarding overwork, which he sees as causing "misery" and "dark views" of work, also condemn ambition, but this time he supports his arguments by introducing not one social class to suppress the aspirations of those below them, but individual geniuses who tower over everyone else in the artistic field as the argument narrows in its reference from commercial life to the exclusively artistic:

Genius ... in whatever field, [it] will always be distinguished by its perpetual, steady, well-directed, happy, and faithful labour in accumulating and disciplining its powers, as well as by its gigantic, incommunicable facility in exercising them. Therefore, literally, it is no man's business whether he has genius or not: work he must, whatever he is, but quietly and steadily; and the natural and unforced results of such work will be always the
things that God meant him to do, and will be his best. No agonies nor heart-rendings will enable him to do any better. If he be a great man, he will do great things; if a small man, small things; but always, if thus peacefully done, good and right; always, if restlessly and ambitiously done, false, hollow, and despicable (12: pp. 345 - 346).

I said above that the argument was narrowing in its reference to the exclusively artistic, and Ruskin goes on to accept precisely that:

I have stated these principles generally, because there is no branch of labour to which they do not apply; but there is one in which our ignorance and forgetfulness of them has caused an incalculable amount of suffering, and I would endeavour now to reconsider them with special reference to it - the branch of the Arts (12: p. 346.).

His prioritising of the Arts as an area of labour in which "an incalculable amount of suffering" has been experienced is further evidence of how much of what Ruskin has to say in the 1840s and 1850s overlooks or flies in the face of actual historical developments, and again calls into question the "broad sweep" approach which suggests that he is unreservedly committed to considering the plight of the workman.

What follows the passage quoted above is a critical tour of the work of various contemporary painters, with very high praise indeed for Millais, but Ruskin devotes most of the essay to an explanation of the development of Turner's greatness, and in doing so repeats his earlier procedure of suppressing the ambitions of the many by highlighting the achievements of this one genius. But perhaps that is not what is actually important here. Rather, it is that in the early 1850s, with his awareness of the economic misery being suffered by so many both in England and in France, Ruskin can state so blandly that the principles concerning the question of labour which he is announcing apply to all forms of labour, and yet isolate painting as an area in which the neglect of his principles has caused "an incalculable amount of suffering" - and substantiate that claim in the following passage where a particular response to landscape is the actual loss:

Every archaeologist, every natural philosopher, knows that there is a peculiar rigidity of mind brought on by long devotion to logical and analytical inquiries. Weak men,
giving themselves to such studies, are utterly hardened by them, and become incapable of understanding anything nobler, or even of feeling the value of the results to which they lead. But even the best men are in a sort injured by them, and pay a definite price, as in most other matters, for definite advantages. They gain a peculiar strength, but lose in tenderness, elasticity, and impressibility. The man who has gone, hammer in hand, over the surface of a romantic country, feels no longer, in the mountain ranges he has so laboriously explored, the sublimity or mystery with which they were veiled when he first beheld them, and with which they are adored in the mind of the passing traveller. In his more informed conception, they arrange themselves like a dissected model: where another man would be awe-struck by the magnificence of the precipice, he sees nothing but the emergence of fossiliferous rock, familiarised already to his imagination as extending in a shallow stratum, over a perhaps uninteresting district; where the unlearned spectator would be touched with strong emotion by the aspect of the snowy summits which rise in the distance, he sees only the culminating points of a metamorphic formation, with an uncomfortable web of fan-like fissures radiating, in his imagination, through their centres (12: pp. 391 - 392).

He argues that this kind of "scientific" response to landscape, in that it provides an insight into the divinely ordained order of the universe, is a reward, but a reward "well worthy the sacrifice" - but what sacrifice? That is defined in the peroration to the essay which celebrates the achievements of Turner and offers consolation to the mediocre toiler for his "sense of loss" which "is not the less painful to him if his mind be rightly constituted". Given that essential condition, then

it would be with infinite gratitude that he would regard the man, who, retaining in his delineation of natural scenery a fidelity to the facts of science so rigid as to make his work at once acceptable and credible to the most sternly critical intellect, should yet invest its features again with the sweet veil of their daily aspect; should make them dazzling with the splendour of wandering light, and involve them in the unsearchablemness of stormy obscurity; should restore to the divided anatomy its visible vitality of operation, clothe the naked crags with soft forests, enrich the mountain ruins with bright pastures, and lead the thoughts from the monotonous recurrence of the phenomena of the physical world, to the sweet interests and sorrows of human life and death (12: pp. 392 - 393).

This passage is very important in indicating where Ruskin has arrived at the start of the 1850s. He is once again vindicating Turner in his representations of the truths of Nature, but the accuracy of Turner's representations is confounded, as it was in the mystifications of Modern Painters 1 and 2, in "the unsearchablemness of stormy obscurity". The
unrelenting cataloguing of natural phenomena in those two volumes is here, I think
unwittingly, conceded for what it is, in his reference to "the monotonous recurrence of
the phenomena of the physical world"; and actual widespread human misery, as that is
identified in "The Nature of Gothic", for instance, is here limply rendered as the "sweet
interests and sorrows of human life and death". A pamphlet which begins promisingly
with what looks like a protest against miserable working conditions ends in a cliché.

There is one further point worth making, and it is this. As Soenstrom points out,
Ruskin is undoubtedly very concerned with manliness, but when he singles out
"contented [mediaeval] manhood" as the primary source of the greatness of mediaeval
architecture, and attacks contemporary cheap-jack housing as symptomatic of a
discontented manhood in The Seven Lamps, what is important is not some deeply
personal concern with his own manhood, but his attack on those social motives and
practices which he sees as driving the development of modern industrial capitalism. Small
wonder that "Unto This Last" envisages the replacement of aggression, ambition, and
self-calculation, with "gentleness, generosity, affection and self-sacrifice". And while it
may well be that Ruskin himself is more comfortable with the latter as a paternalistic
version of manliness, nevertheless, what is more important here is that his revised version
of paternalistic figures exposes the limitations on his understanding of the modern and
the way in which his apparent attack on the values and practices of contemporary
capitalism is, in fact, an attempt to domesticate it and to feminise it into acceptability.

Here, for instance, is Ruskin from The Political Economy of Art. In his first lecture, he
invokes Scripture for a description of the "queenly housewife or the queenly nation":
"She riseth while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her
maidens. She maketh herself coverings of tapestry, her clothing is silk and purple.
Strength and honour are in her clothing, and she shall rejoice in time to come". He then comments:

Now, you will observe that in this description of the perfect economist, or mistress of a household, there is a studied expression of the balanced division of her care between the two great objects of utility and splendour; in her right hand, food and flax, for life and clothing; in her left hand, the purple and the needlework, for honour and for beauty. All perfect housewifery or national economy is known by these two divisions; wherever either is wanting, the economy is imperfect (16: p. 20).

Of course, within the development of his own thought, it is clear that here Ruskin is relying on the divisions which he has already established in Modern Painters 1 and 2 between the two orders of utility, even though the lower order, which serves to sustain material living, is no longer occupying such a subordinate position. That has to be an important part of the account, and is clearly related to the limiting effect of Ruskin's use of simplistic models - the micro-economic is simply not an alternative to the macro-economic; you cannot model the latter on the former. But Ruskin does so constantly, as do the mercantile economists whose work he attacks. James Mill, for instance, had argued as follows:

... if there were two individuals, one of whom owed to the other £100, and the other to him £100, instead of the first man's taking the trouble to count down £100 to the second, and the second man's taking the trouble to count down £100 to the first, all they had to do was to exchange their mutual obligations. The case was the same between England and Holland.172

On the basis of this analogy, Mill then deduces the origins of bills of exchange, while offering a very benign interpretation of Anglo-Dutch relationships. Similarly, Ruskin, in dealing with the value of money, and its impact on social relationships, relies on the micro-economic and the micro-social, and ignores the implications of the macro-economic and the macro-social:

The force of the guinea you have in your pocket depends wholly on the default of a guinea in your neighbour’s pocket. If he did not want it, it would be of no use to you; the degree of power it possess depends accurately upon the need or desire he has for it, - and the art of making yourself rich, in the ordinary mercantile economist’s sense, is therefore equally and necessarily the art of keeping your neighbour poor (17: p. 44).

But what is more to the point than either of these considerations is the way in which Ruskin’s models serve to promote a work force which is essentially subservient, seduced by the tender, generous, caring policies of its masters and mistresses, whom he sees as getting a fair old dividend from their philanthropy: "let us never fear that our servants should have a good appetite - our wealth is in their strength, not in their starvation" (16: p. 23). The limits on this kind of social criticism are there in his use of the first person plural pronoun - there simply is no doubt as to whom Ruskin regards as his audience and his class allies.

But then the ideal of "contented manhood", at the centre of Ruskin’s response to 1848, is not for him a social product necessarily desirable in and for itself, or indeed for the contented. By contrast, the Marxian ideal of freedom from material necessity, being formulated at the same time, is desired as a social product instrumental in producing a universal condition in which other essential freedoms may develop. But Ruskin’s ideal serves other purposes, not the least of which, in The Seven Lamps, is to create the right kind of social conditions in which the architecture of the past can be preserved, and a new architecture can be engineered into existence. As Fitch rightly points out:

It is clear from his letters and journals that in 1848, in Normandy, Ruskin observed the symptoms of spiritual malaise not merely as imprinted in Gothic forms of mediaeval and Renaissance times but as revealed directly in the lives of a people in the midst of social upheaval. The preface to The Seven Lamps speaks of his haste to study churches threatened by both revolution and restoration. More important, the historical moment of social crisis, convulsion, and reconception in which The Seven Lamps of Architecture was conceived and written appears to have determined the content of the book. Its
subject is social as much as physical architecture; it prescribes the moral structure that must precede the one of stone.173

The ideal of "contented manhood" also serves to support a system which he appears to be attacking. As one of his most percipient commentators, J. A. Hobson, pointed out a couple of years before Ruskin died, what hampered him in the development of his "social" thought was his "deep-rooted attachment to the existing order, and still deeper rooted distrust and alarm at the gospel of liberty and equality which stimulated most of the agitations of the age", both of which "made him reluctant to follow out the logical sequence of his thought".174 That "deep-rooted attachment" is very clearly at work in Unto This Last, no matter what the outcry from the Cornhill readership. No doubt, some of his assertions look as if they could form a basis for a very radical critique: for instance, the assertion that the primary problem which political economists should address is the antagonism between a formally free waged labour force and capitalist employers; or that the real motive driving the desire for wealth is the desire to achieve power over men; in its simplest sense, the power of obtaining for our own advantage the labour of servant, tradesman, and artist; in wider sense, authority of directing large masses of the nation to various ends (good, trivial, or hurtful, according to the mind of the rich person)" (17: p. 46).

Similarly, his proposals for workmen to be given a guaranteed steady income whatever the fluctuations of a market economy might otherwise dictate were obviously alarming to some of his contemporaries.

While it has been made clear by Sherburne that very little in Ruskin's political economy is at all original175, the question remains as to just how radical his proposals are.

because it is ironic that Thackeray's readers should have been so angry about what is, in fact, a proposal by a middle-class gentleman to extend throughout the capitalist system the behaviour, attitudes and conditions of service not only of an older social order but also of the newly emerging professional middle-classes. Ruskin's "deep-rooted attachment to the existing order", as that determines his response to contemporary capitalism, includes both images of an enduring but idealised social order and a response to developments within his own class. His rôle models for the New Humane Merchants are, after all, military commanders, priests, physicians and lawyers, members of the liberal professions who, according to Ruskin, are motivated not by the prospect of remuneration, but by their willingness to serve the community. His attempts at persuading his public to discover a new kind of commerce are supported by a coercive argument which would be transparent class blackmail against the mercantile classes if his arguments were addressed to them. He claims that there is a prevalent assumption that "the merchant is presumed to act always selfishly" and that "a buyer's function is to cheapen, and a seller's to cheat"; and that the public "involuntarily condemn the man of commerce for his compliance with their own statement, and stamp him for ever as belonging to an inferior grade of human personality". (17: pp. 38 - 39). However, as Ruskin offers the prospect of a new kind of commerce which "is not exclusively selfish", his particular social position determines an unexpected shift in the argument, and it becomes clear that his intended audience is not the commercial classes at all. If it were, you might reasonably expect his argument, at this point, to dangle before the merchants the prospect of their own enhanced social status resulting from their engagement in commercial activities redeemed from the grosser elements which make them socially
despised. That is not what Ruskin offers. His true audience are the gentlemen, the "men of heroic temper" who have been misguided in their youth into other fields [i.e. other than commerce]; not recognising what is in our days, perhaps, the most important of all fields; so that while many a zealous person loses his life in trying to teach the form of a gospel, very few will lose a hundred pounds in showing the practice of one (17: p. 39).

