

THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

GRADUATE SCHOOL

Report  
of  
Committee on Examination

This is to certify that we the undersigned, as a committee of the Graduate School, have given Helen Margaret Scurr final oral examination for the degree of Master of Arts . We recommend that the degree of Master of Arts be conferred upon the candidate.

Minneapolis, Minnesota

August 1 1919

C. A. Moore  
Chairman

Carlston Brown

Rufus C. Lodge

THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

GRADUATE SCHOOL

Report  
of  
Committee on Thesis

The undersigned, acting as a Committee  
of the Graduate School, have read the accompanying  
thesis submitted by Helen Margaret Scurr  
for the degree of Master of Arts.

They approve it as a thesis meeting the require-  
ments of the Graduate School of the University of  
Minnesota, and recommend that it be accepted in  
partial fulfillment of the requirements for the  
degree of Master of Arts.

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The Philosophical Poetry of the Eighteenth  
Century, as exemplified by "Universal Beauty",  
a Deistic Poem by Henry Brooks.

A thesis submitted to the  
Faculty of the Graduate School of the  
University of Minnesota.

by

Helen Margaret Scurr

In partial fulfillment of the requirements  
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### Introduction

The combination of philosophy and poetry does not always meet with marked success. In fact, many literary critics seriously question whether philosophy is ever appropriately made the theme of a poem. Keats is by no means alone in his complaint that "Philosophy will clip an angel's wings."<sup>1</sup> Yet, in the eighteenth century, a populous school of poets threw on an exclusively philosophical diet. Indeed, it was by their own conscious choice, that their themes were allied to philosophy. Thomson, one of the charter members of the group, expresses its attitude fairly when he says:

"With Thee, serene Philosophy, with thee,  
And thy bright garland, let me crown my song!  
Effusive source of evidence and truth!  
A lustre shedding o'er the ennobled mind,  
Stronger than summer-noon!"

(In "Summer", l. 1730-1738.)

The eighteenth century did nothing revolutionary, to be sure, in adopting this type of poetry; it simply displays the movement at its zenith. Its beginning is probably to be found in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and its basic ideas go as far back as the time of Plato. The first half of the 18th century furnishes, however, certain very striking examples of the type, which bear an intrinsic significance and which, less obviously, but not less certainly, profoundly influenced the school of Romanticism. Most significant of the fully developed philosophical poems of the period are the following:-

1. In *Lamia*, Part II.

James Thomson's "Seasons" (1726-30); Henry Baker's "Universe", (1727); Henry Needler's "Poems", (2nd edition, 1728); Henry Brooke's "Universal Beauty", (1728-35); Pope's "Essay on Man", (1732-4); Mark Akenside's "Pleasures of the Imagination", (1744 - revised edition, 1757); John Gilbert Cooper's "Power of Harmony", (1745); and James Harris's "Concord", (1751).

Henry Brooke's chief interest, today, resides not in any intrinsic merit, but in his exemplification of the qualities common to the group to which he belongs. He is, we freely admit, a writer of no great prominence in the literary world. In a list of seventy standard works on English literature, only twelve mention his name.<sup>1</sup> Forty-five, out of sixty general works of biography investigated, give a place to Brooke, but their account of him is usually cursory and undetailed.<sup>2</sup> Frequently, he is mentioned merely as "author of "Universal Beauty", a philosophical poem in 6 books; of "Gustavus Vasa", a political play; and of "A Fool of Quality", a long sentimental novel. At times the only distinction accorded him is the admission that he is the "father of Charlotte", a daughter moderately well known for her collection of Irish verse.<sup>3</sup>

The object of this study is not to exhumed him from the cemetery, to rouse him from sweet oblivion to be scathed by the smart comments of a superior age; neither will his poetry be defended as meritorious. Such a procedure would prove futile, as we shall see.

1. See Appendix I for list.

2. See " II " "

3. "Reliques of Irish Poetry, Translated into English verse, with notes", by Miss Charlotte Brooke (1789).

Neither will it be our chief aim to expose to ridicule a style of writing long since condemned, or to refute a system of philosophy in which no living person professes to believe. Such an exercise would be unoriginal and unnecessary, to say the least. But from the foregoing statements may be surmised how valuable and important an intensive study of the philosophical type may become, and with what interest each poem in the group may be fraught. This, then, is the attitude with which we shall approach the study, of Brooke's long poem; such a purpose renders unnecessary any apology for an extended treatment of a poem not now in vogue.

Since our study is to include an individual poem, as well as a type, certain matters which are of relatively secondary importance but which are, certainly, not without interest, occupy the opening chapters. A brief biographical sketch is given; a complete biography is neither possible, since many of the works pertaining to the author's life are temporarily unavailable, nor desirable, since the poem, "Universal Beauty", comes very early in the long life of Brooke. An analysis of the poem and an estimate of its literary worth have also been given a place. But the chief interest centers in the philosophy of the poem. Conflicting statements as to its real nature exist, and the matter has, so far, been given little attention. It is with the hope of establishing beyond the possibility of contradiction the fact that "Universal Beauty" is a versification of deistic philosophy that this thesis has been written. That this is the primary aim of this dissertation will, it is hoped, be not unperceivable, even though other matters have been given space and attention. Sufficient evidence, we trust, has been adduced to show, that however, widely he may have deviated

in after years, Brooke was, during the composition of "Universal Beauty", firmly grounded in the philosophy of deism.

## Chapter I.

### "Universal Beauty" Analyzed.

A full account of Brooke's long life has obviously no great pertinence to a study of his maiden effort in letters. It has therefore seemed appropriate to select from the somewhat garbled and unreliable accounts of his life now extant only those details which have a significant bearing upon the poem "Universal Beauty", or which attach an especial interest to the poet's name.<sup>1</sup>

Henry Brooke was born in 1702,<sup>2</sup> at Rantavan, County of Cavan, Ireland. His father, the Reverend William Brooke, Rector of the Union of Killinkere and Moybolgue parishes, in the diocese of Kilmore, intended that his son, too, should preach the word of God, although later he appears to have wished him to become a lawyer. The mother, Lettice Digby, the daughter of a bishop and the grand-daughter of an Irish noblewoman of heroic fame, is said to have been a woman of culture and refinement. The author of "Brookiana" tells us: "As young Brooke was of a delicate constitution, he was indulged to a certain extent, in all those innocent amusements that contribute to health; he was left entirely to the care of his mother; and she was a woman of excellent understanding, highly improved by education. . . At the age of seven he could repeat many of the finest passages in the English poets."<sup>3</sup> Various anecdotes indicate that the alleged precocity of Brooke was an actual fact. The religious atmosphere and the refinement of his early environment have left clearly discernable traces in the writings of his later years.

1. See Appendix I for complete biographical bibliography.

2. Authorities differ as to the exact date of Brooke's birth: the author of Brookiana gives 1708; Chalmers gives 1706; most others give 1702; the records of Trinity College indicate 1702 to be correct.

3. In "Brookiana", volume I, p. 7.

(Cited in Notes and Queries,



Another trait, noticeable in "Universal Beauty", and connected with the nature of his education, is his familiarity with and love for the ancient classics. Felix Comerford, his first schoolmaster, was a pedant who "looked on all tongues save Greek and Roman as jargon merely calculated to carry on communications of sordid trade, or inferior arts of life."<sup>1</sup> Dr. Sheridan, too, whose school in Capel Street, Dublin, Brooke later attended, grounded his pupils firmly in the classics, so that, eventually, Brooke became no mean student of the ancients. This thorough training is testified to in "Universal Beauty" by frequent allusions to classical mythology, by the citation of Latin sources, and by a heavily Latinized vocabulary. Brooke is said to have been an excellent student in all departments of knowledge, although we hear nothing of his success at Trinity College, from which he graduated in 1723.

