Two Milton Essays

(a) The Aesthetic of Milton
(b) Puritanism and Anglicanism in the Age of Milton.

Note: These are submitted together because of their complementary nature: — the twofold spirit in Milton's age, was, comprehensively, a twofold attitude towards Beauty.

McMaster University, Hamilton.
November 1930.
The Aesthetic of Milton

Meredith Thompson

Blake opens his great and strange poem on Milton, with such lines as:

"Say first! what mov'd Milton, who walk'd about in

One hundred years,—" ("Milton" I, 11)

This would be a tremendous undertaking—a task perhaps which not even Masson with his volumes and volumes fully accomplished. In keeping with recent studies it would aim to present the poet not only as a supreme literary artist, and a great, good man—but as an original thinker as well. In part, it would involve the discovery of such aesthetic principles—if any—as governed his creative endeavors. And here it must be said that every artist—especially those who attempt the larger forms of expression, and those who treat themes of cosmic significance—must have some theory of Beauty. But most artists, I believe, have left this creed unwritten; and have more than likely held that scientific aesthetic is futile. One of these, for example, is Bach; and yet no one will doubt that the B Minor Mass could never have been written without a deep and vivid comprehension of the manner in which Beauty may reflect the universe. It is also true that such artists as have expressed a theory have dealt in such extravagances often, or in principles so at variance with their own art-works—as greatly mitigate their usefulness to scientific investigation. This is partially true even of Wordsworth, and it applies admirably to Schopenhauer whose attempts at aesthetic
Newman says: "There is a bit of folly in all musicians. In Wagner it came out in the prose writings; in Beethoven in his private life; in Strauss in his Music of the Times."
have been described (by Ernest Newman) as an outlet for a streak of insanity within him! But Milton is one of those — Plato, Horace, Reynolds & Wordsworth are others — whose words upon Beauty are of the highest value to the Philosophy of Art. For that philosophy is too often a form of arm-chair criticism, too often based upon preceding theories, entirely, than upon the actual phenomena which it attempts to interpret. (Surely it is more reasonable to base an Aesthetic of Music upon Palestrina or Mozart than upon Schopenhauer or Helmholtz.) And so it is a lucky day for Science when a poet of Milton's calibre not only states his principles of Beauty — born out of practical acquaintance with at least two arts — but gives them actual demonstration in inspired verse.

Milton, however, has not left us any treatise on Poetics — nor did Plato. His views are to be gleaned from a few important paragraphs and from incidental suggestions — of which there are many throughout his works. It is, therefore, extremely difficult to present them as a body of doctrine in which no gaps or omissions occur; and to resist the temptation of filling in such cleavage, by unwarranted implication. (By implication we might construct an Aesthetic for the worst possible winter of doggerel.)

In this outline, therefore, I have tried to base my statements on Milton's own words whenever possible; and — in order to exhibit his peculiar value to the Science of Beauty — I have quoted many passages of his poetry as the practical working out of his theories.
1. From the Prophetic Poets - (edited by J.R.D. Mackagan & C.G.B. Russell)

2. John Walter Good is the authority here: "Milton believed that time poetry was the product of the creative imagination operating under the direction or impulse of divine inspiration. The greatest lyrical poetry was the voice of the Hebrew Poets." (Studies in the Milton Tradition, Ch. III - Univ. of Ill. Studies in Lang. and Lit. Vol I Nos. 3, 4)

Inspiration

William Blake in his lengthy poem on Milton makes a celestial bard say:

......... I am inspired! I know it is the truth! For lo
According to the inspiration of the Poetic Genius,
Who is the Eternal all protecting Divine Humanity.
To whom be Glory and Power and Dominion Evermore
Amen.

("Milton", 71, 50)

Later he brings Milton back to Earth in

............ "The grandeur of Inspiration
To cast off Rational Demonstration by Faith in the
Saviour;
To cast off the rotten rags of Memory by Inspiration
To cast off Bacon, Locke and Newton from Albion's
Covering
To take off his filthy garments and clothe him
With Imagination
To cast aside from Poetry all that is not Inspiration

("Milton", xxi, 2)

Whether or not Milton's ghost would have been willing to perform all of this rigorous mission, it would assuredly have agreed with the celestial bard, and been willing to purge poetry of its uninspired elements. For Milton had a belief, at once Platonic and Biblical, in the mystic and God-given nature of true imagination. For him, the true poet writes because he must; and apprehends realities far above the average plane of existence. He was called like the Hebrew Prophets, whom Milton considered the greatest lyricists, to be the voice of God. Thus when Milton's widow was asked concerning her husband's muse, she replied: "It was God's grace and the Holy Spirit that visited him
rightly."

Of his own statements supporting this, there are many. In the essay on Church Government (Bk 2,) he lays it down that great poetry is "not to be raised from the heat of youth, or the
vapors of wine... nor to be obtained by the invocation of Damo
1. William Blake described his "Milton" as "an immense poem, . . . all produced without labour or study."

2. E. F. Carpent says: "It is not impossible, but it is rare to find a quite satisfactory work of art to which we can assign its edification. Milton does not really justify God's ways to man, but we perhaps care more for him than those who thought he did."

(The Theory of Beauty, Page 65)
Memory and her seven daughters; but by devout prayer to
that Eternal Spirit who can enrich with all utterance
and knowledge, and sends His seraphim with the
hallowed fire of His altar, to touch and purify the lips of
whom He pleases"—Of Shakespeare he says:

"For whilst to th' shame of slow-enduring art,
Thy easy numbers flow."—(On Shakespeare 9-10)

In Paradise lost he first invokes the Christian Deity:

"Sing, Heavenly Muse, that, on the secret top
Of Oreb, or of Sinai, didst inspire
That shepherd who first taught the chosen seed
In the beginning how the heavens and earth
Rose out of Chaos.................

Thence
Invoke thy aid to my adventurous song,
That with no middle flight intends to soar
Above the Olympian mount

Instinct me, for Thou knowest

That, to the height of this great argument
I may assert Eternal Providence,
And justify the ways of God to men"—(Il. 6-26)

Then he calls on a Pagan Muse:

"Descend from Heaven, Eraria, by that name
If rightly Thou art called, whose voice divine
Following, above the Olympian Hill I soar,
Above the flight of Peiraeasian wing

Still govern Thou My song,
Urania, and fit audience find, though few. (III. 4-14)

In Paradise Regained he asks God for inspiration:

"As thou art wont, my promptest song employ,

(I line 12)"
1. Dugald Stewart: "Philosophy of the Human Mind" quotes by Ruskin as follows: "Milton...in creating his imaginary garden of Eden....when he first proposed to himself that subject of description, it is reasonable to suppose that a variety of the most striking scenes which he had seen crowded into his mind. The association of ideas suggested them, and the power of conception placed each of them before him with all its beauties and imperfections...Milton accordingly would not copy his Eden from any one scene, but would select from each the features which were most eminently beautiful. The power of abstraction enabled him to make the separation, out of taste directed him in the selection..."