And the result of Ruskin's proposals would be to transform commerce into an "occupation which gentlemen will every day see more need to engage in, rather than in the businesses of talking to men, or slaying them". He is, in fact, proposing a take-over by already accredited gentlemen of an existing commercial culture. This is a neat reversal of Samuel Smiles's ideal of gentility as the reward of Self-help. Smiles's constituents are urged to help themselves to entrepreneurial success and thereby to gentlemanly status, but Ruskin's audience of gentlemen is being urged to help itself to the results of others' enterprise. However, as so often with Ruskin, his proposals to tame the new capitalist classes by supplanting them with gentler people - even gentler since they will have given up the business of killing people - are flying in the face of history. What was actually happening was that, as Smiles recognises, the entrepreneurial classes, who might have supplanted those above them, were busy joining them by gentrifying themselves, perhaps under license from their superiors, because, as Bertrand Russell pointed out, though with how much serious intent I do not know, "the concept of the gentleman was invented by the aristocracy to keep the middle classes in order". ¹⁷⁶ Certainly, his comment is supported by this from Richard Cobden in 1863:

We have the spirit of feudalism rife and rampant in the midst of the antagonistic development of the age of Watt, Arkwright, and Stephenson | Nay, feudalism is every day more and more in the ascendant in political and social life. So great is its power and prestige that it draws to it the support and homage of even those who are the natural.

leaders of the newer and better civilisation. Manufacturers and merchants seem only to desire riches that they may be enabled to prostrate themselves at the feet of feudalism.\textsuperscript{177}

Wiener quotes from Lee an exemplification of the process:

J.M. Lee, examining the Cheshire elite, instructively compared the careers of James Watts, born in 1804, and his grandson, James Watts, born in 1878: The former was a Manchester businessman, possessed of only the rudimentary education. A Congregationalist and an active participant in Liberal politics, he became mayor of Manchester during the eighteen-fifties. From the huge profits of a warehouse trade in fancy goods, he built an impressive country house, Abney Hall. His grandson was sent to Winchester and New College, Oxford, rowed for his college at Henley, and followed all the fashions of his generation, "even to the extent of taking an American wife!"\textsuperscript{178}

On these and similar developments, Wiener comments:

The peculiar flexibility of the English aristocracy snatched a class victory from the brink of defeat, and helped alter the course of national development. At the moment of its triumph, the entrepreneurial class turned its energies to reshaping itself in the image of the class it was supplanting ... As capitalists became landed gentlemen, JPs, and men of breeding, the radical ideal of active capital was submerged in the conservative ideal of passive property, and the urge to enterprise faded beneath the preference for stability.\textsuperscript{179}

As so often, Ruskin's social criticism has gone straight for the point - the deep antagonism between waged labour and capital, and the selfish motives which drive the capitalist classes and which create the antagonism - and he has put forward proposals for ending the antagonism. But he has missed. His solution is for the gentlemen to become the capitalists, but the capitalists were gentrifying themselves, as, to be fair to Ruskin, he was to recognise and ridicule some years later in The Crown of Wild Olive (see above pp: 114 - 115). Ruskin was keen to modify the operations of "active capital" and the "urge to enterprise", and to establish a "stability", but what historical developments actually delivered was not what he was arguing for.

\textsuperscript{177}Morley (1881): Vol. 2: pp. 481 - 482.


But then what of Ruskin's proposals on wages which are a key element in his argument? How radical is his argument that the work force should be guaranteed a steady income and employment free from the vagaries of the market place? I would suggest that just as his proposals for a gentlemanly take-over of the capitalist enterprise are an extension of his own class position as the son of a gentrified entrepreneur, in which, however, he is suppressing his father's career as a civilised entrepreneur who became a gentleman, so these proposals for improved working conditions for the work force are an extension to them of the financial aspirations of those nineteenth-century middle-class professionals who organised their own liberation from market practices. To support this point, I would like to quote in full the following from Martin Wiener:

The gentrification of the Victorian middle classes proceeded [as well] through a second social trend of the period: the rise of the modern professions. Professional men - lawyers, doctors, public officials, professors, and men of letters - came into their own during the reign of Victoria. They grew numerous and distinct enough to be considered a class, or more strictly speaking, a subclass, with an influence on English opinion and culture far out of proportion to its size. By the second half of the nineteenth century there was a professional upper middle class in Britain alongside the capitalist class.

Throughout the century, old professions like law and medicine restructured themselves to emphasise expertise, expanded in numbers, and achieved status. Even the clergy followed a similar pattern. At the same time, new professions proliferated. The establishment of the Royal College of Surgeons in 1800, the British Medical Association in 1856, and the Law Society in 1825 placed the traditional secular professions on a new footing of secure respectability. One after another, new professions, greatly influenced by the model of the older ones, began to detach themselves from the world of business and organise themselves - civil engineers in 1818, architects in 1834, pharmacists in 1841, actuaries in 1848, and so on, all revealing an aspiration to use their claims of expertise and integrity to rise above the rule of the marketplace. Between 1841 and 1881, the nation's population rose by 60 percent, whereas the seventeen main professional occupations increased their numbers by 150 percent, thereby coming to constitute a substantial portion of the middle class.\(^{180}\)

Ruskin is not, of course, alone in his professional modelling of a redeemed capitalism.

There is, for instance, and inevitably in this context, Carlyle's call in Latter-Day

Pamphlets for the regimenting of industry. There is also, ironically, the argument from John Stuart Mill in *Auguste Comte and Positivism* that "until labourers and employers perform the work of industry in the spirit in which soldiers perform that of an army, industry will never be moralised". However, in Ruskin's case, there does seem to be something particularly personal in his attraction towards the professional solution. Although, as I have already stated earlier in this section, I do not feel very comfortable with psychological approaches to Ruskin's work, nevertheless, the following comment by Sherburne seems to me to be extremely relevant to Ruskin's promotion of the professional ideal, pointing, as it does, to the way in which his arguments can be seen as partly determined by his particular social and familial circumstances:

Ruskin's professional ideal has a psychological source which renders comparison with other thinkers irrelevant. Ruskin had observed the feeling of inferiority from which his father suffered as the merchant son of a bankrupt Edinburgh grocer. John James Ruskin wished his son John to be well educated and enter a profession like the clergy in order to remove the stigma of commercial origins from the Ruskin family. In the first chapter of *Unto This Last*, Ruskin is trying to settle the accounts in his father's favour. His father was, in fact, a most unusual businessman - more a dedicated professional or man of honour than an aggressive capitalist. After the struggle to pay off the family's debts and secure a place in London business, the elder Ruskin's relations with his wealthy sherry customers came to resemble his son's ideal of a guild steward. He was, on a large scale, purveyor of the incomparable products of the Domecq vineyards to an assured number of families in the British Isles.

But Ruskin's call for a gentrification of capitalist enterprise is not a call for the gentrification of capitalists - it is for the invasion of their territory by those who are already gentlemen in their own right. Ruskin is not in any way seeking to justify John James's career and ambitions for his son, but is reproducing his father's attempts to erase

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the fact of commercial origins in arguments which distance himself from the entrepreneurial classes and identify himself with the gentlemen.
G) CONCLUDING REMARKS.

Clearly, there was a major shift in Ruskin's interests in the later 1840s and into the 1850s, but I do not think that what happened can be explained in terms of a personal psychology subjected to distorting, and even deranging pressures. The psychological approach certainly has its place, but I think it is only infrequently relevant as, for instance, in the way in which his family circumstances produced someone who was irredeemably paternalistic in his attitudes. But even then, it is not the genesis of his paternalism which is important. Rather, what counts is the way in which his inherited stance towards experience, whether as an "art critic" or a "social critic", limits the extent to which he is able or prepared to develop his work. "Was the carver happy?" does not suggest any identification of Ruskin with the plight of the workman. The question is being asked by a gentleman connoisseur of fine architectural work, a gentleman who remains firmly identified with those who direct and finance the work. If he wants to create happy carvers, there can be no automatic assumption that human happiness is what he primarily desires - much of the evidence points to his prioritising the production of architectural work which carries with it the impression of happy labour. And it is a question of Ruskin and those with whom he identifies creating the happiness - there is no question of carvers, or any other groups of workers, seeking their own collective self-determination. That is clear in Ruskin's responses to 1848, and to Louis Napoleon Bonaparte's coup d'état, in which he welcomes the establishment of a centralised authority as a response to
what he and others see as social disorder, but which might also be seen as due social protest against the extreme harshness of prevailing economic conditions.\textsuperscript{183}

Epiphanic approaches are also inadequate relying as they do on Ruskin's own recollections which are occasionally dubious, often look stage-managed, and owe more to his readings of Wordsworth and Scripture than to an actual history of personal development.

The "broad sweep" approach, which describes what seem to be fairly smooth transitions from Art and Nature to Architecture and Man, and thence to Society and Political Economy, obviously accounts in general terms for an actual development, but the insistence on finding internal consistencies within the published writings, which is a feature of this approach, means that a detailed consideration of the contradictions and confusions in both the published writings and in the letters and diaries which would qualify the general account is often lacking. This, I think, is why Ruskin's attitude to the labouring classes in Europe in the later 1840s and 1850s is often mis-represented and he emerges in some accounts as their champion, rather than the paternalist who may well, from the very best humanitarian motives, wish to improve their lot, but who clearly wishes to see them, and the aspiring entrepreneurial classes, kept firmly in their place, even if that means the use of the "ball-cartridge".

This approach, in common with the psychological and epiphanic approaches, also operates a curious censorship. The psychological approach attends carefully to Ruskin's personal disorders and disabling relationships with members of his immediate family circle, but tends to overlook his reactions to other people and other events. The

\textsuperscript{183}Ruskin's later calls in the 1860s and 1870s for collective determination of working conditions and bargaining rights and a labourers' parliament fall outside the scope of this essay but must be acknowledged.
epiphanic approach focuses almost exclusively on Ruskin's celebratory responses to natural scenes and human artifacts but also neglects his response to people and events which is often far from celebratory. Both approaches limit the presentation of Ruskin as a person living through the historical period in question. But then so does the "broad sweep" approach which tends to concentrate on the published texts and produce internal consistencies in his arguments rather than attend to the enduring assumptions and attitudes which govern and all too often limit his arguments, and which display both contradictions and confusions.

For instance, Modern Painters 1 and 2, grounded in an extremely conservative Natural Philosophy, are an attempt by Ruskin to argue for the greatness of Turner as an exponent of the art of landscape painting, but they are also, as a cultural intervention, an attempt to fix the spiritual meanings of visible natural phenomena, and Ruskin catalogues these values as he interprets them with a supreme confidence that he is offering his reader the view of "things as they are". And things are as they are because he reads nature according to the assumptions of a Materialist Natural Philosopher for whom the inherent qualities and quantities, which make things as they are, have an objective existence - and therefore Ruskin can read out a set of fixed values, and nature can be hermetically sealed from the modern world of technological change which he so detests and which he explicitly attacks in his correspondence of the 1840s.

Even though his intervention in the architectural debate means that he has to face directly in his written work the fact of contemporary change, and while his reliance on Scripture as a mode of persuasion and Eighteenth Century Natural Philosophy as a mode of analysis weakens when faced with an actual history, nevertheless he continues in The Seven Lamps to claim an objectivity and impersonality which place his arguments
beyond historical specificity. He claims, for instance, to be articulating unquestionable
laws which are derived from a universalised human nature yielding natural principles
which are superior to human authority. This, for instance, owes very little to any
historical analysis:

... in all other kind of energies except that of man's mind, there is no question as to
what is life, and what is not. Vital sensibility, whether vegetable or animal, may, indeed,
be reduced to so great feebleness, as to render its existence a matter of question, but
when it is evident at all, it is evident as such: there is no mistaking any imitation or
pretence of it for the life itself; no mechanism nor galvanism can take its place ...

But when we begin to be concerned with the energies of man, we find ourselves
instantly dealing with a double creature. Most part of his being seems to have a fictitious
counterpart, which it is at his peril if he do not cast off and deny. Thus he has a true and
false (otherwise called a living and dead, or a feigned and unfeigned) faith. He has a true
and false hope, a true and false charity, and, finally, a true and false life. His true life is
like that of lower organic beings, the independent force by which he moulds and governs
external things; it is a force of assimilation which converts everything around him into
food, or into instruments; and which, however humbly or obediently it may listen to or
follow the guidance of superior intelligence, never forfeits its own authority as a judging
principle, as a will capable either of obeying or rebelling. His false life is, indeed, but one
of the conditions of death or stupor, but it acts, even when it cannot be said to animate ...

