WEBB AND WOOLF: A STUDY OF THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN BEATRICE WEBB AND THE BLOOMSBURY GROUP, WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO LEONARD AND VIRGINIA WOOLF

Quintin Wight

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ABSTRACT

Quintin Wight

Webb and Woolf: A Study of the Social and Political Relationships between Beatrice Webb and the Bloomsbury Group, with Particular Reference to Leonard and Virginia Woolf

Beatrice and Sidney Webb exerted great influence over British political thought in the early twentieth century. The members of the Bloomsbury Group grew up under this influence, and reacted to it in various ways.

This study compares and contrasts the social, educational and philosophical factors which affected Beatrice Webb and the members of Bloomsbury during their maturation periods, noting particularly the critical changes in lifestyles and the advent of a more feminine world. It then examines the relationships which existed between the Webbs and specific Group members in the light of these factors and of contemporary political events, concluding that the relationships were significant to the literature of the period.

Emphasis is placed throughout on the parallels which can be drawn in family background, education and marriage between Beatrice Webb and Virginia Woolf.

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Chapter I

Introduction

The search for influences in literature is unending. Scholars spend years in minute scrutiny of the works of one writer in the hope of finding traces of the thought, language, or style of another. If no such traces are evident, there is a strong temptation to deny that the influence was felt. But there are many forms of influence; no one can deny that beef which has met the butcher's knife has been influenced--in spite of the fact that the meat does not produce particles of steel thereafter. In the opening years of the twentieth century, the fine flesh of the Bloomsbury Group met the stainless blade of Beatrice Webb.

There can be little doubt that Beatrice was a stainless blade. That was one of the problems she faced: few people care for things which cut, and stainless ones tend to be more unbearable than most:

> Nothing is so irritating as omniscience, nothing so galling as moral superiority, and Mrs. Webb's controversial methods, her contempt for social foibles and disapproval of sexual lapses, sometimes made her disliked, especially by women, who were afraid of her; for she laid down rules of conduct with as much assurance as she gave forth advanced opinions. . . . What made her so very objectionable in the eyes of her detractors was that no chink could be spied in her armour. She had no weaknesses. She and her husband worked unceasingly, talked purposefully,

> lived virtuously, and took their innocent and hygenic pleasures vigorously.[1]

That was Beatrice: finely forged, true-tempered, and honed to incredible keenness by years of whetting against the most superb minds of the age. Only on the inside did her basically unresolved religious feelings give rise to an occasional spurious vibration. Outside she was hard edged as a diamond die. No one was ever in the dark for long about what Beatrice wanted done, and very few ever escaped doing it for her.

It is important to realise at this juncture that, in spite of the foregoing, Beatrice Webb, as such, never really existed. Before 1892 there was a very distinct Miss Beatrice Potter; after 1892 there was a very distinct Beatrice (and Sidney) Webb. Not Beatrice Webb, but Beatrice (and Sidney) Webb. At the same time the distinct Sidney Webb of the Colonial Office became after 1892 the distinct Sidney (and Beatrice) Webb of the London County Council. Although Beatrice and Sidney were not at all equivalent in either intellectual capacity or personality, it must be clearly remembered that Beatrice (and Sidney) Webb is equivalent to Sidney (and Beatrice) Webb at any point in this discussion whether the parentheses are evident or not. For all practical purposes, Beatrice Webb must be read as Sidney Webb throughout (and vice versa).

[1]Hesketh Pearson, George Bernard Shaw: His Life & Personality (1942; rpt. New York: Atheneum, 1963), p. 174.

The Bloomsbury Group, on the other hand, were rather less than definable. The Group started as a small knot in society--hard enough to be felt, but not really distinct enough to be seen--then expanded into a larger, more visible, but slightly softer mass which crumbled as it grew. The end result was that by the time it had become really well known it no longer existed as a distinct entity. All that can be said with any degree of confidence is that certain people were seminal, and therefore central characters; others who had come later, or perhaps simply not allowed their association to become strong, formed an aureole about this centre; and still others made up a decorative, but nonessential fringe.