2. John Ruskin: "Modern Painters; Vol II Sect II Ch I-III.

3. Addison: "Criticisms of Milton...from The Spectator..."


Longinus has shown that the sublime may or may not be infused with passion...once the sublimity of great confusion and great repose. Addison says (see 3) that Milton excels in both types. Burke defined the sublime as that which "inspires awe: bordering on fear by means either of greatness (the extensive sublime) or of power (the dynamic sublime)." Larson continues by saying "Milton is master of both..."

5. De Quincey said: "Ezekiel, Isaiah, Lucan and Milton Have the True Quality (of the Sublime) "Milton is Satan is Sublime"...

J.R. Lowell in his Essay on Milton says "In reading Paradise Lost one has a feeling of spaciousness such as no other poet gives..." and he adds, "Milton is the last man in the world to be slapped on the back with impunity..." That is sublime!"
It is to this lofty inspiration that Ruskin attributes the lightning flashes of Milton's genius; and severely criticises Dugald Stewart who puts forth a simpler explanation. According to Stewart, Milton's description of Eden is a tasteful abstraction and synthesis of the many beautiful gardens he must have seen. This, says Ruskin, explains only the "combinative" side of his imagination, but fails to account for the inspired contemplation and penetrative insight of genius. As examples of such insight, he quotes these (underlined) expressions:

"Under the opening eyelids of the Morn"
(Lycidas 26)

"To behold the wandering moon,
Rising near her highest noon,
Like one that had been lost astray
Through the heaven's wide pathless way,
And oft, as if her head she bowed,
Stooping through a fleecy cloud."
(Al Penitens 67-72)

"The Earth's huge
to him bended knee
His massy spear upstaid; as if on earth
Winds under ground, or waters forcing way
Sidelong had pushed a mountain from his seat,
Half sunk with all his pines" (Paradise Lost vi. 193-198)

Another direct result of Milton's inspiration is the quality of Sublimity about his word. Addison wrote in the Spectator that Milton manifests all that Longinus implies by this term. "Milton's chief talent," said Addison, "lies in the Sublimity of his Thoughts." A recent critic, Martin A. Larson, refers not to Longinus but to Burke's treatment of the Sublime, and adds that "the word Miltonic is almost synonymous with Sublimity."
1. J.W. Good: Studies in the Milton Tradition Ch. IV.

2. The more recent criticism of Milton regards him as primarily a humanist and a child of the Renaissance, rather than as the stern painter of heretofore. e.g., see Denis Saintavit: "Milton as Man and Thinker".

3. Later he says:

"So much the rather thus, celestial Light,
Shine inward, and the mind through all her powers
Irradiate, these plainer eyes, all mist from Thence
Purge and dispense, that I may see and tell
Of things invisible to mortal sight" (Paradise Lost III 51-5).
Finally, this inspired, lofty and mystic nature of Milton's creed and poetry, caused him to become a great stimulus to the revolt from eighteenth-century formalism. For Paradise Lost, albeit didactic, bears a "fairy-land-world-of-romance" character wherein "Those Romantics who sought escape from the depressions of the real world found a satisfying refuge." And this is because the spiritual ideality unto, at the same time, the humanism of Milton is likewise at the core of the new movement.

Light

Closely linked up with his view of inspiration is Milton's concept and doctrine of Light. For he identifies Light with that creative spirit which God breathes into him:

"Hail, holy Light, offspring of Heaven first-born!
Or of the Eternal coeval beams
May I express Thee unblamed?... (Paradise Lost III 1-3)

In such a way Plato allotting varying intensities of light to the varying degrees of comprehension represented in his figure of "the line" - and he makes the vision of the inspired lover (in the Symposium) an affair of dazzling brightness. Also the Neoplatonists conceived of inspiration (or "ecstasy") as induced by a divine and irradient emanation. And Dante in his ascent from Inferno is drawn upwards by the ever-increasing luminosity of the Rose of Heaven. Especially in the Scriptures, old and new, is Light made the symbol of prophetic insight and communion with God. But for Milton Light is more than for all these: It becomes indistinguishable from the essential spirit in the Universe - It is a strictly ontological, not merely a figurative, concept. It is the "form" of Truth, Beauty and Goodness at the same time. Thus the passage just quoted continues:
1. Alden Sampson: "Certain Aspects of the Poetic Genius" 
(in his "Studies in Milton")
2. i.e. Platonic Love.
..."God is light,
And never but in unapproached light
Dwelt from eternity — dwelt then in Thee,
Bright effluence of bright essence increate! (III. 3-6)

And later:—

......"Darkness fled,
Light shone, and order from disorder sprung.
Swift to their several quarters hasted then
The cumbrons elements — Earth, Flood, Air, Fire —
And this ethereal quintessence of Heaven
Flew upwards, vivifies with various forms,
That rolled orbicular, and turned to stars
Numberless".... (III 712-719)

And in the Seventh Book:—

"Let there be light! said God; and forthwith light
Ethereal, first of things, quintessence pure
Sprung from the deep. (III 243-245)

This light is more than the inspiration of the poet; it is the
primordial creative principle in the universe. Everything
moreover is to be appraised according to the extent of its
participation in Light. Thus we see Milton's belief in the
interrelation of essential and visible condition; and we
can understand his very prevalent use of terms describ
the presence or absence of illumination. For "then and ever
the man was half Platonist." He saw in the material the
emblem of spiritual values; and he believed
that we may ascend from the former to the latter by
some such process as is described in Plato's Symposium.
Thus the winged Hierarch replies to Adam's question:

"O Adam, one Almighty is, from whom
All things proceed, and up to him return;" (Paradise Lost)

Since Spirit and Body are both emanations of divine light
Therefore "In contemplation of created things,
By steps we may ascent to God" (Paradise Lost II.
Langdon points out the superiority of Milton's Satan, described merely as Darkness - in comparison with Dante's which is elaborately and vividly depicted in detail. (Milton's Theory of Poetry, p. 152)

Oddly enough, Ruskin makes the same comparison, but he feels that Milton's lack of detail is lack of invention and that Dante was in this respect superior.

