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An Analysis of the Essay, Lord Bacon, by Lord Macaulay, With the Purpose of Revealing Early Victorian Values.

A Seminar Paper

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by

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ABSTRACT

The essay Lord Bacon (1837), by Lord Macaulay, is an excellent source for ideas which Macaulay and early middle class Victorians considered important. The Victorian Age, also called the Age of Faith, the Age of Reform, and the Age of the Industrial Revolution, was similar to the Renaissance decades of England in being a time of great literature, world trade expansion, political change and social mobility.

In Macaulay's essay the Whig Liberal view of government is clearly defined: the mistrust of monarchy, the need for checks and balances in government, the importance of Parliament, the need for adherence to law, the value of middle class participation in business and government, and individual responsibility. The creed of Evangelicism, providing much of the framework of the essay, is apparent in the subjects discussed: the Reformation, Anti-Popery, the Bible, sermons, repentance, family influence, death, and most important, moral righteousness. The idea of progress, at its peak in the early nineteenth century, and the idea of utility which paralleled scientific development, are used by Macaulay to illustrate Bacon's genius. Also discussed are modern language translations and their value in relation to the classics.

> It is curious to observe how some men are applauded and others reviled for merely being what all their neighbors are--for merely going passively down the stream of events, for merely representing the opinions and passions of the whole generation.[1]

There is a touch of pathos in the above observation by Thomas Babington Macaulay if one considers that he has often been called "spokesman of his age." Curiously, some of his contemporaries believed that he did not grow with his time after 1832. Born in 1800 and writing his essays from 1824 to 1840, he presented in these critical essays a comprehensive picture of the climate of thought in the early nineteenth century in England. Macaulay, writing in the Knights' Quarterly in 1824 and the Fortnightly Review the subsequent years, used the critical essays to inform and add to the knowledge of the emerging middle class. It has been said that Macaulay had a place with the Bible and Shakespeare as the favorite reading during his lifetime. The ideas which his readers and he found interesting and their attitude towards them form the warp of the tapestry of thought for the early nineteenth century.

Macaulay was the son of Zachary Macaulay, one of

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[1]Lord Macaulay, Mirabeau, in Critical and Historical Essays (Boston, 1925), II, 102.

the Clapham Sect working for the abolition of slavery, and from his early family life was imbued with the strong convictions of Evangelism which stress strict morals and a sense of family duty. Leavening this somber religious spirit was a life-long interest in Romantic novels which were in full flower at the turn of the nineteenth century, Sir Walter Scott and Jane Austen being his favorite novelists. At Cambridge University he became an admirer of Jeremy Bentham's work in political economy, but rejected the Utilitarian philosophy which would later be called Benthamism. During this period he became a devoted Whig and, as a member of Parliament, would help pass the Reform Bill of 1832 and work for other reforms by legislation.

Fused with these influences was the prevailing idea of progress. Macaulay was speaking for his readers when he said in his History of England from James II that the last one hundred and sixty years had been a time of physical, moral, and intellectual improvement. He saw the English bloodless revolution of 1688 as the working of the genius of England. The climate of thought in the early nineteenth century was optimistic with little understanding of the problems which the next decades would bring as a result of the Industrial Revolution.

The importance of the Evangelical influence on nineteenth century thought was summed up by G. M. Young

in his fascinating book, Victorian England: Portrait of an Age:

> The Evangelicals gave to the island a creed which was at once the basis of its morality and the justification of its wealth and power, and with the creed, that sense of being an Elect People, which set to a more blatant tune, became a principal element in Late Victorian Imperialism. By about 1830 their work was done.[2]

The "stiffness and precision of the Clapham Sect" was retained by Macaulay, said John Morley in a critical essay on him in 1876.[3] He believed that Macaulay did little to help men face the problems of the near future. "It is one of the first things to be said about Macaulay, that he was in exact accord with the common, average sentiment of his day on every subject on which he spoke."[4]

Other contemporaries made similar critical evaluations of Macaulay's popularity. Walter Bagehot in a review of Macaulay's The History of England from James II said that he early attained a high development in his writing but remained the man of 32 years in spirit.[5]

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[2]G. M. Young, Victorian England (London, 1944), p. 4.

[3]John Morley, Critical Miscellanies (London, 1913), I, 271.

[4]Ibid., 278.

[5]Walter Bagehot, Literary Studies (New York, 1856), II, 198.

Justin McCarthy, in A History of Our Time (1897), critical of Macaulay's stand on the Opium War in China, placed him as the most popular writer of his time. "The admirer of Macaulay had all the comfort in his studies that a votary of the Roman Catholic Church may have. He had an infallible guide.... Macaulay was dogmatic; he was full of prejudice; he was in all respects a better advocate than judge... but he was not superficial."[6] Also, he was "inclined to treat ignorance as if it were a crime."[7]

During the nineteenth century there was an increased interest in Francis Bacon, whose writings had been relatively neglected except by the Royal Society. Macaulay admired these writings and quoted Bacon in many of his own works. Macaulay's zest in writing Lord Bacon is evident in a letter he wrote in 1836 from India, where he was a member of the Supreme Council, to Macvey Napier, editor of the Fortnightly Review. Having read Bacon's works carefully, he felt well qualified to write about him, adding that nine-tenths of the people who discussed Bacon had not read his work. He enjoyed writing the essay so much that he felt overpaid.[8] Lord Jeffrey, former editor of Fort-

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[6]Justin McCarthy, A History of Our Times (Boston, 1897), II, 272.