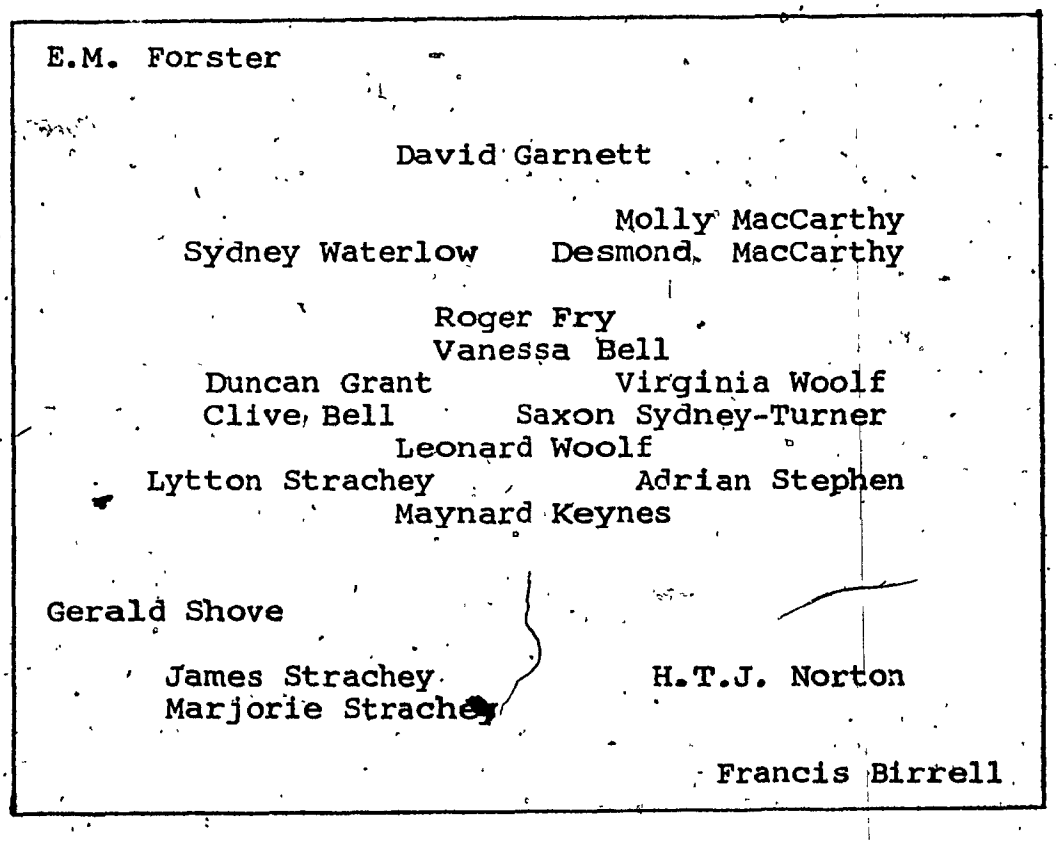
J.K. Johnstone, in his book The Bloomsbury Group, includes as members: "John Maynard Keynes, Lytton Strachey, Virginia and Leonard Woolf, Vanessa and Clive Bell, Duncan Grant, E.M. Forster, and Roger Fry."[2] In his autobiography, Leonard Woolf includes both an old and a new Bloomsbury: the old comprising "the three Stephens: Vanessa, married to Clive Bell, Virginia, who married Leonard Woolf, and Adrian, who married Karin Costello; Lytton Strachey; Clive Bell; Leonard Woolf; Maynard Keynes; Duncan Grant; E.M. Forster. . .Saxon Sydney-Turner; Roger Fry and Desmond MacCarthy and his wife Molly".[3] New Bloomsbury, that of the 1920's and 1930's, added

[2]J.K. Johnstone, The Bloomsbury Group (London: Secker & Warburg, 1954), p. ix.

