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An analysis of the fourth voyage of Gulliver's travels and its relevance to the twentieth century

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AN ANALYSIS OF THE FOURTH VOYAGE OF
GULLIVER'S TRAVELS AND ITS RELEVANCE TO
THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

A Thesis
Presented to
the Faculty of the Department of English
University of the Pacific

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the study. Any work of art, by definition, is so designated because it speaks to all generations, irrespective of time or place, and regardless of artistic, political, economic, or ideological fads. To accept a work as art with anything less than these universalities is blind acceptance and pure idolatry. Each generation must determine the validity of the label art by determining the relevance of the work to its own generation. Unless a work of art can successfully meet such a test, the label is no more than a gentleman's agreement among self-designated arbiters of taste. Two recent critics, writing on the philosophy of literary criticism, have defined what is perhaps the best test which a work of art must meet. Both agree that a work of art must go beyond the contemporary concern of the author. In his "Foreword" to the second edition of his work, The Philosophy of Literary Form, Kenneth Burke notes that:

The poet is not poetizing in the middle of nowhere; though his poem may be viewed purely within itself ("in terms of" its internal consistency), it is also

the act of an agent in a non-literary scene; but by the nature of notation, it survives the particulars of the scene in which it was originally enacted.¹

Like Mr. Burke's, the philosophy of Joseph T. Shipley defines, even in greater detail, the qualities which distinguish art from all other forms of creative endeavors:

The sand-blasting of the fronts of city buildings is a commercial, not an aesthetic, action. Old schools, olden cathedrals, often acquire a mellow beauty, ivy-grown. The patina of the years may enhance any work of art. It softens as its controversies lapse into memories. To be sure, each age views every work of art as contemporary, at least sees it through the glass of its own desires, praises in it the qualities that echo its own ideals. Homer has been considered, successively, a teacher of (bad) morals, a model of decorum, a prize of primitive simplicity, the token of lengthy age. Specialists today also study how opinions in their field have shifted from age to age. Not merely attitudes, but interpretations. The early Christians found in Vergil a prophecy of Jesus' coming. The later English changed Shakespeare's Shylock from a beaten buffoon and minor figure to the central character, a deeply wronged and sorely suffering soul, so that it now seems almost incongruous to include The Merchant of Venice among the comedies. What matters more than such variations, however, is the fundamental shifting of emphasis from the contemporary features of a product of its time to the essential, the permanent, values of a work of art.²

Swift's "controversies," particularly his famous indictment of man, have never lapsed into memories, for the

¹Kenneth Burke, The Philosophy of Literary Form (second edition; Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press, 1967), p. ix.

²Joseph T. Shipley, Trends in Literature (New York: Philosophical Library, 1949), pp. 23-24.

assertions Jonathan Swift makes about man in Gulliver's fourth voyage are incontrovertible. And were it not so, his indictment of man is a valid one. Hopefully, however--and Swift held out such hope--the course of human history may be altered.

Gulliver's Travels has met the test which a work of art must meet; and, as a result, it has transcended temporal and spatial boundaries. Whatever his intentions at the time, Jonathan Swift speaks to the world today; and, because he does, his masterpiece merits the honor it has received. Swift can prick the conscience of humanity, for those who will listen. Unfortunately, too often he has reached only those who would enhance their own prejudices, either by ignoring the most important truths or by misinterpreting Gulliver's last voyage. The two centuries following the publication of Gulliver's Travels loved the story about giants and midgets but detested Swift's censure of man. The more serious and sophisticated reader today is allegedly less concerned with the fantasies than with the broader meaning of the work. Nevertheless, the prejudices still exist. Many critics, believing they have discovered Swift's meaning, have concluded that the Travels is written primarily from the point of view of a Christian moralist. What they imply is not the obvious fact that Swift was a

Christian moralist, but that Gulliver's Travels is a kind of Christian allegory. Such a limited interpretation, however, would deny the universality of the work and limit its value to a parochial concern, since the majority of the world's population, including the "Christian" world, is not Christian. That is not to say that the work denies Christian idealism. Love and brotherhood are not exclusively Christian ideals. All major religious teachings today exalt these ideals, as did some even before Christianity. Swift, in his work of art, went beyond the discussion of religion. He was concerned with man's relationship to man in this world. What he saw, although he did not couch it in religious terms, was anything but Christian behavior. Therefore, it seems unlikely that he was speaking from such a limited point of view. If, however,--and it is unlikely--one could prove that that was his intent, the work itself does not lend itself to such a narrow interpretation today; in any case, each generation has a right to interpret the Travels as it is related to that generation. If we do not accept the fact that a work of art transcends the time and immediate prejudices of even the author, we cannot accept the work as having any meaning except for its own time and place. By logical extension, then, Greek tragedy and Shakespearean tragedy would be considered

curiosity pieces, in which the authors were concerned only with the nobility. The Merchant of Venice could be used to prove that Shakespeare was anti-Semitic, and Coriolanus would be no more than a diatribe against the common people. The same kind of mind which would accept Gulliver's Travels as a kind of Christian allegory would adapt the work to suit modern prejudices. Few readers consider the implications of Swift's writings which revealed the sorrow, pain, greed, brutality, and general agonies which man is capable of inflicting on his own kind. Swift was a Christian, and so was Shakespeare. But that fact does not justify the interpretation that each was spreading Christian gospel. There are, after all, universal spiritual ideals which are not the sole property of a particular group or age. Gulliver's Travels cannot be a true work of art unless it is universal in its application. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to show that the fourth voyage of Gulliver's Travels affirms truths about man which are not limited to any particular area or time, and that it is universal because it affirms the truth that man has too often, as Swift says, perverted his reason, using the small amount of reason he has to aggravate his corruptions and acquire new ones. That Swift's conclusions are accurate is too obvious to require proof. The inequities which still

exist in the world, the fact that people actually starve to death while others are bored in their luxury, the prevalent belief that war will solve political and economic differences, and the ominous threat of total annihilation by the actions of political giants are proof that Swift's indictment of man is fair. This paper, therefore, does not presume to aim at proving precisely what Swift intended, except as his intention concerned the nature of man and his behavior and as his observations are valid today. It is a statement about the reaction of this writer to a work of art and an evaluation of the relevance of the work to modern man and society. Whatever else Swift might have meant or intended, as he was writing Gulliver's Travels, and whatever his political, social, and religious preferences, in the last analysis, these personal concerns are less important to posterity than the broader meaning of the work.

Limitations of the study. This study is limited in its discussion of literary criticism to those criticisms which are pertinent to the discussion of man's capacity, or lack of it, to reason. /Gulliver's Travels, especially the fourth voyage, offers a wealth of material for the scholar who is interested in discussing the satirical implications of the Yahoo concept or the "noble savage"

ideal, the genre of voyage literature, and more recently the psychoanalytical interpretation of Swift--the latter in terms of his scatological references. Many of the studies in these areas have been valuable, but their limitations have been serious.

Since no discussion of these considerations is included anywhere else in this study, a brief summary and evaluation of them at this point is in order. In a broad sense the Yahoos represent man's instincts unaided by reason. That the Yahoos represent the "noble savage" and therefore the main object of Swift's satire, aimed at the rationalists, limits the universality of the Yahoos as symbols to a particular period in history. Whether or not such a purpose was intended by Swift is not really important, and since the word Yahoo today is used as a term of opprobrium to define one whose baser instincts prevail over his reason, what Swift might have intended--if that is what he intended--is less important today for appreciating the broader meaning of the work. As Robert B. Heilman perceptively notes:

. . . Gulliver's Travels goes far beyond its initial role, as topical satire, a role in some details so conspicuous that scholars have been able to identify the contemporary individuals, events, and situations in which Swift found many of the materials for his narrative. Fortunately Swift turned the timely into the timeless. If all he had done was jest, however

skillfully, at current events, we should hardly recall him now except in our antiquarian writings. . . .³

For those interested in Gulliver's Travels as representative of the genre of imaginary voyage literature, William A. Eddy's study, according to Milton Voigt, offers what is considered definitive on the sources.⁴ However, that is the extent of the value of Mr. Eddy's study. His interpretation of the greater meaning of the work is appallingly weak. Mr. Eddy, incensed with the virtuous qualities Swift gave the Houyhnhnms, concludes of Swift that "the fires of misanthropy obscured his judgments, and vitiated his argument."⁵ But nothing proves more effectively Mr. Eddy's own contribution to obscurity than his impassioned aversion to the Houyhnhnms as he seriously asks, "Does not a horse lose some of his dignity when riding in a carriage?"⁶ The most enlightening part of Mr. Eddy's study is the following observation

³Robert B. Heilman, "Introduction" to Gulliver's Travels by Jonathan Swift, Robert B. Heilman, editor (The Modern Library; New York: Random House, Inc., 1950), pp. vii-viii.

⁴Milton Voigt, Swift and the Twentieth Century (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1964), p. 67.

⁵William A. Eddy, Gulliver's Travels: A Critical Study (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1923), p. 189.

⁶Ibid.

which proves that the book was not only misinterpreted but also almost completely ignored:

Few, if any, have lifted their voices in defense of the picture which Swift paints. It would be futile to add, here, another opinion of the justice of the satire. One thing, however, is pretty clear. Whether or not the indictment of the human race be fair, the shot has missed its mark. Relatively few of the readers of Gulliver have read the fourth part: it has been excised from the more popular editions; failing in this way for want of an audience. I suppose we may safely say that circulation is essential to the greatness of any book, and no doctoral theses can elevate in our esteem a work which is fundamentally unreadable. Moreover, the best judgment of those who have read it is that the picture is overcharged with nauseating details, that the colors are not sufficiently subdued.⁷

There is no greater evidence of the Victorian influence which extended into the twentieth century than this admission of censorship. If the fourth book is a failure for want of an audience, it is only because the arbiters of taste thought it too indelicate for the public. That it was censored only reflects the narrow-minded view of the self-appointed censors and, more importantly, their inability to see the truly ugly in human behavior. They felt a great deal more disgust with Swift's scatological obsession than with man's obsession for cruelty. Those who were responsible for omitting the fourth voyage were like Gulliver. Refusing

⁷Ibid., p. 190.

to believe the truth about themselves, they hid the truth in self-deception, and, even worse, kept it from everyone else, ostensibly to protect people from themselves.