In 1724, Brooke made his first trip to London, intending to study law. Doubtless owing to the efforts of Swift, who was a frequent visitor in the Brooke home, he was immediately received into the friendship of Pope, Lyttelton, and other men prominent in the literary circles of London. Called back to Ireland by the death of an aunt, he found himself the appointed guardian of her daughter, Catherine Meares, a twelve year old girl of more than usual charm. An attachment sprang up between the two, and, within eighteen months, a clandestine marriage was effected. The union was an enduringly happy one, but the young father soon learned that the joys of a rapidly increasing family were not unattended by certain pecuniary difficulties. Deciding against law as a profession, he returned to London to write. His increasing friendship with Pope found fruit in the poem "Universal Beauty", in the composition of which Pope

1. Ibid, volume I, p. 7.

was deeply interested.<sup>1</sup> He advised Brooke freely, aided in the revision of the poem, and may even have added a few lines of his own. After another interval, spent in the Council Chamber of Dublin, Brooke returned to London. By the time he had reached the age of thirty, he had attained a moderate peak of fame from the publication of his first poem, had created for himself a social position not often granted to one of his age and experience, and had won the patronage of Frederick, Prince of Wales, to whom Thomson's long poem, "The Seasons", is dedicated. The remainder of his life is marked by pecuniary difficulties, attempts at political reformations, and further literary endeavors. His most significant works are "Gustavus Vasa", a political play, the performance of which was prohibited by the object of its satire, Walpole; his vigorous "Farmer's Letters", comparable in spirit and purpose to Swift's "Drapier Letters"; and a long sentimental novel, "The Fool of Quality", which John Wesley particularly admired.<sup>2</sup>

His biographer describes him, at the time of the composition of "Universal Beauty" as "young, fresh-looking, slenderly formed, exceedingly graceful. He had an oval face, ruddy complexion, and large soft eyes, full of fire; he was of great personal courage, yet never known to offend any man. He was an excellent swordsman, and could dance with grace."<sup>3</sup>

1. Authorities differ as to the exact date for this poem. Mr. Chalmers states that it came out in three installments: in 1728, 1735, and 1736. Most authorities give 1728-1735.
2. See Appendix II for chronological list of Brooke's works.
3. In "Our Portrait Gallery", an article by a kinsman, in the Dublin University Magazine, February, 1852, p. 203.

He was noticeable for his "freshness of mind, and artless vivacity, his wide acquaintance with books, and love of learning, and his unpretended modesty, dignified with considerable independence when any one attempted to patronize him, or lord it over his opinions or himself."

Such, then, was the composer of "Universal Beauty". Since he can claim no rank higher than that of a minor poet, and since his work is comparatively unknown, it has seemed not out of place to enclose here a rather thorough analysis of his poem, and to insert more and longer excerpts than would be necessary were his poem more generally known. <sup>His poem is not unlike Blackmore's</sup> "Creation", in its purpose to confute the Atheists; and <sup>is</sup> like Pope's "Essay on Man" in its effort "to vindicate the ways of God to man." John Gilbert Cooper, in stating the purpose of his "Power of Harmony" (1745) states, too, one of the fundamental ideas of Brooke's poem:

"To recommend a constant attention to what is perfect and beautiful in nature, as the means of harmonizing the soul to a responsive regularity and sympathetic order,"<sup>1</sup>

Brooke himself states his thesis thus:

"A daring unexampl'd task he'd claim,  
And wide unfold the universal frame;  
In mortal draught immortal beauty snare,  
And stamp this leaf as Nature's volume fair."

(Book B. II, 18-22).

Brooke's own prose summary of his first book, formidable as it is, gives a fair indication of his purpose in the work.

1. In prose Introduction to "The Power of Harmony."

"The author introduces his work with a general survey of the whole, in nature of the plan or argument; and then commences anew with a demonstration, a priori, of the being and attributes of God. Thence proceeds to creation, in which he endeavors at an opinion of the manner, as near as possible he may; as also of the nature and difference of the substances of spirit and matter; the economy of the Universe; the astronomical system of physics, anatomy, and most branches of natural philosophy; in which the technical terms are as few, and the whole explained and made as easy and obvious as possible. The connection, dependence, use, and beauty, of the whole. Man considered; the nature of his being; the manner of his attaining knowledge; the analysis of the mind, faculties, affections, and passions, how they consist in each individual; and in the species. The nature of freedom; that it is not in the will; what it is, and wherein it consists, demonstrated. Of vice, misery, virtue, and happiness; their nature and final tendency. The whole being wrought into one natural and connected scheme. The author rises whence he began, and ends with a poetical rhapsody in the contemplation of the beauty of the whole."

And this encyclopedic array is the summary of but the first book! An older and wiser man would never have set himself such a task. But Brooke's indefatigable enthusiasm is capable of carrying him through an endless rhapsodizing upon the beauties of creation.

His opening lines betray his interest in the classics. Where Akenside begins with an invocation to his friend Dyson, and where Thomson utilizes a panegyric to a patroness or friend for a beginning, Brooke sails forth with an invocation to Minerva and Venus, that they invest his lines with wisdom and beauty.

Thus launched into the philosophic sea, he concerns himself first with the thought of creation. An introductory rap is given the atheist, in the confutation of the theory that this Universe arose by chance, which is the first of a long series of sharply anti-atheistic comments. The visible world has sprung not from chance, but from the voluntary creating act of a God of Love. The spheres "rolled into place" according to His command; their satellites followed. The world was clothed in verdure and throbbled with pulsating life. Even the ocean teemed with living creatures. The earth rests in "the soft down of elemental air" (Book 1, l. 254) thru which the sun's warm rays can quickly pass, and in this haven of prolific beauty stands Man

"Whom splendours next to deity adorn,  
Lightnings divine, endued with native right  
Of regal sceptre, and transcending night,  
Such, whom eternal Prescience might invest  
Far blazing, with monarchal titles grac'd;  
Of bright, the brightest; pure, the most refin'd;  
All intellect, quint essence of the mind.

We are reminded here of the proud dignity of Akenside's Man, heading the list of all created beings.<sup>1</sup> We shall see later, however, that Brooke occasionally forsakes the optimistic view which Thomson, Akenside, and Shaftesbury held concerning man, and joins the ranks of Pope, Bolingbroke, Swift, and Young, whose conception of humanity is cynical and derogatory. Man himself is an admirable product, and he is placed in conditions which are suited to his

<sup>1</sup>"Pleasures of the Imagination" Book I. ll. 537-43.

own perfection. In the beautiful garden of the world perfection reigns. Not only are all things flawless; each has moreover its appointed place. A certain economy of scheme prevails in which superfluity cannot exist. Monotony, too, has been avoided: the alternating day and night, the varying seasons, already praised by Hinchliffe, Nädler, and Thomson, and the changing climates, combine to produce an endless variety. The atheist has only to read in nature's open book to trace in its faultlessness the forming hand of an omniscient God.

In Book II, the author modestly confesses himself to be quite bewildered by the vastness of his project. The beauty of the universe confounds him.<sup>1</sup> Regaining his courage, however, he resumes his round of praises, paying his compliments first to the "circumambient air", with "its springy tension and elaborate spring." He departs thence to the "ample sea", and to the rivers which wend their way thereinto. The storms he hails as symbols of Divine strength. In these themes, too, he finds material which can be manipulated into argument against the atheist. The atomic theory is reduced to nothingness. Our author finds the venom of poesy an unsatisfying weapon, and resorts to a long note of crushing logic wherein he adduces evidence showing that the argument of the atheist must in every case be baseless.<sup>2</sup>

The third book sets out

"To unfold

What secrets Earth's prolific entrails hold."

(Book III, ll. 55-6).

<sup>1</sup>"Universal Beauty", Book II, ll. 13-17.

<sup>2</sup>See note on "Universal Beauty", Book II, l. 271.

He classifies and evaluates the subterranean treasure-trove with a persevering admiration which sometimes bursts forth in unexpected poetic beauty.<sup>1</sup> Passing on to a treatment of the prolific powers of the earth, he develops his theme with less felicity; he is in sad danger of having the wings of poesy on which he has soared melt off, in Icarian futility, just as he himself had feared.<sup>2</sup>

The reader is plunged into a detailed, pseudo-scientific account of plant growth and plant nutrition<sup>3</sup> which almost certainly influenced Erasmus Darwin in his elaborate poem, "Botanic Gardens"<sup>4</sup>

Book IV is chiefly concerned with a survey of animal life, and is ponderously augmented with explanatory notes. A dualistic system of philosophy is propounded in which the soul is apprehended to be an essence distinct from matter, and "simple, indissoluble, and unchangeable." The mind, he says, is not subject to the accidental properties of matter. But even matter is only mutable, not destructible. Therefore the soul must be indestructible and undying.<sup>5</sup>

In his disquisition of animal life, he makes one strange statement; he sanctions explicitly the old cartesian doctrine concerning the automatism of animal life.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup>See Book III, 45-54 for particularly pleasing passage.

<sup>2</sup>See "Universal Beauty", Book II, l. 22 ff.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid. (Book III, ll. 120-139.) for a particularly formidable passage.

<sup>4</sup>For identical statement concerning Brooke's influence on Darwin, see "A Hist. of 18th Cent. Lit.," Edmund Gosse (1911) p. 218; "The Age of Johnson", by Thomas Seecombe (1900) p. 241; "Eng. Lit. and Society in the 18th Century" (1903) by Sir Leslie Stephen, p. 121; Darwin's poem was published in 1871.

<sup>5</sup>See Note on Book IV, l. 65.)

<sup>6</sup>See his prose summary in "Universal Beauty", Chalmers edition, p. 350, also "Universal Beauty", (Book IV, l. 23 ff.) This curious theory receives a definite statement in Descartes, in the "Discourse", V, last paragraph from the end, p. 63 in Open Court Edition.