[7]Ibid., III, 109.

[8]Sir George Ottobart Trevelyan, The Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay (London, 1961), I, 417.

nightly Review, considered this essay the finest one written by Macaulay, giving it high praise.[9] Two essays on this period of history had been written previously by Macaulay, Memorials of Hampdon (1831) and Burleigh and His Times (1832), and several had been based on material from the century following the Elizabethan Age.

Analyzing the view that Macaulay had of Francis Bacon reveals a wealth of ideas prevalent in the climate of thought in the first third of the nineteenth century in England. Comparing some of Macaulay's ideas with those held about Bacon in the twentieth century may help to define changes of thought. There is interest in considering Macaulay's view in the light of the similarity between the Victorian and Elizabethan Ages. Bacon published his works at the close of his period and Macaulay wrote at the beginning of the Victorian period. G. M. Young compares these two periods:

> In their exuberance and facility, the earlier Victorians with their flowing and scented hair, gleaming jewelry and resplendent waistcoats were nearer to the later Elizabethans. They were not ashamed; and like the Elizabethans, their sense of the worthwhileness of everything--themselves, their age, and their country: what the Evangelicals called seriousness; the Arnoldians, earnestness; Bagehot, most happily, eagerness--overflowed in sentiment and invective, loud laughter and sudden reproof.[10]

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[9] Ibid., 419.

[10] Young, Victorian, p. 14.

Macaulay's essay, Lord Bacon, was a critical review of a sixteen volume work on Bacon's writings and biography, written by Basil Montagu. Macaulay based his criticism on Montagu's weaknesses in not being objective about Bacon's moral character. The assumption, that geniuses whose works delight contemporaries and future generations are men of good moral character, could not be tolerated. Macaulay saw that such men as Bacon provide a guide to truth and as friends never disappoint us. "With the dead there is no rivalry."[11] But Bacon himself, as recommended in the Novum Organum, would not approve of inferring moral character merely from the contributions of a man. Macaulay (with Evangelical zeal) had undertaken the task of correcting Montagu's assumption. Examples of geniuses whose characters should be given the same moral scrutiny are cited--Salust, plundering the Numidians; Shakespeare cudgelling the gamekeepers; Fielding, bilking his landladies; and Cicero, "whose very soul was under the dominion of a girlish vanity and a craven fear." (Lord Bacon, p. 361). In correctly assessing Bacon's character Macaulay said that he would use Montagu's biography as a source.

Francis Bacon's father was the first object of Macaulay's scrutiny. Esme Wingfield-Stratford in Those Earnest Victorians described the place of the father in

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[11]Macaulay, Essays, 359.

the Evangelical household when he quoted from a famous book of the time, Fairchild Family (1818). "I (the father) stand in the place of God to you whilst you are a child." Winfield-Stratford said, "One can understand the atmosphere in which the future Victorians grew up, when we realize that for so many of them during their most impressionable years, the Lord was above, and papa, if not listening at the door, somewhere below, and lower still, a not improbable Hell."[12]

Macaulay described Sir Nicholas Bacon, father of Francis, as one of a new species of statesmen who could be described with the highest praise. They had replaced the guidance of warrior and priest in government, bringing to public affairs, not men of great wealth with inherited titles, but educated gentlemen, all members of the same university, Cambridge. "These men were all born Reformers.... therefore, one and all, Protestants. They spoke with the eloquence of men who had lived with the first translators of the Bible and with the authors of the book of Common Prayer." (Lord Bacon, p. 366). They had the confidence of the court and of the multitude because they did not aspire to great wealth or to titles. The motto which Sir Nicholas Bacon had over the entrance of his home at Gorhambury

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[12] Esme Wingfield-Stratford, Those Earnest Victorians (New York, 1930), pp. 72-75.

explained their success in public office: "Mediocria firma." In their private lives "their morals were without stain. Their households were sober and well governed." (Lord Bacon, p. 368). Sir Nicholas was Keeper of the great Seal for twenty years under Queen Elizabeth.

Lady Anne Bacon, mother of Francis, was from a family of eminent scholars, her father being Sir Anthony Cooke. Proficient in Greek, Latin, and theology, she had translated sermons on fate and free will and corresponded in Greek with Bishop Jewel. However, Macaulay reminded his readers, ladies of the nineteenth century can be better educated because of the wealth of literature available in modern language. Shakespeare and Ben Jonson could be read instead of the Greek drama and, since most of the ancient literature had been translated, these books and excellent recent ones were available. It was a misapprehension to believe that Latin and Greek were essential for a good education in the nineteenth century or to think that sixteenth century women were more accomplished.

Francis Bacon, the younger son of these paragons of virtue and learning, was born in 1561. Delicate in health, he began early to be interested in speculative pursuits. Queen Elizabeth was amused at his "gravity and wit" and called him her young Lord Keeper. When he entered Cambridge College at the age of twelve, the

master, Whitgift, despicable in his persecutions of Calvinists who did not adhere to the doctrine of Reprobation, could be praised for saving Trinity College from becoming affiliated with Westminster School, "the degrading fate of King's College and New College." (Lord Bacon, p. 373). Bacon's three years at Cambridge were useful in forming the criticism of Aristotelian education, which factor would underlie his later accomplishments.