The psychological critics of Swift and his works have been anything but Victorian in their analyses. Their failure has not been a refusal to examine the scatology; on the contrary, they have gone to extremes in their interpretations. Most notably, Dr. Phyllis Greenacre has provided an extensive Freudian analysis of Swift. She has managed, however, to see more than seems justified by the evidence. In one chapter she has managed to associate with Swift many of the terms associated with repressed sexuality, including Oedipus complex, castration complex, homosexuality, masturbatory fantasies, bisexuality, transvestitism, and fetishisms. She analyzes the "anal quality" of Swift's character as stemming from the fact that Swift as an infant was kidnapped by his nurse who was excessively conscientious and harsh in toilet-training him. This excess, she concludes, "left this stamp of the nursery morals of the chamber pot forever on his character."⁸ All of Dr. Greenacre's conclusions about Swift are deduced

⁸Phyllis Greenacre, Swift and Carroll: A Psycho-analytic Study of Two Lives (New York: International Universities Press, 1955), p. 107.

unfairly from a psychoanalysis of the patient in absentia. Much of the analysis is based on the metaphorical suggestiveness of Swift's works rather than on biographical evidence about Swift. A good example of her methods of interpretation and of the lack of validity in her approach is the following explanation of the possible origin of the "anal stamp" of Swift's character:

By contrast the proper names in Gulliver's Travels are heavy with repeated consonants and duplicated syllables overburdened by consonants, e.g., Glubbudrib, Luggnagg, Traldragdubh, Glumdalclitch, Clumegnig. These words suggest an onomatopoeic derivation from the sound of drippings and droppings possibly originating in the overly intense preoccupation with toilet functions, which seemed for the child Jonathan to engulf and then to color his important infantile philosophies.⁹

What these nonsense words suggest to Dr. Greenacre may say more about her than they say about Swift. The whole analysis seems preposterous if all Dr. Greenacre can offer is the phrase "possibly originating" as evidence. Such overdone psychoanalysis of Swift has been best refuted and answered by Norman O. Brown. Taking to task Dr. Greenacre and other psychoanalysts, Mr. Brown concludes as follows:

Only Swift could do justice to the irony of psychoanalysts, whose capacity for finding the anus in the

⁹Ibid., p. 102.

most unlikely places is notorious, condemning Swift for obsessive preoccupation with anality.¹⁰

Mr. Brown continues, using Swift's own words to answer the critics from his grave. Quoting Swift's "Discourse Concerning the Mechanical Operation of the Spirit, Etc.,"

Mr. Brown observes:

Swift has also prepared a room for the psychoanalysts with their anal complex; for are they not prophetically announced as those "certain Fortune tellers in Northern America, who have a Way of reading a Man's Destiny, by peeping in his Breech"?¹¹

Certainly, there is value in attempting to understand Swift's meaning by understanding his personality; but to speculate about a man's character and personality from his writings with no substantial documentary evidence cannot be justified, however interesting and embellished the theory may be. For those who are so obsessed with Swift's obsession with scatology, Nigel Dennis' analysis may be the most pertinent. He believes that "Obscenity is always one of Swift's retorts to degeneracy," and that "It would be absurd to deny that Swift pelted prudes with turds, but no four-letter word obsessed him more than

¹⁰Norman O. Brown, "The Excremental Vision," Swift: A Collection of Critical Essays, Ernest Tuveson, editor (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1964), p. 36.

¹¹Ibid., p. 37.

Scot."¹² One might add that for all the scatological references in the last voyage of Gulliver's Travels, there is nothing more disgusting, including the excremental, than the image of man Swift exposes as he strips man of his outer garments and allows him to see himself as he really is--a creature less reasonable than he has thought himself to be.

¹²Wigel Dennis, Jonathan Swift: A Short Character (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1964), p. 57.

CHAPTER II

A REVIEW OF MODERN CRITICISM

There has been much valuable criticism of Gulliver's last voyage in the last four decades. Much of it has helped to clarify the meaning of the work by offering new insights which had not been considered in the two centuries following the publication of Gulliver's Travels. In addition to providing a new perspective these modern critics have dispelled many of the long-accepted prejudices concerning Swift. For too long the last voyage was considered to be the product of a deranged misanthrope. But most modern readers, with two centuries behind them and with a more objective view from which to evaluate history, can see that Swift was right and that his many critics, imbued with incurable optimism, were misguided.

Thackeray's criticism is a typical example of the type of criticism which prevailed until as late as the first quarter of the twentieth century. Writing about the fourth voyage, Thackeray called "the moral . . . horrible, shameful, unmanly, blasphemous," and described the voyage as a whole to be "past all sense of manliness and shame; filthy in word, filthy in thought, furious, raging, obscene."¹

¹William Makepeace Thackeray, "The English Humourists

Such a diatribe is understandable, coming from the era which historians consider prudish and excessively optimistic; but it did little or nothing to illuminate Swift's meaning or intent for Thackeray's day, although for the twentieth century it provides an illuminating dialectical position. In fact, it reveals more about Victorian England than it does about Swift or his writings. Criticism of this type was based on two assumptions. The first is a debatable, philosophical one, influenced by seventeenth- and eighteenth-century rationalists, that man is an inherently good creature corrupted only by his institutions. The second is the erroneous assumption that Gulliver is Swift and that Swift equated mankind with Yahoos completely. As a result Swift remained unforgiven for his libel against man until the modern critics began to interpret Gulliver's Travels in a new light.

Contemporary criticism has opened up the discussion of the fourth book as a comment on human nature. It had been considered primarily as a purely political or sociological satire, with topical issues and figures as targets to be exposed. Recent criticism is centered primarily around two interpretations. There are a number of critics who, believing that Swift hated deistic doctrine with

of the Eighteenth Century," The Works of Thackeray (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1904), Vol. 21, pp. 178-179.

its rationalistic approach to religion, see the Houyhnhnms as the main object of the satire. These critics accept the Houyhnhnms as creatures who embody deistic principles. Considering the age in which Swift lived, the arguments are often persuasive. A second group of critics, however, believe that Swift meant the Houyhnhnms to be creatures who displayed the ideals to which man should aspire. Although they recognize much of the foolishness in Gulliver's blind worship of every Houyhnhnm trait, they, nevertheless, believe that Gulliver meant them to be idols to emulate.

Frank Brady, in his introduction to a collection of critical essays, Twentieth Century Interpretations of Gulliver's Travels, establishes a date at which the new approach to Swift and his fourth book began. Mr. Brady credits the beginning of the new approach to Theodore O. Wedel's study.² In 1926 Mr. Wedel published his interpretation, "On the Philosophical Background of Gulliver's Travels." Milton Voigt calls Wedel's work the "first strong challenge to the prevailing view . . . using the history of ideas as evidence."³ Mr. Wedel,

²Frank Brady, "Introduction," Twentieth Century Interpretations of Gulliver's Travels: A Collection of Critical Essays, Frank Brady, editor (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1968), p. 4.

³Milton Voigt, op. cit., p. 87.

unlike his predecessors, discusses the work in terms of religious and philosophical ideas prevalent in Swift's time. One of the more significant considerations which he discusses is the heated controversy between the Hobbesean and Lockean views concerning human nature. Although Mr. Wedel places Swift closer to Hobbes, he concludes that "In Gulliver's Travels . . . Swift is clearly neither Hobbes nor Locke," and that "Gulliver is neither Yahoo nor Houyhnhnm."⁴

Mr. Wedel injected a religious argument which, until his analysis, had never been considered. He believed that Swift's view of man is "essentially the view of the classical and Christian tradition," and that such a position "would absolve Gulliver's Travels from the charge of being an isolated example of misanthropy."⁵ More significant in its influence on modern criticism is Mr. Wedel's statement that the animal rationale-animal racionis capax argument was the "chief intellectual battle of the age," and that as a Christian traditionalist, Swift was necessarily satirizing the Deists of his own age.⁶ Of Swift he says, "His enmity to rationalistic

⁴Theodore O. Wedel, "On the Philosophical Background of Gulliver's Travels," Twentieth Century Interpretations of Gulliver's Travels: A Collection of Critical Essays, op. cit., p. 30.

⁵Ibid., p. 34.

⁶Ibid., p. 31.

dogmatising was the one enduring intellectual passion of his life."⁷ It seems doubtful that Swift was so completely opposed to the rationalistic doctrines, considering the fact that he was enveloped by, and therefore not ignorant of, the prevailing thought. More likely, his enmity was against the pride in reason and not reason itself.

Mr. Wedel's great contribution to the explanation of Swift's most controversial work is that he stimulated the need to re-examine the work in a new light. There is no doubt that the Deists' challenge to revealed religion affected Swift, and the degree to which Swift was affected has been the basis for the modern interpretations. Mr. Wedel's contribution is also significant since it debunked the theory that Swift was a thorough misanthrope.

In addition to providing the modern reader with a new perspective from which to view Gulliver's Travels, particularly Book IV, and with a less prejudicial climate concerning Swift himself, Mr. Wedel guided criticism away from what seemed to be no more than defensive attacks by insulted opponents who believed Swift was calling them Yahoos. Relieved of such a defensive attitude, the reader is better prepared to understand and to appreciate both

⁷Ibid.

Swift's genius and his most controversial work. Mr. Wedel's predecessors, readers and critics, were unable to share in the last important discovery--that man is not a completely rational animal--merely because they felt personally outraged. Ironically, like Gulliver, they refused to accept some of the less flattering truths about themselves, and like Gulliver they remained deceived.

One of the great ironies borne out by the attitudes of earlier Swiftian criticism may be seen in Swift's statement on the failure of satire. In his preface to The Battle of the Books, Swift, discussing satire as a mirror in which one might see himself, states that satire offended few because the "Beholder" generally saw everyone but himself.⁸ Swift did not perceive, ironically, that it would be ineffective because it offended too many, who seeing themselves, refused to believe what they saw. That is not to say that Book IV is ineffective as satire but that it has had little discernible influence in effecting positive changes in man's behavior, attitudes, or institutions. One can only hope that in the age of

⁸Jonathan Swift, The Battle of the Books (Vol. IX of The Prose Works of Jonathan Swift, ed. Herbert Davis, 14 vols.; revised edition; Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1959), p. 140. See p. 77 for a fuller discussion of this point. (Subsequent references to Swift's prose are to this edition.)

atomic over-kill with its pride in scientific accomplishments, Swift's lesson will be heeded. There are today too many like Gulliver who are naively and irresponsibly unmoved by legitimate concern for human survival as the arsenal of destruction has become more "sophisticated" and total. Surely such continued irrationality has vindicated Swift in his evaluation that man does tend to pervert his reason, that man does aggravate his "natural" corruptions, and that he even acquires some he did not inherit. No one can quarrel with the obvious fact that man has used his reason positively to relieve some of his misery. Nevertheless, of what value are all these accomplishments, if his irrationality ends up destroying him?

The major contribution of critics subsequent to Mr. Wedel is that they have developed many of his ideas, especially on Deism, further and have provided valuable studies, exploring the relationship between Swift's writings--satire, tracts, and sermons--and Gulliver's Travels. They are not bound by the assumptions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Unlike the romantics, who, as George Sherburn says, "exaggerated the blackness of his [Swift's] grumblings and intensities, and forgot his gifts for sheer fun,"⁹ these critics are free of

⁹George Sherburn, "The Restoration and Eighteenth

the older prejudices. However, the weakness of their position on Deism lies in the fact that they seem to ignore the real problem. By concentrating their interpretations on the Houyhnhnms as symbols of Deists and, therefore, objects of Swift's satire, they have, as Milton Voigt points out, reduced the fourth voyage "to a kind of High-Church polemic."¹⁰ Their argument, in essence, is that Swift saw the Deists as threats to established religion and that, therefore, he satirized those who accepted the new "rational religion." Although it is plausible that Swift might have been satirizing Deists, it does not necessarily follow that that was his main concern. His Houyhnhnms have no religion; as a matter of fact there is no mention at all of religion in the last voyage. If the fourth book is satirizing any ideas dealing with rationalism, it is satirizing man's pride in his power to reason, a point about which Swift is implicit when he has the Houyhnhnms, as well as the king of Brobdingnag, comment on man's capacity for cruelty and perversion of reason. There is no reason to believe that a satiric attack on Deists would have

Century (1660-1789)" in A Literary History of England, ed. Albert C. Baugh (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1948), p. 858.