The life of a nation is usually, like the flow of a lava stream, first bright and fierce,
than languid and covered, at last advancing only by the tumbling over and over of its
frozen blocks. And that last condition is a sad one to look upon. All the steps are marked
most clearly in the arts, and in Architecture more than in any other; for it, being
especially dependent, as we have just said, on the warmth of the true life, is also
peculiarly sensible of the hemlock cold of the false: and I do not know anything more
oppressive, when the mind is once awakened to its characteristics, than the aspect of a
dead architecture. The feebleness of childhood is full of promise and of inter-

... the struggle of imperfect knowledge full of energy and continuity. - but to see impotence and
rigidity settling upon the form of the developed man; to see the types which once had the
die of thought struck fresh upon them, worn flat by over use; to see the shell of the living
creature in its adult form, when its colours are faded, and its inhabitants perished, - this is
a sight more humiliating, more melancholy, than the vanishing of all knowledge, and the
return to confessed and helpless infancy.

Nay, it is to be wished that such return were always possible. There would be hope if
we could change palsy into puerility; but I know not how far we can become children
again, and renew our lost life. The stirring which has taken place in our architectural aims
and interests within these few years, is thought by many to be full of promise: I trust it is,
but it has a sickly look to me. I cannot tell whether it be indeed a springing of seed or a
shaking among bones (8: pp. 191 - 194).
This owes a great deal to a conservative Vitalist Natural Philosophy, a naturalist's habits of observation, Romantic analogies between the life of the individual and the life of a nation, and Evangelical belief in a fallen humanity. Its suggestion that nothing is more "oppressive" than the sight of a "dead architecture" anticipates his claim in Pre-Raphaelitism that the branch of the arts is special in having suffered "an incalculable amount of suffering" (12: p. 346). It is worth noting that in between these two statements there is Ruskin's account of the palsied suffering of the workmen in "The True Nature of Gothic". Again, the evidence points to Ruskin's prioritisation of Art over Humanity - to the notion that he deplores postlapsarian human misery and imperfection precisely because it issues in inferior art and architecture, and that he would welcome a return to the "lost life" precisely because this would result in "a springing of the seed" of an artistic vitality.

In many ways, the passage quoted above is quintessentially Ruskin, especially in its assumption of a universal human nature, a concept which limits his insights into what is happening within the contemporary world. Like the etymological derivations of key economic terms in Unto This Last, Ruskin's view of human nature is a holding operation against a much detested modern dynamism. The language which Ruskin employs to describe the false life which human beings lead draws exclusively on the natural environment and not the modern world of commerce and industry:

[Man's] false life ... is that life of custom and accident in which many of us pass much of our time in the world; that life in which we do what we have not proposed, and speak what we do not mean, and assent to what we do not understand; that life which is overlaid by the weight of things external to it, and is moulded by them, instead of assimilating them; that, which instead of growing and blossoming under any wholesome dew, is crystallised over with it, as with hoar-frost, and becomes to the true life what an arborescence is to a tree, a candied agglomeration of thoughts and habits foreign to it, brittle, obstinate, and icy, which can neither bend nor grow, but must be crushed and broken to bits if it stand in our way. All men are liable to be in some degree frost-bitten in this sort; all are partly encumbered and crusted over with idle matter; only, if they have
real life in them, they are always breaking this bark away in noble rents, until it becomes, like the black strips upon the birch tree, only a witness of their own inward strength (8: p. 192).

Of course, this owes a great deal to Carlyle, especially in the "ice-palace" images, but what is of more interest in the present context is that Ruskin is developing a very clear image of the reified life - "overlaid by the weight of things external to it, and ... moulded by them, instead of assimilating them". This is potentially an argument which would serve a purpose of which he would later be quite proud - to strike at the root of capitalist practices and the quality of human life which they produce. But instead of accepting and developing what is implicit in his argument, i.e. that it is social practices, "custom and accident", which create the reifications, and that alternative practices could undo them, he reaches for his landscape vocabulary and imports an agency which, by implication, is not a product of human action but imposed from an independent external source. The product of human decisions, the "life of custom", becomes a "hoar-frost", a natural phenomenon which settles on both individuals and nations "in proportion to their age".

The universalising idioms create an obliquity of reference which militates against a specific application of the analysis. There is an application of sorts, in the paragraph quoted above, when he refers to the sickly quality of contemporary architectural enterprise, but throughout the passage, the attempt at social analysis is proceeding not through an engagement in a specific situation at all, but primarily through the choice and development of images - a lava stream, a crustacean, a hoar-frost - and an analogy between architecture and a human life.

Comparisons and connections have often been made between Ruskin's social analysis and that offered by Karl Marx. George Bernard Shaw, for instance, claimed that Ruskin
made Marx look as if he were offering no more than the "platitudes of a rural dean" - a comment both flippant and unfair, for it is precisely when you turn to the analyses which Marx was making in the 1840s that you see what can be achieved when an engagement with the workings of contemporary capitalism is detailed and not hampered by universalist assumptions and unhelpful images and analogies. This, for instance, is Marx in 1844 on the operations of credit:

Credit is conceivable in two situations and on two conditions. The two situations are: (1) a rich man extends credit to a poor man whom he regards as industrious and orderly. This kind of credit belongs to the romantic, sentimental side of economics, to its aberrations, excesses, exceptions, not to the rule. But even assuming that it is exceptional, even granting this romantic possibility it remains true that the poor man's life, his talent and his labours serve the rich man as a guarantee that the money he has lent will be returned. This means, then, that the totality of the poor man's social virtues, the content of his life's activity, his very existence, represent for the rich man the repayment of his capital together with the usual interest. For the creditor the death of the poor man is the very worst thing that can happen. It means the death of his capital together with the interest. We should reflect on the immorality implicit in the evaluation of a man in terms of money, such as we find in the credit system... If (2) the borrower himself is not without means, then credit merely facilitates exchange, i.e. it is money raised to a completely ideal form. Credit is the economic judgement on the morality of a man. In the credit system man replaces metal or paper as the mediator of exchange. However, he does this not as a man but as the incarnation of capital and interest. Thus although it is true that the medium of exchange has migrated from its material form and returned to man it has done so only because man has been exiled from himself and transformed into material form. Money has not been transcended in man within the credit system, but man is himself transformed into money, or, in other words, money is incarnate in him. Human individuality, human morality, have become both articles of commerce and the material which money inhabits. The substance, the body clothing the spirit of money is not money, paper, but instead it is my personal existence, my flesh and blood, my social worth and status. Credit no longer actualises money-values in actual money but in human flesh and human hearts. Thus all the advances and illogicalities within a false system turn out to be the greatest imaginable regression and at the same time they can be seen as perfidy taken to its logical conclusion.

Of course, Ruskin takes up from others the idea that the Industrial Revolution is turning men into machines and that the division of labour necessitated by the new factory

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systems is not only a division of men from each other but also an alienation of men from the produce of their labour. But he does not see this as a specific transformation of human nature as Marx does, because it is not, in fact, happening to him. It is a bereavement happening to others less fortunate than himself, and although, from genuinely philanthropic motives, he speaks out against the harsher aspects of contemporary developments, his view of a universal human nature persists. But Marx's analysis of just one aspect of the operations of capital suggests how specific practices are actually transforming the totality of social relationships and therefore revolutionising what we perceive as human nature, which becomes not a universal and fixed value but a social phenomenon determined by specific modes of production, persuasion and coercion.

"Let us never fear that our servants should have a good appetite - our wealth is in their strength, not in their starvation." I would like to place that remark by Ruskin in a context contemporary to his own work, and in a modern context. First, "our wealth is in their strength" is remarkably close to Marx's suggestion in The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844 that Capital is in fact an accumulation of Labour, just as "contented manhood" in all its ramifications is close to Marx's ideal of a universal freedom from material necessity. But Capital's accumulation of Labour is, for Marx, essentially an appropriation or a robbery, since he is, after all, constructing a fundamentally hostile critique of industrial capitalism and the essential antagonisms between a formally free waged labour force and their employers, whereas Ruskin is urging the possibilities of a redeemed capitalist hierarchy in which all will know their correct place, including not only the workmen but the entrepreneurs.
Secondly, there is this from the British New Labour Party which is claiming, in circumstances very different from the mid-nineteenth century, that since "capital is more than ever a global commodity, highly skilled labour is now finally acknowledged to be the critical resource",\textsuperscript{186} and "in the modern global economy, where capital raw materials and technology are internationally mobile and tradable world-wide, it is people - their education and skills - that are necessarily the most important determinant of economic growth".\textsuperscript{187} It is, I think, appropriate to quote this modern policy statement in the context of a thesis on Ruskin since he had such a considerable influence on the British Labour Party in its early years. It is also, I think, appropriate to draw out the parallels between his paternalistic concerns then for the physical welfare of the working force as expressed in his support for successful but humane capitalist enterprise, and the New Labour Party's leaders' and spin-doctors' concern today with the development of a working force to enhance British industrial competitiveness and thereby to enhance the U.K.'s international competitiveness. Neither bears even the remotest resemblance to socialist enterprise, but, for all of his limitations, not even Ruskin would engage in the present Orwellian double-think whereby greater efficiency is won through greater fairness, increased competitiveness through increased co-operation, and greater growth through deflation - nor, I'm sure, would he have endorsed the following which runs absolutely counter to the central thesis of \textit{Unto This Last}: "by focusing on those presently excluded from the labour market, the government can help to tip the balance in favour of the labour-market outsiders against the insiders and thereby increase the general pressure for responsibility in pay levels" because the speed with which


unemployment could be reduced "would depend in part on the success of pay restraint". 188

APPENDIX A:

UNITY AND MULTIPLICITY IN THE HISTORY OF SCIENCE.

The writings which Sir Francis Bacon published at the beginning of the seventeenth century helped to commit Natural Philosophy for several centuries after his death to what C.C. Gillispie describes as "that long dialogue between the unity of nature and the multiplicity of phenomena," a definition by a modern historian of scientific ideas which neatly reproduces the formula advanced by Ruskin in Modern Painters. Bacon, perhaps crudely, identified scientific progress with the development of inventive skills and the accumulation of data about the external world. This last may be the central activity in his New Atlantis, but he was concerned also with the inference, from the data, of the laws governing the physical universe, in the grand hope of finding a total explanation of its workings. Here was a new element in the general development of the physical sciences, which began that long process of elbowing aside the eminently satisfying Thomist reference to the operations of a Prime Mover. In Bacon's case, however, he was probably being a good Elizabethan, and translating into philosophical science the emphases of late sixteenth-century English state administration on producing a satisfyingly complete uniformity - the most important text behind the Magna Instauratio is probably The Book of Common Prayer.

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190 Discussing Turner's representation of mountain form in "Daphne Hunting with Leucippus", Ruskin writes, "Put what mountain painting you will beside this, of any other artist, and its heights will look like mole-hills in comparison, because it will not have the unity and the multiplicity which are in nature, and with Turner, the signs of size" (2: pp. 318 - 319).
Post-Baconian Natural Philosophers created their own permutations on his formula. Some allowed their desire for a total explanation of the workings of the physical universe to by-pass the mundane operations of detailed investigation and patient limited inference. Sometimes, and consequently, they arrived at all manner of fatuous conjectures. For others, the accumulation of data, the very foundation of the Baconian programme, became an end in itself, excluding either limited inference or total explanation. Yet others, perhaps the majority, allowed their Christian Theology so to determine the beginning and end of "scientific investigation" that they were never able to construct genuinely scientific hypotheses.

These three options by no means exhaust the possibilities which will emerge during the brief and highly selective account below of the manner in which the dialogue between the assumed or much sought for unity of nature and the multiplicity of phenomena was conducted.

According to Bacon, "general statements come out, not notional, but well-defined, and such as nature may acknowledge to be really well-known to her, and which shall cleave to the very marrow of things". His emphasis is on the unity of the external world as expressed in verified scientific laws, and not on the abstract unity of a science itself. Newton continued this objective emphasis in Principia Mathematica: "... whatever is not deduced from the phenomena is to be called an hypothesis; and hypotheses, whether of occult qualities or mechanical, have no place in experimental philosophy". A hypothesis which is not firmly grounded on accurate observation and examination of the external world is not to be taught or employed either as established truth or even as


adequate theory. For the basis of the discovery of general laws was to be the painstaking and comprehensive investigation of the phenomena in the external world and the accumulation of relevant data; Priestley, in 1767, described this programme as the "complete discovery of the face of the earth". To achieve credibility, theoretical unity was to be ineluctably grounded in "objectively" established data; the more data collected, the more objective the basis on which you theorised, and the more securely anchored your theories.