Macaulay denounces both Queen Elizabeth and Lord Burleigh (Robert Cecil), the Prime Minister of the Queen, for not aiding Bacon, after the death of his father in 1580, by giving him support or a position in government. That Burleigh, uncle of Bacon, could only have been jealous of his talents in comparison to those of his own son was the contention of Macaulay. Both the Cecils and Sir Edward Coke spread the opinion that Bacon was superficial in his knowledge of law. "No reports are more readily believable than those which disparage genius and soothe the envy of conscious mediocrity." (Lord Bacon, p. 376).

Bacon, having gained a seat in Parliament and a position in government, would not be successful as his father had been in satisfying both the court and the multitude. His decision was to appease the Queen; therefore, in order to help his own cause he became good friends with her favorite, the Earl of Essex. Macaulay pointed out

that Elizabeth's court was in a state of balance by using two factions in her government. Later historians would be of the opinion that this balance made it necessary for her to keep Bacon from any critical office. Macaulay said that the struggle of these factions for power was not based on important public questions but rather on a desire for power and patronage. "That impetuous and appalling rush with which the human intellect had moved forward in the career of truth and liberty, during the fifty years which followed the separation of Luther from the communion of the Church of Rome, was now over." (Lord Bacon, p. 380). He thought that one of the most interesting problems in history might be to investigate the reason there was no later great Protestant struggle after the Reformation. The boundaries between Protestantism and Popery were defined by him by country, and he explained that they were relatively unchanged from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century.

Bacon's prosecution of Essex after his close friendship with him was clearly unforgivable to Macaulay. Montagu had considered Bacon's action in the affair admirable because, he said, Bacon was only interested in doing good to mankind and was more obligated to the Queen than to Essex. Macaulay's rebuttal of this idea is long and spirited. Bacon not only made a professional prosecution of Essex but he used his talents and knowledge

to compare him with famous traitors in history. Is it "right that a man should, with a wig on his head, and a band around his neck, do for a guinea what, without those appendages, he would think it wicked and infamous to do for an empire" (Lord Bacon, pp. 392-393). Man was answerable to his own conscience.

"His faults were--we write it with pain--coldness of heart and meanness of spirit" (Lord Bacon, p. 396). There is sorrow in Macaulay's words as he gives Bacon credit for good qualities, but permeating his essay is the judgment that Bacon was a corrupt man. The last words of the essay are "... so much glory and so much shame" (Lord Bacon, p. 497). The son of Zachary Macaulay, one who believed that the first business of life was personal salvation, saw Bacon as a man rich in God-given talents, fortunate in being the son of an excellent Protestant heritage, disregarding his first duty to God and the spirit of his family's motto, "Mediocria firma." Later writers would view Bacon in the light of different circumstances but Macaulay was speaking for his contemporaries.

The desire for material things was Bacon's weakness, according to Macaulay, and led to further infamous acts. After James became king, Bacon sought his favor, writing a letter to the Earl of Devon to excuse his conduct to

Essex, whom James had favored. High honors in government were given Bacon by James, but as Attorney-General he had conferred with judges before whom he would try cases and used the rack to torture a prisoner. Montagu had condoned these acts as being usual for the time but Macaulay said they were not then lawful. Bacon's ability and power in government made the acts even more heinous. Even Sir Edward Coke, for whom Macaulay had few kind words, would not have acted in this manner.

Macaulay said there were two Bacons, the philosopher seeking for truth and the Attorney-General seeking for Seals. The first one was admirable and the second contemptible. Integrity and honor had been sacrificed for Bacon's ambition. The final crime of Bacon was in the taking of bribes connected with patents of monopoly. Buckingham, James' favorite, was also involved and Macaulay, seeing the responsibility of mature individuals to youth, saw Buckingham as less guilty because he was young and without the education and experience of Bacon, who was nearly sixty years old. "The austere Puritan patriot might, in his retreat, grieve that one on whom God had bestowed without measure all the abilities which qualify men to take the lead in great reforms should be found among the adherents of the worst abuses." (Lord Bacon, p. 417).

Bacon's good qualities only emphasized by contrast the corrupt nature of his morals. He was not tyrannical, insolent, or licentious in his habits. He was good-humored, affable and patient--a delightful companion. Ben Jonson's praise of Bacon's excellent command of language is quoted. There is a sincere attempt by Macaulay to give Bacon all the credit for good which is due to him. He compares the view of Bacon by his contemporaries with one which Clarendon had written about Waller, who, because he left no accomplishments to posterity, had not been treated as leniently by the passage of time. Macaulay contended that the whole truth must be known and that Bacon's lack of warmth of affection and sentiment must be made clear (sentiment a basic virtue in Macaulay's time).

Monarchy, about which Macaulay evinces mistrust, was given a similar scrutiny concerned with moral behavior. Queen Elizabeth had not supported Bacon after his father's death although "his hereditary claims on the administration were great" (Lord Bacon, p. 374). Bacon's attempt at patriotism on the side of the people had been squelched by the Queen, who resented the outbreak of public spirit which "breathed all the spirit of the Long Parliament." Bacon wrote a letter of abject apology which was as unmanly as any of Cicero's during his banishment (Lord Bacon, p. 378). During the Essex affair

Bacon attempted to mediate between the Queen and Essex but Elizabeth was implacable. Montagu had said Bacon was under obligation to the Queen, but Macaulay refuted this view with irony.