¹⁰Milton Voigt, op. cit., p. 118.

succeeded, as Swift intended, in vexing mankind. It could only have vexed Deists. As a topical satire on Deists it would hardly have survived beyond the eighteenth century except as a kind of curiosity about a contemporary eighteenth-century phenomenon. The emphasis of critics who have accepted the Deistic theory has moved one writer to observe, ironically, that whereas "The nineteenth century generally could not bear the Yahoos; the twentieth century cannot bear the Houyhnhnms."¹¹

One of the first influential proponents of the Deistic theory is Miss Kathleen Williams. In support of her position, she asserts that Swift opposed "all doctrines of the natural self-sufficiency of man, whether they were expressed in Deistic terms or in the related pride of neo-Stoicism; and the Fourth Voyage of Gulliver's Travels embodies that hostility."¹² Miss Williams also states that the Houyhnhnms are repellent creatures rather than ideals to be admired and that they are intended to show "the inadequacy of the life of reason."¹³ Writing

¹¹ Jack G. Gilbert, Jonathan Swift: Romantic and Cynic Moralists (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1966), p. 135.

¹² Kathleen Williams, "Gulliver's Voyage to the Houyhnhnms," A Casebook on Gulliver among the Houyhnhnms, Milton P. Foster, editor (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1961), p. 193.

¹³ Ibid., pp. 194-195.

a few years later ("Gulliver's Voyage to the Houyhnhnms" was first published in 1951), she concludes that Swift satirized the Deists, through the Houyhnhnms, because he believed them to be a greater danger to Christianity than the atheists were.¹⁴

Ernest Tuveson, much in agreement with Miss Williams,¹⁵ believes that Swift "detested the deists, with their reliance on reason."¹⁶ Neither Mr. Tuveson nor Miss Williams is able to quote Swift directly about his utter detestation for Deists. Their theory is based almost exclusively on Swift's faith in traditional Christian views and on his statements on the limits of reason as a guide for living. But where no direct evidence is available such assumptions can be no more than conjecture, right or wrong. In all of this Deistical criticism of Swift there is not one statement attributed to Swift directly which proves that Swift so hated Deists that he intended to satirize them. It is true that Swift was aware of the limitations of man's reason--he said as much.

¹⁴Kathleen Williams, Jonathan Swift and the Age of Compromise, (Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 1958), pp. 100-101.

¹⁵Ernest Tuveson, "The Dean as Satirist," Swift: A Collection of Critical Essays, op. cit., p. 101.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 105.

But to equate reason with Deism is to accept one part as the whole itself. Mr. Tuveson, unconvincingly, argues that the fourth voyage is a kind of Christian allegory. He concludes in his essay:

To see the positive, the matrix of faith in which Gulliver is set, we must go to the Christian moralist. By so doing we can place men, Yahoos, and Houyhnhnms in proper perspective.¹⁷

There is no denying that Swift was a "Christian moralist," but there is no need to believe that every utterance of his was a sermon on Christianity and therefore, as illogically, an attack on Deists, who in their zeal for a "rational religion" questioned "revealed religion." Swift may or may not have held the Deists as threats, but to say that that is the theme of the fourth voyage is oversimplification.

Interpreting Gulliver's final voyage as part of a Christian allegory can lead to extremes which do little to illuminate the book for the modern reader. Calhoun Winton interprets the work not only as a defense of Christianity but also as a satire on Deism. For Mr. Winton, Gulliver's journey parallels that of "Bunyan's traveler." He sees Gulliver as "a sort of eighteenth-century English Everyman" who converts to the Houyhnhnm

¹⁷Ibid., p. 110.

faith--Deism.¹⁸ The important difference in the parallels is that Gulliver's journey is that of one whose gullibility moves him toward the acceptance of a "perilous new religion, . . . so tempting to rational and rationalistic moderns but so deficient. . . ." ¹⁹ Implied, of course, is that the reader in Swift's time would have seen the error in Gulliver's conversion by noting the ridiculous behavior of the Houyhnhnms in their adoption of purely rational behavior and by observing the even more ludicrous behavior of Gulliver in attempting to emulate his idols.

The limitations of Mr. Winton's interpretation, as of all those who see the fourth voyage primarily as an argument against, or a defense of, a particular religious doctrine, Deism, peculiar to a specific era in history, is that such an interpretation makes the work almost irrelevant to any other period. If Gulliver's Travels has survived as a timeless and universal work of art, it necessarily must have transcended such limited concerns. It has to be more than topical satire to speak to an audience two hundred years later. Edward W. Rosenheim, Jr., persuasively argues that the fourth voyage goes

¹⁸ Calhoun Winton, "Conversion on the Road to Houyhnhnmland," A Casebook on Gulliver among the Houyhnhnms, op. cit., p. 271.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 280.

far beyond the satiric. He asserts that Swift is more concerned with "answers to the kind of universal question which are the province not of the satiric but of the philosophic mind."²⁰ Mr. Rosenheim adds that true satire has an identifiable victim and that this feature is obvious in the first three voyages of Gulliver's Travels.²¹ However, he continues, the last voyage is less a satire than it is a profound discovery.²² What Gulliver discovers is that some men are bestial, irrational, and proud. What he did not learn is that not all men are Yahoos. It is difficult not to agree with Mr. Rosenheim, for surely the fourth book has had to be more than topical satire to have survived as a work which needs constant re-examination as the assumptions about human nature change. And that it finds an interested audience today is due to the fact that what Swift said about the constancy of human foibles, if not an absolute, is as true today as it was in his time. In distinguishing the fourth voyage from other satires, Mr. Rosenheim remarks:

There are, moreover, works which . . . survive chiefly, if not exclusively, for reasons other than their satiric qualities . . . most satiric works

²⁰Edward W. Rosenheim, Jr., Swift and the Satirist's Art (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1963), p. 101.

²¹Ibid., p. 154.

²²Ibid., p. 160.

are speedily forgotten and . . . others survive for reasons other than their satiric excellence. . . .²³

Mr. Rosenheim is correct, and for that reason the argument that the fourth voyage is a satire against Deism is not convincing. It says much more about human nature and human behavior than it does about Deism or Swift's alleged hatred for it, whether or not Swift intended to satirize Deism.

Several other critics of the Deistic theory have weakened the argument of Mr. Wedel and his supporters. Commenting on Irvin Ehrenpreis's statement that Swift was satirizing Deists, Mr. Quintana points out that Swift was, rather, concerned with the theme of "the moral dualism of man, a being not rationale, only rationis capax."²⁴ The strength of Mr. Quintana's argument lies in the fact that Swift, commenting on his forthcoming Gulliver's Travels, was explicit in his famous letter to Pope on the subject of man's capacity to reason,²⁵ and that nowhere does he mention Deists in relationship to his book. George Sherburn's analysis supports Mr.

²³Ibid., p. 104.

²⁴Ricardo Quintana, "Notes on Irvin Ehrenpreis's 'The Origins of Gulliver's Travels,'" A Casebook on Gulliver among the Houyhnhnms, op. cit., p. 257.

²⁵An excerpt from Swift's letter and a fuller discussion of the contents appear on p. 52.

Quintana's. He sees "no clear glimmer of religion in Gulliver's fourth voyage that would indicate any attitude toward revealed Christianity, whether favorable or unfavorable."²⁶ The irony in Swift's not making the Houyhnhnms religious is that the attitudes and behavior of the Houyhnhnms, albeit non-Christian, are more Christian-like than Gulliver's or those of other Christians. It would seem unlikely that, had Swift intended to satirize Deists through the Houyhnhnms, he would have made them so virtuous. For the modern reader, at least, such an interpretation would tend to encourage one to sympathize with the Deists, and that would hardly have been Swift's intent. Those who accept the Deistic theory attempt to show that because the Houyhnhnms appear ridiculous threading needles, milking cows, and sitting on their "hams," and that because Gulliver is as ludicrous in his emulation of their gait, gestures, and speech, Swift was pointing out the inadequacies of the life of reason. However preposterous such behavior seems, these absurdities are not enough to convince one that the life of reason is not desirable. If it is not a desirable goal for man to strive to achieve, it is so only because man, being a creature

²⁶George Sherburn, "Errors Concerning the Houyhnhnms," A Casebook on Gulliver among the Houyhnhnms, op. cit., p. 260.

of passions, is not a completely rational animal.

Perhaps the best argument in rebuttal of critics who support the Deistic theory is one presented by Louis A. Landa. The flaw in their position, he discerns, is that they have fallen into a semantic trap by identifying "the language of rationalism with the substance of deism."²⁷ He explains that, although much of the language used in reference to the Houyhnhnms does have rationalistic implications, those characteristics are not the "sole property of deists."²⁸

More recently, Jack Gilbert has offered an interesting analysis of the Deistic argument, showing that Swift's beliefs, in fact, were akin to those of the Deists and that he opposed them for what appeared to him their deliberate attempt to undermine traditional Christianity, as well as the established church. He says that Swift was neither anti-rationalist nor anti-deistic out of principle or disgust but only because of the threat they posed. About religion in the fourth voyage, he states that contrary to the pro-deist argument, the Houyhnhnms are, if anything, non-believers or

²⁷Louis A. Landa, "from 'Note on Irvin Ehrenpreis's The Personality of Jonathan Swift,'" A Casebook on Gulliver among the Houyhnhnms, op. cit., p. 269.

²⁸Ibid.

atheists.²⁹ The Houyhnhnms, he argues, "can much more be shown to embody Swift's principles, than be made to have superficial resemblances to the Deists," and, he continues, "An incidental coincidence has created a rash of critical distortion."³⁰ The coincidence which Mr. Gilbert implies occurs between the rationalism of the Houyhnhnms and that of the Deists.

Charles Peake, in opposing the Deistic theory, shrewdly points out that "Swift was far too good and conscientious a satirist to bury a vital part of his message so deep that over two hundred years should pass before it was disinterred."³¹

The critics of the Deistic theory are not, however, without their own weaknesses. Mr. Rosenheim, although he does not advocate that man imitate fully the extravagances of Gulliver in his worship of reason, does suggest a degree of emulation:

. . . the power of Gulliver's discoveries to alter our vision of ourselves should move us to admiration rather than distaste for the Houyhnhnms. Our emotional tendency, if any, should be toward participation in,

²⁹Jack G. Gilbert, op. cit., pp. 144-145.

³⁰Ibid., p. 145.

³¹Charles Peake, "Swift and the Passions," A Casebook on Gulliver among the Houyhnhnms, op. cit., p. 294.

rather than rejection of Gulliver's own response to what he has learned.³²

Mr. Sherburn has also become an apologist for the Houyhnhnms, but less convincingly, as he defends them against Deistic attacks. "We must not too readily assert a total lack of emotion among the Houyhnhnms," he states.³³ In order to prove that they have emotions, Mr. Sherburn discusses their abhorrence of Yahoos, including English Yahoos, and their "fondness" for their colts.³⁴ These examples seem rather a strained effort to make the Houyhnhnms more palatable. It would have been impossible not to have given the horses some human traits besides reason without making them robots. The fact that these creatures hated Yahoos and mankind would seem to have been included for the purpose of comparison and contrast, by which Swift could reveal the spiteful behavior of Yahoos and men. In any event, the attitude would have been Swift's, not the Houyhnhnms'. Swift uses many masks without necessarily destroying the unity of his work. He speaks

³²Edward W. Rosenheim, Jr., "The Fifth Voyage of Gulliver: A Footnote," Modern Philology, LX (November, 1962), p. 116.

³³George Sherburn, "Errors Concerning the Houyhnhnms," A Casebook on Gulliver among the Houyhnhnms, op. cit., p. 262.

³⁴Ibid.

sometimes through Houyhnhnms, sometimes through the king of Brobdingnag, and, at other times, through Gulliver. There is no reason why an artist must confine his beliefs to the utterances of one character.

