England's Neglect of Higher Education: The Comparative Perspective of Matthew Arnold

Brendan Rapple
Boston College

In this study, I examine why Matthew Arnold considered his country's higher educational institutions to be inadequate, what prescriptions he advocated for improving them, and why he was convinced this amelioration was so necessary for leading England to true modernity. I argue throughout that Arnold's beliefs were profoundly influenced by what he had witnessed during his many official and unofficial trips to the Continent. A genuine understanding of Arnold's views on England's post-secondary institutions necessitates a concomitant comprehension of Arnold the comparative educator.

Dans cette étude, j'examine pourquoi Matthew Arnold considérait comme inadéquates les institutions éducatives supérieures de son pays, quelles prescriptions il préconisait pour les améliorer, et pourquoi il était convaincu que cette amélioration était tellement nécessaire afin d'amener l'Angleterre vers la vraie modernité. J'affirme de par en par que les convictions d'Arnold ont été profondément influencées par ce dont il fut témoin durant ses nombreux voyages officiels et non-officiels sur le Continent. Une lecture authentique des points de vue d'Arnold quant aux institutions post-secondaires anglaises nécessite une compréhension concomitante d'Arnold, adepte de l'éducation comparée.

"Our middle classes are nearly the worst educated in the world." (Arnold, 1960-1977, Vol. V, p. 15)

In February 1866 Matthew Arnold, only a few months after returning from his work on the Continent for the Taunton Commission which was inquiring into the state of England's secondary education, published "My Countrymen" in the *Cornhill Magazine*. This article, written at a time when debate and agitation regarding the proposed Reform Bill were rife and England's future to many increasingly uncertain, had as its chief theme the role of England in

the modern world and the perception of this role by other nations. Arnold's main conclusion was that foreign nations tended to treat England in a cavalier, contemptuous manner. His nation was perceived as no longer a very strong power but, rather, as having declined quite dramatically since the exalted days of Waterloo. At the same time, Continental nations, it was felt, had risen in strength and prestige. Moreover, foreign critics, according to Arnold, focused much of the blame for England's unsatisfactory global role on the newly triumphant middle class (Arnold, 1960-1977, Vol. V, p. 15). Though these critics acknowledged that the keenness for industry and business had made the middle class wealthy and had thus nourished their body, it was felt, however, that they had neglected the care of their intelligence and soul. That they had not fostered the things of the mind was evident from the appalling state of their schools which were much worse than their counterparts on the Continent. Nor had they looked to the care of the soul, as their religion was "narrow, unintelligent, repulsive ... the lowest form of intelligential life which one can imagine as saving" (p. 19). English middle class life certainly bore no comparison to the liberalizing and civilizing life of the foreign middle classes which one might find on the Rhine, at Lausanne, or at Zurich.

Consequently, Arnold was convinced, the English had to attain that culture, *Geist,* lucidity, which he perceived as so common on the Continent, if ever they were to achieve progress in the modern world. For true advances had little to do with the "triumphs of material progress" (Arnold, 1960-1977, Vol. II, p. 315). clearly pervasive throughout Victorian England. What was urgently required was that immaterial progress which he believed the French and Germans had attained to a great degree. While the English, especially the middle classes, were good at the material pursuits of money-making and industry, Arnold believed that much more was needed. For these stimuli, he declared in his "A Liverpool Address" (1882) were "not by themselves sufficient. The need in man for intellect and knowledge, his desire for beauty, his instinct for society, and for pleasurable and graceful forms of society, require to have their stimulus felt also, felt and satisfied" (1960-1977, Vol. X, p. 83). Though Arnold was well aware that there was no single reason why the Germans and French were particularly suited to meet the modern *Zeitgeist,* he did argue, over and over, that they possessed a most beneficial aid in their superior educational systems. He was convinced that their State educational institutions, especially those at the secondary and higher levels, were responsible in great part for inculcating in the French and German middle classes the lucidity so manifestly lacking in the English Philistines. In particular, he regarded England's higher educational institutions as totally

inadequate, a deficiency that was strongly underscored when they were contrasted with their Continental counterparts. They may have sufficed when only the upper classes continued their education after the secondary level, but now the middle classes in increasing numbers were desirous of partaking of higher educational opportunities. No wonder Arnold stressed in his 1868 *Schools and Universities on the Continent* (his Taunton Commission report in book form) on his return to England after an examination of European educational systems: "Organise your secondary and your superior instruction" (Arnold, 1960-1977, Vol. IV, p. 328).

Though there have been numerous studies on Matthew Arnold's views on England's popular education and his lengthy career as an Inspector of elementary schools, far less attention has been focused on his writings on higher education (see, however, Connell, 1950, pp. 269-272). This is surprising since Arnold fervently believed that the reform and expansion of this level of education would constitute a particularly efficacious vehicle for helping the middle classes, his *bête noire*, attain a much needed "intellectual deliverance" and for leading England to true modernity (1960-1977, Vol. I, p. 19). Over the following pages I provide an analysis of Arnold's views on England's post-secondary education, examining in particular why he found the existing provision so inadequate and what prescriptions he adduced for ameliorating it. A pervasive argument, and one that constitutes the paper's original contribution to educational and Arnoldian scholarship, will be that his recommendations were profoundly influenced by what he had witnessed during his sojourns abroad. For a genuine understanding of Arnold's views on England's post-secondary institutions necessitates a concomitant comprehension of Arnold the comparative educator.