> Being the son of her oldest and most faithful minister, being himself the ablest and most accomplished young man of his time, he had been condemned by her to drudgery, to obscurity, to poverty. She had depreciated his acquirements. She had checked him in the most imperious manner, when in Parliament he ventured to act an independent part. She had refused to him the professional advancement to which he had a just claim. To her it was owing that, while younger men, not superior to him in extraction, and far inferior to him in every kind of personal merit, were filling the highest offices of the state, adding manor to manor, rearing palace after palace, he was lying in a sponging house for a debt of three hundred pounds. (Lord Bacon, p. 391).

Queen Elizabeth suffered for her sins at the end of her life. Many think her melancholy in her old age was based on regret about Essex, but Macaulay thought that the courtiers who surrounded her had no affection for her and, having ceased to fear her, were more interested in their intrigues in Scotland and their own interests than in serving her. So she died "sick and weary of the world," an interesting thought about death and after-life to Macaulay's readers.

Macaulay had two views of King James as he did of Bacon. "He was indeed made up of two men, a witty, well-read scholar, and a nervous driveling idiot...." If he

had only been a scholar, perhaps Canon of Christ Church, his reputation to posterity would be excellent. "In a college much eccentricity and childishness would have been readily pardoned in so learned a man." He showed his wisdom in recognizing Bacon's genius and learning (Lord Bacon, p. 398).

The relationship of Villiers (Duke of Buckingham) and James was perplexing to Macaulay as to other historians. That this attachment was scandalous was an idea which Macaulay believed to be unfounded. He described James as a slave at heart, one who had suffered many humiliations before ascending the throne of England. Considering James' personality it was Macaulay's opinion that Villiers' treatment of him was well planned to gain favor.

Montagu had said that the King could have prevented Bacon's final disgrace. Macaulay's view on this was based on the need for Parliament to check the potential despotism of kings, a basic creed in Whig philosophy. James had called three Parliaments and it was the third which investigated the abuse of patents of monopoly. The members of Parliament had acted liberally and respectfully to the King, according to Macaulay, but with the power of the people behind them, the King had no recourse but to abide by their decision. James could have felt sincere friendship for Bacon but would be unwilling to

risk his position with Parliament. That he acted correctly in letting the courts judge Bacon was Macaulay's view (Lord Bacon, p. 427).

"Honest Hugh Latimer" was Macaulay's witness against Bacon on the taking of bribes. He was a plain man of the common people, preaching seventy years before Bacon's time. This popular and admirable bishop had preached on covetousness, avarice, and the taking of bribes with a popularity that proved the sentiment against such a practice in Bacon's time. Macaulay said that he could write twenty pages about the sermons of this man, an action which might have appealed to his readers as sermons were popular reading. (Lord Bacon, p. 430).

The amount of great literature produced by Bacon during his last five years made Macaulay regret that he had spent so much time on other things. One of his contributions was the "best collection of jests in the world." Macaulay said that Bacon died a martyr to experimental science and that his will revealed "a mournful consciousness that his actions had not been such as to entitle him to the esteem of those under whose observation his life had been passed, and at the same time a proud confidence that his writings had secured for him a high and permanent place among the benefactors of mankind" (Lord Bacon, p. 444). The ideas of martyrdom

and repentance on leaving this world were important ideas to Evangelicals.

From the long discussion of Bacon's morals Macaulay turns to Bacon the philosopher. He believed that Bacon's name would be reverenced by posterity all over the civilized world and that the end of his philosophy differed from that of his predecessors. "It was the multiplying of human enjoyments and the mitigating of human sufferings.... Two words form the Key of the Baconian doctrine, Utility and Progress" (Lord Bacon, p. 445).

Earlier essays of Macaulay's will help explain his meaning of Utility and Progress. In 1830 in Southey's Colloquies on Society he had debated the idea of progress with Robert Southey, poet laureate of England. Southey had taken the Tory view that government should be allied with the established religion. He believed that government should get all surplus money to use for national works. He maintained that people had been happier three hundred years before with a paternal government. Macaulay said, in his essay, that Southey wanted opinions on morals, politics, and religion to stem from the government.

Disagreeing with Southey's ideas, Macaulay contended that the Whig philosophy had created improved conditions

for the people, the proof being that the life span was longer. He said that both the government of Charles, combined with the High Church, and the government of Cromwell, based on Puritan creeds, had been oppressive. "The training of the High Church ended in the reign of the Puritans and the training of the Puritans ended in the 'harlots'."[13] Government free from religious direction was needed for free speech because all systems of government depend on public opinion.

> The real security of religion is to be found in its benevolent morality, in its exquisite adaptation to the human heart, to the facility with which its scheme accomodates itself to the intellect, in the consolation which it bears to the house of mourning, in the light with which it brightens the great mystery of the grave.[14]

Freedom, too, of competition in industry was healthful for the economy, whereas the government use of surplus money would lead either to embezzlement or to an abundance of jobbing, Macaulay argued.