Swift, who realized the potency of the passions, could not have expected mankind to achieve the purity of the virtuous Houyhnhnms. He was explicit in his remarks about the Stoics, who would lop off a foot because they lacked shoes.³⁵ The Houyhnhnms are not models to emulate but embodiments of "a point of view," as Mr. Peake states, "from which human behavior and human society can be profitably examined."³⁶ For that reason Mr. Rosenheim and Mr. Sherburn are wrong to suggest that such an idealistic state is even remotely possible, barring the ludicrous behavior of the Houyhnhnms. It is not only unattainable but undesirable as well. That is not to say man should not strive to improve his state; he certainly needs to. Swift would have man examine himself thoroughly so that he might see the truth. He did not need to reveal truth by endowing one creature with all the virtues and setting it up as an example to follow, any more than he might have endowed that same creature with certain vices one

³⁵See pp. 61-62 for a detailed analysis of this point.

³⁶Charles Peake, loc. cit.

ought to avoid.

Milton Voigt, perceiving the errors of the proponents of the Deistic theory, has effectively challenged the critics who, in attempting to reverse the trend, have overstated their case. He sums up well the weakness of such critics:

The usual tendency among critics who resist the ridiculousness of the Houyhnhnm is to bathe the Houyhnhnm in lachrimae rerum, which convinces us of the critics' wistful yearning for a better society, or at least a more tractable human being, rather than of the Houyhnhnm's freedom from absurdity.³⁷

The major weakness in both the Deistic theory and in the theory of those who refute it is that both sides place more emphasis on the attitude and behavior of the Houyhnhnms than they do on Gulliver's reaction to both Houyhnhnm and Yahoo and, by analogy, to man. It seems hardly necessary to complicate the meaning of the work by making the Houyhnhnms the center of Swift's concern and proceeding from that theory to determine what Swift's attitude was toward rationalism and/or rational religion. Both views, therefore, relegate Gulliver to a minor role in the satire, since his discoveries and the influence of those discoveries upon him become less important than the symbolic meaning of the Houyhnhnms. In both interpre-

³⁷Milton Voigt, op. cit., p. 115.

tations even the Yahoos become unimportant. They would seem no more than contrasts which amplify the virtues of the Houyhnhnms. But Swift, who proposed to vex mankind, was, in the fourth voyage, more concerned with revealing the truth about man and his behavior than he was about stating his position on a particular religious or philosophical theory of the time. Gulliver, not the Houyhnhnms, is the most important character in the book, and Swift's meaning must be determined from what Gulliver discovers about man and from what Gulliver does after his discovery. The Houyhnhnms and the Yahoos simply represent the life of reason and the life of passions respectively. The reader needs to understand that, unlike Gulliver, he cannot deny either but must find his place between the two.

Of course, no critic or reader presumes to find the ultimate meaning intended by an author, especially one who cannot be questioned or who might not respond if he were questioned. As in Swift's case, letters, sermons, tracts, and fiction, which are available for thorough examination, are not always as explicit about a man's thoughts as one might hope them to be. In fact, as happens with writers today, the author himself cannot or will not always furnish the preciseness one might desire. Critics of Swift have not presumed to discover the ultimate meaning Swift intended in the voyage to the Houyhnhnms,

but they have, in the last four decades, provided the modern reader with a wealth of studies through which he may better understand and appreciate the work. The last four decades, for the most part, have seen interpretations that have taken the fourth voyage out of the two hundred years of prejudices which obscured rather than revealed. However readers may interpret the Houyhnhnms, as Deists or as idealistic embodiments of virtue, they no longer consider the work as Thackeray, his contemporaries, and his predecessors viewed it, as "horrible, shameful, unmanly, and blasphemous."³⁸ There is a compatibility among the modern critics in that most of them accept the interpretation that Gulliver, not Swift, is the misanthrope and that man has foolishly prided himself on his capacity to reason, despite the evidence which proves that he is not a completely rational animal. Man's only hope of salvation is to find a rational position somewhere in between the two extremes in man's nature.

³⁸See p. 14.

CHAPTER III

A VIEW OF GULLIVER AND SWIFT IN HOUYHNNHMLAND

Preface to the study. The last voyage of Lemuel Gulliver is the culminating one in which he misunderstands and ultimately ignores the most important discovery of his travels; but more importantly the final voyage is an implicit warning to the reader that he must avoid the fate of Gulliver, whose madness derives from his failure to accept himself for what he is--a creature with a dual nature, guided by both passion and reason. Confronted by Yahoos, creatures guided purely by instinct and completely devoid of reason, and by Houyhnhnms, creatures devoid of passions and guided purely by reason, Gulliver is in a position to see both sides of man's nature; but he fails to make the important discovery that man, unlike these creatures, has a dual nature. Since there is much in the behavior of the Yahoos which is reminiscent of his own species, Gulliver concludes that he and his race are in fact Yahoos. His disgust for man knows no bounds, and he, therefore, vows to devote the remainder of his life to the cultivation of reason. Gulliver's ultimate failure is his refusal to accept the animality in his nature, and through his disavowal he denies the reality of his own existence. However much man may aspire

to behave with complete rationality, he can never deny the instinctive part of his nature. The best he can ever hope to attain is an equilibrium in which his reason assuages his baser instincts, particularly his propensity for greed and brutality which threaten to annihilate his species.

[Jonathan Swift was keenly aware that man is not a completely rational animal, but an animal only capable of reason. This judgment is Swift's philosophical statement about the true nature of man, and not, as many readers and critics would have it, either a misanthropic condemnation of man, the Yahoo, or an exhortation for mankind to rid itself of its passions and emulate the Houyhnhnm. Man is neither Yahoo nor Houyhnhnm, but a composite of both.] ^{Conclusion}

Swift's pronouncement should hardly have been a surprising one. The record of man's inhumanity to man throughout history is evidence enough to prove that more often than not man's Yahoo-nature has prevailed over his reason, and, deservedly, Swift has moved to censure man when he is at his worst. However, Swift does qualify his indictment of mankind, for he admitted to loving the individual. What Gulliver refuses to accept is that there are men who merit others' admiration. His rescuer, Don Pedro, should have been proof enough

of the fact that not all men are Yahoos. This fact is the distinction Gulliver never makes, but which the reader should come to realize.

What Swift is telling the reader is that he must see himself for what he is and that he must come to terms with his dual nature. Too often man has remained complacent because he has falsely prided himself on his ability to reason. Such pride has often blinded him to the truth--that man is only capable of reasoning and that too often he perverts that gift. Swift leads Gulliver and the reader to this discovery in the final voyage of Gulliver's Travels; but, whereas Gulliver is led to madness, the reader is given the choice of avoiding Gulliver's fate. Gulliver is typical of the man who, when faced with truth about himself and his species, blames everyone else but himself for whatever depravities or outrages the species is guilty of. This denial of his own animality and complicity is arrogant and irresponsible rationalization at best and madness at worst. The world is full of Gullivers who, desiring to be blameless of the more ignominious record of man's existence rather than admit to being knaves, try to absolve themselves of guilt, like fools, behind a mask of self-deception.

One need only review the history of man in the last fifty years to realize that much of Swift's indictment

of mankind is as deserved today as it was in Swift's time. The enormities perpetrated by man upon his own kind are hardly examples of reasonable behavior, yet man remains deceived in priding himself on his ability to reason. In fact, the increased brutalization of man testifies to the fact that as man's knowledge cumulates, the perversion of his reason increases proportionally. For this reason Gulliver's Travels and much of Swift's other writings are as relevant to the twentieth century as they were to the eighteenth century.

Although the four worlds Gulliver visits are imaginary, they are, as Harold D. Kelling points out, "timeless lands which throw into different perspectives not merely the eighteenth century scene but the relatively permanent moral nature of civilized man,"¹ and, as Gilbert Highet more recently noted, "a journey . . . through various aspects of human life--in four bad spells."² However, the most important and relevant of the four voyages is the last one, in which the travels culminate and the one in which Gulliver and the reader must reflect

¹Harold D. Kelling, "Gulliver's Travels: A Comedy of Humours," University of Toronto Quarterly, XXI (July, 1952), p. 365.

²Gilbert Highet, The Anatomy of Satire (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962), p. 159.

on man's true nature. The last journey is truly "an exploration into the world of the self."³ It is a journey which leads to a discovery all mankind must make or be condemned to relive the past, as he seems to be doing.

Up to the first quarter of the twentieth century the general reaction of readers and critics to the fourth book of Gulliver's Travels was to call Swift a vile misanthrope, whose contempt for mankind was endless. This kind of criticism tends only to prove that, when faced with the truth, men would rather avoid the ugly realities and defend with arrogant pride their power to reason. Most serious readers and critics today, however, no longer believe that Swift was a misanthrope; and they do so rightfully, considering that modern events still illustrate that man's capacity to reason has not minimized his capacity for cruelty. Perhaps the most convincing rebuttal which should, once and for all, discourage those who still might consider Swift a misanthrope is the following cogent statement by Ricardo Quintana:

. . . What used to be called Swift's pessimism strikes most of us today as merely common sense, and if Gulliver's Travels is placed beside some of our own satiric writings--to say nothing of modern existentialist plays and novels--it may, indeed,

³Milton B. Foster, "Introduction," A Casebook on Gulliver among the Houyhnhnms, op. cit., p. xi.

seem a comparatively cheerful book. However that may be, one can at least say that its positive doctrines no longer repel instantly and violently.⁴

Too often the appreciation and understanding of the fourth voyage have been obscured by irrelevant concerns with Swift's sanity, misanthropy, or scatology. Gulliver's Travels is a work of art, and whether it succeeds as such depends on its own merits and on nothing else. That it has succeeded on its own merits is obvious, and as a classic it remains timeless and universal. One of the important questions to consider about a work of literature is: "Does it reveal truth?" The twentieth-century reader is perhaps in a better position to appreciate the validity of Swift's conclusions about human nature. Critics of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries failed to appreciate Swift's irony because they accepted Swift as a misanthrope. The eighteenth-century rationalist, the nineteenth-century romantic, and the Victorian optimist all found Swift's view of human nature too pessimistic to have appreciated him fully. It is also true, as Samuel Klinger states, "that each century makes its own assumptions about human nature" and that, therefore, the meaning of Gulliver's Travels is never "fixed."⁵ Never-

⁴Ricardo Quintana, Swift: An Introduction (London: Oxford University Press, 1955), p. 143.

⁵Samuel Klinger, "The Unity of Gulliver's Travels,"

theless, the two intervening centuries have proved Swift to be right. Because Swift's assumptions about human nature are more acceptable to the modern reader, his masterpiece is more relevant today than it has been in the last two centuries.

Gulliver and Swift in Houyhnhnmland. The most important revelation Swift provides in Gulliver's last voyage is a discovery Gulliver never does make but which the reader should. It is not that man is a complete Yahoo but that man complacently persists in the folly of believing that he is a completely rational being. Setting Gulliver on the vantage point from which he can observe the extremes in human nature, the bestial Yahoo and the rational Houyhnhnm, Swift places the reader at an objective position from which he may view himself as he really is. What Gulliver and the reader discover is that, though man is capable of reason, he is more often irrational than rational. What Gulliver does which the reader should avoid is to extend that discovery into negative and nihilistic philosophy. Any discovery, by definition, implies the acquisition of knowledge. Gulliver discovers much but learns little. The reader

A Casebook on Gulliver among the Houyhnhnms, op. cit.,
p. 149.

is right to identify with Gulliver to the extent that both are making discoveries about man simultaneously. Too often, Gulliver has been given undeserved credit for learning from his discoveries. Although he is provided with the opportunity to learn much about human nature, he makes wrong assumptions. Robert B. Heilman states: "There is no doubt that under their [Houyhnhnms'] tutelage Gulliver becomes a much more perceptive man."⁶ This interpretation is unconvincing, since Gulliver is ultimately maddened, rather than enlightened, by his discoveries. Edward W. Rosenheim also gives Gulliver undeserved credit; however, he is correct in stating that the reader "is asked to share . . . in the substance of Gulliver's discoveries."⁷ The reader must dissociate himself from Gulliver when Gulliver fails to profit from his discoveries and, instead, becomes irrational and, finally, mad. The exact point at which the dissociation should occur is not precisely clear, nor is it really important, since Gulliver's conversion to the worship of reason is gradual. However, it begins with Gulliver's expulsion from Houyhnhnmland. As he takes leave of his Houyhnhnm master, his admiration

⁶Robert B. Heilman, op. cit., p. xxi.