Arnold: Comparative Educator

Few were better equipped than Arnold to comment authoritatively on both England's and the Continent's systems of higher education. Better known today as a consummate poet and religious, literary, social, and political critic, Arnold for three and a half decades, from 1851 to 1886, earned his living as one of her Majesty's School Inspectors of elementary schools, ending shortly before his retirement as Chief Inspector. Though his day-to-day work revolved about elementary schools it is natural that he gained a wide knowledge of the higher educational levels also. In addition, one of such intellectual and social background, Oxford's Professor of Poetry for ten years, arguably England's leading literary critic, and the confidant of many of the most learned men of the day, was bound to learn all that was happening in his

nation's higher educational sphere. Moreover, Arnold was one of the 19th century's most prominent comparative educators and was an authority on a number of foreign educational systems (see Rapple 1989, Nash, 1966). As well as making many unofficial trips to the Continent, in 1859 and 1865 he traveled abroad in an official capacity to gather foreign educational material as an Assistant Commissioner for the Newcastle and Taunton Commissions which were inquiring into the state of England's elementary and post-elementary education respectively, and in 1885-1886 he went as an emissary for the Education Department to study Continental elementary education. In addition, it was because he was considered an authority on foreign education that he was summoned to give evidence for two whole days in 1886 before the Cross Commission, which was examining the progress of elementary education since the 1870 Act. Though his official work abroad was mainly concerned with elementary and secondary education, Arnold became well acquainted with foreign higher education also, an area of which, in his opinion, his compatriots were well nigh ignorant. Moreover, he believed that they were losing out by this neglect of foreign education. As he remarked in 1874 in the preface to the Second Edition of *Higher Schools and Universities in Germany:*

> During the debates in Parliament this last spring on Irish university education, a foreign critic remarked that the ignorance which foreigners are accused of displaying when they talk of England could not possibly exceed the blundering into which the English debaters fell when they talked of universities on the Continent. And a good deal of ignorance about these there certainly, among English public men, is; while some of the lessons to be got from a right knowledge of them are ... very valuable. (Arnold, 1960-1977, Vol. VII, p. 90)

Naturally, he understood that not all foreign educational practices were good and that even if something worked well in a foreign society it would not necessarily be adaptable to the English condition and be of benefit there. Again, societies changed over time and a nation which might at one period have had much to offer England's educational system might later on, with circumstances in one or both of the two nations altered, now have very little to offer for emulation. Arnold, though acknowledging that the development of French education had great historical interest, asserted that the English school system had now few practical lessons to learn from France. However, the schools and universities of Germany offered "an abundance of such lessons" (Arnold, 1960-1977, Vol. VII, p. 90). That Arnold was convinced of the great importance of comparative education was made clear in the preface to his 1868 *Schools and Universities on the Continent* which

contained his clearest and most definitive statement on the nature and purpose of comparative study, and especially comparative education:

> In short, it is expedient for the satisfactory resolution of these educational questions, which are at length beginning seriously to occupy us, both that we should attend to the experience of the Continent, and that we should know precisely what it is that this experience says. Having long held that nothing was to be learned by us from the foreigners, we are at last beginning to see, that on a matter like the institution of schools, for instance, much light is thrown by a comparative study of their institution among other civilized states and nations. To treat this comparative study with proper respect, not to wrest it to the requirements of our inclinations or prejudices, but to try simply and seriously to find what it teaches us, is perhaps the lesson which we have most need to inculcate upon ourselves at present. (Arnold, 1960-1977, Vol. IV, p. 20)

Of course, Arnold's motives as a comparativist were focused on much more than merely improving his country's educational structure. He was convinced that comparative studies were to help in the inculcation of a wider and deeper perspective and in the development of a global awareness rather than a mere national one. A major concern of comparative studies was to transform England, to bring her society, its spirit, in his opinion, narrow, provincial, insular, more into line with the prevailing *Zeitgeist*. Arnold wished the English to become more cosmopolitan in outlook and practice; to become imbued with a greater feeling for international, as opposed to mere domestic, currents, particularly in intellectual life; to display, in short, an increased awareness that England, though important, still occupied only part of the world's stage. This desire to develop in his countrymen a greater understanding and appreciation of foreign societies and the realization that there were many advantages which might fall to them from such an enlargement of spirit may be said to have constituted for Arnold the most significant function of comparative studies in general and comparative education in particular.

Inadequacies of England's University Education

Though his writings on the first two levels of education in England were extensive, Arnold wrote relatively little on his nation's universities and other institutions of higher education. Indeed, at one stage of his life he was rather more concerned with the problem of establishing a Roman Catholic University in Ireland, somewhat on the lines of the predominantly Catholic University of Bonn in Protestant Prussia or the predominantly Protestant University of Strasbourg in Catholic France, than with the state of England's