Writing this essay before the concept of evolution had changed the traditional view of nature, he saw God as the creator of general laws for the physical and moral world. "We do not see either the piety or the rationality of thus confidently expecting that the Supreme

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[13]Macaulay, Southey's Colloquies, Essays, I, 529.

[14]Ibid., 531.

Being will interfere to disturb the common succession of cause and events.... We rely on the natural tendency of the human intellect to truth and on the natural tendency of society to improvement."[15]

Macaulay looked ahead a hundred years to 1930, expecting that people would be even better fed and lodged and saw the national debt increasing as the country became more prosperous. He said that machines, not yet invented, would be in every home and that all traveling would be by steam railroads (a new convenience at that time). Yet he said that he was prophesying nothing and recognized that calamities can occur in a country. He could see nothing to fear in the increase in population with the increase in knowledge of mechanical sciences. (Robert Malthus in An Essay on the Principle of Population, the second edition published in 1803, had stated that the pressure on food had diminished with the advance of civilization and that morality, too, acted as a check on the increase of population).[16]

By Utility Macaulay meant that the various branches

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[15] Ibid., p. 541.

[16] W. R. Sorley, A History of British Philosophy to 1900 (London, 1965), p. 233.

of knowledge should be studied for their usefulness. His use of the word utility did not mean that he had adopted the Utilitarian philosophy. He had made clear his opposition to their "faulty" reasoning in three essays in 1829. He admired the laws of political economy which Jeremy Bentham had advocated but he disassociated him from Utilitarianism because Bentham had stated that monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy may balance each other and by mutual checks produce good government. Macaulay did not attack their "greatest happiness" principle but said it was not new:

> The greatest happiness principle has always been latent under the words social contract, justice, benevolence, liberty, and so forth, just as far as it was for the happiness, real or imagined, of those who used these words to promote the greatest happiness of mankind.[17]

The basic difference in view between Utilitarians and Whig Liberals is discussed in D. C. Somervell's English Thought in the Nineteenth Century and in The Idea of Progress by J. B. Bury. The split between the Utilitarians and Whig Liberals, said Bury, was that the Liberals believed that individual liberty was the motive force in government. The Utilitarian philosophy led to the authority of the state (socialism).[18]

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[17]Macaulay, Westminister's Reviewers Defence of Mill, Essays, I, 453.

[18]J. B. Bury, The Idea of Progress (New York, 1935), p. 236.

In Mill's Essay on Government (1829), Macaulay gives the process by which happiness for mankind can be attained:

> Surely by that method which, in every experimental science to which it has been applied, has signally increased the power and knowledge of our species,--...by the method of Induction.... Proceeding thus,--patiently,--diligently,--candidly--we may hope to form as far from inferior to that (Utilitarianism) which we have been examining and as far superior to it in real ability as the prescription of a great physician... to the pill of the advertizing quack which is to cure all human beings, in all climates, in all diseases.[19]

Macaulay polishes off the Utilitarians with the following conclusion: "They may as well be Utilitarians as jockies or dandies...it is not much more laughable than phrenology, and is immeasurably more humane than cock-fighting."[20]

That the Baconian doctrine, Utility and Progress, with its use of inductive reasoning, constituted a revolutionary change needed to effect progress for the human condition was discussed at great length by Macaulay in Lord Bacon. That the ideas of Seneca, Plato, and Epicurus, set forth with the use of deductive reasoning, were impractical and the ancient philosophers left the world as ignorant and wicked as they had found it, was

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[19]Macaulay, Mill, Essays, 420.

[20]Ibid., p. 422.

Macaulay's contention. Paganism of the ancients had infected Christianity in the fifth century. If the ancient philosophers had been able to banish vice their philosophy might have helped mankind but in the thousand years since Socrates, using the best intellectual minds, there had been no progress in men's morals or in their living conditions.

The corruption of primitive Christianity, rather than taking place in the fifth century, occurred in the seventeenth century, according to John Henry Newman, a contemporary of Macaulay and a Tory like Southey.[21] He believed that the Whigs had suppressed the primitive Christianity of the Anglo-Catholic Church.[22] He bitterly opposed the Evangelicals, whom he considered to be under the influence of Whig Liberals.

Macaulay, an ardent Whig and Evangelical, thought that the Protestant Reformation marked the beginning of progress for mankind. In his essay on Bacon he named the great Protestant Reformers who had freed man from the scholastic philosophy--Luther, Zwingli, Bucer, Peter Martyr, Calvin, and Ramus. Latinity had been reformed by Ascham and Buchanan. A leader, a mere common man,

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[21]John Henry Cardinal Newman, Apologia Pro Vita Sua (Boston, 1956), p. 61.

[22]Ibid., p. 50.

was needed to set forth the principles which would make infinite progress possible. According to Macaulay, Bacon was this great leader:

> Bacon knew that men, and philosophers as well as other men, do actually love life, health, comfort, honor, security, the society of friends, and do actually dislike death, sickness, pain, poverty, disgrace, danger, separation from those to whom they are attached. He knew that religion, although it often moderates these feelings, seldom eradicates them: nor did he think it desirable for mankind that they should be eradicated (Lord Bacon, p. 466).