[3]Leonard Woolf, Beginning Again, Harvest Books (1964: rpt. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, n.d.), p. 22.

Julian, Quentin and Angelica Bell, and David (Bunny) Garnett, while losing Lytton Strachey and Roger Fry.[4] Frank Swinnerton, a contemporary, albeit hostile, witness, includes, by implication, Bertrand Russell and T.S. Eliot.[5]

Perhaps the best concept of "membership" in the Bloomsbury Group is that expressed by Quentin Bell in his own work on the subject.[6] Professor Bell uses a diagram (reproduced below) to illustrate a type of geographical distribution of aureole or fringe members about the central core. This



[4]Ibid.

[5]Frank Swinnerton, The Georgian Literary Scene (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1934), pp. 339-377.

[6]Quentin Bell, Bloomsbury (New York: Basic Books, 1968), p. 15. Reproduced by permission of the author.

diagram is useful in that it shows how E.M. Forster, for instance, long an intimate of all of the true central characters, was yet only on the fringe of the actual group itself. At the same time it brings out a point germane to this study --that not all of the "Bloomsberries" (Molly MacCarthy's term) can be included, no matter how close they were to the mystic core. For our purposes, the question is not so much "Who is Bloomsbury?" as "Who, of Bloomsbury, can be said to have had any relationship with Beatrice Webb?" The relationship could be purely physical--they met, talked and parted--or it could be purely conceptual--their ideas agreed or contrasted--but it could be demonstrable. In this way, we can eliminate at once such Bloomsberries or near-Bloomsberries as H.T.J. Norton, whose early promise slowly crumbled away to nothing; Duncan Grant, whose brush said little to interest Beatrice; Molly MacCarthy, who was overshadowed by Desmond; Saxon Sydney-Turner, who disappeared into the Treasury in the manner of the Cheshire cat--leaving only the smile; and Sydney Waterlow, who went everywhere, and knew everyone, yet left little impression for the minds of later students. At the same time, we should add to Professor Bell's diagram a few ultra-fringe members who were close enough to both the Fabian and Bloomsbury camps to have significant effect. Bertrand Russell and Rupert Brooke would fall into this category, as might one or two others.

Of primary interest will be Beatrice's relationship

with Virginia Woolf. There were amazing parallels in the lives of both women, from family background to educational processes to physical appearance. There were also violent differences, many of which can be traced to the changing lifestyle of the period. Since Virginia was one of the main channels for Webb ideas to flow to the Bloomsbury Group, and since she and Beatrice were often connected in the minds of their contemporaries, the contrasts and similarities between the two women are of great significance to this study and must be borne in mind throughout.

A significant question at this point would be: "Why bother?" Why should the relationship between an aging socialist agitator and a movement of young literati have any particular significance? Perhaps it doesn't. On the other hand, most critics would agree that the Bloomsbury Group could only take root and flourish as it did in a world whose values were changing. Although they were symptomatic of the change--which is why the Group as a whole had such significance--they were not the motive power behind it. They sprang from ground which had already been prepared. The critical years for the Bloomsbury Group were not the years of their growth and fruition: they were the years of clearing and sowing which had gone before. Beatrice Webb was one of those who cleared and ploughed the land. She certainly had no wish to propagate the Bloomsbury Group--the aura of decadence which she felt surrounded it was against all her principles--yet she had no

small hand in the preparation of the ground from which it sprang. That is where the fascination of their relationship lies. The Bloomsbury Group were the garden of her labours--were they weed or harvest in her eyes?

Chapter II

The Background

Beatrice Potter was born the eighth daughter of Richard Potter and Laurencinda Heyworth Potter on January 22nd, 1858. Her father was a second-generation businessman of considerable means and much personal authority. This had a large effect on Beatrice, since she inherited both: the first enabling her to spend her life doing exactly as she pleased, and the second enabling her to force others to do exactly as she pleased. Fortunately for Britain, Beatrice's pleasures consisted largely in what others would have considered irksome duties.