⁷Edward W. Rosenheim, Jr., "The Fifth Voyage of Gulliver: A Footnote," Modern Philology, op. cit., p. 116. (See p. 68 of this thesis for a fuller treatment of Mr. Rosenheim's ideas.)

clearly turns to worship:

But as I was going to prostrate myself to kiss his Hoof, he did me the Honour to raise it gently to my Mouth. I am not ignorant how much I have been censured for mentioning this last Particular. Detractors are pleased to think it improbable, that so illustrious a Person should descend to give so great a Mark of Distinction to a Creature so inferior as I.⁸

Gulliver's condition worsens as he begins to imitate their behavior, and it turns to madness when he is unable to distinguish Yahoo from man, even from an obviously good man such as Don Pedro, his rescuer. The madness is complete when he decides to live with horses upon his return to England.

The most compelling evidence showing that Swift was not a misanthrope is the hope which he held out for Gulliver's recovery. The final chapter of the last voyage shows Gulliver as not only mad but also a complete misanthrope. He is also "smitten with Pride," a vice he attributes to others but which he does not recognize in himself.⁹ For all his self-deception he is slowly recovering. However, he has begun, as he states at the end of the book, ". . . to permit my Wife to sit at Dinner with me, at the farthest End of a long Table, . . ."

⁸Swift, Gulliver's Travels, Vol. II, op. cit., p. 282.

⁹Ibid., p. 296.

even though he must stuff his nose "with Rue, Lavender, or Tobacco-Leaves" to keep out the offensive smell of Yahoos.¹⁰ This apparently prideful tolerance in itself is not significant. What is significant, however, is the first sentence which begins the narrative of the fourth voyage:

I continued at home with my Wife and Children about five Months in a very happy Condition, if I could have learned the Lesson of knowing when I was well.¹¹

Since Gulliver is writing in retrospect, he has had time to consider what he has done as he is commenting on his experiences. More importantly, this admission reveals Swift's attitude toward Gulliver's conversion. It shows that even Swift held hope for Gulliver's recovery. And, finally, it proves not only that Swift was not a misanthrope but also that he did not approve of the misanthropy he bestowed upon his main character.

Herbert Davis is only partially correct in his conclusion that Swift "did not wish to prescribe for the sickness of humanity, having no hope of its recovery, but he could not refrain from probing, anatomizing, and diagnosing its malady. . . ."¹² To accept this analysis

¹⁰Ibid., p. 295. ¹¹Ibid., p. 221.

¹²Herbert Davis, The Satire of Jonathan Swift (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1947), p. 105.

completely is to accept the misanthropy of Swift. The satirist may diagnose and prescribe at the same time, and Swift's satire is such a prescription. It is invalid to presume that Swift held no hope for mankind merely because he exposed man's vices. It is not the function of the satirist to praise virtue, but to expose vice and folly. Swift himself admits that the purpose of his masterpiece was "to vex the world rather than divert it,"¹³ though he managed to do both. Swift, like most satirists, vexes through his probes and diagnoses and at the same time provides the proverbial bitter pill as prescription enough. It is not Swift's fault that the reader refuses the diagnosis and the prescription, as did Gulliver. It is precisely on this point that many interpreters of his most caustic satire have misunderstood Swift's intent. Charles Peake wisely remarks that "because the satirist may say nothing good of some aspect of human nature or behavior, the reader is apt to assume he has nothing good to say of it."¹⁴ It is the genius of Swift that he was able to diagnose and by implication to prescribe,

¹³Letter from Jonathan Swift to Alexander Pope, September 29, 1725, in Harold Williams (ed.), The Correspondence of Jonathan Swift 1724-1731 (Oxford University Press, 1963), III, p. 102. (Subsequent references to letters of Swift and Pope are to this edition.)

¹⁴Charles Peake, op. cit., p. 282.

and one must not lose sight of the fact that as a Christian moralist he did not have to be in the pulpit to preach. That is not to say, of course, that Gulliver's Travels is a sermon.

The crucial point of Gulliver's stay with the Houyhnhnms occurs when Gulliver begins to realize the degree to which his own race has perverted reason. It is the first of many revelations which lead him to his final state. Naively shaking his head "and smiling a little" at the "Ignorance" of his host, who has never heard of war, Gulliver describes for him the fiendish weaponry which men have contrived to slaughter one another.¹⁵ Gulliver's companion is horrified, and, having at first credited Gulliver and his race with having some degree of reason, he is completely dismayed and disgusted by such a creature who "pretending to Reason, could be capable of such Enormities. . . ."¹⁶ Gulliver does not begin to realize his own indictment until his host, having heard enough, compares Gulliver's race unfavorably to the Yahoos. Although the Houyhnhnms hate the Yahoos, much of whose behavior reflects man's own, he no more blames them for their "odious Qualities, than . . . a

¹⁵Swift, Gulliver's Travels, op. cit., p. 247.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 248.

Gnnayh (a Bird of Prey) for its Cruelty, or a sharp Stone for cutting his Hoof."¹⁷ Clearly man, unlike the Yahoo who is a creature guided exclusively by instinct, cannot justify his behavior and still believe himself to be a rational animal. If he hopes to rationalize such behavior as admittedly brutal but necessary for self-defense, he cannot dismiss the further indictment which cannot so easily be justified or rationalized. In a catalog of vices, all too familiar to man, Gulliver reveals further the inhuman treatment man visits on his own kind:

But, in order to feed the Luxury and Intemperance of the Males, and the Vanity of the Females, we sent away the greatest Part of our necessary Things to other Countries, from whence in Return we brought the Materials of Diseases, Folly, and Vice, to spend among ourselves. Hence it follows of Necessity, that vast Numbers of our People are compelled to seek their Livelihood by Begging, Robbing, Stealing, Cheating, Pimping, Forswearing, Flattering, Suborning, Forging, Gaming, Lying, Fawning, Hectoring, Voting, Scribbling, Stargazing, Poysoning, Whoring, Canting, Libelling, Free-thinking, and the like Occupations: . . .¹⁸

After contrasting the vices of his race with the natural virtues of the Houyhnhnms, Gulliver thinks he understands the complete truth and resolves, therefore, "never to return to human Kind. . . ." His friend, whom Gulliver acknowledges as his master, concludes

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 252.

from Gulliver's disclosure that the human race has only a "small Pittance of Reason" of which he makes "no other Use than by its Assistance to aggravate [his] natural Corruptions, and to acquire new ones which Nature had not given. . . ."19

This pronouncement is the indictment Swift makes on mankind, and it certainly is as vexing as he promised to make it. But it is one neither Gulliver nor the reader can deny. It should be clear at this point in the final voyage that Swift is speaking through both the Houyhnhnm and Gulliver, since Gulliver is reporting the Houyhnhnm reaction. It is also the point at which Gulliver's discovery and, consequently, his education end. Those who have denounced Swift as a misanthrope identified him with Gulliver throughout the book and therefore concluded that Swift, like Gulliver, renounced man, choosing, rather, to live apart from the rest of man, as Gulliver does finally, and that Swift set up the Houyhnhnms as models to imitate, which Gulliver does do. It matters little, except as a satirical jab at those who would rationalize their own failings, that Gulliver chooses to live apart from mankind. What matters is that the reader should not follow Gulliver but remain

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 258-259.

to see the entire truth about man and through self-knowledge be better prepared to come to terms with himself and his world. Gulliver's self-deception proves conclusively that he does not show even a pittance of reason; instead, he shows the capacity of man to rationalize and then to call his rationalization reason. His final and complete conversion as he begins to emulate the Houyhnhnms' neighing speech and their gait can only be madness.

After his initial and shocking discovery that man perverts reason, Gulliver is unable to make sound judgments, and his tragedy lies in his failure to distinguish not only between Yahoo and man but also between man and Houyhnhnm. Whereas the Yahoo behaves only by instinct, as Gulliver's master points out, the Houyhnhnm lives intuitively by reason. The Houyhnhnms are, in fact, guided by an absolute reason, which amounts, paradoxically, to a kind of instinctive reason. By nature, therefore, if not in behavior, the Yahoo and the Houyhnhnm are more alike than either is like man, for both are extreme positions. This distinction is important since neither Yahoo nor Houyhnhnm has much choice in the way he behaves. Gulliver refuses, or is unable, to recognize that he, as well as the rest of his kind, is guided by both instinct and reason. Gulliver misunderstands his discovery by misinterpreting and by accepting the Houyhnhnm

statement that "Reason alone is sufficient to govern a Rational Creature."²⁰ He fails to see that the creatures he so admires are devoid of passion and that, because he does have passions, he is not a completely rational animal. Furthermore, although reason is sufficient for governing a purely rational creature, it is foolish to believe that man can deny his passions and live completely by his reason. Because of his dual nature he can no more deny one aspect of it than the other. In fact, he must accept that duality or else live forever deceived, as Gulliver chooses to live in order to satisfy himself that he is not a Yahoo, or is, at least, a superior one. Gulliver does persist in being deluded rather than coming to terms with reality, thereby remaining in a kind of blissful state of ignorance similar to the state of happiness Swift defines in his "Digression Concerning Madness" as "a Perpetual Possession of being well Deceived"²¹ and consequently in "The Serene Peaceful State of being a Fool among Knaves."²² Truly, we are all knaves, a condition less deceiving, however, than being utter fools.

Much has been written and debated about Gulliver's

²⁰Ibid., p. 259.

²¹Jonathan Swift, A Tale of a Tub, Vol. I, p. 108.

²²Ibid., p. 110.

last voyage and about what Swift meant or did not mean in his biting satire; however, there is no reason for not taking Swift at his word. Swift clearly outlined, while still working on his masterpiece, not only his purpose and intentions but his philosophy on human nature as well. The most reasonable approach for one to follow in the hope of understanding Gulliver's Travels would be, therefore, to rely more on Swift's own statements than on someone else's interpretations. In his letter to Alexander Pope, in which he vowed to vex the world, he also presented his famous indictment of mankind:

" . . . principally I hate and detest that animal called man, although I hartily love John, Peter, Thomas and so forth. . . ." ²³ Although these misgivings about man appear to be pure invective, Swift does temper his indictment with significant qualifications. Unlike Swift, Gulliver gives a blanket condemnation in his diatribe against mankind and holds absolutely no hope for the human race. Swift is hardly Gulliver, and the qualification he does retain is the difference between Gulliver's complete pessimism and Swift's hope, which must lie in man as an individual. Gulliver is brought close to reality, but he shows that he completely misunderstands

²³Letter from Swift to Pope, op. cit., p. 103.

or ignores what is further revealed to him:

As these noble Houyhnhnms are endowed by Nature with a general Disposition to all Virtues and have no Conceptions or Ideas of what is evil in a rational Creature; so their grand Maxim is to cultivate Reason, and to be wholly governed by it. Neither is Reason among them a Point problematical as with us, where Men can argue with Plausibility on both Sides of a Question; but strikes you with immediate Conviction; as it must needs do where it is not mingled, obscured, or discoloured by Passion and Interest.²⁴

Poor Gulliver struggled with all his limitations to understand, but nevertheless, Swift in his double irony has Gulliver admit that it was difficult for him to make his master comprehend the meaning of the word opinion since reason allowed men "to affirm or deny only where we are certain; and beyond our Knowledge we cannot do either."²⁵ Although Swift, in these last two excerpts, is satirizing the sophistry which is inherent in arguing on both sides of a question, particularly if the aim is primarily to score points, he does reveal that man has the capacity and freedom to make decisions. This capacity for reasoning, although not always used wisely, is a precious gift the Houyhnhnms do not possess and is what differentiates man from that ideal creature. That gift is one which Swift recognizes in his sermon, "Thoughts

²⁴Swift, Gulliver's Travels, op. cit., p. 267.