The genius of Bacon was in turning the minds of speculative men, long occupied in verbal disputes, to the discovery of new and useful truths which had been accessible all the time. Macaulay said that the use of the inductive method, as advocated by Bacon, was not a new concept, but had been used since the beginning of mankind. The analysis of inductive reasoning made by Bacon was not new, either, and had little practical value. Bacon's claim that variations in intelligence were not factors in acquiring new knowledge, if the rules for induction were followed, was not a valid idea to Macaulay, "The interval between a man of talents and a dunce is as wide as ever" (Lord Bacon, p. 481). However, Bacon had stimulated men to use the inductive method by furnishing them with new motives, a new end. "The end being given, the means as it appears to us, could not well

be mistaken" (Lord Bacon, p. 482). (Catherine Bowen, in 1963, would agree with Macaulay about the evaluation of Bacon's contribution to inductive thinking.)

The end or "object of all his speculations in every department of science, in natural philosophy, in legislation, in politics, in morals...was to use his own emphatic expression 'fruit'. It was the multiplying of human enjoyments and the mitigating of human sufferings" (Lord Bacon, p. 455). The ancient philosophers, even the Epicureans (whose philosophy was pleasure for the individual by the practice of virtue), had not contributed to Progress. Macaulay had compared the accumulation of truth and knowledge in the sixteenth with the nineteenth century in his discussion of the education of women. Before the sixteenth century truth had been on a treadmill.

Macaulay illustrated the possibilities for Progress with the new philosophy by comparing the approach of Bacon to that of the ancient Greeks in terms of usefulness of various pursuits of knowledge. Appealing to the business men of his time, Macaulay said that the Aristotelians did not prepare men to be shopkeepers and merchants, able to buy and sell, but tried to raise their minds above the material universe. These same philosophers

would be living in luxury while the mass of people lived in wretched conditions.

Bacon's idea of the usefulness of mathematics had differed from Plato's and Archimedes', who had considered arithmetic useful as a discipline, "a noble intellectual exercise" (Lord Bacon, p. 458). Bacon had written in 1605 in The Advancement of Learning that mathematics could be useful both in natural philosophy and as a beneficial study for the intellect. Twenty years later he had said in his Treatise on the Advancement of Learning that mathematics could have no higher rank than as an appendage to other sciences and that more and more branches of mathematics would be used as more and more discoveries were made in physics, but had omitted any reference to the study of pure mathematics. Macaulay said that Bacon, in his enthusiasm for his own ideas, may have erred in not considering that mathematics might be useful to a man speculating for his own pleasure, "in extending the empire of man over matter" (Lord Bacon, p. 458). Macaulay's valuing the metaphysical use of mathematics is modern.

Progress in the science of medicinewas possible by using Bacon's philosophy. Plato had said that only men of good constitution and intellect should be treated for external injuries or occasional "distempers." Bacon's concern was for all, using the example of Christ who was

the Great Physician of the body" (Lord Bacon, p. 462).

The interest of Bacon in serving all mankind was carried into the field of legislation. His conception of the end of legislation as the well-being of the people was practical and attainable. "The aim of the Baconian philosophy was to provide man with what he wants while he continues to be a man.... The philosophy of Plato began in words and ended in words" (Lord Bacon, p. 465).

Other comparisons favorable to Bacon's philosophy were made but, for the purpose of revealing the thought of Macaulay's time, the scope of this discussion has to be limited.

Macaulay's "essay" would be published as a book in the twentieth century. The approximately sixty thousand words he used is over a third more than used by Francis Steel, writing on the same subject in 1930, and not many words less than Catherine Bowen used in 1963. Sixty per cent of Macaulay's essay concerned Bacon's public life and corrupt character. Forty per cent discussed Bacon's contributions as a great philosopher.

Although the emphasis on moral weakness is greater in Macaulay's essay, later biographers of Bacon would be disturbed by the same duality of character. Catherine Bowen called it the "yin and yang, its evil and good, its

dark side and its light."[23] She thought that the versatility of his genius presented difficulties in writing his biography and that his "propensity for evil" added to this problem. Macaulay recognized the controversial aspects in a letter from India to McVey Napier in which he said that he hoped that his essay would inspire further studies of Bacon. This hope was realized when James Spedding, prompted by the essay, began a thirty year research and published what is still considered the most comprehensive study of Bacon's life.

Macaulay's judgment of Bacon's morals reads like a sermon, a type of writing which, as noted previously, was a popular form of reading. His approach, using a tone of moral righteousness, is not popular now but his essay should be read to understand the spirit underlying nineteenth century England. This "unmerciful vehemence,--strident confidence,--breathless conviction," as Pieter Geyl expressed it, represented the force of Evangelicism on the society of England.[24] Macaulay was a whole man in that his emotional life and intellectual life were fused. Geyl, like other later intellectuals, considers

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[23]Catherine Bowen, Francis Bacon (Boston, 1963), p. 4.

[24]Pieter Geyl, Debates with Historians (New York, 1958), pp. 30-45.

his certainty about things "horrifying, unbearably irritating." Geyl said of Macaulay's view of progress and utility in Lord Bacon, "It is a view of the world and of history that makes one shudder." He considered Macaulay a politician of historic interest writing with "a mind of rare clarity and immense vigor."