She was born to a world in which Blake's "dark Satanic Mills" were only too real; a world of appalling poverty and misery, in which the fat sharks of commerce swam freely through seas of human wreckage, gobbling down whatever they chose. There were three worlds really--worlds which existed side by side, yet which rarely took cognizance of each other in any meaningful way. Taking London as an example, we find that:

> London then epitomized the extraordinary contrasts that characterized nineteenth century liberal England. There was bourgeois London, with its grand boulevards, its great public monuments to industry, trade, finance and government, its affluent homes, its new parks, opera houses and museums, its stores, richly stocked with goods from every corner of the earth. Then there was petit-bourgeois and working-class London, with its tidy streets, tidy shops, tidy homes, its numerous churches, its music halls and its pubs. Finally, there were the slum ghettoes radiating out into the suburbs, with their unpaved streets, their disease-

> ridden and over-crowded tenaments, their poorhouses and old age homes, their missionary sects, their pervasive dirt, prostitution, and alcoholism. These three component societies of London might have lived in different cities for all that they knew or cared about each other.
>
> Politically and administratively, London had scarcely advanced beyond the Middle Ages. In the 1880's, with a population of over four million, it still lacked a water, sanitation, and public health system; it still suffered from periodic plagues of typhus and cholera; and its poor laws were as archaic and oppressive as ever. There was no central government to speak of. Not until 1888 was a County Council established to assume over-all responsibility for education, sewage disposal, housing, and hospitals.[1]

That was the England in which Beatrice grew up. At the time of her birth, roughly one million men were eligible to vote in Britain. Twenty-six years earlier, in 1832, before the passing of the Reform Act, there had been only 435,000 eligible out of a total population in England and Wales of over fourteen million. In 1867, when Beatrice was nine, Disraeli, a near riot in Hyde Park, and a hastening letter from Queen Victoria combined to force Lord Derby, the Prime Minister, to introduce the Second Reform Act to Parliament. The number of eligible voters then rose to two million--but very few working-class men were included, and no representatives of the working class were brought to Parliament. The fact that Members of Parliament were unpaid at this time effectively barred the participation of the lower-middle and working classes anyway, since only those with independent means could

[1]Albert Fried and Richard M. Elman, eds., Charles Booth's London (New York: Pantheon Books, 1968), p. xv.

afford the position. Not until 1884, when Gladstone shepherded the Third Reform Act through, did every male householder acquire the right to vote. That still meant a total of only five million voters--a mere 20% of the population. By that time Beatrice was twenty-six, and an experienced social worker; Virginia Woolf was two years old.

In this world of grim pursuit of wealth, Beatrice grew up swimming with the sharks. This is a vital point to remember in examining her future actions, because although she devoted her life to the relief of the misery of the common man and bent all her energy towards changing the world for his benefit, she always remained a shark, at least in her methods. Years of business training with her father taught her all the intricacies of the use of power, and she had no scruples at all in applying pressure wherever needed to achieve her aim. As she noted in her autobiography:

> The consciousness that was present, I speak for my own analytic mind, was the consciousness of superior power. As life unfolded itself I became aware that I belonged to a class of persons who habitually gave orders, but who seldom, if ever, executed the orders of other people.[2]

This passage marks one of the really great differences between Beatrice and the Bloomsbury Group, and has a bearing on a second difference. The first difference is simply time, with its attendant changes in lifestyle. Although the majority of Bloomsbury Group members were born during the 1880's,

[2]Beatrice Webb, My Apprenticeship (1926; rpt. Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1971), p. 65.

when London was still a human swamp on the Thames, they grew up into the twentieth century. The England which they became aware of as they matured was a softer, more pleasant land in which the powers of the robber-baron liberals had to some extent been trimmed. Beatrice, on the other hand, grew up into the 1880's. The England which greeted her emerging maturity was the swamp in all its dismal grandeur. Beatrice grew up in a medium in which personal power was not only useful, but essential. She was twenty-two months old when The Origin of Species was published on November 24th, 1859, and her growth coincided with the period in which the doctrine of the "survival of the fittest" (developed by those rapacious minds who saw opportunity for personal gain in Spencer's somewhat garbled account of Darwin's concepts) was applied quite literally to economic functions. "Freedom" in England at that time meant freedom to starve if one could not maintain a measure of personal success.