(Modern Painters Vol III ch. xiv)
Thus we can understand the tremendous condemnation implied in calling Satan the "Prince of Darkness"—and the greatness of the fall which was inflicted upon his hosts—once "Progenie of Light." With such a concept Milton is able to achieve a vast sublimity and to overcome the limitations of detailed description. Indeed much of the action in Paradise Lost might be expressed merely in terms of darkness and light—the one encroaching upon the other. For Satan, after his banishment, becomes "a force of first: the opposite nature as God. Hence in the presence of Him and his followers the radiance of goodness is dimmed, and darkness diffuses itself overall. Thus when two of his attendants go by:

"...the blasted stars looked wan,
And planets, planet-struck, real eclipse
Then suffered." (Paradise Lost II 412-414)

But the crowning act of Satan's perfidy is, when he assumes a shallow though deceptive brightness. That is, he "gilds over his inward darkness, and makes a lies of the symbol of truth." Milton, however, is careful to show the instability of Satan's glitters. For:

"Thus while he spoke, each passion dimmed his face,
Thrice changes with: pale—ire, envy, and despair;
Which marred his borrowed visage, and betrayed
Him counterfeit; fain my eye beheld;
For heavenly minds from such distempers foul
Are ever clear.".... (Paradise Lost II 114-119)

The Law of Form:

It follows from such a theory of inspiration, from such an Ontology, that only a good man can
2. Milton: Christian Doctrine Bk II Ch.".
3. by Langton.
5. Matthew Arnold's view that "Poetry is a criticism of life" is similar to Milton's: but as Lucan's Alcmenon says "Who cares about criticism when raised to the imaginative heights by:

"Tyger, tyger, burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?"

Alcmenon continues... "These moments of animated forensic reasoning in Paradise lost--do we value them as moments of philosophy? By no means; but on the contrary precisely as we value moments of imagery and emotion...--The older Milton could never afford to be syllogistic; for he could make logic serve in the whole a purely imaginative purpose... I doubt if Milton have agreed with this.

The Inferno
Regarding Paradise Lost Harritt (Theory of Bead) says "The moment we ask if any single statement there is propounded logically, true we have ceased... to treat them as works of art" (Page 211)
create good art, and moreover that the goodness and beauty of any art work are one and the same. This of course is a familiar doctrine—characteristic, in some way, of all Idealistic Aesthetic. Thus Plato says "Nothing worthy of serious attention has ever either in verse or prose been written" without knowledge of "things just and beautiful and good." 3 Ruskin states that "Poetry is the suggestion by the imagination of noble grounds for the noble emotions," and he makes beauty depend on the embodiment of attributes typical of the Christian God. Milton sums up his own doctrine when he says it down that "None of our works can be good, but by faith 2 as their justification—that art should be a "free and unimposed" expression "which from a sincere heart, unbidden" comes "into the outward gesture." This doctrine has been described as Milton's Law of Form, 3—such that for him outward manifestation (or Form), is determined by the inner spirit and function of any work. That is that "Forma est causa per quam res est id quod est," Moreover this inner spirit, both in the artist and his product is one with the Divinely emanating Light which we have described. It governs the function of the arts and dedicates them "to the great ends of society":—

"Teaching over the whole book of sanctity and virtue through all the instances of example to those especially of soft and delicious temper, who will not so much as look upon Truth herself unless they see her elegantly dressed, that whereas the paths of honesty and good life appear now rugged difficult, though they be indeed easy and pleasant, they would then appear to all men both easy and pleasant though they were rugged and difficult indeed." (Essay on Church Government. BK 2).
1. Milton: Epistulae Familiares 21
2. Tolstoy: "What is Art" Chapter IV.
4. Yet as Elbert Thompson (Essay on Milton) points out:
   "he thought more of content than of form. He calls
   "Poetry simply because its theme is so truly
   heroic."
..."are the inspired gift of God rarely bestowed, but yet to some (though most above) in every nation: and are of power beside the office of a pulpit to inbred and cherish in a great people the seeds of virtue and public civiluty."... (Church Government BK 2)

Satan tempts Christ with his delight and instruction of pagan poetry:

"There thou shalt hear and learn the secret power
Of harmony, in tones and numbers hit
By voice or hand, and various-measured verse,
Peculiar charms and Doric lyric odes,"... (Paradise Regain IV 245-250)

Muse for Milton, as for Cvoce, creative art is the expressed result of an inner spiritual activity; and it is this activity which should dictate the form, and elaborateness of expression. For he has a Puritan contempt for meaningless ornament; and couples "reduplancy of words with "rivolosness of matter". "If I have written anything well," he says, "I should wish my mind and character to be correspondent":

"I apply myself...to the adornment of my native tongue; not to make verbal curiosities the end—that were a toilsome vanity—but to be an interpreter and relater of the best and sagest things"... (Church Govt. BK 2)

But let it not be assumed that Milton would have agreed with Tolstoy that the best art is the "simplest transfer of feeling"; or that when he said "Nature taught Art" he meant that "The poet is relieved of technical and intellectual labors." Even the simplest complete from from his own verse is manifest reflection of such a view—not to mention the masterly construction of his great epic. It is interesting to note that he seldom uses
1. Milton: History of Britain

2. Addison: Criticisms of Paradise Lost in the Spectator

He adds (in reference to Milton) "The genius of the poet shines by a happy invention, a
distant allusion or a judicious imitation." By such care was achieved what Arnold
calls Milton's "unfailing level of style."
the term "Art" without some qualifying adjective or other means of indicating that it is a skilful method of procedure with a definite plan and end in view. Nor is this contradictory to his Theory of Inspiration. Thus Mammon says:-

"Nor want we still or art from whence to raise Magnificence..." (Paradise Lost II 272-273)

And Michael, later:-

"..."studious they appear
Of Arts that polish life..." (P. L. II 605-606)

In his history of Britain Milton speaks of leaving certain subjects to other poets "who by their art will know how to use them judiciously." It might be added that numerous examples may be found to show that Milton, like Plato, did not distinguish very clearly between "Fine" and "Industrial" Arts. One of these is in Lydidas:

"Blind mouths! that scarce themselves know how to hold
A sheep-hook, or have learnt aught else the least
That to the faithful handman's art belongs."

(Lydidas. 119-121)

Thus Addison was right when he said that Milton was one of "those that have formed themselves by rules, and submitted the greatness of their natural talents to the corrections and restraints of art." 2. Nor did Milton consider that such conscious labor was inimical to sincerity or genuine feeling. He would have said with Horace:

"Praise ye no piece, my noble friends, but what has been through many an hour and many a blot
Corrected, tentimes poised in judgment's scale,
And smoothed like sculpture to the critic's nail!"

(Ars Poetria 289-294)
4. Coleridge said the difference between Milton and Shakespeare was the same as that between Sophocles and Euripides. Sophocles said:
   "My kind of poetry represents men as they should be; Euripides' kind, men as they are."
5. Ruskin said that in Paradise Lost, "every artifice of invention invisibly and consciously employed."
   (Sesame & Lilies IV).
6. "Yet the poet must not be unwilling to undertake the humblest tasks of life"—such as entering the political arena on occasion.
one recalls the notebooks of Beethoven, which show by what laborsious trials his muse found expression.

And that Milton's whole life was vitally spent in preparation for Paradise Lost. His education, in effect, not in speed of accomplishment—resembles that of John Stuart Mill. Thus intellect and principle rule all that he wrote; and separate him from many who found him an inspiration. Moreover "because of this intellectual equipment, which the romantic poets so condescendingly lacked, and because of the loftiness of his ideals, the man has been judged cold and unsympathetic. That truth is, that he was one of those that Lowell speaks of—"in whom the light of truth may not lack the warmth of desire."  