Certainly the breath-taking accumulation of data by the post-Baconian Natural Philosophers, and the astonishing breadth of their interests, was an ambitious attempt to realise the dream of The New Atlantis. When, for instance, Robert Jameson, Regius Professor of Natural History and Keeper of the Museum in the University of Edinburgh, died in 1854, he left behind him forty thousand specimens of rocks and minerals, ten thousand fossils, eight thousand stuffed birds and many more insects and flowers. Joseph Priestley wrote on theology, history, education, politics, psychology, optics, electricity, botany and pneumatic chemistry. Thomas Young, who succeeded Humphry Davy as Professor at Rumford's Royal Institution, learned Greek, Latin, Hebrew, Chaldae, and Samaritan, found the principle of hieroglyphic writing through his study of the Rosetta Stone, could grind lenses and turn a lathe, is recognised as a founder of actuarial science, studied physics and physiology, and identified colour-blindness and astigmatism. Finally, Thomas Foster, one of the founders of meteorology,

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studied astronomy, mechanics and aerostatics. When he was only sixteen he compiled a Journal of the Weather. I pass over his interest in anatomy, physiology, and phrenology, in colours, the life of birds, his study of the violin, and of the law, his editions of Lieder der Deutschen ("Songs of the Germans"), of Catullus and the original letters of Locke, Shaftesbury and Algernon Sydney which he had inherited, his poems and his metaphysical treatises. When he fell ill in 1810, his attention was directed to The Influence of Atmosphere upon Health and Diseases; in 1811 he was induced to take up the study of astronomy by the appearance of a comet; in 1812 he published his Researches about Atmospheric Phaenomena. In July 1819 he discovered a comet, five years later he founded, with Sir Richard Phillips, a Meteorological Society (which only lasted a short while however), returned to his experiments on the influence of the atmosphere on the origins of diseases, especially cholera, and in 1831 made a balloon ascent ... characteristically, he did not omit to publish an autobiography and two volumes of Epistolarum Fosterarium... what I have enumerated is only a fragment of his activity; in the catalogue of the Royal Society alone he is represented with thirty-five papers. 197

Unfortunately, the astonishing range of interests and the patient discipline in amassing data were not always accompanied by a disciplined interpretative programme. This is a particular problem for the more conservative Natural Philosophers, especially those whose Christian beliefs dictated an unwillingness to settle for any ultimate explanation which would rid the external world of its assumed divine and impenetrable mysteries. Ruskin undoubtedly belongs, perhaps throughout his career, to this company.

Responsibility for the faulty and often fanciful speculations which characterised much Natural Philosophy in the Eighteenth and early Nineteenth Centuries can to an extent be assigned to Isaac Newton's immense authority. His Principia Mathematica, published in 1687, seemed to suggest that all known celestial and terrestrial motions could be derived from the three primary laws of motion and the law of gravitation. It was a dazzling concept which "caught the imagination of Newton's and later generations". 198

Newton's corpuscularity, for instance, offered the fascinating prospect of a unitary answer to all questions relating to the motions and interactions of particles. It was not


long before, in the manner of Eighteenth-Century Naturalists, who tended to regard living things as amenable to examination by principles derived from physico-chemical studies, Hales' *Vegetable Staticks* offered Newtonian corpuscularity as a total explanation for physiological phenomena:

We find by the chymical analysis of vegetables, that their substance is composed of sulphur, volatile salt, water, and earth; which principles are all endued with mutually attracting powers, and also of a large portion of air, which has wonderful property of strongly attracting in a fist state, or of repelling in an elastick state .... and it is by the infinite combinations, action and reaction of these principles, that all the operations in animal and vegetable bodies are effected. 199

Newton's own working abstractions were usually very tentative. Clearly, he regarded a hypothesis as only useful, and not to be regarded even as adequate theory. 200 However, although the *Optics* continued the Baconian emphasis on observation, experiment, and the accumulation of data, the *Principia* had encouraged abstract systematisation, and the *Queries* encouraged imaginative hypotheses. Newton's position was so dominating that his speculations on the role of the aether quite decidedly helped to enthrone what Whitehead has called "the fallacy of misplaced concreteness", whereby working abstractions are confused with verified explanations of the workings of the physical universe. 201

Newton's speculations on the role of the aether had been part of his confrontation of certain aspects of the work of corpuscularian Mechanists such as Hobbes, Descartes and Borelli. He had strongly emphasised a limited inference from evidence, but they had sought a comprehensive particulate model which would offer a satisfyingly total

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201 Whitehead (1953): p. 64.
explanation. Their engineer's view of the natural world was very influential, but their explanations of the workings of the physical universe, by crudely lumping together the human and non-human creation, re-emphasised for others traditional dualisms between its vital and physical forces.

Newton's authoritative speculations seemed to offer ways of overcoming these dualisms without resort to de-spiritualised mechanisms: "Thus may therefore the soul, by determining this aethreal animal spirit or wind into this or that nerve, perhaps with as much ease as air is moved in open spaces, cause all the motion we see in animals".202 and, according to P.C. Ritterbush, the particulate theses of the Mechanist Philosophers did not serve the desire for a comprehensive explanation as well as a "cosmos of interrelated fluids" could; and aethreal fluids gave physiologists a chance to substitute for the traditional dualisms, new analogies between mind and matter.203 Newton himself, for instance, had made an analogy between vital energies and electrical effluvia, and in so encouraging speculation about such analogies, had made it easier for the analogy to be confounded in attempts to identify "vitality" or "life" with electrical phenomena as the principle of unity. "Drawing analogies throughout nature gave rise to the satisfaction of creating comprehensive explanations, rewarding those who overlooked the differences between plants and animals in order to dwell on their similarities".204 For in post-Newtonian Natural Philosophy, the analogical principle was eagerly developed and applied.

At the same time, there is, however, an enduring feature of Cartesian thought which had consequences more important than the more familiar image of the organism-as-machine. This is the tendency, common in pre-Darwinian biology, to overlook not only the distinctions between the different orders of the organic creation, but also the manifest differences between the animate and the inanimate creation. Thus Richard Lovett (1692-1780) thought that the "electrical fluid" was

the mechanical Cause that we breathe, live, and move; the efficient Cause of all motion; the physical Cause of Gravitation, Cohesion, Magnetism, the ebbing and flowing of the Sea, and of all the other the most abstruse Phenomena of Nature.203

Not only the external physical phenomena received this reductive treatment in the attempts to establish unitary explanations. David Hartley (1705-1757), in dealing with intellectual phenomena, took his cue from Newton, and the ether-as-comprehensive-explanation satisfied his anti-rationalistic, anti-empirical demands:

Let us suppose the existence of the ether, with these its properties, to be destitute of all direct evidence; still, if it serves to explain and account for a great variety of phenomena, it will have an indirect evidence in its favour by this means. Thus we admit the key of a cypher to be a true one, when it explains the cypher completely .... and this without any direct evidence at all.206

The application of this abstraction to intellectual phenomena was specifically rebuked by Dugald Stewart in his Elements of Philosophy. In particular, he condemned the efforts of Hartley (and Reid) to reduce the variety of intellectual phenomena to determination by a single cause in emulation of the Natural Philosophers:

in all other sciences, the progress of discovery has been gradual, from the less general to the more general laws of nature; and ... it would be singular, indeed, if, in this science, which but a few years ago was confessedly in its infancy, and which certainly labours under many disadvantages peculiar to itself, a step should all at once be made to a single principle, comprehending all the particular phenomena which we know.207


206Hartley (1749): pp. 15/16.

Stewart derided Hartley as the first among the "Alchemists" of the Science of the Mind; the term "alchemist" is suggested by an analogy between Chemistry and Epistemology, and a comparison of chemical science before and after the triumphs at the end of the eighteenth century:

It required nothing less than the united splendour of the discoveries brought to light by the new chemical school, to tear the minds of men from the pursuit of a simple and primary element; a pursuit renewed in every age with an indefatigable perseverance, and always renewed in vain .... The Philosophy of Mind has its Alchemists also; men whose studies are directed to the pursuit of one single principle, into which the whole science may be resolved.²⁰⁸

What is interesting in Dugald Stewart's comments is that he finds fault not with the principle of applying the methods of the natural sciences to other areas of investigation (a principle which he operates himself), but with the wrong-headedness of their method of application. And the criterion which informs the judgement is derived from his own version of an empirical natural philosophy which eschews abstract schematisation in favour of the gradual development of understanding through the careful verification of limited observation and inference - principles which he applies to aesthetic problems in his *Philosophical Essays*. This is also the method which Burke professes to use in his *Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, and in Appendix C I offer some comments on Burke's *Essay*, and the work of Sir Charles Bell, which follows Burke's work, and which was also carefully read by Ruskin.

²⁰⁸Ibid.
APPENDIX B:

EIGHTEENTH CENTURY NATURAL PHILOSOPHIES.

The Materialistic philosophical systems which developed during the eighteenth century included the conviction of the Mechanists, D'Alembert (1717 - 1783), Lagrange (1736 - 1813) and Laplace (1749 - 1827), that "there exists a single unitary system with the tightest possible necessary connection between all its parts".\(^2\) This was expressed as follows by Holbach:

Nature in the widest sense of the word is the great whole which is the result of the assembly of different matters, their various combinations, and the different movements which we see in the universe ... If we understand by nature a mass of dead, qualityless, completely passive bodies, then of course we shall be compelled to look for the principles of its movements outside of that nature. But if we understand by nature what it really is, a whole whose different parts have different qualities, being in constant action and reaction one upon the other, which possess weight, gravitate to a common centre, whilst others go away from it, and move to the circumference, which mutually attract and repel one another, are united and divided, and which by their continual clashes and drawing together again produce and decompose all the bodies visible to us, then we are not compelled to have recourse to supernatural forces in order to explain to ourselves the formation of things and of visible phenomena.\(^3\)

This is an important statement for it indicates that the universe of the Mechanist philosopher could be a dynamic reality, and was not necessarily a cold, lifeless, mechanical world. But when the philosophy of dynamic corpuscularity was employed as a total explanation of life as a mechanical reality, it presented a threat to certain kinds of traditional religious and aesthetic experience, which were supported by their own particular kind of natural philosophy.


\(^3\)Quoted in G.V. Plekhanov (1967): p. 5.
During the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, it is possible to distinguish broadly between three natural philosophies and their concomitant theories of matter: the Mechanist, the Materialist and the Vitalist. While the first two could function as particular examples of the more general philosophy of Materialism, the last was, as a fully developed position, quite inimical to it, and normally associated with an explicit or residual Christianity.

The Mechanist theory of matter sought a total explanation of biological phenomena through the extension of the scientific laws which had been adduced in physico-chemical observation and experiment. This is the feature of the Mechanistic philosophy of Descartes which endured longer than the more familiar image of the organism-as-machine.

The Mechanist asserted that the causes of all natural phenomena were to be sought in primary particles of an undifferentiable matter, the various sizes and shapes of possible combinations of these particles, their motions, and the forces of attraction and repulsion between them which determine those motions.\(^{211}\)

The Materialist, however, asserted that the same causes inhere in unique substances, each possessing as an essential property the power to convey, in proportion to its quantity, some characteristic quality.\(^{212}\)

Both theories relied on observed regularities in property and reaction, but, where these provided the Mechanist with the essential clues enabling him to reason his way through to the ultimate particles and forces, they provided the Materialist with the categories with which he could distinguish one substance from another. Further, for the Materialist,

All physical phenomena were to be explained by the possession, or absence, of a substance carrying the necessary distinguishing characters, and (and here is a major


strength in this view) the amount of a substance present gave a measure of the phenomenon it caused.\textsuperscript{213}

The difference between the two theories can be seen in the different ways in which they sought to explain the vexed question of animal heat.

According to the Mechanical philosopher:

the elements of fire lay hid or dormant in bodies and the AIR, which most substances both solid and liquid contain, being set at liberty by its elasticity excites into motion the latent particles of fire and generates heat, and therefore, as the animal fluid not only contains a large proportion of the phosphoric principle or sulphur in a quiescent state at least, the generation of heat in the vital frame was the necessary consequence of the particles of phosphorus and air coming into contact.