Geyl errs in considering Macaulay a man untouched by the Romantic Movement "with no feeling of awe before the mystery of the past."[25] Macaulay's Lays of Ancient Rome, interest in the classics, pleasure in Sir Walter Scott's novels, collection of ballads, his belief in the natural inequality of men, and his admiration for Francis Bacon make him a true Romantic. His style of writing with emotional subjectivity is characteristic of the definition of romanticism in A Handbook to Literature.

> Yet, viewed in philosophical terms "romanticism" does have a fairly definite meaning for the student of literature. The term designates a literary and philosophical theory which tends to see the individual at the very center of all life and all experience, and it places him, therefore at the center of art, making literature most valuable as an expression of his unique feelings and particular atttitudes....[26]

After his return from India, where he had been from 1834 to 1838, Macaulay seemed to feel alienated from

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[25] Ibid., p. 35.

[26] Thrall, Hibbard, Holman, A Handbook to Literature (New York, 1960), p. 431.

his society. The Oxford Movement, Utilitarianism, the Indian Mutiny, and the disintegration of the Whig Party were distressing to him. The poem he wrote in 1847 after his defeat for a seat in Parliament is Romantic in spirit. Like a Romantic hero, he felt that society did not understand him.

> Yes, let them go, gain, fashion, pleasure, power.
> . . . .
> Mine is the world of thought, the world of dream,
> Mine all the past and all the future mine.
> . . . .
> In the dark hour of shame, I deigned to stand
> Before the frowning peers at Bacon's side;
> . . . .
> See riches, baubles, flatterers, pass away.
> Yes, they will pass away; nor deem it strange:
> They come and go, as comes and goes the sea;
> And let them come and go; thou, through all change,
> Fix thy firm gaze on virtue and on me.[27]

Some writers have questioned Macaulay's view of economic development as not perceptive of its problems. Perhaps the answer is that Macaulay, a religious man, had faith in the individual. The structure of his world was the Whig Party, which died out in 1844, and Evangelicism, which began to ebb in 1833, followed by the Oxford Movement. Macaulay saw the need for reforms in government and believed in education, as his famous Minute written in India had indicated. With his philosophy, success in government, business, and personal life would be attained

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[27] Trevelyan, Life, II, 130-133.

through virtue of the individual.

The virtue of Bacon, to Macaulay, was in freeing the individual so that progress was possible. Whether Bacon can be given credit for starting the idea of progress is discussed by J. B. Bury in the comprehensive study published in 1932, The Idea of Progress. He said that Bacon had helped to free science from Theology and was Utilitarian in wanting science to be useful, but "his conception of his own time as the old age of humanity excludes the conception of an indefinite advance in the future, which is essential if the theory /of Progress/ is to have significance and value."[28] Bury said, too, that Bacon's ideal state, New Atlantis, was not projected into future time, a method which is used with the idea of progress. He gives credit rather to the philosophy of Descartes as a beginning of the idea. Descartes, unlike Bacon who believed in an active intervening Providence, believed in the immutable laws of nature.

Macaulay, living in a period when the idea of progress was at its peak, was limited by the lack of interest in speculative thought at the universities. W. R. Sorley in A History of British Philosophy to 1900 said

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[28]Bury, Progress, p. 58.

that the fourth decade in England was lacking in philosophic ideas with the possible exception of those of Coleridge and Carlyle. "The Benthamite Creed, which was in the ascendent, was not favorable to speculative inquiry."[29]

These early decades of the Victorian Age had not experienced the impact of Carlyle's super-man philosophy, the influence of the Higher Criticism of German writers, Darwin's radical theory of evolution, nor the reappraisals of the conflict between science and religion. The limitations of Macaulay's view of the world were typical of the limitations of his contemporaries in the middle class of England before 1840. His absence from England for four years (1834-1838) could have caused Macaulay to remain essentially the man of the time of the Reform Bill of 1832, as Walter Bagehot had typed him, but it is more probable that his religious faith kept him firm in his convictions..

Religious faith in the age of science was discussed by a Victorian writer, Mathew Arnold, in Hebraism and Hellenism. Arnold said there were two forces leading to man's perfection or salvation. The force of Hebraism provided the sense of obligation of duty, self-control,

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[29]Sorley, British Philosophy, p. 240.

and an earnestness in doing one's work. Hellenism, the force with sweetness and light, helped men see things as they really are. Arnold believed that the Puritan sect of Protestantism, inferior to the Hebraic primitive Christianity, was the primary force since the English Renaissance and was checking man's advancement towards "knowing himself and the world, seeing things as they are."[30] He believed that scientific development had created a certain "confusion and false movement" which made a combination of Hebraism and Hellenism necessary for "enlarging our whole view and rule of life." Arnold said that the English Reformation "was weak in that it never consciously grasped the central idea of the Renaissance--the Hellenic idea of pursuing, in all lines of activity, the law and science, to use Plato's words, of things as they really are" and that Protestantism was superior to the Hellenic idea only in morals.[31]

Macaulay, in his admiration for the "fruits" of Bacon, seemed to combine the forces advocated by Arnold. His rejection of Puritanism and of Cromwell is apparent in his writings. The dichotomy of his outlook was between his

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[30]William E. Buckler ed., Prose of the Victorian Period (Cambridge, Mass., 1958), p. 485.