higher educational system (see Rapple 1994). Though certainly interested in higher education and particularly in the affairs of Oxford and Cambridge, Arnold seemed for the most part to ignore the multitude of changes which were occurring in this sphere during the second half of the century. For example, the major reforms which the two ancient universities were at this time undergoing received little attention in his writings. It should be pointed out that reforms had even begun before Lord John Russell's establishment in 1850 of the Royal Commissions to examine Oxford and Cambridge (See Sanderson, 1975). Nor did Arnold write much about England's two other universities. First was the University of London, originally a college established in Gower Street in 1828, which received a charter in 1836 to organize examinations for and grant degrees to candidates from the Gower Street college as well as to students of the Anglican King's College (opened in 1831). The other was the University of Durham, chartered in 1832, but which for many decades remained small with few students. Though he desired that increased accessibility to higher education be made available in the provinces, he made little mention of the various nonuniversity institutions, some the embryos of the later civic universities, which were proliferating in provincial cities during the second half of the century (See Jones, 1988). (He did, however, concern himself with Liverpool University College, and mentioned Owens College, Manchester, in his 1882 "A Liverpool Address.") Nevertheless, though he provided few details of the inadequacies of specific institutions, in writing after writing he bemoaned in general terms the weakness of his nation's higher educational provision, a weakness which he considered was heavily underscored when contrasted with the excellence of the corresponding institutions abroad. Indeed, even a brief perusal of his works reveals that it was one of his main convictions stemming from his comparative educational experiences abroad that there was urgent need for the establishment in England of a thorough public post-elementary educational system on the Continental model. Increased access to improved higher educational institutions, he was assured, would constitute one of the main agencies for reforming England's middle classes.

Arnold acknowledged that both of England's ancient universities had many virtues. Cambridge, for example, he lauded in 1882 as "the University not of great movements, but of great men" (Arnold, 1960-1977, Vol. X, p. 549). Still, it was Oxford he loved more and which played a most significant part in his life. His father, Thomas Arnold, had been a prominent Oxford figure, having become a fellow of Oriel College, a Doctor of Divinity, and, for a brief period before his death, Regius Professor of Modern History, a post which he held concurrently with his headmastership of Rugby. Matthew

himself, after a not particularly distinguished undergraduate career, though he won the prestigious Newdigate Prize for Poetry, also became a fellow of his father's College and held the Professorship of Poetry from 1857 to 1867. Furthermore, as was natural for one of his class, a large proportion of his friends and intimates were Oxford and Cambridge men who, as himself, had been molded to a great extent by the distinctive *mores* and traditions of these old institutions. Though no uncritical admirer of his *alma mater*, it is not surprising that numerous complimentary references pervade his writings. As he wrote, late in life, to his daughter Lucy: "I think Oxford is still, on the whole, the place in the world to which I am most attached" (Russell, 1895, Vol. II, p. 332). He was especially pleased when Oxford awarded him an honorary D.C.L. in 1870: "Nothing could more gratify me, I think, in the way of an honour, than this recognition by my own University, of which I am so fond, and where, according to their own established standard of distinctions, I did so little" (Russell, 1895, Vol. II, p. 35. See also Buckler, 1958, p. 102). His greatest compliment to Oxford is, patently, the purple passage concluding his Preface to his 1865 *Essays in Criticism*:

> And yet, steeped in sentiment as she lies, spreading her gardens to the moonlight, and whispering from her towers the last enchantments of the Middle Age, who will deny that Oxford, by her ineffable charm, keeps ever calling us nearer to the true goal of all of us, to the ideal, to perfection, – to beauty, in a word, which is only truth seen from the other side? – nearer, perhaps, than all the science of Tübingen. Adorable dreamer, whose heart has been so romantic! who hast given thyself so prodigally, given thyself to sides and to heroes not mine, only never to the Philistines! home of lost causes, and forsaken beliefs, and unpopular names, and impossible loyalties! What example could ever so inspire us to keep down the Philistine in ourselves, what teacher could ever so save us from that bondage to which we are all prone, that bondage which Goethe, in his incomparable lines on the death of Schiller, makes it his friend's highest praise (and nobly did Schiller deserve the praise) to have left miles out of sight behind him; – the bondage of "was *uns alle bändigt,* DAS GEMEINE!" She will forgive me, even if I have unwittingly drawn upon her a shot or two aimed at her unworthy son; for she is generous, and the cause in which I fight is, after all, hers. Apparitions of a day, what is our puny warfare against the Philistines, compared with the warfare which this queen of romance has been waging against them for centuries, and will wage after we are gone? (Arnold, 1960-1977, Vol. III, p. 290)

But despite his deep regard for the venerable institutions of Oxford and Cambridge, Arnold was quite sanguine that they could be improved. He

admitted in his 1861 *The Popular Education of France* that the education received by their small number of students had long served as a satisfactory one for the role which most of them later assumed in life. These universities "long maintained a course which the modern spirit, not altogether without justice, decried as antiquated but [they] nevertheless formed generations able to fill, not ignobly, their part in Church and State" (Arnold, 1960-1977, Vol. II, p. 188). In their narrow function they constituted what foreigners envied most in English education. However, in 1868 Arnold also observed, echoing the sentiments of Carlo Matteucci, Italy's Minister of Public Instruction, that Oxford and Cambridge were not really at the level of higher education at all, but were merely "hauts lycées:" "though invaluable in their way as places where the youth of the upper class prolong to a very great age, and under some very admirable influences, their school education ... they are still, in fact, *schools,* and do not carry education beyond the stage of general and school education" (Arnold, 1960-1977, Vol. IV, p. 319; also pp. 68, 133, 331). The low standards meant that it was relatively easy to take a degree in either of the two institutions. Though he was writing in a humorous vein, the methods, depicted in 1867 in his *Friendship's Garland*, employed by two fictional characters, Viscount Lumpington and Reverend Esau Hittall, to pass their exams at Oxford must have been frequently repeated in reality:

> I have always thought that their both getting their degree at last with flying colours, after three weeks of a famous coach for fast men, four nights without going to bed, and an incredible consumption of wet towels, strong cigars, and brandy-and-water, was one of the most astonishing feats of mental gymnastics I ever heard of. (Arnold, 1960-1977, Vol. V, p. 70)