I shall not attempt to describe the intellectual labors of the poet. For these—concerned with metre, structure and like matters—are belong to literary technique rather than aesthetic proper. However there are two general qualities—Verisimilitude and Decorum—of which the poet should strive. These requirements go back to Aristotle and were catchwords among the Neo-classic critics of Milton's day. The former implies not a narrow "resemblance", literal realism, but a presentation of such aspects as are true to life as a whole, as it is, or might be—that is, art is to give concrete expression to universals. The latter is closely related and has been defined as "typical fitness." It ensures the right presentation of both character and atmosphere.... From all that has been said it will be seen that Milton has a very definite and lofty conception of the ideal poet. He insists on his inspiration won through noble living and communion with God, on his artistic skill won through years of preparation and arduous toil—on his usefulness to Society as a teacher speaking of and through the Beautiful. All this he sums up admirably when he demands that the poet "ought himself to be a true poem".
1. Arnold says: “Nature formed Milton to be a great poet.”
2. The original Latin text of this, is as follows:—

   "Excipit hinc fessum sinuori pompa theatri
   Et vocat ad planus garmla scene sum.

   Et dolet specto, iuvat et spectasse dolendo;
   Interdum lachrymis dulcis amaror inest.

4. 15. of Tragic Katharsis.
Katharsis. I shall now describe another vital and not wholly
unallied principle of Milton’s Aesthetic. In one of his early
poems, he says:—

"Here too, I visit, or to smile or weep,

The winding theatre’s majestic sweep;

The grave and gay colloquial scene recruits
My spirits, spent in learning’s long pursuits;

I gaze, and grieve, still cherishing my grief.
At times, e’en bitter tears yield sweet relief."[2]

(First Ilegy ll 27-28, 39-40, transl. by Cooper) 2

This passage, particularly the last line, is akin to the usual
interpretations of Aristotle’s term “Katharsis” (Καθαρσίς) — a
most important conception of the function of Drama. It implies
that Tragedy is a presentation “with incidents arousing pity and
fear, wherewith to accomplish its Katharsis of such emotions.”[2] As
to the exact nature of this process, however, we are unable to
speculativize. For the extant works of Aristotle yield no further
explanation; nor has scholarship upon them reached unanimous
definition as yet. This, however, is one of the aesthetic
principles which Milton expressed most unmistakably; and, indeed,
he made vital contribution to the controversy over it. The
classic exposition of this view is to be found in the short preface
which he wrote to “Samson Agonistes”: To quote in part:—

"Tragedy, as it was antiently composed, hath been ever
held the gravest, moralist, and most profitable of all other
poems; therefore said by Aristotle to be of power by raising
pity and fear, or terror, to purge the mind of those and such
1. The following are some of the more important commentators with their dates of composition or publication:
   - Cintio 1543, Robertelli 1548, Maggi and Lombardi 1550, Tasso 1559
   - Minturno 1559, Scaliger 1561, Rossi 1590, Castelvetro 1570, Galleggi 1621


like passions, that is, to temper and reduce them to just
measure with a kind of delight, stirred up by reading
or seeing those passions well imitated. Nor is Nature
wanting in her own effects to make good his assertion:
for so in Olycic things of melancholic hue and quality
are used against melancholy, some against sour, salt
to remove salt humors."

It is generally supposed that Milton, when he wrote this, was
influenced to a large degree by his commentator upon
Aristotle . For in his day (and before it) there was much
activity (and eminence) in discussing such concepts as this.
Now the two main interpretations of Καθαρσίς were, on the
one hand, religious or moral, and on the other medical or
pathological. The former was rendered in Milton's day by
such words as illustratio, expiatio, purificatio; the latter
by purgatio, curatio etc. And the concensus of
opinion seems to be that Milton favored the medical
view. For example, Butcher says that for Milton "Tragedy
is a form of homoeopathic treatment curing emotion by
means of an emotion like in kind but not identical." Spiegel
illustrates purgatio by noting Minturno: "as a physician
eradicates, by means of poisons or medicine, the pernicious
poison of disease which affects the body, so tragedy purges
the mind of its impetuous perturbations by the force of
these emotions beautifully expressed in verse," and he adds
"we find Milton, in the preface to Samson Agonistes, explaining
the catharsis in much the same manner." But the most
important contribution on this point is Bywater's scholarly
essay. He draws attention to the custom of regarding Milton
1. Antonio Scaino wrote "La Politia di Aristotele redotta in modo di Parafraesi" 1578.

2. Targovius Galluzzi wrote "Vindicaciones & Commentario tres de Tragedia Comoedia Elegia" 1621.

3. Another indication that Milton's view was homoeopathic is to be found in the following:

   "These abilities [of the dramatic poet] ... are of power beside the office of a pulpit ... to allay the perturbations of the mind, and set the affections in right tone" - ("The Reason of Church Government" Bk. 2. - as quoted in Langdon: "Milton's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art")


5. I make no attempt to give here a complete outline of the various interpretations of Katharsis. Most of them it is true, fall under the pathological or ethico-religious heads. Another view (based on the Rhetoric) is that Katharsis is a matter not of psychological effects but of aesthetic values. That is, that Aristotle was not so concerned with the effect of drama upon the audience as with its presentation of an imitation of life, wherein such feelings as Pity and Fear stand in mutual equipoise. (Cf. G.S. Brett: Reflections on Aristotle's Theory of Tragedy - in "Memorial Essays to John Watson")
As in some sense originator of the therapeutic view; and \_\_\_ insists that he is hardly that, although an outstanding protagonist of it. For while it is true that the earlier Italians were generally in favor of a religious Katharos, yet they were men like Antonio Scaino and Jacquinio Galluzzi who advanced "medieval" theories. Indeed the latter was Rector of the Greek College at Rome at the time of Milton's Italian journey (1638). Therefore, since he did not find it in any of the available editions of the Poetics, Milton must have got his Katharic interpretation from Italy in his own day. The three authorities, Butler, Spigam and Bywater, undoubtedly right. Milton is certainly a 'purgationist'? Nevertheless I can see nothing in his famous preface to prevent this being an 'imitation' at the same time. Moreover it seems reasonable that one with his lofty conception of the religious functions of art, should regard \( \kappa \theta \epsilon \alpha \rho \omega \sigma \iota \) in some spiritual way. At this point, Mrs Langdon's observation is interesting. She reminds us that on the title page of Samson Agonistes \( \kappa \theta \epsilon \alpha \rho \omega \sigma \iota \) is rendered by 'Iustratio' (rather than 'purgatio') thus:

"\textit{Tragedia est imitatio actionis feria & Perniciicordiam & metum perficiens talium affectuam iustrationem.}\"

But the most valuable contribution of Milton to Tragic Katharos is in the realm of application rather than theory. Aristotle, it will be remembered, pointed to "Oedipus Rex" as an instance of his principle. Milton, however, wrote his own instance in Samson Agonistes this tragedy, Dr. Johnson liked not better than Lycidas:
Prometheus is the famous drama of Aeschylus (c. 525-456 B.C.).