²⁵Ibid.

on Religion."

Liberty of conscience, properly speaking, is no more than the liberty of possessing our own thoughts and opinions, which every man enjoys without fear of the magistrate. . . .²⁶

It is important to note at this point that the Houyhnhnms are not significant as character studies. The fallacy in some contemporary criticism lies in the tendency of many critics to discuss Houyhnhnms as though they were somehow humans, or even ideal humans. Too much has been made of these creatures. It matters not at all that they appear ridiculous in their human gestures--sitting, building, cooking, etc. Nor is any worthwhile purpose served in theorizing about their limitations, such as Mr. Eddy's concern with their lack of dignity. It is not even relevant to discuss the obvious lack of compassion in their decision to expel Gulliver from their homeland because he resembled Yahoos. These concerns merely detract from the real issue. There is no need to analyze the motives or the character of the Houyhnhnms as though they were humans. The fourth book is about man and his limitations, not about the Houyhnhnms and their failings. They are reason personified. It is

²⁶Jonathan Swift, "Thoughts on Religion," Irish Tracts 1720-1723 and Sermons, Herbert Davis and Louis A. Landa, editors, Vol. IX, p. 263. (The tracts are edited by Mr. Davis, the sermons by Mr. Landa.)

Gulliver who must be analyzed; and, more importantly, it is the reader who must analyze himself and his species, for he has the capacity to do so. The "Liberty of Conscience" which Swift defines and which he says every man enjoys is exclusively man's gift. Therefore, it seems gratuitous to discuss the failing of a purely mythical creature who happens to be a character in a book as though that creature were human, let alone the author's major concern.

Since man can never be certain of anything, the best he can do in his struggle to do right is to be guided by his conscience. The uncertainty with which man is forever confronted is not, as Gulliver notes, "problematical" with the Houyhnhnms. They may be fortunate in this respect, but, although they need not struggle with their consciences, neither do they have their own thoughts and opinions, which all men enjoy. Gulliver, therefore, foolishly begins to worship reason, not realizing that man's dual nature, though at times a curse, is a blessing as well. The last book, for that reason, may be understood, as Mr. Quintana states, as a "symbolization of man's perennial moral dilemma."²⁷

Gulliver's short-sightedness is best described

²⁷Ricardo Quintana, "Note on Irvin Ehrenpreis's 'The Origins of Gulliver's Travels,'" op. cit., p. 257.

by Martin Price's analysis of Gulliver's failure (as well as man's):

. . . Gulliver embodies the incorrigible tendency of the mind to oversimplify experience, a trait that takes, with equal ease, the form of complacency or misanthropy. Given his tendency to see man as either a rational animal or an irrational beast, given his expectation that man will be essentially good or essentially evil, Gulliver can never comprehend the problematic nature of man as he really is.²⁸

Gulliver's attitude and behavior subsequent to his denunciation of mankind are the result of simplistic thinking. His oversimplified formula by which he measures man alienates him even further. He is like every man, as Henry Sams points out, who can readily see the depravity in others but is ignorant of his own.²⁹ Mr. Sams calls this tendency the "satire of the second person." He illustrates it in the way Gulliver inveighs against pride, yet "displays in his own person the external symptoms by which pride may be recognized. The effect is satiric betrayal."³⁰

Although Gulliver was obtuse about man's moral dilemma, Swift was not. He criticized man sharply for

²⁸ Martin Price, "Swift: Order and Obligation," Twentieth Century Interpretations of Gulliver's Travels: A Collection of Critical Essays, op. cit., p. 89.

²⁹ Henry Sams, "Swift's Satire of the Second Person," Twentieth Century Interpretations of Gulliver's Travels: A Collection of Critical Essays, op. cit., p. 35.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 39.

his failings, but he was nevertheless aware of man's limitations. In his letter to Pope he clearly outlines his position:

I have got Materials Towards a Treatis proving the falsity of that Definition animal rationale; and to show it should be only rationis capax. Upon this great foundation of Misanthropy (though not Timons manner) The whole building of my Travells is erected. . . .³¹

This statement seems hardly so violent as to have incurred the anger of readers over the last two centuries. It is a truth he has proved simply enough by revealing man's behavior and allowing man to look at himself closely. The only thing misanthropic about it is Swift's admission of misanthropy, which he qualifies. But, then, the successful satirist is often reviled for baring the truth; and those most critical of and least affected by the reality are the most complacent, who have a higher opinion of themselves.

Swift does not say that man is incapable of reason, but that man is not a completely rational animal. Considering the human condition not only in Swift's time but also in the twentieth century, one would have to be completely deceived to deny the fact. What has been called Swift's misanthropy is nothing stronger than

³¹Letter from Swift to Pope, op. cit., p. 103.

vexation. One might wonder why Pope has never been severely accused of misanthropy, since he concurred with Swift:

For I really enter fully as you can desire, into your Principle, of Love of Individuals: And I think the way to have a Publick Spirit, is first to have a Private one: For who the devil can believe any man can care for a hundred thousand people, who never cared for One? No ill humoured man can ever be a Patriot, any more than a Friend.³²

Where there is any doubt of Swift's meaning, Swift clarifies his position. Two months after the letter to Pope in which he outlined his intentions and purpose concerning Gulliver's Travels, Swift corrects any misunderstanding that might have ensued:

I tell you after all that I do not hate Mankind, it is vous autres who hate them because you would have them reasonable Animals and are Angry for being disappointed.³³

The implication in Pope's answer to Swift's first letter is, of course, that one cannot know others until he knows himself and that he cannot extend his love to others until he sees something in himself to love. Gulliver's problem is that he does not know or love himself and is, therefore, incapable of knowing or loving

³²Letter from Pope to Swift, Oct. 15, 1725, op. cit., p. 108.

³³Letter from Swift to Pope, Nov. 26, 1725, op. cit., p. 118.

anyone else. In the final analysis it is this incapability of Gulliver to know himself that is the cause of his misanthropy and self-deception. Gulliver's self-deception is perfectly outlined, by extension, in a sermon by Swift, who describes the fate of one who, in trying to avoid sin and folly, runs directly into it "like a Horse into the Battle; as if he had nothing left to do, but like a silly Child to wink hard, and to think to escape a certain and infinite Mischief, only by endeavouring not to see it."³⁴ In the same sermon, Swift succinctly analyzes the reason that man seldom attempts to examine himself. Man fears looking into his heart because he "may discover some Vice or some Infirmity lurking within him, which he is very unwilling to believe himself guilty of."³⁵ Swift continues:

³⁴Swift, "The Difficulty of Knowing One's Self: A Sermon," Irish Tracts 1720-1723 and Sermons, op. cit., p. 354. Louis Landa states that this sermon has been considered of doubtful authenticity from the beginning. The authenticity of this sermon is defended by Thomas Sheridan in his edition of the Works in 1784. Sheridan sees evidence in Stella's handwriting of that sermon as being exactly the same as her transcription of other works by Swift. Those who question the authenticity find fault with certain of Swift's conventional devices, such as grammatical structure (pp. 103-106). Landa concludes, "These various considerations cautiously weighed do not permit confident rejection or acceptance of The Difficulty. It has therefore been printed in the Appendix as doubtful" (p. 106).

³⁵Ibid., p. 357.

These are very unwelcome Discoveries that a Man may make of himself; so that it is no wonder that every one, who is already flushed with a good Opinion of himself, should rather study how to run away from it, than how to converse with his own Heart.³⁶

There are perhaps no better explanations a propos Gulliver's predicament, and of course man's, than those propounded by Pope and Swift. And Pope said it all best in his immortal couplet:

Know then thyself, presume not God to scan;
The proper study of Mankind is Man.³⁷

Gulliver's disillusionment with himself and his species multiplies rapidly, for the more his admiration for the Houyhnhnms grows, the more his disgust for the Yahoo and hatred of mankind swells. In his ridiculous attempt to imitate every gesture of the Houyhnhnms and to achieve complete rationality, Gulliver's contempt for the passions grows. His worship of reason is tantamount to a denial of his instinctive nature, and the more disgust he feels for mankind the more he abhors the animal part of his nature. Gulliver is as absurd as anyone who denies the existence of the passions or instincts. To deny them by resisting them is one thing,

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Alexander Pope, Essay on Man, Pope: Poetical Works, ed. Herbert Davis (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 250.

but to deny their existence is another. That they are necessary for man's existence seems almost too obvious to need justifying. Much has been made by some critics of Swift's sermon "Thoughts on Religion." It has been used unconvincingly to prove that Gulliver's fourth voyage is primarily a satire on eighteenth-century Deism. Others have argued that it is an attack on the new stoicism of the period. Taken simply at its word, it seems enough to view it as Swift's acknowledgment that passions exist and, therefore, cannot be denied. They, with man's capacity for reason, provide man with his dual nature. The conclusion of his sermon is relevant to Gulliver, who has used his reason to deny the love of life:

Although reason were intended by providence to govern our passions, yet it seems that, in two points of the greatest moment to the being and continuance of the world, God hath intended our passions to prevail over reason. The first is, the propagation of our species, since no wise man ever married from the dictates of reason. The other is, the love of life, which, from the dictates of reason, every man would despise, and wish it an end, or that it never had a beginning.³⁸

Swift reiterates this same sentiment in an attack on the Stoics: "The Stoical Scheme of supplying our Wants, by lopping off our Desires; is like cutting off our Feet

³⁸Swift, "Thoughts on Religion," Irish Tracts 1720-1723 and Sermons, op. cit., p. 263.

when we want Shoes."³⁹

Pope, also, recognized the importance of the passions, which he called "self-love":

Two Principles in human nature reign;
 Self-love, to urge, and Reason, to restrain;
 Nor this a good, nor that a bad we call,
 Each works its end, to move or govern all:

 Self-love, the spring of motion, acts the soul;
 Reason's comparing balance rules the whole.

 Self-love and Reason to one end aspire;
 Pain their aversion, Pleasure their desire;⁴⁰

The final lines of Essay on Man are perhaps the best analysis of what Pope, as well as Swift, believed to be the answer to the dilemma in man's dual nature:

For wit's false mirror held of Nature's light;
 Shew'd erring Pride, WHATEVER IS, IS RIGHT;
 That REASON, PASSION; answer one great aim;
 That true SELF-LOVE and SOCIAL are the same;
 That VIRTUE only makes our Bliss below;
 And all our Knowledge is OURSELVES TO KNOW.⁴¹

Gulliver never understands the dilemma. Instead, he oversimplifies by choosing the obvious good over the more manifestly bad in man's nature. He has lost his perspective and is unable to make a valid judgment.