It was a basic problem, Arnold repeatedly stressed, that English universities invariably failed to develop in their students an appreciation of real learning. There was little fostering of what he termed science, that is the disposition "towards knowing things as they are," little nurturing of man's "scientific sense ... the sense which seeks exact knowledge" (Arnold, 1960-1977, Vol. III, p. 298; Vol. VI, p. 9). In Germany, however, as he wrote in "German and English Universities," the universities, not being "hauts lycées," had the development of such science as their chief goal: "In a German university ... the aim, the dominant problem, is no longer the formal cultivation of the spirit; it is *science* – the concentration of the spirit upon a definite branch of knowledge, the systematic study of this branch, and finally, the sense of a first-hand, independent, sure mastery of it" (Vol. IV, p. 331). Consequently, declared Arnold, "It is in science that we have most need to borrow from the German universities" (Vol. IV, p. 264). Referring, in his 1864 "The Literary

Influence of Academies," to Ernest Renan's criticisms of J. W. Donaldson's *Jashar*, Arnold agreed with the critic's implication that

> an extravagance of this sort could never have come from Germany, where there is a great force of critical opinion controlling a learned man's vagaries, and keeping him straight; it comes from the native home of intellectual eccentricity of all kinds, – from England, from a doctor of the University of Cambridge; – and I daresay [Renan] would not expect much better things from a doctor of the University of Oxford. (Arnold, 1960-1977, Vol. III, p. 243)

Furthermore, though superior education, in Arnold's opinion, should allow the student to pursue those studies for which he has a natural aptitude and to do so "systematically under first-rate teaching," he was convinced that Oxford and Cambridge, with their rigid curricula, did "next to nothing towards this end." Indeed, their neglect of teaching science or systematic knowledge was clearly demonstrated by the fact that their B.A. examinations were nothing other than the final examinations of the secondary school abroad, the *Abiturientenexamen* of Germany, or the *épreuve du baccalaureate* of France (This was an opinion expressed by Arnold in 1868 and it seems quite extreme. Oxford and Cambridge at this period were making headway in their reforms in a number of spheres, the academic curriculum being an important one. Certainly, by the later years of Arnold's life the ancient universities had improved greatly from the time he himself was a student at Oxford in the 1840s). In addition, Arnold considered that these institutions were particularly at fault at the graduate level where no formal teaching was provided for masters' and doctors' degrees. In France and Germany, on the contrary, universities had true scientific instruction for these qualifications. Not surprisingly Arnold advocated that when an English student wanted first-rate teaching and systematic study he was obliged to go to Paris, Heidelberg, or Berlin (Arnold, 1960-1977, Vol. IV, pp. 318-320). In short, he was unequivocal in his 1868 Taunton report about the inadequacies of English universities:

> If it is the function of the university to develope into science the knowledge a boy brings with him from the secondary school, at the same time that it directs him towards the profession in which his knowledge may most naturally be exercised ... [then] our English universities do not perform the function of a university, as that function is above laid down. (Arnold, 1960-1977, Vol. IV, p. 254)

Indeed, "in the opinion of the best judges, [they constituted] the weakest part of our whole educational system" (Vol. IV, p. 318).

But this neglect of true science in England's post-secondary education was surpassed, Arnold pointed out in his Taunton report, by an even greater problem, namely the paucity of students, something especially manifest when compared with France and Prussia: "Abroad far more than in England, where university instruction is the privilege of comparatively few, secondary instruction leads to superior or university instruction" (Arnold, 1960-1977, Vol. IV, p. 177). In 1862 out of a population of nearly 37,500,000 France had 23,371 students in her five faculties of theology, law, medicine, sciences, and letters, in addition to those students attending special schools (Vol. IV, p. 128). Prussia, a few years later, had 6,362 matriculated students at her eight universities out of a population of about 18,500,000. But England with 20,000,000 inhabitants could only number about 3,500 matriculated students. Moreover, Oxford and Cambridge, in Arnold's opinion, being merely "hauts lycées" and London University, especially after the establishment of the external degree scheme of 1858, being more of an examining board than a real teaching institution, most of these students did not actually receive what he regarded as real superior instruction (Vol. IV, p. 320; see also Curtis, 1963, p. 424).

Arnold's Prescriptions for Third Level Educational Reform

Just as Arnold generally failed to provide more than broad criticisms of England's higher educational structure so also did he fail for the most part to furnish specific detailed prescriptions for reforming this educational level. Blueprints were not his forte; practical details he invariably dismissed, borrowing from Carlyle, as "machinery" (Super, 1970, p. 37). He was quite clear, however, that reform extended to more than Oxford and Cambridge, or indeed London and Durham. The most important changes were to be accomplished elsewhere. He set out a general plan in his 1868 Taunton Commission report:

> If there is one thing which my foreign experience has left me convinced of, – as convinced of as I am of our actual want of superior instruction, – it is this: that we must take this instruction to the students, and not hope to bring the students to the instruction. We must get out of our heads all notion of making the mass of students come and reside three years, or two years, or one year, or even one month at Oxford or Cambridge, which neither suit their circumstances nor offer them the instruction they want. We must plant faculties in the eight or ten principal seats of population, and let the students follow lectures there from their own homes, or with whatever arrangements for their living they and their parents choose. It would be everything for the great seats of population to be thus made

> intellectual centres as well as mere places of business; for the want of this at present, Liverpool and Leeds are mere overgrown provincial towns, while Strasbourg and Lyons are European cities. (Arnold, 1960-1977, Vol. IV, p. 322)