It is of course understood that Pity and Fear, in the Aristotelian sense, are merely generalized expressions for the various emotions which conflict in life.

In the soliloquy which follows may be seen Milton’s grief over his own blindness; and his dissatisfaction with the conditions which surrounded him.
He considered it a drama "in which the intermediate parts have neither cause nor consequence, neither hasten nor retard the catastrophe." As a matter of fact there is no lack of movement in Milton's drama. Samson Agonistes is indeed moving; although, like Prometheus, its action is internal rather than outward. Like Prometheus and other of Milton's Classic models, it is based on the conflict of wills and emotions rather than upon some highly entangled situation. Like Prometheus, "Each speech... is a step in the action; each word... is equivalent to a deed; it is the authentic voice of will which rises, superior to physical bondage. The play's action throughout—action none the less real because it consists not in doing, but in suffering. Thus the external movement—the arrival of those friends who constitute the chorus, the endeavours of Manoa, the Festival, and even the destruction of the Theatre, as a physical fact—are of lesser importance. It is the mind of the doomed Israelite distressed with the conflict of

"restless thoughts, that like a deadly swarm of Hymenaeus, no sooner found alone, But rush upon me thronging...." (ll.19-21)

That forms the basis of the tragedy. The ultimate catastrophe is a resolution of the drama—not so much because it brings death to Samson's or Israel's enemies—as because it brings about a Katharsis of the turmoil of feeling. That constitutes the action; and, therefore, justifies "the ways of God to man." Thus in the concluding pages, Manoa says:
1. As also he regarded "The story of Job, The Apocalypse, and the Song of Solomon as a "Divine pastoral drama". -

cf. Albert S. Cook: "Miltons view of The Apocalypse as a tragedy" wherein Revelations is set forth in the acts of a drama -

"(Studies in der Neueren Sprachen und Literaturen" 1912)"
"Come, come, no time for lamentation now,
Nor much more cause, Samson hath quit himself
Like Samson, and heroically hath finished
A life heroic. 

Nothing is here for tears, nothing to wail
Or knock the breast, no weakness, no contempt,
Dispraise, or blame, nothing but well and fair,
And what may quiet us in a death so noble." (ll. 1708–1711)

And the chorus concludes the drama, thus:-

"His servants he with new against
Of time experience from this great event
With peace and consolation hath distrest,
And calm of mind all passion spent." (ll. 1755–1758)

Before concluding this subject, καθαρσίας,-
two other examples may be cited from Milton. The first of
These gives evidence that he regarded the Sin in The Garden as a
Tragic episode in the structure of *Paradise Lost*; For when the
News of Man's transgression is reported in Heaven, it has a
Katharsis effect upon the Elect therein assembled:-

.... "Soon as the unwelcome news
From Earth arrived at Heaven-gate, displeased
All where who heared; dwin sadness did not spare
That time celestial visages, yet, mixed
With pity, violated not their bliss. (Paradise Lost, V, ll. 21–25)

But whether Milton intended it or no, this is not true Katharsis — that
is, not in the Aristotelian sense. For, in the first place, it will be
observed that there is no mention of tragic fear, only of pity and
sadness — whereas pity and fear, as we learn from Aristotle's

2. The main reference is *Politics* II (1341 b 32—1342 b 15).

3. Professor G. S. Brett gives an interesting example of musical *katharsis* in the *Tarantella*. This is an Italian dance of wild character, which was supposed to induce a kind of frenzy into those who heard and danced it, such that the poisonous effect of a tarantula's bite would be counteracted—(G. S. Brett, "Reflections on Aristotle's theory of Tragedy" in a volume of memorial essays to John Watson).
"Rhetoric are correlated (and mutually dissipating) emotio. Moreover it is impossible that the celestial beings might, in all strictness, experience either fear or pity — since for them to fear is unthinkable; and to pity is contrary to Aristotle's condition that pity arises from such examples as make it more probable that the case may become our own. He says:"

"...we must take it as a general maxim, that all things which we fear for ourselves, we pity when they happen to others." (Rhetoric 2.8.1386a 24-28, Jell.)

However, the solution of this difficulty is, it seems to me, that Milton was unwilling to sacrifice either Divine Omnipotence or Compassion — for the sake of a technical formula.

The other instance of καθαρσία is that which is brought about by Music; and here Milton again follows in the footsteps of Aristotle. For it is generally supposed that the latter came upon this conception by observing the sedative effect of certain melodies on morbid religious ecstasy."

Thus in the Politics he advocates certain tumultuous modes as a means of medical or purgative treatment. Such instill quiescence and harmless joy. It is from this source that the "purgative" definition of Katharsis has been transferred (notably by Bernays) to its mention in connection with Drama in the Poetics. There are two main references to Kathartic Music in the writings of Milton. First of all in "Arcades:"

"Such sweet compulsion dost in Musick lay,
To dull the Daughters of Necessity,
And keep unitedly Nature to her law,
And the low-world in measure motionless..."
Blacks and Macaulay regarded Milton's classical training as a hindrance rather than an aid. Ruskin (in *Seicento e Liber* IV) claimed that Milton's story of the Fall was "wholly founded on ... Herod's account of the decisive war of the younger gods to the Titans." Masson describes the writer of *Samson Agonistes* as "an English Sophocles or Euripides writing on a Hebrew Subject" (*Masson Vol. VI B.C. 15*).
After the heavenly tune, which none can hear
Of human mords with gross unpurged ear,
(Arcades. II 68-73)

Then, more definitely, in the "Tractate on Education" where Milton advocates that before and after meat the English youth may "with profit and delight" hear or learn music:—

......"which if wise men and prophets be not extremely, have a great power over dispositions and manners, to smooth, and make them gentle from mutic harshness and distempered passions......and send their minds back to study in good tune and satisfaction".... (Tractate on Education Works 4.331)

It might be added that Milton considered comic interludes to be detrimental to the kathartic effect of Tragedy. For he was a dramatic "purist" and regarded the grave plays of Classic Antiquity as vastly superior to the more popular productions of the Renaissance writers.

Milton's Interest in the other Arts.

Before concluding, I should like to bring partially relieved of the necessity of describing the strict nature and functions of Beauty—in order to mention Milton's interest in the other arts—(whether it is philosophic or otherwise). For this seems to me an appropriate appendix to a discussion of his Aesthetic proper. Now whosoever said that 'architecture is frozen music' coupled together the two forms of art, in which, outside of Poetry, Milton was most interested. Indeed his interest in these amounted to highly technical knowledge, and his works abound with allusions to them—often too scientific (said Addison), for the average reader to appreciate.

Architectural Beauty is his theme when in Il Penseroso
he says:—

"To walk the stately cloister's pale,
And love the high embowed roof,
With antique pillars massy-propped,
And storied windows richly lighted,
Casting a dim religious light." (Il Penseroso 155-160)

When he describes the building of Pandemonium:—

"...like a temple, whose pilasters round
were set, and Doric pillars overlaid
with golden architrave; nor did these want
Cornice or frieze, with bossy sculptures graven:
The roof was fretted gold. .............................................