The Materialist philosopher, however, explained the phenomenon in quantitative terms:

The quantity of absolute heat contained in pure air, is diminished by the change which it undergoes in the lungs of animals and the quantity of heat in any kind of air that is fit for respiration, is nearly proportional to its power in supporting animal life ....

.... the quantity of heat in a mixture of pure and phlogisticated air, will be increased by augmenting the proportion of the former, and diminished by augmenting that of the latter. Agreeably to this we find that the comparative heat of pure air is to that of atmospheric, which consists of a 1/4 pure and 3/4 phlogisticated air, as 2.2 to 1 .... The quantity of pure air in a given quantity of the purest dephlogisticated air is four times as great as that contained in an equal bulk of atmospheric; and the comparative heat of the former is to that of the latter only as 2.2 to 1.\textsuperscript{214}

The attempts to explain the phenomenon of animal heat are a useful introduction to the differences between, on the one hand, the Mechanist and Materialist theories of matter, and, on the other, the Vitalist. For the major distinguishing characteristic of the theories which can be grouped under the general category of "Materialism" is the belief that the physico-chemical laws discovered in the study of the inanimate world are equally applicable to all biological phenomena; and the successes of the Materialist philosophers in apparently quantifying the essentially biological phenomenon of animal heat provoked


\textsuperscript{214}Goodfield (1960): p. 33 and pp. 48/49.
a protest even from the followers of chemists like Lavoisier who were responsible for the success:

The abuses which, at the beginning of the present century were made of the applications of chemistry to medicine, have caused the natural and intimate relations of this science with the art of healing to be mistaken .... In order to direct with propriety the applications of chemistry to the human body, proper views must be adopted relating to the animal oeconomy itself, together with accurate notions of chemistry itself. The results of the laboratory must be regarded as subordinate to physiological observations. It is in consequence of a departure from these principles that the human body has been considered a lifeless and passive substance ....

In the mineral kingdom everything is subject to the invariable laws of affinities. No internal principle modifies the action of natural agents ....

In the vegetable kingdom, the action of external agents is equally evident; but their internal organisation modifies their effects ....

In animals functions are much less dependent on external causes and nature has concealed the principal organs in the internal parts of their bodies as if to withdraw them from the influence of foreign powers. But the more the functions of the individual are connected with its organisation, the less is the empire of chemistry over them and it becomes us to be cautious in the application of this science to all phenomena which depends essentially on the principles of life. 215

The Vitalist philosophy, as this statement indicates, emphasises the differences between the behaviour and properties of animate and inanimate matter. It emerged as a reaction against the theories of the seventeenth century Mechanists. Henry More (1614 - 1687) rejected mechanical forces in favour of

a substance incorporeal, but without sense and animadversion, pervading the whole matter of the universe, and exercising a plastic power therein .... raising such phenomena in the world, by directing the parts of the matter and their motion, as cannot be resolved into mere mechanical powers. 216

The notion of a "substance incorporeal" was, as I noted above, given an enormously authoritative boost by Sir Isaac Newton who produced an innovation in the particulate theory of matter with which the Mechanist philosophers had replaced the scholastic


Aristotelian theory, by suggesting that the particles acted upon each other not by direct contact, but at a distance. Further, he thought it inconceivable that "inanimate brute matter should, without the Mediation of something else, which is not material, operate upon and affect other Matter without mutual contact." But Newton created something of a problem for the natural philosophers who came after him, for he had apparently put forward conflicting alternatives - a dynamic corpuscularity and authoritative speculations on the role of the ether.

Historically, dynamic corpuscularity dominated English Natural Philosophy during the first forty years of the eighteenth century, but it was overtaken during the 1740's by the etherial thesis. The major impact here came from the work of Linnaeus, whose *Systema Naturae*, appearing in six editions between 1735 and 1748, encouraged a mania for classifying the masses of data which the natural philosophers were accumulating; and, accompanying a revived interest in the works of Bacon, proved more amenable to the Natural Philosophers of the second half of the eighteenth century. Priestley, Black, Cavendish, Hutton, and Watson were altogether more interested in the pragmatic, rather than the more abstract mathematical side of Newton's work. Further, Linnaeus based his taxonomy on the observable characteristics of external form. This was itself a form of Aristotelianism new in this respect, that characteristics on which the classification was based, came to be, in the transition from the Mechanist to the Materialist theories, regarded as substances rather than motions and forces.

In the many attempts to explain the phenomena, it is not always easy to distinguish Materialist and Vitalist theories from each other, since the "vital" force being offered as

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an explanation is often very material, especially when the writer is offering a derivation from Newton's ethereal hypothesis. Rackstow, for instance, thought that the "vivifying spirit" supporting animal life was the "ethereal or electric fire", a thesis also accepted by Stukeley:

Come we to the animal world, we must needs assert that all motion, voluntary and involuntary, generation, even life itself, all the operations of the vegetable kingdom, and an infinity more of nature's works, are owing to the activity of this electric fire, the very soul of the material world.219

Similarly, John Freke asserted that electricity was fire, and was the active principle in matter, the soul of the world, and the prime cause of motion.220

Not all of the "electrical" theses were as extreme as these, but even a cautious pragmatist like James Maclurg saw electricity as a welcome escape from Mechanism;

For though it is by no means demonstrated that the nervous power is the same with that which occasions the phenomena of electricity .... yet the contemplation of such active and subtle energies has enlarged our views and drawn attention from those principles of mechanics and chemistry to which it was before too slavishly attached.221

This sense of a redemption from the Mechanist theories of matter is present in both those whose Vitalism is only partially related to the Materialist Natural Philosophy, and those whose Vitalism is quite unambiguous. George Cheyne (1671 -1743) moved away from Mechanism through a dichotomy between material and spiritual realities, in which spirit reflects the operation of God in causing the simplest phenomena. But Cheyne remains to some extent a Materialist; he asserts, for instance, that the human body operates under the influence of a spiritual animal matter more subtle and elastic than the


finest aether. Similarly, John Wesley was able to accept electricity as a "secondary cause of motion" able to produce and sustain life throughout nature, in animals as well as in vegetables.

None of the writers so far mentioned was a full-blown Vitalist. There is an element of compromise in their attempts to define vitality by analogy with other forms of energy. The most thorough-going Vitalists are characterised by a refusal to identify internal individual vitality with any secondary or external phenomena such as the ether or electrical effluvia which are subject to physico-chemical laws; physiological phenomena, for the Vitalist, are too plastic in their behaviour to be subject to the rule of external determinism or mathematical exactitude.

Within the Vitalist theories of matter, it is possible to distinguish two separate strands: a descriptive Vitalism which rejects any explanation of physiological phenomena which does not stress primarily "the variability of the organism"; and an explanatory Vitalism which stresses the enormous and obvious differences between animate and inanimate nature and postulates "the existence in nature of vital agencies of a non-physico-chemical kind". This distinction was prevalent during the first half of the nineteenth century.

Robert Whytt straddles both worlds. He concedes that the nerves are the immediate cause of muscular phenomena, but rejects any mechanical or material cause as the ultimate explanation, arguing that you cannot attribute sensation or thought to matter which operates strictly according to the laws which have been prescribed for it: 

\[ \text{... it is} \]


\[ \text{Wesley (1760): p. 12.} \]

\[ \text{See Goodfield (1960): chapter 3.} \]
improper to attribute active powers to that which .... is no more than a system of mere matter .... the sensibility of our fibres is owing to their being animated by a living principle different from matter and of powers superior to it".225 Similarly, William Heberden asserted that "to living beings belong many additional powers, the operations of which can never be accounted for by the laws of lifeless matter".226 Yet, although this represents a Vitalist position, the descriptive Vitalists did, in fact, reject precisely this assumption of a unique vital force in animate nature. The rejection could be tentative and confusingly involved in continuing attempts to find material explanations. Berzelius, for instance, says of the Vital Force:

"We may consider the whole of the animal body as an instrument which, from the nourishment it receives, collects materials for continual chemical processes, and of which the chief object is its own support. But with all the knowledge we possess of the forms of the body considered as an instrument, and of the mixture and mutual bearings of the rudiments to one another, yet the cause of most of the phenomena within the Animal Body lies so deeply hidden from our view, that it will certainly never be found. We call this hidden cause vital power and like many others, who before us, have in vain directed their deluded attention, we make use of a word to which we can fix no idea. When the text-books inform us that the vital power in one place produces from the blood the fibres of the muscle, in another the bone .... we know after this explanation as little as we did before."227

Confusion occurs when Berzelius locates "the unknown cause of the phenomenon of life" in the nervous system, "the very operation of which it constitutes," but still insists that all explanations of "life" must end in something inexplicable.

Similarly, Xavier Bichât, one of the best known of the Vitalist philosophers, insisted continually that the infinitely variable behaviour of physiological phenomena put Mechanist and Materialist explanations quite out of court:


One calculates the return of a comet, the speed of a projectile; but to calculate with Borelli the strength of a muscle, with Keill the speed of blood, with Lavoisier the quantity of air entering the lung, is to build on shifting sand an edifice solid in itself but which soon falls for lack of an assured base. This instability of the vital forces marks all vital phenomena with an irregularity which distinguishes them from physical phenomena remarkable for their uniformity. It is easy to see that the science of organised bodies should be treated in a manner different from those which have unorganised bodies for object .... the vital properties are at every instant undergoing some change in degree and kind .... in their phenomenon nothing can be foreseen, foretold nor calculated; we judge of them only by their analogies, and these are in the vast proportion of instances extremely uncertain .... chemists and those in pursuit of natural philosophy, accustomed to study the phenomena over which physical powers preside, have transferred their theoretical calculations to the laws of vitality but it is no longer the same thing .... the mode of theorising with regard to organised bodies must be quite different from that of theories applied to natural philosophy .... Every physiological explanation should present nothing more than outlines or approximations; it should be vague if I may be allowed the term.228

In this section, I offer some comments on two writers whose work was well known to Ruskin, and who, like him, approach aesthetic questions in the manner of Natural Philosophers, but with some significant differences.

Ruskin quotes Burke's *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*\(^{229}\) six times in *Modern Painters 1 and 2*, a high frequency in a work which is sparing of references to contemporary or near-contemporary writers on aesthetics, but then Burke's work has much in common with Ruskin's in that his Essay is an attempt to construct an aesthetic theory by confronting the problem of finding a principle of unity, and perhaps uniformity, in aesthetic response; and attempting to solve the problem through the application of principles derived from Natural Philosophy.

Burke is not offering a comprehensive definition of Beauty; his method is as tentative as Dugald Stewart's, and like his, operates in the name of a cautious Newtonian pragmatism, which deals in efficient, and not ultimate causes. It is symptomatic of Burke's extension of Natural Philosophy into Aesthetics that to justify his limited programme of aesthetic inquiry, he should refer to the example of Newton. In Part IV, section 1, of *The Sublime And The Beautiful*, he rejects any possibility of finding the ultimate causes of Beauty, and limits his inquiry explicitly to efficient causes. Discovering "what affections of the mind produce certain emotions of the body" and "what distinct

\(^{229}\)Burke as edited by Boulton (1967); all further references to Burke's treatise are given as page references in the text.
feelings and qualities of body shall produce certain determinate passions in the mind and no others" will aid "the distinct knowledge of our passions" (p. 129).

Similarly, when Newton first discovered the property of Attraction, he could employ this to explain some very important phenomena, but he insisted on Attraction as no more than an effect whose ultimate cause he did not try to discover; and he considered later speculations on the ether as an ultimate cause as mistaken because

the great chain of causes, which links one to another, even to the throne of God himself, can never be unravelled by any industry of ours. When we go but one step beyond the immediate sensible qualities of things, we go out of our depth (pp. 129 - 130).

Like Dugald Stewart and Ruskin, Burke accepts the limits of a Christian Natural Philosophy and the widely accepted view of the workings of the universe as ultimately arcana.

Once Burke has catalogued the regular manifestations of Beauty, he presents its efficient causes as physiological phenomena. In this way, he is able to free his discussion from subjective considerations such as Custom, and move into the "objective" world of the Natural Philosopher by objectifying aesthetic experience as processes amenable to mechanical explanations. This is clear from his explanation as love as a response to Beauty:

When we have before us such objects as excite love and complacency, the body is affected, so far as I could observe, much in the following manner: the head reclines something on one side; the eyelids are more closed than usual, and the eyes roll gently with an inclination to the object; the mouth is a little opened, and the breath drawn slowly, with now and then a low sigh; the whole body is composed, and the hands fall idly to the sides. All this is accompanied with an inward sense of melting and languor (p. 149).