Gulliver was completely disillusioned, but Swift had no illusions about man. He denied neither reason

³⁹Swift, A Tale of a Tub, op. cit., p. 244.

⁴⁰Pope, op. cit., p. 252.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 279.

nor passions as the components of humanness. For him, however, a third component was necessary to bring the two into compatibility--faith. Perhaps the need for faith was uppermost in Swift's mind when he considered Gulliver's condition; however, Swift never injects religion into the book as an argument. As a Christian moralist he undoubtedly held that faith was a necessary condition for sanity in a materialistic world filled with greed and brutality. His religious faith is evident in his sermon "On the Trinity":

Therefore, let no Man think that he can lead as good a moral Life without Faith, as with it; for this Reason, Because he who hath no Faith, cannot, by the Strength of his own Reason or Endeavours, so easily resist Temptations, as the other who depends upon God's Assistance in the overcoming his Frailties. . . .⁴²

Why Swift was not explicit in the fourth voyage about the need for faith is not clear. It seems likely that he avoided the question of faith because he was dealing with two significant aspects of man which are inherent in his nature regardless of whether or not a person has a religious conviction. The Earl of Shaftesbury discusses the question of whether or not man is capable of knowing moral right from wrong before receiving religious instruction. In his Characteristics, published in 1711,

⁴²Swift, "On the Trinity," Irish Tracts 1720-1723 and Sermons, op. cit., p. 164.

fifteen years before the publication of Gulliver's Travels, Shaftesbury writes:

Before the time, therefore, that a creature can have any plain or positive notion one way or other concerning the subject of God, he may be supposed to have an apprehension or sense of right and wrong, and be possessed of virtue and vice in different degrees, as we know by experience of those who, having lived in such places and in such a manner as never to have entered into any serious thoughts of religion, are nevertheless very different among themselves, as to their characters of honesty and worth: some being naturally modest, kind, friendly, and consequently lovers of kind and friendly actions; others proud, harsh, cruel, and consequently inclined to admire rather the acts of violence and mere power.⁴³

To the extent that Swift avoided the question of religion, he can be said not to have been sermonizing. Calhoun Winton, who, it seems, is straining to seek a Christian moral in Gulliver's Travels, unconvincingly argues that it is a Christian allegory on the order of Bunyan's The Pilgrim's Progress. He agrees with Roland Frye, who views the Yahoos as symbols of man's inherent depravity, or original sin. Paraphrasing Mr. Frye, Mr. Winton believes that had "Gulliver attended church . . . he might have been better prepared for the animality of the Yahoos. . . ."⁴⁴ Such an interpretation, however, does

⁴³Earl of Shaftesbury, Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times, John M. Robertson, editor (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1964), Vol. I, p. 266.

⁴⁴Calhoun Winton, op. cit., p. 276.

not come to terms with reality nor with the book itself. Gulliver's problem is that he is not prepared for the animality in himself. When he learns of the rational manner in which all aspects of Houyhnhnm life are conducted, Gulliver is driven further from the truth about his instinctive nature. The more he learns about Houyhnhnm society, the less he knows about himself. He discovers that the Houyhnhnms' behavior toward one another is unlike that of man and other animals, who have at least certain behavioral patterns in common. When he sees some of the affinities animals and man share, he wrongly identifies himself further with Yahoos.

In the Houyhnhnm society, reason is doubtlessly sufficient to govern, but that society is irrelevant for Gulliver because Gulliver is not a Houyhnhnm. These rational creatures are devoid of passions. There is neither love, sympathy, nor compassion in their nature. They look upon marriage as "one of the necessary Actions in a reasonable Being."⁴⁵ Gulliver is impressed by this cold relationship, and in his total deception prefers not to remember that in such matters, to paraphrase Swift, God intended the passions to override reason.

Gulliver further denies his passions when he

⁴⁵Swift, Gulliver's Travels, op. cit., p. 269.

admires the Houyhnhnms for their stoical acceptance of parenthood. These rational creatures "have no Fondness for their Colts or Foles;" for which the Houyhnhnm shows "the same Affection to his Neighbour's Issue that he had for his own."⁴⁶ His acceptance of this relationship is surprising since Gulliver has children and, therefore, must have experienced love. Nevertheless, he proclaims the superiority of the Houyhnhnm relationship. In this respect, it is true, man is more like other animals than he is like the Houyhnhnm, for most animals also love their offspring. Man is not a Yahoo, however, since the Yahoos in matters of filial love are more closely related to the Houyhnhnms than to man. And if this is any indication of man's animality, so be it. But it is certainly preferable to the passionless existence of the supremely rational being, which, of course, exists only in utopias. It has been seen in his other writings that Swift does not advocate such a stoical existence.

The discovery that man has only the capacity for reason is fully obscured for Gulliver as he contemplates the superiority and desirability of the Houyhnhnm utopia. In order to have seen the truth he should have contemplated the state of man's human condition--that man has only

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 268.

a pittance of reason and that his limited capacity for reason is no justification for the brutality that man has perpetrated on his own kind. These realities cannot be explained away, as Gulliver explains them, by believing that man has no reason and that he is governed exclusively by brute instinct. For such an interpretation does not explain Swift's love for "John, Peter, Thomas and so forth."

Gulliver seems merely to be rationalizing his position, perhaps subconsciously, in order to absolve himself of shame by denying his complicity as a member of the human race which he has erroneously equated with the Yahoo tribe. A more reasonable and human reaction would have been for him to accept his limitations and those of man and to strive to better the human condition. Instead, in disgust, he runs away from human kind and from himself by deciding upon his return to his homeland to live in a stable with horses away from the sight and smell of man, his wife and children included. This final action proves not only that he denies his passions but also that he is in a blissful state of ignorance, if not madness. Swift aptly describes such a condition in the same context in which he defines happiness as "a perpetual Possession of being well Deceived":

But when a Man's Fancy gets astride on his Reason,

when Imagination is at Cuffs with the Senses, and common Understanding, as well as common Sense, is Kickt out of Doors; the first Proselyte he makes, is Himself. . . .⁴⁷

Each of Gulliver's voyages should have been an education derived from a discovery. But Gulliver learns nothing, in the sense that he does not apply his knowledge toward his own edification. It is the reader, not Gulliver, who sees the pettiness of the Lilliputians, the largeness of spirit in the Brobdingnags, and the ludicrous extreme to which abstract speculation could extend. Gulliver reports; he does not comment on these people. Edward Rosenheim is only partially correct when he suggests that "what Gulliver learns, we learn as well,"⁴⁸ and that Gulliver discovers truths about men in the first three voyages which lead him to the correct analysis he makes about man in the final voyage.⁴⁹ It is not Gulliver who admires the humanitarian concern of the Brobdingnagian king. As a favor to the king, Gulliver suggests that the latter would be in a dominant position over his enemies if he would accept from him the secret

⁴⁷Swift, A Tale of a Tub, op. cit., p. 108.

⁴⁸Edward W. Rosenheim, Jr., Swift and the Satirist's Art, op. cit., p. 210.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 211.

of gunpowder. The king is horrified at the suggestion and at Gulliver's description of the inhuman uses to which gunpowder is put. Gulliver's host protests "that although few Things delighted him so much as new Discoveries in Art or in Nature; yet he would rather lose Half his Kingdom than be privy to such a Secret. . . ."50 Gulliver's reaction is that the king displays "narrow Principles," "short Views," and "nice unnecessary Scruple."51 Such a reaction proves that Gulliver learns nothing. However, the reader, unless he agrees with Gulliver, learns much. Contrary to what Mr. Rosenheim states, it is not until the last voyage that Gulliver begins to synthesize what he observes into some moral statement, but he does so without benefit of what he might have gained in his other voyages. Had he learned anything he would have realized that the Brobdingnags were good and that if their physical features disgust him (since they are giants he views them in magnification), he is only revealing his own pettiness. But he does not discover this about himself any more than he discovers his own stupidity in the gunpowder incident.

Until the last voyage Gulliver is really an impartial

50Swift, Gulliver's Travels, op. cit., p. 135.

51Ibid.

observer. It is the reader, guided by Swift, who must constantly make moral or ethical judgments. Swift, as Martin Price points out, demands "of his readers what he never grants to Gulliver, the power to make necessary distinctions."⁵² Toward the end of the last voyage Gulliver is no longer the impartial observer provided with the opportunity to see the world as it is. Neither should the reader be content merely to observe. Gulliver becomes an active participant, drawing some correct conclusions regarding his species but failing to note the most important distinctions among man, Yahoo, and Houyhnhnm. It is at this point that Swift permits the reader to be his own guide and to proceed to make his own important discovery.

Much of what Gulliver concludes about man in the last voyage is valid, and Gulliver is Swift only when he is revealing the truth. Swift shows what happens to man, who, believing he is a reasonable, wise, and moral creature, is faced with the truth about himself. Gulliver ignored the discoveries of his first three voyages as he was experiencing them. And in a rather hasty synthesis in the last voyage, he ignores the most important discovery-- that although he is not a completely rational animal,

⁵²Martin Price, *op. cit.*, p. 92.

neither is he a complete Yahoo. Rather than use his discovery to come to know himself and to work for a greater idealism, some but not all of which the Houyhnhnms displayed, he foolishly denies himself. In his ignorance he assumes a superiority over his fellow-man. And as he declaims on the foolish pride of man, he becomes guilty of that pride in himself. Even though he considers himself, as well as mankind, as Yahoo, he is mistaken. It is that small pittance of reason, which the Houyhnhnm master attributes to man, that distinguishes man from other animals. That ability to reason, however small, is his only salvation from ever becoming a complete Yahoo.

Theodore O. Wedel, one of the first to approach Gulliver's Travels in terms of its ideas as related to the religious and philosophical beliefs of the eighteenth century, proposed that in the last voyage "we have, designedly or not, Hobbes contrasted with Locke," and that Swift "stands nearer to Hobbes."⁵³ Whether or not Mr. Wedel is correct in placing Swift nearer to Hobbes, it is perhaps true that man stands midway between Locke's optimism and Hobbes' pessimism concerning the inherent nature of man.

⁵³Theodore O. Wedel, op. cit., p. 30.

Nowhere is Gulliver's mistaken conclusion better illustrated than at the end of his voyage when Gulliver is confronted with evidence that not all men are Yahoos. However, he ignores the last of the discoveries. He is allowed one final opportunity to readjust his thinking from the more extreme initial position that all men, without exception, are Yahoos, but his conversion to the worship of reason is final. He can no longer make allowances despite irrefutable evidence to the contrary. Having been expelled from Houyhnhnmland by the creatures he admired, he is rescued by a Portuguese vessel. The captain, Don Pedro, is warm, sympathetic, and deeply compassionate. He is the epitome of the best of men--the Johns, Peters, and Thomases Swift loved although he could not abide mankind. Not only the captain but also the crew treat Gulliver with great understanding and compassion. At one point they prevent the now mad Gulliver from leaping to his suicide as he feels disgust at being again among "Yahoos." Whatever atrocities men have inflicted on one another, Gulliver's conclusion that all men are Yahoos is ridiculous. The world has many Don Pedros, proving that man is capable of reason, and however small that number, his only salvation and the only hope he has of minimizing his irrational behavior must lie in his recognition that such men exist. The

best way for man to achieve such a state--a more realistic kind of utopia--is not by denying one part of his nature but by accepting the fact that it exists and aspiring to better the human condition. The reader, unless he is as gullible as Gulliver, cannot fail to see that the Houyhnhnm society is not a human one, whatever else it may be and however admirable it may at first appear. A world of Don Pedros who are capable of love and compassion and reason is the best which man can hope to attain and the only realistic one for which to strive. It is a world where reason and passion are commingled and the only possible world in which man can come to terms with the duality of his nature.