Having finished his survey of animal life, he passes on to a consideration of humanity. Man's supreme cause for gratitude is that he has been invested with perception, consciousness, reason, - a soul. Man's body is also, however, a masterpiece worthy of consideration, and is given account of in the approved terms of 18th century physiology. The circulation of the blood, particularly, is a cause of amazement, and is explained at length. The eye, too is a marvelous and indispensable possession, and receives due attention.

The fifth book is given over largely to an account of "earth's minimum populace", and derives its information chiefly from Derham's "Physical Theology" and Pliny's "Natural History", according to Brooke's own testimony. Here, too, notes of explanation are duly abundant. Even the question of the snail's possession of eyes on the end of its horns is discussed. Those insects which undergo the process of metamorphosis particularly attract him, and their transformation suggests man's hope for immortality. He writes:

"The state and conduct of these animals, as here described, may be looked on as allegorical, and representative of the present state of man and his future hopes."<sup>1</sup>

Book VI has no appended notes, and is, in a manner, a recapitulation of material already presented. Moral platitudes are drawn from observations of the social life of bees in true Vergilian manner. Other "architects of Nature", - the beaver, the spider, the wasp - receive their due encomium. A final congratulation of Divinity upon the success of His creation ensues, and the poem is at an end.

<sup>1</sup>"Universal Beauty", (Book V, l. 242.)



The foregoing discussion is little more than an abbreviated paraphrase of Brooke's poem. A later chapter deals with its more important philosophical ideas. For the present, suffice it to say that the poem is strongly anti-atheistic, blandly optimistic, and untiring in its admiration of Earth's created beauties. Its relation to <sup>previously</sup>~~above~~ mentioned poems of closely affiliated theme, will be developed in the succeeding pages.

Chapter II.

A Critical Estimate of "Universal Beauty."

Whatever praise may be due to Brooke on other scores, his style of writing stimulates the reader to no great admiration. In fact, any consideration of his literary style makes justifiable Swift's advice to this young author that he should not devote himself to a life of writing. A catalog of the poetical sins of the day could easily have found admirable examples of all its types in the single poem, "Universal Beauty."

In the first place, Brooke's use of the heroic couplet is most unfortunate. Shaftesbury, in his "Advice to an Author," had urged the use of blank verse. Thomson, Cooper, and Akenside, had followed this behest. The sonorous lines of Thomson's "Hymn", have indeed, an almost Miltonic ring. His work is the more remarkable in that it is with the exception of two minor poems, "The Splendid Shilling", and "Cyder"<sup>1</sup>, the first noteworthy use of blank verse since the time of Milton. Brooke should have found in blank verse a vehicle highly appropriate to his theme; for a poem based upon the contemplation of infinitude, a meter unrestricted by the requirements of a rhyming scheme should be most suitable. The subject itself, and Brooke's method of treating his theme preclude any marked success with the couplet. His interminable, Whitmanlike catalogs and series drag on, sometimes throughout twenty couplets, without reaching the end of the original sentence. Pope's couplets flash with a pyrotechnic brilliance; each shines with a splendid polish, and the effect of the whole is that of a brilliant mosaic, fashioned from a thousand glittering fragments. But it is difficult to find in Brooke one quotable couplet. The few which are detachable lack the point and polish of

<sup>1</sup> The work of John Phillips (1696-1709).

Pope's. It must not be inferred from this, however, that Brooke's writing is slovenly. His lines have, on the contrary, a certain laborious, mechanical perfection. There are few faulty rhymes. The rhythm is usually painfully regular. His work simply lacks the variety with which genius would have invested it. He knows of no variations with which to relieve the deadening monotony of his verse. Considered from the standpoint of metrics, at least, the poem deserves Thomas Seccombe's verdict of "consistent dullness" [in his "Age of Johnson", p. 241.] Pope had freed his couplets from monotony by an ingenious shifting of the caesural pause: but in nine-tenths of Brooke's lines, the caesura reveals itself at all only after diligent search; much less, is it ever shifted, to secure variety. Pope sometimes alters his couplets by the introduction of a triplet, a practice which Swift burlesqued with characteristic mercilessness; the third line occurs in "Universal Beauty" but once. There is also but one unfinished line.<sup>1</sup> One variation, - the Alexandrine - is used at times, but this practice seems to be due to an inability to conclude the thought in a line of five feet, rather than to any attempt to relieve tedium. In the entire poem, however, there are but thirty-nine Alexandrines,<sup>2</sup> and Gosse's complaint of "a frequent indulgence in the Alexandrine"<sup>3</sup> is scarcely warranted by so small a number. Where they occur, the effect is peculiarly lagging and oppressive, it must be confessed; it is a significant fact, however, that in the last two books, where the author is more fully master of his powers, only one mechanically lengthened line is to be found.

If there is little to be said in favor of Brooke's versification, his diction makes still less appeal. Typical of the pseudo-

1. Book I, l. 5.

2. See separate sheet, immediately following, for statistics.

3. Hist. of 18th Cent. Lit., p. 218.

2.

"Universal Beauty" has 2302 lines and 39 Alexandrines/

Book I	II	III	IV	V	VI
391 1.	333 1.	443 1.	352 1.	349 1.	434 1.
Alexandrines 10 found in:	Alex. 9 found in:	Alex. 15 found in:	Alex. 4 found in:	Alex. 1 found in:	none found in:
11. 21	4	61	65	204	
64	27	68	147		
100	101	75	204		
164	118	89	310		
248	162	118			
272	178	190			
323	274	221			
331	318	250			
379	322	296			
391		304			
		334			
		346			
		364			
		394			
		416			

in this form,

Alexandrines are to be found in the following lines: Book I, 21, 64,

100, etc. etc.

classic school, it abounds in hackneyed phraseology, Latinized expressions, and artificialities. Such adjectives as "translucid", "pellucent", and "umbelliferous", are unpleasantly frequent. A peculiarly disagreeable effect results from the use of an adjective for a noun; an example is, - "The immense profound". In fact, one part of speech becomes another at the poet's convenience. See how his fish "tempest thru the main." His birds, like all the birds of the age, are "feathered legions", or "plumy choirs"; his fish, of course, are "finny tribes", or "the watery people"; his grass is not merely green,- it is "of verdurous hue", and "embroidered with flowers"; his air has a habit of being "circumambient", or at least "ambient"; his eyes are "transient optics", which "gratulate" the "beamy morn"; the epithet of "Geometrician", he applies with rare lack of discrimination to spiders, wasps, and God! To give a complete list of his offences in this regard, we should be obliged to quote a large part of the poem. Beautifully consistent is his abstemious forbearance from calling a spade a spade; his disguise of commonplace objects by ingenious epithets is quite incomparable. For example, who could have divined what a "multipede aurelia" might be? Or who would have guessed that so unoffending an object as a tree called forth the following effusion:

"Collateral tubes with respiration play,  
And winding in aerial mazes stray.  
These as the woof, while warping, and athwart  
The exterior cortical insertions dart  
Transverse, with cone of equidistant rays,  
Whose geometric form the Forming Hand displays."

(Book III, ll. 367-374).

Baker's poem, inferior as it is, gives a far more satisfactory

account of the forest's beauty. Even more formidable is his account of plant nutrition.<sup>1</sup> Yet Brooke's literary sins are the sins of his age, and he alone cannot be held responsible for them.

The monotony gained by an unvaried meter and a hackneyed diction is not relieved by any felicitous manner of description. Thomson had a happy faculty for inserting such digressions of narrative character as the story of Celadon and Amelia, or of Damon and Musidora; Akenside, too, availed himself of this resource. Thomson, particularly, keeps ever in the foreground of his accumulated mass of descriptive details some live human figure - the shepherd, the swain, the fair maiden, - which, conventional tho they may be, yet melt off the icy edges of the scene with a warmth of personal interest. Brooke, in contrast, not only omits all narrative elements; he excludes altogether the homely details of domesticity or of normal living which have made for many another poet a place in the human heart. Like Pope - even more than Pope - he is passionless.

Thomson is concrete and definite in his observations.<sup>2</sup> Brooke is apt to be vague and general. Thomson's portrayal of landscape scenes is at times almost inimitable; Brooke sees no landscapes. Thomson observes various colors, with a nice eye for shades and tints: Brooke's adjective for portrayal of color is almost invariably "purpling"; - the morning, the ripening plum, the flower - all are, alike, "purpling".<sup>3</sup> Thomson's description of the winter snowstorm produces an effect not soon to be forgotten; Brooke describes the phenomenon thus:

1. Bk. III, l. 120 ff.

2. His description of the spring song birds exemplifies this nicely. See "Spring", l. 580 ff.

3. See Bk. I, 236; II, 84; II, 275; IV, 122 and elsewhere.

"Oft, where the zenith's lofty realms extend,  
Ere mists, conglobing, by their weight descend,  
With sudden nitre captivates the cloud,  
And o'er the vapour throws a whitening shroud;  
Soft from the concave hovering fleeces fall,  
Whose flaky texture clothes our silver ball."