> No relief whatsoever was to be offered to able-bodied persons and their families except the workhouse. And the workhouse itself was to be deliberately made so unpleasant that any person would do his utmost to avoid being sent there.[3]

Aside from Roger Fry, who was, even at that, a good eight years younger than Beatrice, the Bloomsbury Group matured in a period in which this doctrine was dying. The Poor Law of 1834 did not die in its entirety until 1945--two years later than Beatrice

[3]Brian Jackson, intro. to My Apprenticeship, by Beatrice Webb, p. 21.

--but it was her personal power and vital energy which sapped much of its strength. Her work with her cousin-in-law, Charles Booth, on his great effort The Life and Labour of the People brought her into contact with the statistics of poverty; her work as a rent collector for Octavia Hill in the slums near St. Katherine Dock brought her into contact with the poor themselves; and her work on the Royal Commission on the Poor Law brought her into contact with those who administered them. Only her own personal sense of power and her ability to use it--an ability thrust upon her by the timing and circumstances of her upbringing--kept her going. The Bloomsbury Group had neither the sense of, nor need for, such power. Their feelings were of intellectual superiority, not of ~~authority~~ over others, and except perhaps for Leonard Woolf, and in a minor sense for Virginia, their contacts were not with the poor.

The second difference between Beatrice and Bloomsbury which is brought out to some extent in the passage quoted above, is that of apparent sex. It has to be "apparent sex", for in spite of the fact that Beatrice was beautiful (her contemporaries said so), an accomplished hostess (if eccentric) and fond of fine dresses (her diary anguishes over guilt at their purchase), she was essentially masculine. Her entire makeup was masculine and paternalistic. Her interests were economic and political, and her satisfaction at having wielded power effectively was the satisfaction of the tycoon

at the bargaining table, not that of the wheedling woman in the drawing room or boudoir. In a further passage, she states (referring to her father):

> When those maps of continents were unrolled before him I listened with fascinated interest to eager discussion, whether a line of railway should run through this section or that; at what exact point the station or junction should be placed; what land should be purchased for the contingent town; whether this patch or that, of forest, coalfield or mineral ore should be opened up, or left for future generations to exploit. And these manifold decisions seemed to me to be made without reference to any superior authority, without consideration of the desires or needs of the multitude of lives which would, in fact, be governed by them; without, in short, any other consideration than that of the profit of the promoters. . . . It remains to be added, though this is foretelling my tale, that on the death of my mother I found myself giving orders and never executing them. Reared in this atmosphere of giving orders it was not altogether surprising that I apparently acquired the marks of the caste.[4]

An attitude such as this does not fit clearly into current or past stereotypes of a feminine role. In her later machinations as a member of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws, her hard-mindedness is brought out even more clearly--to the point, in fact, that she suggests the existence of a masculine characteristic herself:

> With Sidney, this attitude of indifference to his colleagues on public bodies is habitual--perhaps I am merely becoming masculine--losing the "personal note" which is the characteristic of the woman in human intercourse. What is rather disconcerting is that I catch myself "playing the personal note" when it suits my purpose--playing it without feeling it. Is that a characteristic of the woman on public bodies? I do try to check myself in this mean little game; but it has the persistency of an inherited or acquired habit.[5]

[4]Webb, Apprenticeship, p. 66.

[5]Beatrice Webb, Our Partnership, ed. Barbara Drake and Margaret I. Cole (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1948), pp. 377-8.

The evidence is fairly clear that Beatrice was purely masculine in mind. Even her twist of conscience about her use of a feminine attribute--"playing the personal note"--has the ring of masculine distaste for such an action about it. This evidence, of course, relates only to a masculine mind. It has little bearing on the emotions of a feminine body. Beatrice could, and did, fall in love, in one way or another, with two men. The implication of those relationships, however, belongs to a further study.