Pope, as well as Swift, outlined the dilemma man faced in trying to exist with opposing forces within his nature forever pulling at him:

Know then thyself, presume not God to scan;
 The proper study of Mankind is Man.
 Plac'd on this isthmus of a middle state,
 A being darkly wise, and rudely great:
 With too much knowledge of the Sceptic side,
 With too much weakness for the Stoic's pride,
 He hangs between; in doubt to act, or rest,
 In doubt to deem himself a God, or Beast;
 In doubt his mind or Body to prefer,
 Born but to die, and reas'ning but to err;
 Alike in ignorance, his reason such,
 Whether he thinks too little, or too much:
 Chaos of Thought and Passion, all confus'd;
 Still by himself abus'd, or disabus'd;⁵⁴

⁵⁴Pope, op. cit., pp. 250-251.

Swift, in the fourth voyage, like Pope in Epistle II of An Essay on Man, is concerned less with man's religious faith than with man's state in respect to himself. Whatever compromise man makes between his reason and his passions must be based on common sense, despite the spiritual fulfillment his religious faith may offer.

Poor Gulliver has lost his common sense in his moral straining to achieve perfection. He fails to see that man devoid of reason is a Yahoo and that devoid of passions he is a Houyhnhnm. It is a fact man must live with whether he wishes to or not. Any denial of this fact is a gross rationalization for purely prideful reasons--self-deception at best and madness at worst. It is that duality in man's nature that creates man's moral dilemma--that "Chaos of Thought and Passion" which puts him "In doubt his mind or Body to prefer." Gulliver made the mistake of deciding to prefer his mind, as though he had to choose one over the other. Pope did not presume to take sides; he merely stated the dilemma. For man to know himself it is enough to understand the existence of the dilemma and, therefore, to be better prepared to live within it.

Gulliver's utopia is no better than an ant colony where procreation is a mechanical process and where children are so many robots necessary to preserve the

species. The land of the Houyhnhnms, as Jack Gilbert wisely points out, is a "cynic utopia" in which the best beliefs and ideals of a society are projected but, nevertheless, one that in its description of what ought to be describes something other than what is usually considered utopian. It is therefore a negative utopia.⁵⁵ It is furthermore a utopia that is unattainable simply because man is not a Houyhnhnm. A man may at times admire and/or envy the fortitude of the stoic or the devoted idealism of the ascetic, and he may imitate them himself, but it is pure folly to advocate that all men emulate these extremes.

Man, because of his dual nature, must confront situations not problematical to any other species, imagined or real. Gulliver, although he utters this truth, never contemplates the meaning of it. He fails to see that the precious difference between his society and that of the Houyhnhnms is that man is, or at least can be, an individual. Man has, as Swift says, the liberty of conscience and the freedom to think and to hold opinions. The price man pays for these precious rights is the consequence of the moral and ethical choices he makes as he confronts the many dilemmas he must.

⁵⁵Jack G. Gilbert, op. cit., p. 150.

Gulliver was right only to the extent of realizing that man can behave--in fact, has often behaved--worse than the lower animals, but he allows no exceptions. Certainly that is not what Swift believed. John F. Ross has rightly pointed out that "the activities of monarchs and statesmen are the actions of an exceedingly small group of people."⁵⁶ For that reason the fourth voyage is not only a caustic satire of mankind in general but also a satire on the gullibility of some men who, seeing the worst in some human behavior, would absolve themselves of any guilt by refusing to accept what they are and by deceiving themselves into believing they are better than the whole of mankind. Gulliver, unaware of his own rationalization, reveals his failings:

I write for the noblest End, to inform and instruct Mankind, over whom I may, without Breach of Modesty, pretend to some Superiority, from the Advantages I received by conversing so long among the accomplished Houyhnhnms.⁵⁷

Swift is allowing the reader to reflect closely and to avoid Gulliver's dodging. The object of satire in the fourth book, as Mr. Ross points out, is the reader himself.⁵⁸

⁵⁶John F. Ross, "The Final Comedy of Lemuel Gulliver," Swift: A Collection of Critical Essays, op. cit., pp. 80-81.

⁵⁷Swift, Gulliver's Travels, op. cit., p. 293.

⁵⁸John F. Ross, op. cit., p. 80.

Mr. Ross' analysis is especially true of any reader who has identified with Gulliver to the very end and who also has been gulled into believing in his own superiority. Few men enjoy what they see when they are given the means by which to examine themselves closely. Swift, therefore, is doubly ironic in his satiric attacks. He satirizes man by showing him what he really is, and then he satirizes him a second time for refusing to accept the truth. Swift knew men's propensity for avoiding the truth when confronted with it. He describes that trait in his preface to The Battle of the Books:

Satyr is a sort of Glass, wherein Beholders do generally discover every body's Face but their Own; which is the chief Reason for what kind of Reception it meets in the World, and that so very few are offended with it.⁵⁹

Gulliver had an opportunity, after all the truths he had confronted, to come to know himself. What the fourth voyage offers through its revelations is the truth, as Pope states it, that "The proper study of mankind is man." But one cannot know mankind until he first understands himself. This truth is well defined by Swift in the final section of his sermon "The Difficulty of Knowing One's Self":

Thus, upon every Occasion, a Man intimately acquainted

⁵⁹Swift, The Battle of the Books, op. cit., p. 140.

with himself, consulteth his own Heart, and maketh every Man's Case to be his own (and so puts the most favourable Interpretation upon it). Let every Man therefore look into his own Heart, before he beginneth to abuse the Reputation of another, and then he will hardly be so absurd, as to throw a Dart that will certainly rebound and wound himself.⁶⁰

Swift had no illusion of what man was or of what he had done. He bared the truth on both matters. He tried to shake man from his complacent belief that he is a completely rational animal. Swift shows also that man is guilty of self-defeating and self-deceiving pride in that belief. Man's capacity for reason seems only to advance his capacity for greed and cruelty. He proves that before the horrors of the past can be avoided, man must take a good long look at himself. The fourth voyage is the mirror he presents man for that purpose. Because Gulliver did not like what he saw, he distorted the reflection himself. Although Swift purposely has Gulliver make the wrong assumptions, he allows the reader to reflect longer and to observe not only his own reflection but also Gulliver's distortion of the truth, in order that the reader avoid Gulliver's pitfalls. Mr. Ross's analysis of Gulliver and other gullibles is an excellent summary of Gulliver's failings and Swift's attitude

⁶⁰ Swift, "The Difficulty of Knowing One's Self: A Sermon," Irish Tracts 1720-1723 and Sermons, op. cit., p. 362.

toward his reader:

. . . Swift paid his readers a higher compliment than most readers will pay him. He assumed, as any ironic satirist by the very nature of his work assumes, that he and his readers were on terms of equality in sharing an important secret. . . . Yet Swift offers us the opportunity to ride out the storm with him. . . . If we choose to disregard Swift himself and the last part of Voyage IV, and to go down finally for the third time, with Gulliver, it is hardly Swift's blunder.⁶¹

No one can ask more of the writer than the compliment Swift gives his reader--that he is intelligent enough to see himself refusing to see himself. Hopefully he will avoid the pride of Gulliver and accept the discovery of himself as a man with a dual nature. And though he must realize he can never be a Houyhnhnam--nor is that ideal state a desirable one--his small pittance of reason can keep him from becoming a complete Yahoo.

⁶¹John F. Ross, op. cit., p. 74.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Our own nuclear age, more than any other since the first publication of Gulliver's Travels in 1726, can ill afford to ignore the inescapable conclusions Swift set forth in Gulliver's last voyage. There is no better example of Swift's conclusion that man perverts his reason to acquire new vices than the modern creation of an arsenal of such horrendous proportions that in its threat of total annihilation man cannot help but live in a perpetual state of fear. We can almost forgive the pride in reason the eighteenth century enjoyed as it began to question long established doctrines, because along with this pride was an optimistic hope of creating a better world, despite the naiveté of some of the schemes of that period. In the optimism of rationalists such as Locke was a faith in man's ability to use his powers of reason to eliminate injustices. The modern era, unlike the eighteenth century, has the scientific and technological knowledge to eliminate the wretched conditions under which a majority of the world's population lives, but such advances benefit only a relative minority. The eighteenth century pride was a pride in man's rational abilities. The modern pride is often super-nationalistic

arrogance, governed less by reason than by passions. Man still does not know himself. Rather than use his reason to temper his passions, he has allowed his passions to overrule his reason. Surely, the state of the world in the last half century has proved that Swift's indictment of man is justified and that Swift's invective, under the circumstances, is comparatively milder than it might be were he writing today. When one compares the meager arsenal of the European that Gulliver described to his master, one can see the extent to which man has perverted reason:

And, being no Stranger to the Art of War, I gave him a Description of Cannons, Culverins, Muskets, Carabines, Pistols, Bullets, Powder, Swords, Bayonets, . . . Ships sunk with a Thousand Men; twenty Thousand killed on each Side: . . .¹

Such a list today appears innocent when one considers the total destructive power contained in the modern arsenal with its atomic and hydrogen bombs, radioactive fallout, nerve gas, chemical and biological warfare, anti-personnel mines, napalm, and the promise of even greater means of destruction which no longer stagger the imagination.

The risk of interpreting a work of literature as this writer has done is that it opens him to the criticism

¹Swift, Gulliver's Travels, op. cit., p. 247.

that such an evaluation reduces the work of art to a sociological tract. But that was not the intention. Swift was not a sociologist, and his concern for such evils as poverty, etc., was no more than a feeling of the moral obligation of the more fortunate to look after the more wretched members of the society. This attitude is clear enough in the eighteenth century concept of "benevolism." But despite the paternalistic attitude of these "benevolists," they were genuinely concerned. Even Swift went beyond noblesse oblige and left all he had to found a mental institution. That is not to say that no one today is sincerely concerned with the problems that still exist in modern society nor that all men in the twentieth century should be condemned as irrational. There are many Don Pedros who deserve the world's respect, such as Jonas Salk. They are the Johns, Peters, and Thomases whom Swift admitted loving, despite the Yahoo-like behavior he saw in others. The existence of such concerned individuals encourages optimism at a time when pessimism seems more a propos. Book IV of Gulliver's Travels is not the misanthropic diatribe it was once considered to be, nor was Jonathan Swift the complete pessimist he has been accused of being. Swift incurred the wrath and hatred of many, but only because their views were more optimistic than his. Perhaps Swift's

pronouncement might have been more acceptable had he not been so liberal with his scatological references. But the fact that he resorted to such frank expression should not deny the validity of his main argument. It is ironic, indeed, that readers still are upset and disgusted by Swift's scatology, yet they somehow manage to read the truly ugly and disgusting in man without a frown.

As Samuel Klinger observed, each century makes its own assumptions about human nature so that the meaning of a piece of literature changes as the assumptions change.² Two centuries of readers refused to accept Swift's conclusion, but their world was not threatened by total calamity. The modern reader cannot afford to ignore Swift. That is not to say Swift sprinkled his masterpiece with "messages," a word that has become anathema to the "sophisticated" reader. But the work does affirm truths of a profound nature which Swift intended to be realized and to be acted upon. Gulliver's Travels is not an exercise in cleverness created to titillate the sophisticated; it is a study of man and an implicit warning that man's record on earth has not

²See p. 41.

always justified the pride man has enjoyed in believing himself to be a rational animal.

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