(Bk. II, ll. 179-184).

Brooke's favorite figures of speech are, the simile, the apostrophe, interrogation, and exclamation. Nature's beauty sets him in a perpetual state of wonder; like Ibsen's *Tesman*,<sup>1</sup> his every comment is an ejaculation. Contemplation of deity freed Thomson from metrical restrictions, and lifted him to the highest expression of reverence; but too often it leads Brooke down by a way piled with meaningless epithet and "turgid declamation", as Chalmers styles it.<sup>2</sup> To what extent is the reader enlightened by such expressions as "the Self-essential, co-essential Cause", or "Finite infinitude"? And is one's piety increased by calling God a "Geometrician"? His use of the simile is also often infelicitous. A grotesque example is seen in his comment upon the meter<sup>3</sup>:

"When from on high the rapid tempest's hurl'd,  
Enlivening as a sneeze to man's inferior world."

Most of his comparisons are gleaned from classic lore, and are introduced in a cumbersome, elaborate, manner. An extensive likeness is found between Caesar's supremacy over his army and the soul's supremacy over the body. (Bk. IV, l. 253 ff.). The flight of the queen

1. See Ibsen's "Hedda Gabbler."

2. In his "Life of Henry Brooke", Chalmers' Eng. Poets v. 17, p. 335.

bee reminds him of Dido's flight from Tyre. The sudden flight of the "reptile" at first supposed to be unblest with wings finds its parallel in the vision of "Tobit's Youthful Hero". (V. 139 ff.)

In unvaried meter, unpleasing diction, and infelicitous use of figurative language, then, reside Brooke's most glaring imperfections. But a consideration which makes prominent only his stylistic deficiencies is scarcely just. Many of his faults are of a piece with the garb in which all pseudo-classicists invested their thought. If we find Brooke not highly pleasing in style, at least we do not discover in him the stentorian tedium which Blackmore's pious "Creation" displays; nor do we suffer from the scientific laboring of Erasmus Darwin's "Botanical Gardens". To this negative praise should be added the fact that, scattered throughout the poem, there are singularly effective passages revealing an imagination far superior to Pope's, and inducing us to give credence to the reason which his biographer assigns for his cessation of legal study, - "Law was given up as he had little inclination to remain in a profession which excluded so many of the pleasures of the imagination." The three quotations which follow are, perhaps, his choicest lines and are certainly not unpoetic.

The first is perhaps more poetic in idea than in its manner of expression. The idea comes to the poet, after a survey of the visible beauties of the Universe, that the unseen beauties may even surpass them:

"O think, if superficial scenes amaze,  
And e'en the still familiar wonders please,  
These but the sketch, the garb, the veil of things,  
Whence all our depth of shallow science springs;  
Think, should this curtain of Omniscience rise,



Think of the sight! and think of the surprise!  
Scenes inconceivable, essential, new,  
Whelm'd on our soul, and lightning on our view!

(Bk. V, L. 149 ff.)

This description of the "insect tribe" in Book V is far superior to the ordinary run of his descriptions.

"In every eye ten thousand brilliants blaze,  
And living pearls the vast horizon gaze;  
Gemm'd o'er their heads the mines of India gleam,  
And Heav'n's own wardrobe has array'd their frame;  
Each spangled back bright springling specks adorn,  
Each plume imbibes the rosy tinctur'd morn;  
Spread on each wing the florid seasons glow,  
Shaded and verg'd with the celestral bow,  
Where colors blend an ever varying dye,  
And wanton in their gay exchanges vie."

(Book V, ll. 272-280.)

At the end of the poem is a passage of tender beauty which immediately recalls to the reader Bryant's "To a Waterfowl". To both poets appears the never-old miracle of the guiding hand through out the "boundless tracts" of "pathless skies."

"Say! when the nest thy little halcyons form,  
Brood on the wave, and mock the threatening storm;  
Who quells the rage of thy reluctant main,  
Or o'er thy winter throws a lordly rein?  
.....  
Uplifted on thy wafting breath they rise;  
Thou pavest the regions of the pathless skies,  
Through boundless tracts support'st the journey'd host,

And point'st the voyage to the certain coast;  
Thou the sure compass, and the sea they sail,  
The chart, the port, the steerage, and the gale!"  
(Book VI, 1.344 ff.)

Chapter III.

Initial Postulates of Deism.

We have seen in the foregoing summary that Brooke's poem has as its basis ideas dependent upon modern scientific discoveries; that it is the Newtonian system which is set forth throughout the whole six books. Physiological, botanical, geological, and astronomical details, we have seen, are given no small place in the discussion. The atomic theory is attacked; the atheists are crushed, at least in the intention of the author; a dualistic system of philosophy is set up for our approval. But, after all, these ideas are subsidiary to the greater project of the poem. The keynote of interest of the whole matter is the extent to which Brooke brings himself into agreement with the deistic philosophy of his time, and the point up to which he is in conformity with the standards set by his orthodox contemporaries. Mr. George Saintsbury, in his treatment of Brooke in the "Cambridge History of English Literature", says of his poem: "It is more scientific than theological, though by no means atheistic or even deistic."<sup>1</sup> In order to determine definitely what should be our attitude in regard to this important point, we shall be obliged to state first, in very definite terms, an acceptable conception of deism. For the reader's convenience in judging of the validity of the succeeding argument, and to avoid the possibility of misunderstanding, therefore, the following summary of deism is included.

The name of "deists" seems to have been employed first in the middle of the 16th century, by men in France and Italy who, according to Leland, their indefatigable opposer, "were willing to cover

1. In Chap. II, Section VI, p. 184-5.

their opposition to the Christian revelation by a more honorable name than that of atheists."<sup>1</sup> Lord Edward Herbert, Baron of Cherbury, distinguished himself among the early deists by stating systematically the principles which he professed to believe. Though his creed was not universally acceptable to the deists, his five "articles" are significant, and worth considering. They affirm: (1) that there is one supreme God; (2) that he is chiefly to be worshipped; (3) that piety and virtue are the principal parts of his worship; (4) that repentance of sin is appropriate, and will be rewarded by pardon; (5) that there are rewards for the good, and punishments for the bad, in a future state.<sup>2</sup> The last tenet, particularly, came to be questioned. Especially revolting to the deists was the orthodox practice of holding up the "rod and the sweet meat" as a motive for virtuous conduct.

Succeeding deists made each their contribution to the philosophy of deism. Their ideas are, at times, widely divergent. This, coupled with the fact that many deists, Shaftesbury among their number, remained members of the established church throughout their lives, makes the process of differentiating between deism and atheism on the one hand, and deism and orthodox Christianity, on the other, somewhat difficult. The deists, sometimes, perhaps, more to preserve their own reputations than because of any feeling of moral wrath, became most vociferous in their denunciation of atheists. This trait has already been noted in the work of Brooke. Thomson, usually quite peaceable, indulges in a satirical denunciation of the "haughty little ignorance", and "the critic fly", which are always carping

1. In "A View of the Principal Deistic Writers", John Leland (1691-1766).
2. In "De Veritate" (1624) published first at Paris, then at London.

about a universe which is, in reality, perfect.<sup>1</sup> John Gilbert Cooper adds his rebuke in the withering questions:

"Did an idiot's scheme

Upraise this wondrous fabric? Say, was man  
Forth from the dark abyss of Chaos call'd  
In vain to breathe celestial air, in vain  
To view the bloom of Beauty, not to feel  
Th' effect divine soft thrilling through his soul,  
And wak'ning every pow'r which sleeps within  
To gaze amazement?"

On the other hand, the orthodox Christian proclaims that these self-appointed foes of atheism are, themselves, atheistic. Leland, for instance, brands with the stigma of atheism writers whose work was only deistic. To call a man atheist was ~~so~~ always a sure way to kill him, so far as the public was concerned, and orthodoxy had no scruples in using this mode of annihilation. But the name of atheist is clearly a misnomer in this case. The free-thinkers express their belief in God quite as frequently and quite as ardently as do the orthodox clergy. It is a fundamental part of their creed that God is everywhere clearly evident. They are equally industrious in exterminating disbelievers. Their arguments against atheism, moreover, are often more telling than those of the church, as the contrast between Brooke and Blackmore proclaims. The deists were not atheists; they were sometimes classed as such only because the Church, fearing them as her enemies, just as she feared atheistic opponents, stigmatized them thus. Because of this practice, the laity was itself confused and not always able to judge rightly. Their mistake lay quite as often, however, in accepting that as

orthodox which was intrinsically heretical. Pope's "Essay" was accepted as orthodox for five years, and even after Crousaz's exposure of its unseemly heresies in 1738, the defense of Warburton<sup>1</sup> was able to give it a temporary reinstatement. Pope himself, tho, in most points, a deist, was, simultaneously, a Roman Catholic and an assailant of the deists, Shaftesbury, Tyndall, Woolston, and Toland.