He deplored that England had few seats of higher education whereas many European nations had such centers spread throughout their country. France, he pointed out, did not have distinct universities like Oxford and Cambridge. Rather, she was divided into 18 academies, in 16 of which were faculties, each with varying numbers of chairs. Not every academy had all five faculties. Only letters and sciences were in each; theology was in seven, law was in 11, with medicine in three. Even large towns with no seat of a faculty of letters and sciences could establish auxiliary institutions where students could attend lectures which could be counted under certain restrictions as faculty lectures (Arnold, 1960-1977, Vol. IV, pp. 128-131). The faculties were not connected with each other, but each had the power to examine for and to grant degrees. Arnold was also impressed with the extensive higher education in Prussia which had six complete universities, each with the faculties of theology, law, medicine, and philosophy, at Berlin, Bonn, Breslau, Greifswald, Halle, and Königsberg and two incomplete universities with only theology and philosophy, at Münster and Braunsberg. Even Italy had 15 universities, though Arnold considered that this was too many to fill with first-rate professors (Vol. IV, pp. 255, 164, 177).

In his proposed eight or ten centers of faculties, in London and the provinces, Arnold recommended that Oxford and Cambridge should locate a number of their professors, who would still retain the title of professors of these old universities. These personnel would contribute to "unite things new and old, and help in the happiest manner to inaugurate a truly national system of superior instruction." He also proposed that some of the Oxford and Cambridge emoluments could go towards endowing professorial chairs and student exhibitions in these centers (Arnold, 1960-1977, Vol. IV, pp. 322-323). In addition, as he suggested in his 1882 "A Liverpool Address," the State should assign some Regius Professorships to such new institutions as Liverpool University College and Owens College, Manchester (Vol. X, p. 79). For his general goal was "to form centres of superior instruction in at least ten different parts of England, with first-rate professors to give this instruction" (Vol. IV, p. 323). He was insistent that the main function of a university was not merely to examine or to confer degrees; the provision of good instruction should be its main aim, as was the case in Prussia. It was essential that universities "bring young men into personal contact with teachers of high mental gifts and high attainments, and to raise and form the

pupil by that contact" (Vol. X, p. 80)[1]. He proposed that the teachers or professors be grouped into faculties, each with a dean. They would then concert, "as the professors and *Privatdocenten* of a faculty concert in Germany, their instruction together," the universities thereby acting, unlike Oxford and Cambridge where professors were not formed into faculties, as real universities (Vol. IV, p. 324). He desired that this system also be effected at the University of London which, as he acknowledged in his 1860 "On Translating Homer," was "an institution which by its position and by its merits acquires every year greater importance" (Vol. I, p. 139). Still, this university, he recommended in 1868

> should be re-cast and faculties formed in connection with it, in order to give some public voice and place to superior instruction in the richest capital of the world; and for this purpose the strangely devised and anomalous organisations of King's College and University College should be turned to account, and *co-ordered*, as the French say, with the University of London. Contributions from Oxford and Cambridge, and new appointments, might supply what was wanting to fill the faculties, which in London, the capital of the country, should, as at Paris or Berlin, be very strong. London would then really have, what it has not at present, a university. (Vol. IV, p. 323)

Having concluded from his studies that too many universities in Germany granted degrees and that there existed a distinct lack of standardization among these awards, Arnold advised in his 1868 Taunton report that not all of his proposed eight or ten centers containing faculties should have the power of examining for and of conferring degrees. It would be sufficient if in England only Oxford, Cambridge, and the University of London were examining boards with degree granting powers; each of the centers throughout the country would be connected with one or other of the boards and the students of that faculty would take that board's degree examinations (Vol. IV, pp. 324-325).

Arnold was adamant that England's reorganized higher educational institutions should be under the jurisdiction of the State, as was the case in Continental nations.

> It is not from any love of bureaucracy that men like Wilhelm von Humboldt, ardent friends of human dignity and liberty, have had recourse to a department of State in organising universities, it is because an Education Minister supplies you, for the discharge of certain critical functions, the agent who will perform them in the greatest blaze of daylight and with the keenest sense of responsibility (Arnold, 1960-1977, Vol. IV, p. 325)

Nevertheless, he did not want excessive control, a problem which he found in France where, despite the undoubted benefits resulting from that country's public system, he believed that there was too much regulation by the Ministry and the State. He preferred the situation in Prussia where the universities, though under the control of the Minister of Public Instruction, were much more autonomous. "The French ... are naturally most struck with the liberty of the German universities, and it is in liberty that they have most need to borrow from them" (Vol. IV, p. 264).

Still, it was only excessive interference by the State which Arnold was against, for he was quite clear that England's restructured higher educational system was to be under an Education Minister, in whom would reside the duty of appointing professors, and also a Superior Council of Public Instruction. An important benefit, he believed, which would result from a truly State educational system would be the coordination of all three branches, elementary, secondary, and higher, "as parts of a regularly designed whole," as was the Continental practice. He was impressed with the coordinated educational systems of France, Germany, and Italy and, as he observed in 1886, particularly with the Canton of Zurich whose constitution ordained that "'there shall be an *organische Verbindung,* an organic connexion, between all the schools of the Canton, from the lowest to the highest'" (Arnold, 1960-1977, Vol. XI, p. 102). However, the situation was very different in England where only elementary education came under the aegis of the State and where, in the absence of one integral system, there existed no real contact between the three levels. This, he believed, was to be particularly regretted for where there existed a truly coordinated system the different levels had beneficial effects on each other. As he remarked in "A Liverpool Address," "Without good secondary schools you cannot have good universities; without good universities you cannot have good secondary schools" (Vol. X, p. 76).