Like Stewart, Burke is prepared to censure those who unwisely elevate limited hypotheses to the status of comprehensive laws, but is himself subscribing to the fallacy of misplaced concreteness. He offers the above descriptions of love and beauty as a
personal observation ("so far as I could observe"). As such the statement has the status of a working abstraction. But his assumption of the universality of human experience objectifies the abstraction as a constant in human experience: "The universal voice of mankind, faithful to their feelings, concurs in affirming this general effect" (p. 150). He concedes that there may be exceptions, but claims that the description is the "concurrence of many experiments", and should therefore be retained. In fact, "we must still retain it, subjoining the exceptions which may occur, according to the judicious rule laid down by Sir Isaac Newton in the third book of his Optics" (p. 150).

Newton's "rule" is the programme for the "Investigation of difficult Things" which he presents at the end of the Optics. It proceeds by the "Method of Analysis" which precedes the "Method of Composition". Analysis consists in making Experiments and Observations, and in drawing general Conclusions from them by Induction .... And if no Exception occur from Phaenomena, the Conclusion may be pronounced generally. But if at any time afterwards any Exception shall occur from Experiments, it may then begin to be pronounced with such Exceptions as may occur. By this way of analysis we may proceed .... in general, from Effects to their Causes, and from particular Causes to more general ones, till the Argument end in the most general.230

This is the programme which Burke follows for much of his argument, but when he comes to apply the method of "Synthesis", he forces his argument beyond the theoretical limits of Newton's programme.

The method of Synthesis "consists in assuming the causes discover'd and establish'd as Principles, and by them explaining the Phaenomena proceeding from them, and proving the Explanations".231 Although Newton's own statement of general conclusions


is usually fairly cautious, 232 Burke pushes his proposition that "beauty operates by relaxing the solids of the whole system" to the status of a fundamental supposition. He does this by suggesting that a number of secondary propositions, on which his major proposition is based, are, or could be, verified objective truth. The "appearances" or effects of love are objectified as a relationship of quantities in the act of perception; such effects: "are always proportioned to the degree in the object, and of the sensibility in the observer" (pp. 149 - 150). This is the principle of quantification derived from Materialist Natural Philosophy as employed later by Ruskin. I have already pointed to Burke's objectification of the effects of love as a universal human response, and Burke strengthens his argument by suggesting that two further propositions could be objectively verified:

Our position will, I conceive, appear confirmed beyond any reasonable doubt, if we can show that such things as we have already observed to be the genuine constituents of beauty, have each of them, separately taken, a natural tendency to relax the fibres. And if it must be allowed us, that the appearance of the human body, when all these constituents are united together before the sensory, further favours this opinion, we may venture, I believe, to conclude that the passion called love is produced by this relaxation (pp. 150 - 151).

Sir Charles Bell (1774 - 1842) was an early nineteenth century physician whose discoveries in the nervous system were an important contribution to the development of modern physiology. He was the author, among other works, of the fourth Bridgewater Treatise, The Hand, Its Mechanism and Vital Endowments As Evincing Design, and a volume on The Anatomy and Philosophy of Expression, As Connected with the Fine Arts. 233 Conner precisely places Bell's work on both the nervous system and aesthetics as follows:


233 Bell (1833) and (1844).
For the needs of serious students, early Victorian England supplied a number of critics and chroniclers of art - but, on the whole, it was not their writings on art that made them notable. Charles Eastlake was known as a painter, as President of the Royal Academy, and then as the first Director of the National Gallery; Edmund Head edited a history of German, Flemish and Dutch painting while relaxing from his duties as a Poor Law Commissioner; and Anna Jameson turned to art after establishing herself as a writer on Shakespeare and travel. Maria Graham (later Lady Calcott) also entered the literary world as a travel writer, and for every individual who knew her as an interpreter of painting, there must have been ten more who knew only her Little Arthur's History of England. Two other contributors to the literature of art, Charles Bell and Alexander Walker, owed their fame to publications on the nervous system. Bell and Head were both knighted for their accomplishments in fields other than art.  

Ruskin was familiar with Bell's work, and was reading The Anatomy and Philosophy of Expression at the end of 1844. On the 26th. December, he wrote to Henry Acland: "I like a great deal of what he says, only I wish he would explain himself, and not leave me to guess out half". But this was a favourable first impression and Ruskin soon revised his opinion. He had been asked by John Murray to review Bell's volume favourably for "The Quarterly Review", and took it with him on his 1845 Italian tour. However, the project came to nothing - basically Ruskin refused to write a favourable review because, as he confided to his father, he found the structure of the volume "loose", and often "wrong". Even though Murray had wanted a favourable review for the sake of Bell's widow, Ruskin simply refused to write what he didn't think. However, he does make an unusually high number of references to Bell in the second volume of Modern Painters.

Why should Ruskin have reservations about a Natural Philosopher associated with such writers as Whewell and Buckland in the conservative enterprise of The Bridgewater Treatises? I want to suggest that this is an example of Ruskin's reactions to modernising

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236Shapiro (1972): p. 1, and n. 1; p. 20, and n. 2; p. 115, and n. 2.
tendencies because Bell is not exactly unamenable to new ideas, and mixes what are recognisably conservative commitments with interests in, and even acceptance of mechanical explanations and the assumptions of some of the newer sciences such as uniformitarian geology. He also bases his aesthetic theorising on accurate anatomical knowledge. Ruskin found neither geological uniformitariansim nor anatomy congenial.

The general thesis with which Bell opens his Bridgewater Treatise argues for Providential design in the mechanical construction of each living entity, and Providential benevolence in the disposition of its vital qualities and its adaptation to its environment:

If we select any object from the whole extent of animated nature, and contemplate it fully and in all its bearings, we shall certainly come to this conclusion: that there is design in the mechanical construction, benevolence in the endowments of the living properties, and that good on the whole is the result.

"Mechanical construction" and "living properties", both providentially disposed, offer a simple formula for avoiding any dualisms between the physical and vital forces which the Natural Philosopher observes. Mechanical constructions are for Bell, as they are for Ruskin, inferior to living properties in the scheme of creation, because "wonderfully and exquisitely constructed" as physical entities may be, the living properties are necessary to "animate the body to the utmost exertion". There is nothing here with which the Ruskin of Modern Painters would disagree in principle. After all, the Providential adaptation of the human consciousness to the external phenomena is a key principle for him, but there is no suggestion that that adaptation is other than static - Ruskin is very concerned, as part of his enterprise in fixing values, to fix human responses as universally ordered by Providence. However, Bell's version of adaptation, designed explicitly as a

rejection of Lamarckian theories of adaptation, differs radically from Ruskin's. The latter, with his belief in a universal human nature, sees adaptation as a given, fixed and unchanging. Any possibility of change can come only from the corruptions produced by the fact of living in a post-lapsarian world, and change in that sense is false. So too are the changes induced in a species by cultivation, a process which Ruskin opposes. His position can, like Bell's, be regarded as anti-Lamarckian (though implicitly so) in that he opposes the notion that anything beneficial can result from the submission of a living entity to the undue influence of external circumstances: in The Seven Lamps, for instance, he defines human beings as having an authentic and inauthentic existence. Authentic living is a question of asserting human authority over external circumstances (an interesting position for someone developing an opposition to the capitalist exploitation of the environment); inauthentic living, as he defines it, is precisely a submission to external circumstances:

But when we begin to be concerned with the energies of man, we find ourselves instantly dealing with a double creature. Most part of his being seems to have a fictitious counterpart, which it is at his peril if he do not cast off and deny. Thus he has a true and false (otherwise called a living and dead, or a feigned and unfeigned) faith. He has a true and false hope, a true and false charity, and, finally, a true and false life. His true life is like that of lower organic beings, the independent force by which he moulds and governs external things; it is a force of assimilation which converts everything around him into food, or into instruments; and which, however humbly or obediently it may listen to or follow the guidance of superior intelligence, never forfeits its own authority as a judging principle, as a will capable either of obeying or rebelling. His false life is, indeed, but one of the conditions of death or stupor, but it acts, even when it cannot be said to animate ...

[Man's] false life ... is that life of custom and accident in which many of us pass much of our time in the world; that life in which we do what we have not proposed, and speak what we do not mean, and assent to what we do not understand; that life which is overlaid by the weight of things external to it, and is moulded by them, instead of assimilating them; that, which instead of growing and blossoming under any wholesome dew, is crystallised over with it, as with hoar-frost, and becomes to the true life what an arborescence is to a tree, a candied agglomeration of thoughts and habits foreign to it, brittle, obstinate, and icy, which can neither bend nor grow, but must be crushed and broken to bits if it stand in our way. All men are liable to be in some degree frost-bitten in this sort; all are partly encumbered and crusted over with idle matter; only, if they have real life in them, they are always breaking this bark away in noble rents, until it becomes,
like the black strips upon the birch tree, only a witness of their own inward strength (8: pp. 191 - 192).

Bell, in constructing an explicitly anti-Lamarckian thesis, provides for his study of individual phenomena a general context which is dependent not, as one might suppose in a Bridgewater Treatise, upon the conservative notion of Fixed Species, but upon what I would like to describe as a Providential Embryology, a dynamic concept which is influenced by the implications of the newer geological arguments and his acceptance of the newer geological thought is instrumental to his own refashioning of both the notion of the fixity of species and the Lamarckian notion of the importance of adaptation to external circumstances in the development of a species' characteristics.

The traditional notion maintained that all existing species were simultaneously created, that no new species had been created, and that none had become extinct. Bell, hedging his bets, cleverly produces a thesis which combines the new emphases of uniformitarian geology and Biblical typology:

The remains of the marine animals are found in the highest mountains of the old and new worlds, and on turning up the surfaces of our fields, or in the beds of rivers, huge bones are discovered; and not in the loose soil only, but under the solid limestone rock. The bones thus exposed become naturally a subject of intense interest, and are unexpectedly connected with the enquiry in which we are engaged.

Bell's placing of the word "unexpectedly" is, perhaps, disingenuous. He continues:

Among other important conclusions they lead to this - that there is not only a scheme or system of animal structure pervading all classes of animals which now inhabit the earth, but that the principle of this great plan of creation was in operation, and governed the formation of those animals which existed previous to the revolutions that the earth has undergone: that the excellence of form now seen in the skeleton of man, was in the scheme of animal existence long previous to the formation of man, and before the surface of the earth was prepared for him or suited to his constitution, structure, or capacities. 238

238 ibid: pp. 23 - 24
While this rejects Biblical fundamentalism, Bell is seeking to create a compromise between the newer geological ideas and a reworking of Biblical typology in his argument that blueprints for the various species were initially created and have since providentially evolved. Fixity of principles of formation replaces fixity of species, even though Bell is loath to make too radical a break from the traditional notions which it is, after all, the purpose of the Bridgewater Treatises to defend. He accepts that new forms of living and organised matter have been adapted to the successive changes in environmental conditions, and he concedes, as he has to, that there are observable many changes in the histories of individual species, but

such changes in the organs are but variations in the system by which new matter is assimilated to the animal body, - and however remarkable they may be, they always bear certain relation to the original type, as parts of the same great design. 239

Part of Bell's brief in contributing to the Bridgewater Treatises is to "expose the futility of the opinions of those French philosophers and physiologists [i.e. the Lamarckians], who represented life as the mere physical result of certain combinations and actions of parts by them termed Organisation". 240 Confronting his opponents' theories, he extracts from their work what he sees as their strong points, and reinterprets, rather than rejects these in the light of his own belief in a Christian Providence. For instance, he rejects geological determinism, but he accepts the influence of environmental conditions on a creature, and its adaptation to them. He takes issue with contemporary naturalists who would

seek to obscure the conception of a Divine author, an intelligent, designing and benevolent Being, and clinging to the greatest absurdities, will rather interpose the cold


240Bell (1833): p. x.
and inanimate influence of the mere "elements", in a manner to extinguish all feeling of
dependence in our minds, and all emotions of gratitude. 241

He is arguing specifically against the Lamarckians, in so far as they had maintained that it
was a change in external circumstances which was responsible for the changes in the
organisation and structure of any given species. He concedes to them "surprising
changes in the conformation of the same animal", but pulls this back into the domain of
Paleyite theology by suggesting that such a change is caused by the internal dynamism of
a creature, which is providentially given, as it responds to changes in external
circumstances, which are providentially designed. 242 Bell reverses the Lamarckian
emphasis on environmental conditions and relies on an older, Aristotelian emphasis on
the "embryological" situation of a creature, an emphasis which helps Bell to define more
clearly his notion of evolutionary blueprints:

... if we take the larva of a winged insect, we shall perceive in the arrangement of its
muscles, and the distribution of its nervous system, all the requisite provisions for its
motion over the ground. But if, anticipating its metamorphosis, we dissect the same larva
immediately before the change, we shall find a new apparatus in progress towards
perfection. The muscles of its many feet are then seen decaying; the nerves to each
muscle are wasting; a new arrangement of muscles, with new points of attachment,
directed to the wings instead of the feet, is visible; and a new distribution of nerves,
accommodated to the parts which are now to be put in motion is distinctly to be traced.
Here is no budding and stretching forth of the organs under the influence of the
surrounding elements; but a change operated on all the economy, and prospective, that
is, in reference to a condition which the creature has not yet attained. 243

The views expressed here may owe something to the Naturalphilosophie of Lorenz
Oken, Geoffrey Saint-Hilaire, and Goethe. An English version of their theories was

241 ibid: p. 144.