Furthermore, it must not be supposed that Shaftesbury, of whom we shall speak most frequently, because his influence upon the poets is incalculably greater than that of his associates in creed, was in any sense revolutionary. Parts of his philosophy, particularly the identification of the Good and the Beautiful, are merely a revivification of Platonism. Moreover, the reviving process had been under way for two centuries. The Cambridge Platonists of the 17th century, particularly, show plainly the reversion to Platonism, and also the growing tendency to consider seriously the relation which reason bears toward faith.<sup>2</sup> Benjamin Whichcote's "Select Sermons and Aphorisms", John Smith's "Select Discourses", and Nathaniel Culverwel's "Discourses of the Light of Nature", all of which are cited by Campagnac, show clearly this tendency. Henry More (1614-87) in his "Opera Omnia"; Ralph Cudworth (1617-88), in his "True Intellectual System of the Universe" (1678), an erudite survey and attack upon the "hylozoic" and "atomic" materialism; and John Norris (1657-1711) in his "Essay toward the Theory of the Ideal or Intelligible World" (1801-4) and "Reason and Religion" (1724), had already paved the way for the eighteenth century deists. The poets had not ne-

1. In "Critical and Philosophical Commentary", 1742.

2. See Campagnac's "Cambridge Platonists", Oxford (1901) and John Smith Harrison's "Platonism in Eng. Poetry of 16th and 17th centuries." (1903)

glected this significant tendency in philosophy. The work of Henry More (1614-1687), Joseph Beaumont's "Psyche" (1648), and the "Retreat" of Henry Vaughan (1621-1695), are cases in point.

Also in Sir Thomas Browne's "Religio Medici" (1643) and Sir John Suckling's prose essay on "The Religion of Reason", we see clearly the emphasis on rationalism in religion so conspicuous in the 18th century.

Whatever their disagreements, the deists unite in assailing certain bulwarks of orthodoxy, such as the establishment of revelation as a basis for Christianity. Collins tried to show that the foundations of Christianity are only allegorical.<sup>1</sup> Toland voiced the idea that Christianity is not mysterious.<sup>2</sup> Matthew Tindal cast revelation aside as superfluous by proving that our so-called Christianity existed long before the time of Christ, and of revelation.<sup>3</sup> Morgan and Chubb speak of Christianity as "highly moral, but not of divine origin."<sup>4</sup> Bolingbroke came forth with the bold statement that "from the clearness and sufficiency of the law, it may be concluded that God hath made no other revelation of his will to mankind; and that there is no need for any extraordinary supernatural revelation."<sup>5</sup>

1. In "A Discourse of Free Thinking" (1713).
2. "Christianity not Mysterious", (1696).
3. In "Christianity as Old as the Creation", (1730).
4. Cited in Courthope's "Hist. of Eng. Poetry", Vol. V, Chap. IX, p. 275.
5. (Cited from Leland's "View of the Deistical Writers", (4th ed., 1764), p. 4).

For a complete account of these philosophers, see Sir Leslie Stephen's "Hist. of English Thought in the 18th Century".

The work which was, itself, most poetical, and which the English poets followed most closely, was the "Characteristics" (1711) of Lord Shaftesbury.<sup>1</sup> John Gilbert Cooper,<sup>2</sup> Thomson,<sup>3</sup> and Akenside,<sup>4</sup> specifically acknowledge their indebtedness to it, and the borrowings of other poets are quite apparent. Pope was, indubitably, influenced both directly and indirectly, through Bolingbroke, by the philosophy of Shaftesbury.

I. This, then, may be said to be one of the first general principles of deism: that nature is so perfect a revelation of her Creator as to render superfluous all other revelation.

The Maker, thus revealed in His work, is, moreover, not the terrible God of wrath and vengeance, but his chief attributes are Goodness and Benevolence.

II. Obviously this God cannot be solely and perfectly revealed by a universe that is a makeshift and a botch; the conclusion is, inevitably, that the universe is perfect.

1. Shaftesbury's influence upon the English poets is now an accepted fact. I have therefore taken no pains to substantiate my assertion. For detailed proof, see "Shaftesbury and the Ethical Poets in England (1700-1760)" an article by C. A. Moore, in Publications of the Modern Language Association for 1916, pp. 264-325; and Otto Bundt's "Akensides Leben und Werke", Anglia, Vol. XX (1898), pp. 1-44; and vol. XX, pp. 467-532; and vol. XXI (1899), pp. 89-164.

2. In the close of the Design prefixed to "The Universe".

3. In "Summer", ll. 1551 ff.

4. Author's note on the "Pleasures of the Imagination", Bk. I, l. 374 and elsewhere.



III. Hence upon the pillars of this philosophy devolves the task of defending such phases of nature - storms, the sea, the regions, of excessive heat or cold, the mountains - as had been interpreted by the atheists as blemishes left by a bungling, fettered creating hand, and by the Calvinists as a punishment for man's Primal sin. These "preponderances" of nature were explained now, first upon a utilitarian basis: Blackmore's "Creation", for example, discusses the usefulness of mountains as a place of shelter and forage for wild beasts.<sup>1</sup> Then came the idea that these wastes of the earth are the especial abode of God, since they are unspoiled by the marring hand of man. Such a philosophy is obviously fraught with poetic possibilities not usually attributed to deism.

So far as theology is concerned, the deists may all be classified as rationalists. The fact of God is established through a rational process which eliminates the necessity of revelation. When the field of ethics is entered, however, there is a sharp division. The deists differ widely in the extent to which they are willing to accept reason as a guide to conduct. So long as the authority of the Church was valid, ethical questions were decided easily enough by reference to the Bible. But with the Book of Books invalidated, with all the laws of psychology and all the formulations of ethical philosophy as yet in a nebulous state, such questions as How may we fallible human beings know our duty? and How, knowing it, may we be persuaded to perform it? did not always receive the same answer. It is not surprising that in this matter, too, the ancients were consulted. The opposing philosophies of Plato and Aristotle are, perhaps, responsible for the division of opinion which arose.

1. See p. 7-14, "Nature in English Poetry between Pope and Wordsworth"

One school of writers, based upon Aristotle, continued the emphasis, <sup>upon Reason</sup> stating that Virtue is attainable only <sup>by</sup> the triumph of Reason over instinct. Locke and Voltaire, are conspicuous members of this rationalistic school. The opposing faction, the members of which are commonly known as the Sentimentalists, based its philosophy on Plato, and found its chief adherents in Shaftesbury, and Rousseau. Its chief assumption was that man is endowed by nature with an unerring "moral sense". The natural man is good, Here, again, was Calvinism attacked; its followers had thought human nature essentially sinful and ugly. Of the poets, Pope is, with the exception of a few inconsistencies, an adherent of the Rational <sup>School</sup>; Thomson, of the Sentimental School. To which school Brooke belongs will later be developed. The above explanation shows plainly, however, that even though his ethical philosophy may not be identical with that of certain other prominent deists, he is still quite properly classified with the deists.

Another important ethical doctrine is that moral virtue is its own reward. To follow the dictates of the "moral sense" brings an inward glow of rapture which makes any farther thought of recompense beside the mark. This idea was, of course, antipathetical to the practice of the Church of holding up as a motive for good works the prospect of Heaven or Hell. Shaftesbury taught that, in bargaining with God for a safe and happy hereafter, man lost all relish for Virtue, per se. It is only the inward satisfaction which accompanies good works that should be the object of our seeking.

The emphasis which deism placed upon humanitarianism extended to all created life. Since God is revealed in all Creation, even the slightest wiggle in the dust is not inconsequential. All forms of life demand sympathetic consideration. This tendency, too, was

voiced assiduously by the poets.

Furthermore, in obeying the behests of moral intuition, man approaches the highest Beauty: Duty and Beauty are one. This purely Platonic idea is capable of development into a complete code of morality on the basis of aesthetics. No direct statement of this is made in Thomson, but Akenside, Cooper, and Harris, are replete with it.

A final development of the ethical philosophy of deism was the prominence given to Benevolence. This tendency was fostered by the Platonic, or Sentimental, school. Shaftesbury's own statement of it comes as a refutation of the unflattering view of mankind presented in "The Leviathan" of Hobbes (1651) and in certain of La Rochefoucauld's "Maxims". The Calvinists, English men of letters, such as Swift, Prior, Pope, and Defoe, and the French satirists, had expressed a belief in the innate selfishness of man. The Sentimentalists found in humanity an innate tendency toward good conduct, and made benevolence toward man the highest virtue. Mandeville's attack upon Shaftesbury - "The Fable of the Bees" (1723) - served, by its virulence, to attract an even greater following to the philosophy which he assailed. The possibilities of popular literature as an organ of social reform were now realized. Here again we find rooted in the philosophy of deism a tendency which profoundly influenced the literature of England and the continent.