Though Arnold made hardly any recommendations regarding the financial involvement by the State in his proposed system, he did desire that public grants should, if necessary, help the organization of the centers of faculties. He recognized, as he stated in *A French Eton* in 1864, that English universities already received "public grants; for – not to speak of the payment of certain professors by the State – that the State regards the endowments of the Universities as in reality public grants, it proves by assuming to itself the right of interfering in the disposal of them" (1960-1977, Vol. II, p. 287). Yet, it seems as if he wished that the State's financial involvement in English higher education be more lavish and more organized, as it was on the Continent where, at the time of the Taunton Commission, Italy was by far the

leader in government spending in this area, followed by France, and then by Prussia (Vol. IV, pp. 165-166). It is true that he believed that many of the towns of the new faculties "would furnish an annual contribution to the expenses of the faculties" (Vol. IV, p. 326) and that in 1882 he praised University College, Liverpool for garnering its finance from local rather than State resources. However, the main reason he considered that the Liverpool institution had done better from local rather than central help was his belief that if there had been greater involvement by the State in this particular instance the College would have become a mere examination board like London rather than the real teaching institution he considered it to be (Vol. X, pp. 79-80). Much more representative of his general thought on State financial aid to education was his 1888 speech, as reported in the *Bristol Times and Mirror*, in support of an endowment fund for Bristol University College: "He hoped the College would get over the difficulties that were besetting it, and if anything could be done to induce the Government to give aid to Colleges of this sort, one of the endeavours of his life would be gratified, and a very great benefit would be conferred on the whole of the community (applause)" (Vol. XI, p. 382). Though he never spelled out in detail the financial arrangements of his reformed higher educational system, the whole tenor of his educational and political thought indicate clearly that he believed that State involvement in higher education in England should extend to more than certain regulatory functions, and help with financing.

Arnold consistently maintained that "education is the road to culture" (1960-1977, Vol. V, p. 527) and that a State system of educational institutions covering all levels would constitute one of the greatest means of attaining that culture among the English people. He was not very specific about programs of studies, apart from recommending that the post-secondary institutions should offer a broad range of subjects to cater to students' particular aptitudes. As he observed in his Taunton report:

> The university or the superior school ought to provide facilities, after the general education is finished, for the young man to go on in the line where his special aptitudes lead him, be it that of languages and literature, of mathematics, of the natural sciences, of the application of these sciences, or any other line, and follow the studies of this line systematically under first-rate teaching. (Vol. IV, p. 318)

However, he never prescribed for the higher level any specific curricula or programs of studies. He was generally happier speaking in very broad terms and recommending, for example, the ideal end of education rather than specifying the best method of study or providing a detailed list of subjects and disciplines the study of which would lead to that end. Thus, he tended to be

vague as in his repeated insistence that the disinterested study of true science or knowledge would inevitably lead the English to culture and overcome their Philistinism.

It is not surprising that for Arnold, an excellent Greek and Latin scholar, the study of the Classics played an important role in the attaining of his desired culture and science. However, he had little time, as we read in *Culture and Anarchy,* for the common identification of culture with a superficial knowledge of the ancient languages:

> The culture which is supposed to plume itself on a smattering of Greek and Latin is a culture which is begotten by nothing so intellectual as curiosity; it is valued either out of sheer vanity and ignorance or else as an engine of social and class distinction, separating its holder, like a badge or title, from other people who have not got it. No serious man would call this *culture,* or attach any value to it, as culture, at all. (Arnold, 1960-1977, Vol. V, p. 90)

Still, few subjects, he believed, offered so rich a vehicle for approaching human perfection as Greek and Latin, if only they were taught in the proper way. Following in the tradition of Erasmus, he was keen to observe that the stress, common in England, on philology, on grammar, accidence, syntax was to fail totally in the teaching of the Classics. What was needed was to look to the German approach to these subjects, to see how they attempted to develop a broad *Alterthumswissenschaft,* that is "a knowledge of the spirit and power of Greek and Roman antiquity learned from its original works" rather than a mere superficial or, for that matter, thorough acquaintance with the philology of these languages (Vol. IV, p. 294; also p. 242). As he observed in his 1882 Rede lecture "Literature and Science" it was essential to go beyond linguistic analysis and gain real knowledge of the great civilization of the ancients, their art, their thought, their literature, their history (Vol. X, pp. 57-58).

However, the attainment of true culture, Arnold believed, necessitated exposure to more subjects than just an improved Classical curriculum. As he insisted in the Taunton report, a student must have contact with as many points as possible of the circle of knowledge and not be content with just one part of its circumference; that is, one who would be really educated should not concentrate on one branch of knowledge to the total exclusion of all others. He was thinking in particular of the respective claims of the sciences versus those of the humanities. The former was important for true education. It is "a vital and formative knowledge to know the world, the laws which govern nature, and man as a part of nature. This the realists have perceived, and the truth of this perception, too, is, inexpugnable." Consequently, "As our public instruction gets a clearer view of its own functions, of the relations of

the human spirit to knowledge, and of the entire circle of knowledge, it will certainly more learn to awaken in its pupils an interest in that entire circle, and less allow them to remain total strangers to any part of it" (Arnold, 1960-1977, Vol. IV, pp. 290-291). Accordingly, though he recognized that most individuals, due to their own aptitudes for one particular part of the circle and because of the vastness of knowledge, were understandably limited in the number of subjects which they could study, he had no hesitation in stressing that the sciences, as well as the Classics, had a rightful claim as an object of culture. Certainly, he recognized that the teaching of natural sciences had improved at the ancient universities, especially at Oxford, since the reforms of mid-century. However, these subjects, he felt, generally received more and better attention on the Continent. In his Taunton report in 1868 he mentioned French criticism of Cambridge's emphasis on mathematics:

> But the French lay the greatest stress on the importance of teaching the natural sciences, and regard mathematics as subsidiary to this object; they severely criticise our Cambridge teaching for devoting itself so exclusively to pure mathematics, and making the instrument into an end. The barrenness in great men and great results which has since Newton's time attended the Cambridge mathematical teaching is mainly due, they say, to this false tendency. (Vol. IV, p. 118)

In the same work he recalled with obvious agreement the observation of Italy's Signor Matteucci on the curriculum in England's universities, namely that "the strengthening of our superior instruction, especially in the direction of the sciences, [was] our most pressing need of all in the matter of public education" (Vol. IV, p. 133). In short, Arnold was convinced that it was now high time that the stranglehold enjoyed by the Classics, despite their great merit, should cease, the modern *Zeitgeist* having signaled the end of those days when a knowledge of Latin and Greek alone indicated the mark of culture. The study of the sciences should be made more available. As a slight help in this direction Arnold suggested the abolition of compulsory Greek in certain circumstances. As he remarked in a letter to the Vice Chancellor of Cambridge on June 18, 1879: "In England we have no institution which answers to a German Polytechnicum. I should be glad if students following the mathematical or natural sciences could be admitted to the University by an examination without Greek, and could also take an honour degree in those Sciences by an examination without Greek" (Arnold, *Davis-Arnold Collection of Letters*, No. 4885, Box 20).

But Arnold wanted far more than increased exposure to scientific subjects. English, he considered, would constitute a most beneficial study,

particularly its great literary works. As he wrote in "A Guide to English Literature" in 1877,

> In literature we have present, and waiting ready to form us, the best which has been thought and said in the world. Our business is to get at this best and to know it well .... The literature most accessible to all of us, touching us most nearly, is our own literature, English literature (Arnold, 1960-1977, Vol. VIII, p. 238)

Accordingly, he recommended in letters to John Churton Collins, that Oxford students should take the leading works of English literature together with those of Greece and Rome for the final examination in the School of *Litterae Humaniores* (however, he did not wish that a new School of Modern Literature or Languages be established): "These seem to me to be elementary propositions, when one is laying down what is desirable in respect to the University degree in Arts. The omission of the mother tongue and its literature in school and University instruction is peculiar, as far as I know, to England." Nevertheless, he informed Collins that he had little expectation that such changes would soon be forthcoming due to the inadequate intellectual vision and comparative perspective of those who held the power in the Universities:

> I will not conceal from you that I have no confidence in those who at the Universities regulate studies, degrees, and honours. To regulate these matters great experience of the world, steadiness, simplicity, breadth of view are desirable. I do not see how those who actually regulate them can well have these qualifications; I am sure that in what they have done in the last forty years they have not shewn them. Restlessness, a disposition to try experiments and to multiply studies and schools, are what they have shewn, and what they will probably continue to shew – and this though personally many of them may be very able and distinguished men. (Arnold, 1910, pp. 5, 9-10)

While Arnold earnestly desired an increase in the great literary works of his own nation on the university curriculum, he was not at all happy, as he reveals in an 1875 letter to his sister Fan, with the English authors who were included on the reading list for the History School at Oxford, where his son Dick was a student. Many were "quite secondrate men," the result being that Oxford History offered "nothing to form the mind as reading truly great authors forms it, or even to exercise it as learning a new language, or mathematics, or one of the natural sciences exercises it." To study the best available, no matter what nationality, was always Arnold's goal and he accordingly believed that the course could only be improved if such foreign works as those of Thucydides or Tacitus, or Montesquieu's *Esprit des Lois* or

Guizot's *Civilisation in France* were included. Moreover he considered that History had worsened by the removal of the study of Roman Law, "the one matter which gave the mind something to school it." The main problem was with those who regulated studies at Oxford and he believed that there would be no improvement

> till we get a man like Guizot or W. von Humboldt to deal with the matter, men who have the highest mental training themselves, and this we shall probably in this country never get, and our intellectual progress will therefore be a thousand times slower than it need be, and generations will be sacrificed to bungling. (Russell, 1895, Vol. II, pp. 142-143)

Especially unsatisfactory, he averred in *On the Study of Celtic Literature* in 1866, was the system of chairs in English universities which was "based on no intelligent principle, and does not by any means correspond with the requirements of knowledge .... The whole system of our university chairs evidently wants recasting, and adapting to the needs of modern science." (He is thinking in particular of the absence of any chair of Celtic in English universities). Arnold continues providing, from a comparative European perspective, what is his most succinct statement of the purpose of a university and the professorship:

> Circumstances at Oxford and Cambridge give special prominence to their function as finishing schools to carry young men of the upper classes of society through a certain limited course of study. But a university is something more and higher than a great finishing school for young gentlemen, however distinguished. A university is a member of a European confraternity for continually enlarging the domain of human knowledge and pushing back in all directions its boundaries .... But undoubtedly the most fruitful action of a university chair, even upon the young college student, is produced not by bringing down the university chair to his level, but by beckoning him up to its level. Only in this way can that love for the things of the mind, which is the soul of true culture, be generated, – by showing the things of the mind in their reality and power. Where there is fire, people will come to be warmed at it; and every notable spread of mental activity has been due, not to the arrangement of an elaborate machinery for schooling, but to the electric wind of a glowing, disinterested play of mind. (Arnold, 1960-1977, Vol. III, p. 544)

Conclusion

It was Arnold's opinion that the inadequacies of England's higher educational structure mirrored the inadequacies of her wider society. He was

concerned that his nation, increasingly dominated by the pervasive middle class civilization, was becoming more and more a Philistine, Hebraic society where culture, true science, and Hellenism were lacking. Moreover, due to her copious intellectual faults, which he believed the educational system was doing little to rectify, England was failing to meet the demands of modernity and, consequently, was falling behind certain Continental nations where the modern *Zeitgeist* was increasingly viewed as synonymous with intellectual deliverance. The most effective vehicles for attaining this deliverance, he was convinced, were the State controlled educational institutions at all levels of these foreign nations, especially France and Germany (and those of Italy and Switzerland, to a lesser extent). They were major agencies for inculcating among many of their citizens the intelligence, culture, and science which he fervently desired should also be fostered among his own compatriots and especially those of the middle classes. It is true that he came over the years to be increasingly disillusioned by the French lack of seriousness and conduct and that he felt that their State-intervention in education, as in other spheres, tended at times to be excessive. Still, he rarely had anything but high praise for most aspects of France's public school and university system. In like manner, for all his disapproval of certain elements of German civilization, he invariably lauded the Prussian and other German State educational systems as even more potent than those of the French in cultivating their pupils' intellects. However, England's secondary schools, he believed, were in an abysmal condition and her universities were totally failing to satisfy the needs of the modern age. The latter institutions were too few, were still, despite the great rise to prominence in Victorian times of the middle classes, socially inegalitarian, and catered to only a tiny segment of the population. Accordingly, England, Arnold urged, should look to Continental models, especially that of Prussia, and place her higher educational structure under a central Minister and a superior Council of Public Instruction, and in the process greatly extend and thoroughly reorganize it. A greatly improved post-secondary system would be a most powerful agency for helping to transform the English middle classes and to lead England to true modernity. What was "devoutly to be wished," he wrote in 1878 in "'Porro Unum Est Necessarium,'" was to educate these classes on the first plane, rather than on the second, and in good State institutions with the objective of effecting their homogeneity, intelligence, and civilization (Arnold, 1960-1977, Vol. VIII, pp. 368-369). He was very impressed by an old memorandum of his admired von Humboldt: "'The thing is *not,* to let the schools and universities go on in a drowsy and impotent routine; the thing is, to raise the culture of the nation ever higher and higher by their means'" (Vol. IV, p. 209). But raising the

nation's culture was precisely what England's existing higher educational institutions, in Arnold's opinion, were failing to do:

> This entire absence of the crowning of the edifice not only tends to give us, as I have said, a want of scientific intellect in all departments, but it tends to weaken and obliterate, in the whole nation, the sense of the value and importance of human knowledge; to vulgarise us, to exaggerate our estimate, naturally excessive, of the importance of material advantages, and to make our teachers, all but the very best of them, pursue their calling in a mere trade spirit, and with an eye to little except these advantages. (Vol. IV, pp. 320-321)

Though he naturally understood that good secondary education was undoubtedly more important, particularly in terms of numbers of the middle classes who would be directly affected, Arnold was still assured that higher educational institutions would assist them in setting a standard of lucidity at which these classes would aim in their quest for an intellectual deliverance:

> To generate a spirit of lucidity in provincial towns, and among the middle classes, bound to a life of much routine and plunged in business, is ... difficult. Schools and universities – universities with serious studies, with disinterested studies, universities connecting these studies the one with the other, and continuing them into the years of manhood – are in this case the best agency we can use. It may be slow, but it is sure. (Vol. X, p. 88)

In conclusion, it may be posited that Arnold was perhaps over sanguine about the sureness of education's power to introduce more culture, science, *Geist,* sweetness and light into society. Education can only do so much to effect societal change. On its own its effectiveness is necessarily limited unless backed up by other social, political, and economic action, action to which Arnold paid too little attention. Nevertheless, in over-emphasizing the power of higher educational institutions to bring about an intellectual deliverance he was being at least as magnanimous and idealistic as he was simplistic. For this magnanimity and idealism and the comparative perspective, uncommon in the insular Britain of the day, on which they were based Arnold must be lauded.

NOTES

1. I can find no reference by Arnold to the University Extension Movement started by Cambridge in 1973 and followed by London in 1876 and Oxford in 1878. This was a program whereby academics from these universities would travel to other towns, especially in the North, and lecture on various subjects to working and middle class audiences (see Kelly, 1992, pp. 216-242, and Welch, 1973, especially chapters 1-4).

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Brendan Rapple, Ph.D. is Collection Services Librarian, O'Neill Library, Boston College. He also teaches in Boston College's College of Advancing Studies. He has published in *College Teaching, British Journal of Educational Studies, Contemporary Review, History of Education, Journal of Educational Thought, Economics of Education Review, Journal of Research and Development in Education, The Journal of General Education, Education Policy Analysis Archives, Journal of Education for Library and Information Science, Mississippi Studies in English, Catholic Library, The St. Croix Review*, and elsewhere.