From the arched roof,
Pendent by subtle magic, many a row
Of starry lamps and blazing cressets."....

Or when Satan tempts Christ with Rome's glory:

"The imperial palace, compass huge, and high,
The stately, rich of noblest architects,
With gilded battlements, conspicuous far,
Turrets, and terraces, and glittering spires"

(Paradise Lost I 710-734)

Milton's love of Music was almost as great as his joy in poetry. He calls it the "sphere-born harmonious sister of verse," and he himself was a practical musician of some accomplishment—Allan Sampson tells us that "when Milton was engaged in the composition of Paradise Lost he spent hours daily at the organ, refreshing his mind and nourishing his soul "such that "the splendour of that sound is heard reverberating through the cantos of the poem in the same way that it leagers in the aisles and beneath the vaulted roof of a cathedral." A further linking of the two
1. The classic expositions are Plato's Republic III, Aristotle's Politics IV (1352b) and Plato's works as Aristoxenos' Harmonics.

2. Plato: Republic III, 399. Socrates also mentions the Dorian modes as instilling manly virtues.

3. A type of flute, now obsolete, which was noted for its solemnity & sweetness. Wishing to order his distraught mind, Hamlet cries: "Come, some music; come, the recorders."

4. Thus, e.g. Tyrtæus instilled valorous into those Spartan warriors who marched against Messenia.

arts is seen in his constant tendency to speak of poetry as "song"; and in L'Allegro when he describes

...... "soft Lydian airs
Married to immortal verse" (L'Allegro ll.136-137)

we have already noted some of his ideas on the
function of music in discussing Katharmis. Closely
related to this, and equally sweeping in origin, is his
belief in the *ethos* (*ethos*) which pervades; and is
communicated by certain types of melody. That is
like Plato and Aristotle, he believed that different
muses expressed different moral qualities, which
they might impart to those who heard them. Thus
the Lydian Airs mentioned above are those which
Sonatas especially describes as inducing pleasurable
ease. Moreover the roots of Satan and:

"In perfect phalanx to the Dorian mood
Of flutes and soft recorders² and as raised
To height of noblest temper, Heroes old;
Arming to battle." (Paradise Lost I 550-553)

Whereas their heavenly combatants are inspired by:

"...... The sound
Of instrumental harmony that breathed
Heroic ardor to adventurous deeds." (Paradise Lost III 64-66)

Thus every tone and instrument "has for him a
fixed and definite function... They cannot be
indiscriminately changed about." Furthermore it
is not surprising to find that in his enthusiasm
he attributes to music such powers as can only be
taken as hyperbolical. As when he says:

"Strains that might create a soul
Under the ribs of Death." (Comus 861-62)

One of the most interesting of all Milton's references to
Music occurs in the description of Adam's vision: when...

".... The sound
Of instruments that made melodic strains
Was heard of Harp and Organ, and who moved
Their stops and chords was seen: his volant
Touch, instinct through all proportions low and high
Fled and pursu'd traverse the resonant aquare."

(Paradise Lost II 554-559)

This has been called "the best description of a fugue ever written"; and is evident proof that Milton was not only trained in the technique of musical construction but was in touch with the most advanced development in his own day. For at the time this was written Bach, the greatest of fuguolistes, was not yet born; and Fux, who wrote the first treatise on the subject, was a mere babe. Milton, therefore, must have obtained his knowledge, in some direct manner, from the first pioneers in this style of writing. And since these men Gabrieli, Frescobaldi and Froberger, were at that time in Italy—it is only natural to assume that Milton picked up the information during his sojourn there.

But the art of fugue and the concept of harmony were not the only mental acquisitions which Milton derived from this visit. For he undoubtedly enriched his soul by becoming acquainted with much of the glorious pictorial art which there abounds. But this we infer not from direct references—although remarkably, one almost negligible—but from the fact that his poetry agrees with Croce's definition of verse as "speaking paintrip." Thus Coleridge points
1. Coleridge: Table Talk
out a kinship between Milton and Michael Angelo; and claims that in one instance "Milton has certainly copied the fresco of the Creation in the Sistine Chapel at Rome".:

"..... now half appeared
The tawny lion, pawing to get free
His hinder parts - then springs as broke
From bonds,
And rampant shakes his brindled mane." etc.

So this might be added innumerable passages which, if not referable to so definite a source, are certainly suggestive of great canvases for some artist to paint. Langdon 2 sees in one of these a fitting contrast to Corot's "Dance of the Nymphs"—when, in The Nativity Hymn:

"With flower-inwoven tresses torn
The Nymphs in twilight shade of tangled
Thickets Mourn".

Volumes might be written on the colourful and plastic quality of Milton's imagery and description.

Closely allied to this is his interest in another important art: landscape gardening— as is amply shown in his word-pictures of Eden. It was, as Addison said composed of "beds of flowers" and "wildness of sweets"—in the fashioning of which our first parents had followed the dictates of Nature rather than formal design. Indeed some, like Wespole, have gone so far as to attribute to Milton that change from extreme artificiality to extreme realism which took place in garden-planning after his time. And it was not uncommon to find books with such titles as "Paradise Regained: or the Art of Gardening". This, while an exaggeration, indicates the undoubted influence which Milton had upon the art.
2. Caedmon: Metrical Paraphrase of the Holy Scripture as translated by Benjamin Thorpe. Caedmon's and Milton's treatments of the Fall make an interesting comparison. The original text of this quotation is as follows:

"wis þe þeoh nicel
þe neða þæs peard
þe neða þæs puldon-cyning
þe peðum heþužen
mòðum luþien."

These lines open the poem.
Lancelas Alcconwriae in his "Theory of Poetry" says that "no poetic theory, however it sharpen its analysis is ever likely to come to an end of its topic: there must always remain a mystery: this is true; and, moreover, it has particular application in Milton's case. For his art is of such eminence that not even his own aesthetics can offer a better means of accounting for it, than as inspiration. That is, that Milton was, as Tennyson said "God-gifted organ-voice of England". Furthermore, I cannot believe that Milton sat down with his aesthetic programme in front of him; or, in the last analysis, with his moral programme either; and wrote in strict accordance therewith. It is more likely that he spoke out of those needs of expression with which all artists are endowed, on the other hand, it is undeniable that he linked these needs with a lofty religious purpose and moral zeal. Like Cassius, our first poet, he set out in the deep conviction that

"For us it is much right
That we the Guardian of the Skies,
The Glory-King of Hosts,
Without words praise,
In our Minds Love."
References

The only book that I could find specifically dealing with this topic is
Ida Langdon: "Milton's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art"
Besides Milton's genuine Aesthetic, it contains a lot of material which belongs rather to the sphere of literary techniques and which I thought unsuitable to dwell on in a short essay like this. Other references are exceedingly scarce; but the following (besides some others mentioned in the notes) have been very useful:

Wilhelm Blake - "Milton", edited with an introduction by
A.H. R. Hall - Ruskin as a Literary Critic.
Addison - Criticisms of Milton from the Spectator.
M.A. Larson - The Modernity of Milton.
David Masson - Life of Milton: exp. Vol. VII.
Ingram Bywater - Milton and the Aristotelian Definition of Tragedy.
Denis Savary - Milton: Man and Thinker.
Alden Sampson - Studies in Milton.
Dmitri Merejkovsky, Russian author, has written a series of novels about an old, old conflict—a conflict of life with itself. That is to say, he has visualized two swollen life-streams, mutually expressive, and determining the trend, new of manners and morals, new of institutions and creeds, of art or science, of single individuals or whole civilizations. These forces, moreover, are particularly manifest to him in the Pagan and the Christian ideals. The former is, in essence, aesthetic and immoral, seeks fulness of expression and regards the world as lovely and endowed with pleasure for man—Beauty and Power are its watchwords. The latter is definitely moral, looks upon delight and bountiful living with suspicion, not reverence; holds mortal existence as trivial because preparatory; trembles before a stern of paternal Deity, and perpetually proclaims submission and virtue as the enduring values of life.

But these tendencies are as old as time itself. Long before Julian and Leonardo and Peter of Russia, long before Arnold could have named them Hellenism and Hebraism, long before they were consciously apprehended at all—they must have made their impress on thought and action in primitive society. And why?—because they flow from the fountain springs of Reality: out of the twofold essence of life which the most monistic philosophies have not quite explained away—because in their unceasing course, over precipitous meadow, they voice the equally legitimate demands of flesh and spirit, desire and divinity.
The Renaissance was a return to the Pagan ideal. In contrast to the gloom and somnolence of the Middle Ages - to the misery, hopelessness and puppyness of mankind - to servility trembling before priestly tyrants and dogmatic deity ... these came, like summer fragrance upon earth, a new spirit, hope, vision and creed: - Humanism.

Now this meant that where death and denial had alone seemed desirable, now life in all its fulness, and particularly human life, are paramount. Man is truly "the measure of all things." His natural aims and pleasures are therefore good. His investigations and opinions are ultimately the authority for science, religion and morality. So Raphael painted lovely, voluptuous Madonnas; Copernicus put man at the centre of the universe; Bacon stated the Naturalistic Method; and Luther proclaimed for all time the majesty of man's soul.

It was an age of freedom and magnificence, an age wherein luxury and indulgence, enterprise and invention went hand in hand, and knew no bounds. In Italy the gloriously dissolute Borgias, the Medici, the common people, paid little heed to the wisdom of Machiavelli, or the feeble warnings of Savonarola. Yet from Italy came the New Science, the wonders of Art & Music, and the elements of modern thought. In England, where it spread, the movement bolstered Tudor supremacy and culminated in the Elizabethan Age, thence to decline ... What a wonderful England Elizabeth rules! Never in its history had been seen such days. Politically supreme and fabulously wealthy, the Nation enters upon a new lease of life. Everywhere was keen enjoyment and overflowing energy - practical as opposed to jejuni aims, regal pomp and patriotism.
as opposed to monkish precept and fanatical submission.

And, of course, the literature of the age reflected its tempo. Rich and time-to-life, practical yet devious of conscious purpose, individualistic and also typical, it excelled in portraying character and mood, and thus brought drama & lyric to unprecedented heights. Out of a huge assemblage of skilful writers, some few there were who spoke even for all time, and yet as children of their age. Shakespeare is a splendid example of the desire to experience and assimilate as much as possible of life, of the interest in character, rather than abstract truth, of the strong regard for sensuous beauty, and at the same time for the practical concerns of life. (Though, of course, he is not to be limited by these qualities alone). Spenser, has similar tendencies, and wrote his “Faerie Queen” under the (pagan) ideal of “grace and self-culture”. In so doing he expressed the Elizabethan ethic which set up the ability to do great things on earth ahead of spiritual achievements in an afterlife. He too was an ardent lover of beauty and form, and was interested, as well, in national life and material concerns. It has been said that these were two things which he never forgot: London and the Queen.

There is, in Geneva, I am told, a cathedral of extraordinary significance. For an onlooker, who feasts on its Renaissance splendors outside — will find to his disappointment that a later age has stripped the interior to barrenness and gloom. Now this is characteristic of what happened in England. — For as the Elizabethan epoch passed away, it was succeeded by a time when life seemed likely to lose all its beauty and all its grace.
Throughout Caroline and Cromwellian days there was a growing reaction to the moral ideal in all its austerity, narrowness, and fanaticism. If England had slept and dreamed that life was beauty, she was certainly awaking now to find it duty. But, of course, there was no neat passage from one age to another; nor was this among ages the most homogeneous. Rather, in the Seventeenth Century, there was a considerable struggle, political, religious, literary — between the same old ideals of which Merejovsky writes. And, though it is time that the Christian forces were greatly victorious, yet were they to submit in time to a Paganism restored and licentious.

These contending parties practically fall of life between them. On the one hand were the Anglicans who carried on the Elizabethan and Renaissance traditions — they might be reviving cavaliers, ritualistic churchmen or extravagantly sensuous poets, yet were they one class. Their common belief was in that simple and manifold life which we have described — they were cultured, Royalist and intensely patriotic. Beauty, physical beauty, was for them a material expression of divinity; and it must be admitted that, by many, higher spiritual reality was little desired. On the other hand were the Puritans whose humanism was a kind of religious fervour which made all else trivial but the salvation of man's souls. Nothing, said they, must come in between man and his Creator. Priestly office and ritual, innocent but distracting pleasure, material beauty and all other sensuous illusion, even the throne of England — must be wiped out. So blind was their spiritual zeal, so great their self-disparagement, that they put aside
The gorgeous domes, sheared the graceful curls, draped themselves in black; and with stern visage went forth ruthlessly, and cruelly in the work of salvation. Calvinism with its gloomy fatalism and its Stoic endurance was part of their creed. They believed themselves a body elect, refused to contemplate God with less than the most rigid concentration and forced the most rigid conformance on all persons.

These of course are the extremes, the distinguishing features of Anglicanism and of Puritanism. For it must be assumed that the one was as free and the other as blinded as depicted. Take Puritanism especially: In its early days it was not nearly so adverse to the lighter and more elegant sides of life. For if Nehemiah Wallington's mother was seldom "seen abroad except at church," and if Bunyan was so full of self-abnegating piety that he had to relinquish heartfelt sport — yet there were other Puritans like Colonel Hutchinson or even Cromwell who cultivated the gracious arts, and tempered their zeal with tolerance and benevolence. Moreover, it must be admitted that Puritanism was in many ways a healthy, sober corrective to the excesses of a race newly conscious of their powers and newly liberated from the yoke of centuries.