Having given this cursory account of deism, we shall now return to our consideration of Brooke, testing his poem by the precepts already laid down. If we can show by a citation of a series of quotations of parallel passages that Brooke agrees with the deistic philosophers who influenced the English poets; that he closely resembles the poets generally acknowledged to be deistic and that he deviates widely from such a poet as Blackmore, who is certainly the norm of

orthodoxy; we shall be justified in our conclusion that Mr. Saintsbury is in error, and that "Universal Beauty" is a deistic poem, pure and simple.

*His "Creation" was*

1. Written in 1712, and praised by Addison, (Spectator, 339).

Dennis called it "a philosophical poem, which has equalled that of Lucretius in the beauty of its versification, and infinitely surpassed it in the solidity and strength of its reasoning."

Chapter IV.

Is "Universal Beauty" Deistic?

The first principle of deism as outlined above is that Nature reveals God so completely as to render other revelation superfluous, and derogatory to the Deity. Like Thomson, Brooke makes no sweeping assertions against the authenticity of revealed religion; rather he stresses the power of Nature to reveal God, and preaches against orthodox Christian theology by ignoring it. This negative evidence is highly significant. In an age when all literature was ranged in one of two hostile camps, the very absence of definitely Christian theology is enough to convict a writer of deism. Brooke makes no mention of Christ or of his miracles; he never adds weight to his admonitions by the allusion to hell fire. The fact that, later in life, he swerved from deism, writing even such a poem as "The Redemption" (1772), has probably been instrumental in causing the error regarding his first work. His "Fool of Quality", too, had the ring of Methodism. But works written in 1766 and 1772 can scarcely be adduced as evidence that in the period of time from 1728 to 1735, when the six books of "Universal Beauty" were in the making, Brooke was not a deist. To this must be added his own testimony of sincerity:- "I claim no advantage from a poetical license to assert anything contrary to that which I apprehend as the truth."

But positive evidence is not lacking. Nature is addressed as "Bright Effluence of the One Supreme",<sup>1</sup> and is frequently spoken of as a means of knowing God. The poet continually recommends

<sup>1</sup>"Universal Beauty", Book II, l. 26. See also Book II, ll. 56 - 60.

to the atheist that he learn to know God through communion with Nature.<sup>1</sup> The argument of the whole poem is, in fact, an extended claim that the harmony and beauty of the universe proclaim God.

It may be objected here that Brooke has expressed no more than the orthodox Christian viewpoint. The Scriptures, which, as we have seen, the deists discarded, state in manifold measure that Nature reveals God.

"The Heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth Knowledge." (Psalm 19).

But it should be noted that even in such Old Testament passages, it is not the whole creation that is addressed as evidence. Certain so-called defects were always omitted. The New Testament rarely or never offers Nature as a revelation of God. Christianity distinctly discourages this type of speculation concerning Deity. After the entrance of sin this earth became a vale of tears, admirable only as a place for qualifying for entrance into Heaven. Biese's remark on this subject is pertinent: "To Judaism and Christianity, Nature was a fallen angel, separated as far as possible from her God. They only recognized one world - that of spirit; and one sphere of the spiritual, religion - the relation between God and man. Material things were a delusion of Satan's; the Heaven on which their eyes were fixed was a very distant one."<sup>2</sup> It will be remembered that the gloomy Calvinistic outlook upon the world was not widely different from this. The world is evil; its roughness uplifts the martyr man until he is fit to leave it for a

<sup>1</sup>See "Universal Beauty" Bk. II, l. 309 ff.  
Bk. VI, l. 330 ff. and elsewhere.

<sup>2</sup>"The Development of the Feeling for Nature in the Middle Ages and Modern Times", by Alfred Biese, p. 22-23. Read introduction and all of chapter I 7 II for a complete discussion of the subject at hand.

better land. It is thus a far cry from the orthodox contention to Brooke's statement that "the deity is necessarily inferred from the contemplation of every object."<sup>1</sup>

It should also be kept in mind that Brooke's attitude is distinct from that of the nature poets of preceding eras. It is true that appreciation of the beauty of the external order was not unknown. Yet most poets struck no high note of worship. A naive, unspeculative delight in the freshness of the May morning is common enough in mediæval and earlier literature. The mediæval allegory almost inevitably begins with the blue-skyed mornings of May, with the caroling of birds, the springing of flowers. But no note of devotion. Chaucer betrays this same child-like attitude. Shakespeare, whose references to nature are characterized by their anthropomorphism, selects the brighter, more joyous, phases for admiration, and keeps them entirely apart from any religious thought. The new note in literature - that Nature, as a whole, reveals the creating Power behind it - leads later to an identification of creator with creation, and prepares directly for the theology contained in the nature poetry of the romantic school, and, as such a preparation, it has been no mean contribution. The philosophy of deism had poetic possibilities which not even its proponents fully comprehended.

It is evident that, in stating that God is revealed by Nature, Brooke transcended the unphilosophical love of nature, which was in no way connected with the idea of worship, and came into direct collision with the purely orthodox idea that the earth is composite product of tribulation and woe whose severe discipline

<sup>1</sup>Author's note on "Universal Beauty", Bk. V, l. 27.

moulds man in a shape acceptable for future bliss. In this respect, then, Brooke is a deist, and is in line with the free-thinkers of his time. Brooke praises the economy of scheme in the entire universe;

"The One grows sundry by creative power;  
The Eternal's found in each revolving hour;  
The Immense appears in every point of space;  
The Unchangeable in Nature's varying face;  
The Invisible conspicuous to our mind;  
And deity in every atom shrin'd;  
From whence exults the animated clod,  
And smiling features speak the parent God;  
Who here, and there, and everywhere abounds."

("Universal Beauty", Bk. III, ll.3-11).

If this passage be compared with Blackmore,<sup>1</sup> Brooke's departure from the orthodox norm will become evident. It must not be supposed, however, that Brooke was a pantheist. He shows even less tendency toward pantheism than Thomson, who may be said to be semi-pantheistic. In the "Hymn" appended to the "Seasons", particularly, he verges on pantheism. But these passages identifying God with Nature are elsewhere contradicted, and his conception is, on the whole, very similar to Brooke's. Pope, too, is somewhat conservative and gets no nearer pantheism than the following passage indicates:

"All are but parts of one stupendous whole,  
Whose body Nature is, and God the soul!"

Brooke states his objections to pantheism very plainly,<sup>2</sup> but the

<sup>1</sup>(Chalmers Eng. Poets Vol. X, p. 357. end of Bk. III in "Creation".)

<sup>2</sup>"Universal Beauty" Bk. I, ll. 221 ff.  
and Bk. II, ll. 305-20.



deistic qualities of his conception of God are unmistakable.

The second assumption, the goodness of God, is so apparent throughout the whole poem that Brooke's acceptance of it need not be argued.<sup>1</sup> The beauty of the universe, and the wonderful gifts which man enjoys testify undeniably that God is good. Brooke's philosophy is here in danger of chasing itself about in a circle. God is good, because only a good God can have given us this marvelous environment;- can have fashioned our complicated bodies; can have blest us with Reason and Soul: the Universe is perfect, because it cannot be otherwise, coming from a good God. This circling system of thought is no more attributable to "Universal Beauty", however, than to its philosophic forbears. That God's handiwork is faultless is reiterated tirelessly. Blackmore, representative of orthodoxy, had been somewhat apologetic:<sup>2</sup> but Shaftesbury had come boldly forth with the idea that nature has no flaws.<sup>3</sup> Henry Needler had echoed this sentiment in his essay on "The Beauty of the Universe". Brooke, himself, in no uncertain terms, shows how

....."the final causes tend,

And reach unerring each appointed end."<sup>4</sup>

With the bland optimism of the philosophical school which he represents, he pays very little attention to the existence of evil in the world. Again he seems to have been influenced by his master, Pope, who disposed of evil, not very profoundly, to be sure, by

<sup>1</sup>For passages suggesting the goodness of God, see Bk. IV, l. 89; Bk. IV, l. 112; Bk. IV, l. 336; and Bk. V, l. 9

<sup>2</sup>See Chalmer's Eng. Poets, Vol. X, p. 353 Bk. III of "The Creation".)

<sup>3</sup>See ("Characteristics", Treatise V. The Moralists, Section III, p. 22).