242 ibid: p. 145.

243 ibid: pp. 147 - 148.
advanced by Sir Richard Owen who believed in the development of all existing forms from a number of archetypes, the whole process being providentially controlled:

The recognition of an ideal Exemplar for the Vertebrate animals proves that the knowledge of such a being as Man must have existed before Man appeared. For the Divine mind which planned the Archetype also foreknew all its modifications ... To what natural laws or secondary causes the orderly succession and progression of such organic phenomena may have been committed we are yet ignorant. But if, without derogation of the Divine power, we may conceive the Existence of such ministers, and personify them by the term "Nature", we learn from the past history of our globe that she has advanced with slow and stately steps, guided by the archetypal light, amidst the wreck of worlds, from the first embodiment of the Vertebrate idea under its old Ichthyic vestment, until it become arrayed in the glorious garb of the human form.244

For Bell, the mind, as well as the body, is providentially adapted to its surroundings, and, interestingly, the universe which he postulates for the exercise of the mind's faculties is not a static mechanical model such as is normally presented in Paleyite design theology, but an evolving historical reality. Such a model informs the observations above on the adaptation of organic structures to the physical environment; and when Bell deals with the ways in which the human consciousness responds to the physical environment, he combines the traditional notion of providential adaptation with the newer ideas on geological development:

It is hardly possible to watch the night and view the break of day in a fine country, without being sensible that our pleasantest perceptions refer to the scenery of nature; and that we have feelings in sympathy with every successive change, from the first streak of light until the whole landscape is displayed in valleys, woods and sparkling waters ... Now, all these sources of enjoyment, the clear atmosphere and the refreshing breezes, are as certainly the result of the several changes which the earth's surface has undergone, as the displaced strata within its crust are demonstrative of these changes. We have every reason to conclude that these revolutions, whether they have been slowly accomplished or progressively, or by sudden, vast and successive convulsions, were necessary to prepare the earth for that condition which should correspond with the faculties to be given to man, and be suited to the full exercise of his reason, as well as to his enjoyment.

If a man contemplate the common objects around him - if he observe the qualities of the things external and the exercise of his senses, between the senses so excited, and the condition of his mind, he will perceive that he is in the centre of a magnificent system,

which has been prepared for his reception by a succession of revolutions affecting the whole globe, and that the strictest relation is established between the intellectual capacities and the material world.\textsuperscript{245}

While Ruskin would accept "the strictest relation", he would certainly not accept the notion that successive geological revolutions, no matter that they are providentially designed, are responsible for the preparation of landscape phenomena.

Despite the presence in this argument of an up-to-date geological perspective, the major assumption of a providential adaptation of mind and matter to each other serves the main purpose of Bell's \textit{Bridgewater Treatise} - the refutation of Mechanist and Materialist theories of species development. For instance, the last quotation from Bell raises the question of how the mind actually perceives. He takes issue with Newtonian doctrines of ethers and vibrations to explain the phenomenon of sight; and his strategy is the classic Vitalist one of placing the phenomenon under discussion out of the range of physico-chemical explanation. He concedes, with his habitual respect for his opponents' strengths, that sensations are "created by a disturbance of the extremity of the nerve", but he rejects any suggestion that such a disturbance can be "transmitted to the brain according to any physical laws that we are acquainted with". This may seem to leave the door open for future discoveries, but Bell is quick to refer the problem to providential disposition. Further, in denying that any explanation for the phenomenon of sight can be sought in the resemblance between the sense impression and the idea, he commits himself to the belief that such phenomena are, anyway, totally beyond physico-chemical investigation. He relates even specific observations on the particular and exclusive function of each nerve to Providential disposition.\textsuperscript{246}

\textsuperscript{245}Bell (1833): pp. 32 - 33.

\textsuperscript{246}ibid: pp. 172 - 173.
Bell's primary strategy here is to replace the Mechanists' notion of the supremacy of physico-chemical laws with the notion of a natural law which is within the scope of descriptive science but actually beyond explanation - a position with which, in principle, Ruskin would have had no difficulties. Ultimately, this is a very conservative Christian natural philosophy, and the inclusion of the newer geological notions is used to support traditional notions:

When we acknowledge that animals have been created in succession and with an increasing complexity of parts, we are not to be understood as admitting that there is here proof of a growing maturity of power, or an increasing effort in the creator: and for this very plain reason, which we have stated before, that the bestowing of life, or the union of the vital principle with the material body, is the manifestation of a power superior to that displayed in the formation of an organ or the combination of many organs, or the construction of the most complex animal mechanism. It is not, therefore, a greater power that we see in operation, but a power manifesting itself in the perfect and successive adaptation of one thing to another - of vitality and organisation to inorganic matter.247

Bell's Natural Philosophy helps to shape the aesthetics of his Anatomy of Expression.248 This work has obvious similarities with Modern Painters 1 and 2. Like them, it is a display cabinet. Ruskin catalogues Natural Truths, Divine Types, and Forms of the Imagination; Bell catalogues Sources of Expression, the operations of facial muscles, and varieties of pain. Both writers, like Burke whom they both quote, are confident that what they present as findings are universal in their application, Ruskin because he purports to derive universal laws from the providentially designed workings of the natural world and providentially designed human responses to it; Bell because he categorises human expression on the basis of a universal human anatomy. This, for instance, is how Bell categorises Fear as a human response:

247 ibid: pp. 223 - 224.

248 Bell (1844). All references to this work in the rest of this section are given as page references in the text.
In man, the expression of mere bodily fear is like that of animals, without dignity; it is the mean anticipation of pain. The eyeball is largely uncovered, the eyes are staring, and the eyebrows elevated to the utmost stretch. There is a spasmodic affection of the diaphragm and muscles of the chest, disturbing the breathing, producing a gasping in the throat, with an inflation of the nostril, convulsive opening of the mouth, and dropping of the jaw; the lips nearly conceal the teeth, yet allow the tongue to be seen, the space between the nostril and the lip being full. There is a hollowness and convulsive motion of the cheeks, and a trembling of the lips, and muscles on the side of the neck. The lungs are kept distended, while the breathing is short and rapid. From the connection of the nerves of the lungs and diaphragm with those of the side of the neck, and with the branches which supply the cutaneous muscle of the cheek and neck, we may comprehend the cause of the convulsive motion of this muscle. The aspect is pale and cadaverous from the receding of the blood. The hair is lifted up by the creeping of the skin, and action of the occipito-frontalis (p. 150).

This passage is worth quoting in full because it exemplifies the way in which Bell grounds what he has to offer about emotional phenomena in their anatomical and physiological basis. From this point of view his Anatomy of Expression is precisely that - emotional and mental phenomena are decidedly physically based, and the physicality of those phenomena are what he reads into artistic products as the major criterion of their comparative quality.

He points out, for instance, that in the sculpture of antiquity, there are portrayed types which are strictly super-human, but which are generally considered to be an ideal of human form. To determine the reasons for this preference, the critic needs to establish a rule for measuring proportions, and he further suggests that the correct way through the problem is to apply a "scientific principle ... that the outward forms result from the degree of development of the contained organs" (p. 21). This principle, associated with the principle of evolutionary adaptation, articulated at greater length in The Hand, helps to explain, for Bell, the characteristics of infant facial expression:

The whole character of the face of a child results from the fleshy parts and integuments being calculated, if I may use such a term, for the support of larger bones than they possess in early years. The features are provided for the growth and development of the bones of the face, and hence the fullness, roundness and chubbiness of infancy (p. 42).
But his thesis goes further than this, for he argues also that there is a connection between the vital internal organs, the muscular structure and the responses of the mind. He refers to the way in which an audience will respond as one being to the acting of Mrs. Siddons, and asks: "Who taught the crowd sitting at a play, an audience differing in age, habits, and education, to believe those quivering motions, and that gentle smile, and those slight convulsive twitchings to be true to nature?" (p. 83). The explanation which he offers certainly demonstrates his insistence on the providential government of physical processes, and the expectation which he shares with Burke and with Ruskin, that particular phenomena call forth the same responses, but it also testifies to his emphasis on the importance of physical arrangements in determining human responses: the explanation for an audience's uniformity of reaction to Mrs. Siddons is to be found in "the extensive connections which are established betwixt the great organs that sustain life and the muscular system of the face, neck, and chest" (p. 83). There is also, he adds, a crucial connection between the functions of these organs and the passions of the mind.

With what looks suspiciously at times like a creeping materialism, Bell argues that not only is there a close connection between the passions of the mind and the functions of various bodily organs, but that there is also a connection between the structure of the body and certain major emotional states and intellectual activities. Of course, he regards the groups of emotions associated with religious worship as one of the most important, and in a passage reminiscent of Burke's explanation of love, he describes this group by reference to a combination of mental qualities with certain physical arrangements in the muscles and nerves of the face. He isolates the turning up of the eyes as the great universal characteristic of human worship (pp. 94 - 95).
To assert that this is the great universal characteristic, however, is merely to describe the phenomenon; for an explanation, Bell turns to natural philosophy rather than theology, and examines the actions of sets of muscles which govern the eyeballs. For instance, in sleep, fainting, or death, the "voluntary muscles resign their action", "insensibility creeps over the retina", and "the pupil is resolved, so as to expose only the white of the eye" (p. 95). Bell claims for this muscular and nervous arrangement a comprehensive influence on human life: "See, then, how this property of our bodily frame has influenced our opinions, and belief; our conceptions of the Deity - our religious observations - our poetry, and daily habits" (p. 96).

The "scientific" principle that the external expression will depend on the degree of development of the internal organs becomes an artistic criterion for judging the treatment of figure in drawing, painting and sculpture. Bell praises Michelangelo's anatomical studies because he demonstrates the utmost accuracy of knowledge while remaining true to the living reality which he depicts. He compares his anatomical drawings with the sculpture on the tombs of the Medici, and remarks that, whereas the drawings exhibit every point of bone, muscle, tendon, and ligament "marked, and perhaps a little exaggerated", the principle which he has formulated is clearly exhibited in the statuary (p. 186).

Function alone, however, does not guarantee artistic excellence. Bell believes that a hierarchy of form and function determines degrees of beauty. For instance,

... monkey-like protrusion of the fore-teeth takes away from the dignity of human expression ... [but] ... it is not necessarily a deformity that a feature resembles that of a lower animal. In our secret thoughts the form has a reference to a function. If the function be allied to the intellect, or is connected with mind (as the eye especially is), then there is no incompatibility with the human countenance, though the organ should bear a resemblance to the same part in a brute (pp. 40-41).
This is a principle which Bell sees exemplified in antique statuary. However, he sees a problem with such art - the artists very obviously represent that which is not found in nature itself, but the consensus of critical opinion maintains that their work represents an Ideal Beauty created through the selection and combination of the most perfect features of a number of examples of the same object. According to Bell's principle, in the sculpture of antiquity, "whatever is peculiar to the human countenance, as distinguishing it from the brute, is enhanced" (p. 55).

The particular occasion of this argument is a refutation of the notion that in antique statuary beauty is created not by a representation of the human being but by a representation of the divine being. Winckelmann, for instance, in his History of Art, had written: "La beauté supreme reside en Dieu. L'idée de la beauté humaine se perfectionne à raison de sa conformité et de son harmonie avec L'Être Supreme" (as quoted by Bell: p. 19).