Among the disputed paintings of Leonardo there is one of much interest here. That is the picture of the beautiful youth seated pleasantly beneath a tree and clad in skins. Now the remarkable feature of this is that critics are as yet undecided whether this young man represents John the Baptist or Bacchus; and since it might be either, it is evident that the artist (Leonardo or a close disciple of his) held some mysterious connection between these ostensibly opposed conceptions. This
of course is not new. The claims of flesh and spirit have not always been urged or acted upon separately. Take, for example, the love-philosophy of Plato or Spenser. Think of Sir Phillip Sidney...... In the earliest years after Elizabeth's death, there was born a great writer in whom the opposing tendencies of the age were both represented. Milton has been called "the last of the Elizabethans" as well as "the highest and completest Puritan." In a way, he was both.

Let us look at his life. In youth he enjoyed an environment of gaiety, ease and intellectual culture. His parents were cultivated and prosperous, and gave him an education which in breadth, if not in precision, entered Mills. He loved perfection and learning, beauty and joy, humanity, and affection; and looked forward to the fullest and richest kind of life. Yet he was a Puritan and a sincere Christian, he shrank from all that was coarse or brutal or indulgent. But Milton's life was filled with disappointments. He was to find that domestic happiness successively tried was successively denied him. He was to see his political tenets vanquished and his cause held away. He was to despair of blind and disabled, mistreated by his own children and daily in danger of political assassination as a regicide. But the remarkable thing about him is that his Puritan self-reliance stood the test. Throughout it all he was scarcely affected, remaining calm through adversity and regretful for nothing that he had done. The ideals of his youth, beauty and godliness sustained him, as he wished them to sustain others, to the end of life.

And this character is expressed in his writings. For
they combine a sense of beauty and a didactic purpose which were his inheritance from the Anglo-Saxon and Latin ages. The classics, the Renaissance writers in Italy and England, Spenser especially and also the Bible—were the various models of his inspiration. He was at once scholar and artist, preacher and poet, patriot and pamphleteer. Yet as a poet and artist, he makes his chief claim to immortality. Milton's poetry considered as a whole manifests certain general characteristics which are peculiar to the Man. As a child of the Renaissance we detect in him a keen love of nature which expresses itself in magnificent imagery and description and presents a series of values in their concrete embodiment. We see him as an artist restoring to prose, especially to blank verse, the grand manner which since Shakespeare had dwindled into imitation affectation. We find too that he is a Classical Revivalist enfolding his works with picturesque conceptions of mythology, and freely adopting the spirit and even the form of ancient masterpieces... Then there is the Puritan element as well—a certain gravity, a meditative seriousness, and dignity which tempers his aesthetic rapture. As a Cromwellian he seeks to pile up moral arguments rather than to delineate character; he turns from lyric to ode, from drama to epic; and becomes less rich and more purposeful, less pagan and more theological as time goes on. Instead of being witty or whimsical, he prefers to be majestic and logical.

Thus among his earlier works we will find his 'purest' poetry. For example "the Ode on the Morning of Christ's Nativity" is a remarkable treatment of such a religious subject, since it concentrates attention not
on spiritual significance but on novel, metamorphic treatment, in physical terms. It presents a peculiar blending of pagan mythology with theology which characterizes much of Milton's work, and it even contains a note of regret that the gods of antiquity are now banished. Then there are those delightful fantasies, "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso"—species of sheer music to which the threads of meaning are of as little importance as they are to T. S. Eliot or Edith Sitwell. They cannot be judged on philosophically more than on narrative grounds, for they are "art works for art's sake." What they do show is Milton's love for and familiarity with Nature, his polite education, his genius as a versifier, and, perhaps, the trifling of moods to and fro as he—\(\text{even if those moods were embodied by classes, or nations...} \) Milton's Messenian, of which "Comus" is an example, are peculiar to this extent: That, whereas, Puritans were opposed to the Messenian (which even in Milton's hands could be interpreted as an argument for pleasure), yet Milton made them subservient this aim: to defend Puritanism. This he achieved by making good appear as beautiful as possible, and evil as ugly—by assuming the final triumph of Righteousness—and by concluding with such a moral as this: "Love virtue, she alone is free..." Yet the style of Comus suggests the pagan rather than the Puritan, for it is luxurious, poetical, secular and non-religious... "Lycidas", too, is written in this vein, and employs the pagan ideas and pastoral fictions to such an extent, that Dr Johnson considered it unfit for its intended purpose, i.e., as a lament on a departed friend. We cannot fail, however, to notice its rare
beauty, and to compare it favorably with Adonis and "In Memoriam."

Milton's later and longer poems, "Paradise Lost," "Paradise Regained," and "Samson Agonistes" were the fruits of almost a whole life devoted to preparation; and, it might well be expected from his earlier works and arduous training, that they would climax his literary career, as at least one of them did. The form of these works is epic rather than dramatic, and has many affinities with the Greek poets and tragedians whom Milton revered. They are, in fact, least effective when their characters manifest individuality, and most successful when they present an impersonal moral discoursé such as Aeschylus or Sophocles might have written. Now in these, we see once more the twofold nature of Milton and his age. Take "Paradise Lost" for example; there was never a greater exposition of Puritan righteousness than this. There are few poems that can approach its massive argument for morality. And yet, it is through sensuous symbols that Milton still imparts the truth. His Adam and Eve have been called "glorious, strong, voluptuous children, naked in the light of Heaven." His descriptions emphasize physical environment, even food and furnishings; oddly enough, his best treatment is reserved for Hell and the Devil.... Yet it is true that "Paradise Lost" represents an increase of the Puritan tendency over his earlier poems. For example, there is an austere renunciation of rhyme, a disappearance of mythological allusion, a weightier style and so forth. Moreover this Puritanism was to grow-
into something like rigidity - into a distinct lack of
sensuous appeal in the other epics. "Paradise
Regained" has a decided coldness and simplicity
of style for which it has been called the most
unadorned poem extant in any language. "Samson
Agonistes" may be a touching ode of
defeated Puritanism, but it lacks the metaphorical
richness of earlier works. Milton had
now drained his cup of life almost to the dregs.
The wine, once rich and spicy, had taken a
deeper, less brilliant hue; it had lost much of
its sweet and stirring flavor. Yet even the
last drops had a peculiar strength, and an
undisturbed continuity, and Milton too (the
whole of them, calmly, to the end).

This have we tried to show that
Anglicanism and Puritanism have their roots
in the nature of reality, and especially in
its highest manifestation: man. We have
endeavored to trace their influence in two ages
and in the life and works of one of our greatest
poets. As a matter of fact, we could so extend
their limits that all thinkers and artists and
writers, all creeds and policies and ideals, all
nations and races and civilizations - could be
categorized one or the other. But if we did this,
(and its usefulness might be questioned) - there would
still be men and peoples and visions which embraces
the eternal values, or some of them, from both sides. This
was what happened in the Seventeenth Century, and in the
mind of its outstanding genius, Milton -