<sup>4</sup>In Bk. III, ll. 217-219. See also Bk. I, ll. 305-310.)

calling it good if rightly understood.<sup>1</sup> Brooke again finds it necessary to depart from poetry, and in a prose note<sup>2</sup> of explanation argues that, although the universe betrays an eminent fitness in its present state, it cannot now be perfect, because it is changing continually. It has a "present fitness", but is working toward a future state of perfection. In leaving himself this loophole, Brooke is not more cautious than Shaftesbury,<sup>3</sup> who, however, conceives the operations of God to have been limited by the co-existent and co-eternal principle of matter. This idea, in turn, is traceable to Plato. Pope safeguarded his statement in the same way:

"Of systems possible, if 'tis confesst,  
That Wisdom infinite must form the best."

In upholding his thesis that the universe in its present state of fitness is above man's criticism, Brooke does not seem to find it necessary to enter into any detailed defense of the sterner phases of Nature. On one occasion he is known to indulge in a complaint because of the bitter cold of the polar regions. His attitude towards mountains is very nearly the conventional one of Blackmore, whose explanation is purely utilitarian.<sup>4</sup> Both<sup>5</sup> find mountains to be unobjectionable merely because they restrain tides, or provide grazing grounds, or useful metals, or inclines down which the mountain streams can flow. Brooke's utilitarianism does not mean that he is un-

<sup>1</sup>See his *Essay on Man*, Epistle IV, l. 113-5.

<sup>2</sup>Note on Bk. V, l. 162.

<sup>3</sup>See Fowler's discussion in "Shaftesbury and Hutcheson", pp. 115-116.

<sup>4</sup>See Chalmers' *Eng. Poets*, vol. I, p. 354, "Creation", Bk. 111.

<sup>5</sup>For evidence in Brooke's case, see *BK. II, 128-30; 191-2; 235-236.*

deistic; it simply means that he is less poetical in his conception than some of his successors.

It is typical of most of the philosophical poets already mentioned that, in making their grand survey of Creation, they place man at the top of the scale of life.<sup>1</sup> This preeminence is usually attributed to the fact that man is endowed with the faculty of reason, which the eighteenth century rated very highly. Brooke does not omit to express his gratitude for this "largess of perceptive sense",<sup>2</sup> but is not unreserved in his praise. Our reason is entirely inadequate to measure the wisdom or goodness of the Infinite. Science has taught us that Nature has many a hidden recess which our imperfect senses can not penetrate. He gives us an emphatic statement of the principle involved in Pope's familiar admonition:-

"Know then thyself; presume not God to scan;

The proper study of mankind is man."

His verse suggests the possible existence of beauty now unknown because of the inadequacy of reason.<sup>3</sup> Again resorting to prose, he states plainly his cognizance of our mental limitations.<sup>4</sup>

1. See Akenside's "Pleasures of the Imagination"-Bk. I, l. 537 ff.

Pope's "Essay"-Epistle I, sect. VII, ll. 207 ff.

Harris's "Concord", ll. 76 ff; Needler's "Vernal Hymn"; Baker, in the preface to his poem, writes: "He is, without dispute, the first upon the globe; superior reason making him superior to every other creature."

2. Bk. IV, l. 90.

3. See Bk. V, l. 149 ff; Bk. IV, l. 115, note; II, l. 321, ff.

4. Excerpt from note on l. 153, BK. V:- "Our reason is indeed not infallible; but neither is it useless: reason perceives a wisdom and art that is obvious and inimitable; and hence cannot avoid to infer that the same wisdom and art is universal; and there must be one sole Omni-present and Adorable Artist. But when Reason attempts a higher pitch, and forms itself independent schemes of the courses of Nature, or fitness of things; nothing can be more vain than such a dictating arrogance."

This tendency to recognize the limitations of reason is not inconsistent with the later acquiescence in the ideas of the mysticists, Boehme and Law<sup>1</sup> and is in marked contrast with such a work as Toland's "Christianity ~~Not~~ ~~Mysterious~~".

In his final estimate of man, he is not markedly different from Pope. Shaftesbury's postulate of the "moral sense" had been adopted by Thomson<sup>2</sup>, and, later, by Akenside.<sup>3</sup> Their man stood high in the scale, the lord of all created beings, shining in virtue bright. Pope, too, had been attracted by the guilelessness of the primitive mind, but he retracted, inconsistently enough, and preached, with Bolingbroke, the natural selfishness of man. He finally concluded that man is a grand composite product of good and evil, not unlike the creature whom Young expostulates upon:

"Midway from nothing to the deity!  
A beam ethereal, sullied, and absorpt!  
.....  
A Worm! a God!

Brooke, too, is here Aristotelian rather than Platonic. Bland optimist though he is, man's faults have not escaped him; and he nowhere mentions the "moral sense". Human imperfections have, however, one redeeming quality, they offer the poet an opportunity for moralization and didacticism, which Brooke, for one, does not leave unutilized. Like Pope, he gives a flattering account of man at the outset, but tempers it later with rebuke and abuse. Book III has a virulent outburst which has a Pope-like smack.

<sup>1</sup> Particularly noticeable in "The Pool of Quality."

<sup>2</sup> In "Spring", 234 ff, and elsewhere.

<sup>3</sup> Throughout Bk.I of "Pleasures of the Imagination"; See 537 ff., especially.

"O Nature, whom the song aspires to scan!  
O Beauty trod by proud insulting man!  
This boasted tyrant of thy wondrous ball,  
This mighty, haughty, little lord of all;  
This king o'er reason, but this slave to sense,  
Of wisdom careless, but of whim immense;  
Toward Thee incurious, ignorant, profane!  
But of his own dear, strange productions vain!"

If these lines resemble Pope, they also bear a marked similarity to Baker, who, in stating the purpose of his poem, proposes "by considering the grandeur of the whale, to make man sensible of his own littleness and insignificance, except in the very place he stands."<sup>1</sup> Throughout his whole poem this purpose is never lost sight of. Brooke's Aristotelian tendencies are not permanent, however. His "Fool of Quality" is notoriously sentimental. In this, as well as in religious matters, he is curiously inconsistent.<sup>2</sup> As pointed out before, Brooke's temporary disagreement with Shaftesbury on this point does not argue against the fact of his deism.

Although our poet does not pay as much attention to ethics as to theology, there is abundant evidence, here too, that he was influenced by the Free-Thinkers. Like Shaftesbury, he does not hold up the thought of Heaven or Hell as a stimulus for good conduct—virtue is its own reward—; yet he does express a faith in an after life, and in doing so is again comparable to Pope, Baker, and Thomson. The latter, in the close of "Winter", reflects at length upon a future state; Pope, too, makes a vague reference to the life after death.<sup>3</sup> Dr. Young had been so disappointed at the inadequacy of Pope's treatment of this theme, however, that he had been prompted to write the lugubrious "Night Thoughts" as a corrective. Like his master, Brooke does not stress the thought of the future state, but he does refer to it not infrequently.<sup>4</sup>

1. See Preface to "The Universe", p. 6.

2. At the close of his life, Brooke had adopted the religion of the Wealeys.

3. See "Essay on Man", Epistle I, Section III, l. 97-8.

4. In Bk. IV, ll. 71 ff; 305 ff; in Bk. V, 242, ff, and note.

Metamorphosis in animal life symbolizes the future glorious state of man. This same idea had been expressed by Baker.<sup>1</sup> Brooke finds many faults in man, and quite appropriately, in an age of rampant satire seeks to eradicate them by the writings of his pen. With Shaftesbury, Thomson, Baker, and Pope,<sup>2</sup> he points out the fact that man, though helpless in infancy, and not always physically perfect, is the most highly endowed of God's creatures. Complaint of any sort is unreasonable and unappreciative.<sup>3</sup>

The poet criticizes man's manner of living, recommending country life and dismissing with a fine scorn the daily rounds of "that scented nothing of a beau". Rules for helpful, cooperative living may be learned from observation of bees, beavers, and others of "the animal kind". All animal life holds a lesson for us, and deserves our protection. This humanitarian note had been sounded by Thomson, who, though he could not bring himself to forego the fascinations of fishing, stoutly rebuked all other pastimes causing suffering to animals,<sup>4</sup> and, in "Liberty", seems to have espoused a purely vegetarian diet. The humanitarian movement was given point by a revival of the Pythagorean doctrine of the transmigration of souls, which

<sup>1</sup>Baker, in his "Universe", writes thus:-

"'Twas God; it's God and thine, O man, and he  
In this thy fellow creature lets thee see  
The wondrous change that is ordained for thee.  
Thou too shall't leave thy reptile form behind,  
And mount the skies, a pure ethereal mind,  
There range among the stars, all bright and unconfin'd."

<sup>2</sup>See "The Moralists" pp. 78-80; also Pope's "Essay", Epistle I, Section VI.

<sup>3</sup>See Bk. V, ll 308-323.