[31]Ibid., p. 486.

belief in human progress, based on Protestantism, science, and industry, and his lack of understanding of the results on society of these forces. Some reasons for this lack of understanding might be found in a book by William Barrett, Irrational Man. According to Barrett, modern man, living in a mass society, is depersonalized. "Science stripped nature of its human forms and presented man with a universe that was neutral, alien, in its vastness and force, to his human purpose...religion had encompassed man's life" before this.[32] Macaulay, Romantic and religious, was alien to the society described by Barrett. Other Victorian writers, questioning their faith, showed a comprehension of the conflict between science and faith--Macaulay never did.

Macaulay's view of Bacon as having a religious faith like his own, therefore to be judged by his standards, is questionable. William Blake (1798), whose diaries were recently published by Geoffrey Keynes, despised Bacon as non-Christian and Epicurean.[33] His only criticism of Bacon with which Macaulay would have agreed was that Bacon erred in thinking all men alike. Other writers have

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[32]William Barrett, Irrational Man (New York, 1962), p. 35.

[33]Geoffrey Keynes ed., William Blake (London, 1966), p. 396.

considered Bacon half-modern, his view of theology, mediaeval, and of science, modern. Although some of his contemporary scientists had adopted the Copernican theory, Bacon was still Ptolemaic and placed the earth as the center of the model universe he constructed. He was not much different from Thomas Aquinas, who had said in the thirteenth century that science should be studied independently, that truth was indivisible, and that nothing in the study of science would contradict God. Bacon said in The Advancement of Learning, "a little knowledge of science will incline a man towards atheism but when a man sees the work of Providence he will see that science must be tied to God."

E.M.W. Tillyard in The Elizabethan World Picture describes the age of Bacon as one in which the spirit of humanism with a belief in the importance of the present life is combined with a belief in the pattern of mediaeval hierarchy, an age in which the Tudors were an integral part of the physical universe. Tillyard said that Spenser, Sidney, Raleigh, Hooker, Shakespeare, and Jonson "are united in holding with earnestness, passion, and assurance to the main outline of the mediaeval world picture as modified by the Tudor regime, although they all knew that the coherence of this picture had been

threatened."[34] Man was placed between the angels and the beasts in a "chain of being," a theocracy. Bacon's servile behavior towards royalty, while he emphasized human dignity in his works, could be typical of this humanist-mediaeval environment.

Basil Willey in The Seventeenth Century Background discusses Bacon's problem in separating science from the mediaeval pattern of theology. The study of science had been satanic, forbidden knowledge, as in Faustus. Bacon said that truth was two-fold, the truth of religion and the truth of science. The study of science was not forbidden because "God revealed himself to man by the means of two scriptures.... The written word.../and/ his handiwork."[35] Willey said that "Bacon's desire to separate religious truth and science was in the interests of science, not of religion.... After three hundred years of science we now have writers pleading for religion in an age dominated by science. Bacon was pleading for science in an age dominated by religion."[36] Bacon's view of Nature as God's handiwork, and divine, culminated in the age of Wordsworth and was the basis for reconciling science with

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[34] E. M. W. Tillyard, The Elizabethan World Picture (New York, 1942), p. 102.

[35] Basil Willey, The Seventeenth Century Background (New York, 1953), p. 42.

[36] Ibid., p. 37.

religion for two centuries, according to Willey. Macaulay, born in 1800 near the end of these two centuries, may never have perceived the conflict between science and religion because, to him, Nature (science) was God's handiwork.

Modern scientists recognize the contribution of Bacon to experimental science as providing an outline to be followed. The method he advocates was used by contemporaries of his like Galileo, but Bacon's writings delineated the idea. "Men began to realize that by making observations carefully and analyzing them quantitatively, it could be shown that nature behaved in a regular manner and that these regularities could be discovered, reduced to mathematical form, and used to predict future events."[37] Catherine Bowen names Bacon "a propagandist of science." Basil Willey said that Bacon gave science "an incomparable advertizement." He described Bacon as a master of language, with the wisdom of a poet or prophet, with "intervals of wise passiveness" as described by Keats and Wordsworth.[38]

Macaulay's view of Bacon is perceptive if the critical material on Bacon and his time published before 1837 is contrasted with the wealth of critical literature now available. Most writers judge Macaulay as unduly harsh

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[37]Edward Hutchins, Jr., ed., Frontiers in Science (New York, 1958), p. 226.

[38]Willey, Background, p. 43.

in condemning Bacon as corrupt, but time and research have not changed the fact that Bacon was corrupt. An understanding of Macaulay and the early nineteenth century background will reveal the admiration which Macaulay had for Bacon and which is expressed in Lord Bacon. Macaulay's style of writing, discursive on every subject he introduces, and emphatic on every point, is not acceptable now to many readers.

John Morley, seventeen years after Macaulay's death, summed up the criticism of Macaulay with which modern critics agree:

> Now a man of letters, in an age of battle and transition like our own, fades into an ever deepening distance, unless he has while he writes, that touching and impressive quality,--the presentiment of the eve; a feeling for the difficulties and interests that will engage and distract mankind on the morrow.[39]

Macaulay has "faded into the distance," but there could be a revival of interest in his writings in this modern age which is looking for roots and for expression by the individual. He should be considered as one of the intellectuals of the Romantic period of English literature, as well as "spokesman of the Victorian Age" which drew much of its inspiration from the Romantics.

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[39]Morley, Miscellanies, 290.

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