Just as Bell's application of natural philosophy to aesthetics stresses physical arrangements and processes which are open to direct examination and verification, so here his refutation of this important area of neo-classical theory stresses the physical. In particular, it stresses that all knowledge and appreciation of form must, and can only, stem from a contemplation of the physically knowable. The counter-thesis which Bell presents is this: "THE PRINCIPLE, THAT BEAUTY IN THE HUMAN FORM HAS RELATION TO THE CHARACTERISTIC ORGANS OF MAN" (p. 52). He suggests that his own Bridgewater Treatise may serve as an introduction to this subject, so closely related are art and science; and associates his "principle" with the traditional notion of a hierarchy, or "great chain of being", to explain why what seems unnaturally beautiful in antique statuary can also appear beautiful.
Part of the interest offered by Bell's general thesis is that he is offering it as a practicable proposal for the renewal of English art, especially through an appreciation of anatomical science. Although, as Bell perceives the contemporary situation, a love of the fine arts is becoming increasingly prevalent among the affluent classes (p. 3), he derives no encouragement from this, for one of the lessons to be learnt from a study of ancient art is that institutions have a greater influence on art than climate. For any significant progress in art, artists must liberate themselves from the stifling practice of regarding the antique as the alone model of perfection, and relate themselves to what is of greatest importance in contemporary society:

It is in vain that we dream of equaling the great works of antiquity; they were raised under tyranny and false religions. We must hope for excellence, in a different condition, as the fruit of a religion of love, joy, and peace. If the arts of design bear no relation to that which has the greatest influence on mankind; if they stand related neither to religion, nor to the records of history, nor to the progress of empire, - they must be ever, as a dead language, associated with ancient times; and with us, nothing more than a handmaid to domestic ornament and individual refinement and enjoyment (p. 9).

If artists are to aspire to this ideal in the renewal of art, there must be a corresponding feeling in the public which patronises art (p. 10). On this point, Bell turns to the patronage of art by the mediaeval Christian church, and finds in this a suitable historical model. He attributes its success partly to the range of subjects which the painters were required to depict: innocence, tenderness, truth, beauty, in fact, "the whole range and character of human expression" (p. 12). He certainly has a high admiration for the way in which the Roman Church has fostered the arts, and a corresponding depreciation of the ways in which Protestant Enthusiasm has encouraged the visual poverty of public places of worship (pp. 13 - 15).

Ruskin may have refused to write a favourable review of Bell's Anatomy, but he did study the work very carefully and there is an usually high number of references to Bell in
Modern Painters 2, in which Ruskin, as usual, is sparing in explicit references to other modern writers on art. He refers the reader to Winckelmann and Schiller for views on the Laocoon opposed to his own (3: p. 121), and he refutes the view which he ascribes to Schiller that a "sense of beauty never fathered the performance of a single duty" (3: p. 215). He takes issue with Burke on the question of Apparent and Constructive Proportion (3: p. 105 and 108); describes Dugald Stewart's definition of the imagination as "meagre" (3: pp. 224 - 225 and p. 231), and dismisses Taylor's altogether (3: pp. 229 - 230). He quotes with approval Reynolds on colour, form and external texture (3: p. 302), and Leigh Hunt on Addison's Cato (3: p. 254). He also quotes in support of his own arguments Vinet's Vital Christianity on the relationships between the individual and the group (3: p. 183), and Dr. George Herbert (not to be confused with the poet) from the "Journal of the Horticultural Society" on the ecological situation of wild plants (3: p. 171). There remain three other authors to whom Ruskin refers: Sir Archibald Alison (five times); Sir Charles Bell (seven times); and Fuseli (eight times).

It is hardly surprising that Ruskin should refer frequently to Alison and his Essay on the Nature and Principles of Taste,249 because he clearly sees him as a major exponent of Associationist theory, and as Landow comments:

The Associationist theory of beauty is the most important of the positions which [Ruskin] opposes both because it was popular and because it presented the greatest threat to Ruskin's idea that beauty has an objective, unchanging existence. More than any other position he rejects, Associationism removes beauty from the heavens and places it within the changeable and limited territories of the human mind.250

And in fact, all five references to Alison are rejections of what he has to say on the subject (3: p. 70, p. 63, p. 77, p. 97, and pp. 367 - 368).

249 Alison (1815).

Fuseli fares better. Ruskin quotes with approval four of his aphorisms (3: p. 105, p. 137, p. 236, and p. 259), and refers to his definition of "true invention" as supporting his own arguments (3: p. 286). But, although he partly approves of Fuseli's reading of Raphael's "Massacre of the Innocents", he suggests that it is basically a "shallow and uncomprehending" response, and accuses Fuseli of dealing with the surface of paintings (3: pp. 271 - 274).

The references to Bell are equally mixed, but rather guarded. The comparative frequency of the references may well be explained by the fact that Ruskin was working on Bell at Murray's request while he was preparing the text of Modern Painters 2, and perhaps in some ways the references are a substitute for the review. The guarded nature of the references may well be explained by Ruskin's wish not to offend Bell's widow.

He refers to Bell's Anatomy on Michelangelo twice - to the artist's "exaggeration" of anatomical features (3: p. 310) and his physical strength and speed (3: p. 285). He refers the reader to Bell's volume on The Hand to compare what he himself has to say on Constructive Proportion in animals with what Bell has to say, and he quotes from the same volume to support his own views on whether some animals being deficient are therefore inferior (3: p. 104, and pp. 11 - 112). None of these references suggests any disagreement between Ruskin and Bell, but the remaining references are not so straightforward.

For instance, in discussing "Repose, or the Type of Divine Permanence" (Part III, Section I, chapter VII" of Modern Painters 2"), Ruskin suggests that this quality is exemplified in three outstanding artists, Phidias, Michelangelo, and Dante. They are closely followed by Homer and Shakespeare in whom Ruskin detects "less fullness and earnestness of faith". He then suggests that from these great figures,
we may go down step by step among the mighty men of every age, securely and certainly observant of diminished lustre in every appearance of restlessness and effort, until the last trace of true inspiration vanishes in the tottering affectations or the tortured insanities of modern times (3: pp. 118 - 119). 251

Surprisingly, he does not illustrate his argument from a modern product but from a piece of antique statuary, the "Laocoon", which he describes as follows:

no group has exercised so pernicious an influence on art as this; a subject ill-chosen, meanly conceived, and unnaturally treated, recommended to imitation by subtleties of execution and accumulation of technical knowledge (3: p. 120).

He adds a long note to explain his opposition to the statue, which he compares to Michelangelo's "The Plague of the Fiery Serpents" from the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel.

Basically, he is objecting to the ignorance of the habits of serpents displayed in the "Laocoon":

If Laocoon had had to do with real serpents, instead of pieces of tape with heads to them, he would have been held still, and not allowed to throw his arms or legs about. It is most instructive to observe the accuracy of Michael Angelo, in the rendering of these circumstances; the binding of the arms to the body, and the knotting of the whole mass of agony together, until we hear the crashing of the bones beneath the grisly sliding of the engine folds.

To support his argument Ruskin now introduces a reference to Bell's Anatomy, in which, according to Ruskin, Bell "has most wisely and incontrovertibly deprived the statue of all claim to expression and fortitude of mind, and shown its common and coarse intent of mere bodily exertion and agony". Either Ruskin has misunderstood Bell's argument, or he is deliberately and, perhaps, tactfully, misrepresenting Bell's arguments as supporting his own.

Bell is taking issue with Payne Knight's verdict on the statue. As quoted by Bell, Payne Knight argues that in responding to the "Laocoon", we do not "sympathise" with

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251Ruskin revised the last phrase of this passage to read "vanishes in tottering affectation or tortured insanity", but I think the first version is necessary here as an example of Ruskin's response to the modern.
the death agonies of Laocoon and his sons, because such a response would be "painful and disgusting". Instead, we respond to "the energy and fortitude of mind which those agonies call into action and display". Bell takes issue with this, and argues that Knight's ignorance of anatomy, "the structure of his own frame, and the facts most essential to just criticism in works of art", have led him to misinterpret the sculptor's intention which was in fact "to represent corporeal exertion, the attitudes and struggles of the body and of the arms". Bell then offers an analysis of what happens to a human frame in the grip of a serpent's coils. However, he is not damning the statue for "its common and coarse intent of mere bodily exertion and agony," as Ruskin suggests, but is using it to illustrate a general principle which he wishes to promote against those "critics" who "think it necessary to refine and go beyond Nature". The successful representation of "corporeal exertion" based on an accurate anatomy and physiology is adequate for Bell for

the rule is to learn her [i.e. Nature's] ways, and to be cautious of adding the slightest trait of expression, or what we conceive to be such, to the simple, and because simple, the grand character of natural action; instead of making the appeal more strongly to the senses, it is sure to weaken it.

The criticism which follows, of Michelangelo's "David", can hardly have been welcome to Ruskin, as Bell accuses Michelangelo of offending against good taste by having his subject bite his lip in order "to convey the idea of resolution and energy". However, Bell, as concerned as is Ruskin to fix values, regards biting the lip as "an action intended to restrain expression, to suppress an angry emotion which is rising in the breast ... a sign of some trifling inconvenience, never of heroism".

Nor can Ruskin have been too pleased with Bell on the "Dying Gladiator" 252 which he introduces into his argument as "one of those masterpieces of antiquity which exhibits

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252 Since both Bell and Ruskin refer to this statue as a gladiator, I have used their label, but recognise that it is inaccurate, and that the subject is most likely an Anatolian Celt.
a knowledge of anatomy and of man's nature". And it is in the statue's accurate anatomical representation that he locates its greatness:

He seeks support to his arms, not to rest them or to sustain the body, but to fix them, that their action may be transferred to the chest, and thus assist the labouring respiration. The nature of his sufferings leads to this attitude. In a man expiring from loss of blood, as the vital stream flows, the heart and lungs have the same painful feeling of want, which is produced by the obstruction to the breathing ... And so the ancient artist has placed this statue in the posture of one who suffers the extremity of difficult respiration (pp. 176 - 178).

Interestingly, Ruskin had originally intended to contrast the "Laocoon" with the "Dying Gladiator", and the comment on the statue which would have appeared in Modern Painters 2 indicates some of the difficulties which Bell must have given him:

The dying gladiator - though the statue of a vanquished slave - a mere victim of some butcher of the arena - is yet noble and exalted in its whole tone and character, for the very reason - strange as it may appear - that in its numbing clasp the right hand has already forgotten its cunning, and death has stamped upon the seared and disgraced brow the nobility of its repose (3: p. 119: n.3).

That comment places Ruskin among the critics whom Bell condemns for seeking to "refine and go beyond Nature" by adding unnecessary expression to a perfectly adequate anatomical and physiological truth. But there is more to it than this. In commenting on the "Laocoon" and the "Dying Gladiator", Ruskin draws attention to details ( the inadequate representation of the "habits of serpents", and the gladiator's hand and brow) in such a way as to displace attention from nakedness and anatomy, an area with which Ruskin has difficulties:

Generally it is well to conceal anatomical development as far as may be; even Michel Angelo's anatomy interferes with his divinity ... How far it is possible to subdue or generalise the naked form I venture not to affirm; but I believe that it is best to conceal it, as far as may be, not with light and undulating draperies, that fall in with and exhibit its principal lines, but with severe and linear draperies, such as were constantly employed before the time of Raffaello (3: p. 327).
Although both Bell and Burke feature prominently in *Modern Painters 1 and 2*, it is clear that when Ruskin refers to them on specific points, he is actually in disagreement with them, as for instance when he exposes what he sees as the fallacies in Burke's arguments on Constructive Proportion. But there is an underlying disagreement which Ruskin does not explicitly articulate. Burke borrows from contemporary Materialist Natural Philosophy to support his thesis that human responses to the beautiful are not subjective phenomena but objectively verifiable as physiological effects. Bell, drawing on his own achievements as an anatomist, and on his detailed knowledge of his contemporaries in the field, especially Cuvier, grounds the whole range of human expression in anatomical structure and nervous reactions. Both writers however consign the ultimate explanation for the phenomena which they are observing to divine disposition and therefore to the inexplicable, and their work, no matter how much modern scientific thinking may be present, supports a conservative Christian belief. With that the Ruskin of *Modern Painters 1 and 2* would have no problem, nor would he have a problem with the insistence that aesthetic responses are not a subjective product of varieties of Association. But the grounding of human responses in the physical is a position to which, as an exponent of a science of appearances, he is implacably opposed, and that opposition, especially in his presentation of the Theoretic Faculty's "contemplation of things as they are", is a further confirmation of how very conservative indeed is the cultural intervention represented by Ruskin's early work.
John Ruskin: Conservative Attitudes to Change.

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