<sup>4</sup>See "Spring", ll 54 ff; and "Autumn", ll 390 ff.

Gay not long before had regarded quite flippantly. Even Pope, the passionless, could not omit a diatribe against the indiscriminate slaughter of animals;<sup>1</sup> Harris, in "Concord", added another word of sharp rebuke; Baker, as usual, reached the point of absurdity, complaining even against the "murder" of a fly.<sup>2</sup> Brooke's humanitarianism is a curious inconsistency; if animals are automata, what point is there to protecting the "mechanic race"? Naturally enough, his reaction against cruelty to animals is less vigorous than that of his companions, and his poem contains comparatively few humanitarian outbursts.<sup>3</sup> The lesson is taught more by the glorification of animal life than through detachable rebukes. The humanitarian tendency in deism reached the height of his development in the writers of the Romantic School. Blake's "Book of Thel", and Coleridge's "Ancient Mariner" had scarcely been written, had there not come first the deistic conception that all life is, in its ability to reveal God, sacred and inviolate, a lesson which Brooke repeated tirelessly.<sup>4</sup>

The Romanticists here, as in their attitude toward Nature, have been influenced directly by our group of philosophical poets. This were indeed to state a heresy - that out of pseudo-classicism grew its opposite, romanticism. But the findings of modern research have shown the futility of any effort to draw sharp lines of division between the two schools; did the scope of this study permit, it might easily be shown that they are more closely connected than

<sup>1</sup>See "Essay on Man", Epistle III, ll 147-168.

<sup>2</sup>In "The Universe", p. 30.

<sup>3</sup>The most vehement is to be found in Bk.VI, ll 274-285.

<sup>4</sup>See "Universal Beauty", Bk. I, ll. 217-220.

is ordinarily believed to be the case.<sup>1</sup>

In formulating his code of ethics, Brooke goes on the assumption that Beauty and Truth are identical. The "virtuoso system" of Shaftesbury and Akenside is only hinted at. According to them, to appreciate the beautiful is to become good; to feel the loveliness of a rose is to be morally uplifted. But this gift of "taste", though innate, may be improved by cultivation. Equality prevails in the distribution of, but not in the opportunities for the development of this gift. Shaftesbury had refrained from attacking the church partly because he felt that it offered a shelter for those whose chances for developing this gift of "taste" were few. It will be observed that these thinkers, in so many ways the precursors of Jean Jacques Rousseau, are here unwilling to push their theories to the logical conclusions to which they point, and to which he drew them. The Shaftesbury system glorifies the natural man, and then sets limits past which its appreciations must not be carried.<sup>2</sup> Brooke suggests this doctrine of aesthetics-versus-morals when he finds Beauty to be "recluse from vulgar eyes". (Bk. III, l.178) We find in him numerous inferences to the effect that Beauty and Truth are identical, but few clear-cut statements, like Cooper's<sup>3</sup> and Akenside's.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>For further development of this idea, see Mr. Moore's article, "The Return to nature in the English Poets of the 18th Century in Studies in Philology vol. XIV (1917).

<sup>2</sup>For further discussion of this theme, see W.G. Howard's article "Good Taste and Conscience", P.M.L.A., vol. 25.

<sup>3</sup>"Beauty and Good, th' unseparable pair,  
Sweet offspring of the sky, those emblems fair  
Of the celestial cause, whose tuneful word  
From discord and from chaos raised this globe."

("Power of Harmony", Bk. II, ll 37-40)

<sup>4</sup>Thus at first was Beauty sent from Heaven,  
The lovely mistress of Truth and Good  
For in this dark world Truth and Good are one;  
And Beauty dwells in them, and they in her,  
In like participation."

(Pleasures of the Imagination, l.431-5.)



Brooke's statement which most nearly approximates this is the following:

".....Beauty, wrap't, recluse from vulgar eyes,  
Essential, sits on Truth's eternal throne,  
And universal, reigns on worlds unknown."

(Bk. III, 168-160.)

This statement furnishes fairly conclusive evidence; but in this matter, as in the case of humanitarianism, it is necessary to base one's final decision upon, the general effect, rather than upon specific, detachable passages. Brooke had not the power of compact statement that was Pope's; this fact accounts for the absence of clear-cut statements.

## CHAPTER V.

### CONCLUSION

One matter remains which should not be omitted from our discussion. No penetrating review can omit a mention of Brooke's interest in science. The discoveries of Newton have been primary factors in opening his eyes to the much lauded beauties of the universe. Current findings of scientists have made him look differently upon the strata of the earth; his complacency in considering his residence as the center of the universe has been somewhat shaken by the discovery that there are other and greater planets than the earth. Far from being disgruntled by the necessity of changing his mind, he looks forward in eager and confident expectancy for more and greater discoveries. Like Ulysses, he is ready

"To follow knowledge like a sinking star

Beyond the utmost bounds of human thought."

An observation in prose voices this expectant attitude:- "Since for many ages past the continual and successive improvements that have been made in natural philosophy, by perpetually displaying new and unimagined fields of knowledge, do at the same time demonstrate that there are many yet unopened."

(Note on Bk. IV, 1,115.)

It is true that in grounding himself in science he sometimes becomes technical and laborious. It is equally true, however, that science has given him his inspiration for the whole poem and is responsible for its most poetic portions. This fact is indicative of the active part which science, supposedly so unpoetic, has played in the moulding of poesy. Brooke stands early in a long line of

poets who attempt with varying degrees of success to poetize scientific gleanings. His occasional success is the more remarkable when the date of his work is considered. His fanciful descriptions of the insect world demonstrate long before the time of Wordsworth the principle set forth in the Preface:- "If the time should ever come when what is now called science becomes familiarized to men, then the remotest discoveries of the chemist, the botanist, the mineralogist, will be as proper objects of the poet's art as any on which it can be employed. He will be ready to follow the steps of the man of science, he will be at his side, carrying sensation into the midst of the objects of science itself. The poet will lend his divine spirit to aid the transfiguration, and welcome the being thus produced as a dear and genuine inmate of the house of man."<sup>1</sup>

Brooke not only demonstrates that the scientist is the poet's friend. He avoids, with becoming humility, the pitfall of cock-sureness; he recognizes the high attainments of science, but sees that there is yet an undiscovered country. The scientist dispels one mystery to open up ninety-nine greater mysteries. Because of science poetic imagination has vast tracts of unexplored regions in which to range. In suggesting this thought, Brooke is doing a real service, whatever our estimate of his poetry may be.

Attention to the time of Brooke's work makes his promulgation of philosophy, as well as of science, highly important. We have compared him unfavorably with such a poet as Mark Akenside, but it must be recalled that "Universal Beauty" preceded "The Pleasures of the Imagination" by nearly twenty years, and that Brooke's only notable predecessors were Needler, Baker, and Thomson. We have

<sup>1</sup>For a discussion of the relation of science to poetry, read Chapters I-IV of Shairp's "Poetic Interpretation of Nature."

traced many resemblances between Pope and Brooke. Parts of "Universal Beauty" preceded "The Essay" in date of publication. It is regrettable that we cannot discover the measure of aid which Pope gave to Brooke. Their correspondence is lost through fire; the letters of Swift and Pope never mention the young Irish writer. It is safe to assume that Pope's was the guiding hand, and that he himself gained nothing from Brooke, who, indeed, mentions Pope most appreciatively:

"Thou, sole object of my envy, Pope!" (Bk.V,1.60)

Such an ejaculation is the more noteworthy because it is unparalleled by references to other contemporary poets. Just how much genuine deism had penetrated into Ireland before Brooke's time it is difficult to determine. Brooke's visits to London and the influence of Pope and his circle, are undoubtedly responsible for his attitude. He stands midway between Baker and Pope, in point of time and merit.

A panoramic view of "Universal Beauty" brings into prominence the following peaks:- scientific interest; insistence upon deistic doctrines in theology and ethics; a religious devoutness; a clearly perceptible tendency to poetize philosophy. As the ambitious undertaking of a scholarly youth, it is a remarkable achievement.

Our case is, then, before us. We have seen that at practically every point Brooke is in agreement with the deists. There is a clear case for his deism if only the negative evidence be considered; and the positive evidence corroborates our conclusion that he is a deist. We have tried to demonstrate by constant reference to his own words his belief that nature reveals Deity; his thesis that creation is flawless; his emphasis upon reason; and his insistence upon the ethical principles of the deists. An attempt has been

made to establish the proof of his harmony with the deists not solely by means of quotations from his own work, but by a citation of similar passages from other poets who are generally recognized as deists and by specific contrast with works which came into being solely to confute deism and to poetize the norms of orthodoxy. At almost every step in the investigation added proof of his deism has been yielded. His alliance with the free-thinkers seems unmistakable.

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Appendix III.

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