If Beatrice was essentially masculine in intellect, the members of the Bloomsbury Group were essentially feminine. As with Beatrice, this feminine cast of mind was not necessarily associated with actual sexual preferences--in spite of the homosexual tendencies of some of the Bloomsbury members (e.g. Lytton Strachey and Maynard Keynes). It was, rather, a preference for a softer, more feminine approach to life, to literature, and to art. It would be stretching a point to say that art and literature are more feminine occupations than business and commerce. On the other hand, it can reasonably be said that there are masculine and feminine aspects to art and literature, and that the Bloomsbury Group tended towards the feminine--to the drawing room chic rather than turbulent epic or heroic saga--to decorative sculpture and painting rather than inspirational statuary or monumental architecture. At the risk of stirring up great controversy, the feminine in art and literature is the introspective, epigrammatic, intel-

lectual, decorative material, and the masculine the inspirational, emotional, stirring material which appeals to the primitive urges of warrior man. Bloomsbury preferred the former. As Desmond MacCarthy tells us, Sidney Webb himself clarified the point thus:

> he said, in his quiet lisping way, "We are interested in the drains and stopping dry-rot in the house; you in its decoration." I demurred to my share of the metaphor, but I was glad he had spoken like that for it showed he did not expect me to take to plumbing.[6]

The question of the apparent sex of the principals may not at this point be clearly tied in with the background and the age. It is significant, however, if one notes that the switch from masculine to feminine was a characteristic of the period. What was happening? As Sir Mortimer Wheeler has pointed out,

> prior to 1914, Europe was bottled up by decades of comparative peace and good-feeling, tempered by unventilated or at any rate unremedied social ills, and above all corked with complacency.[7]

Beatrice had been born into a thoroughly corked world, but the cork had been working loose, and was ready to blow just at the time the Bloomsbury Group was forming. There were many changes, but the point to emphasize is that these changes, though often harsh and bloody, were essentially feminine. Stern aristocratic paternalism was replaced by a more permissive middle-class ethic, and the real power of women was rising. As Bantock notes,

[6]Desmond MacCarthy, "The Webbs as I saw them," The Webbs and their Work, ed. M.I. Cole (London: Frederick Muller, 1949), p. 20.

[7]Webb, Apprenticeship, p. 35.

> Before the First World War, male hegemony had suffered a reverse in the rise of the "new women" and the suffragette movement. Shaw's analysis of femininity in Man and Superman and Candida implies an error in the continental nineteenth-century assessment of the relative role of the sexes.[8]

Beatrice, oddly enough, had at first been opposed to the new freedom sought for women. There is reason enough in her background for this. As one of ten women in the household of one lone man, with whom she had great sympathy, Beatrice early developed a dislike for her own sex--as did all her sisters. Of her father she says:

> He worshipped his wife, he admired and loved his daughters; he was the only man I ever knew who genuininely believed that women were superior to men, and acted as if he did; the paradoxical result being that all his nine daughters started life as anti-feminists![9]

This original feeling for her father, plus, in all probability, the early contact with very superior male minds such as those of Huxley and Spencer gave her the original boost towards the easy acceptance of a quasi-masculine role. At the same time, her youthful antipathy to her mother (herself a very superior feminine mind) reinforced this bent by pushing her into a self-reliant, individualistic channel. There is strong evidence throughout her diaries that, to Beatrice, femininity spelled "weakness." The passage quoted above concerning her behaviour in committee is an example of this.

[8]G.H. Bantock, "The Social and Intellectual Background", The Modern Age, The Pelican Guide to English Literature Vol. 7, ed. Boris Ford (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1961), p. 20.

[9]Webb, Apprenticeship, p. 35.

She did, however, change with age. Writing in 1926 she describes her anti-feminist feelings, saying:

> Why I was at that time an anti-feminist in feeling is easy to explain though impossible to justify. Conservative by temperament and anti-democratic through social environment, I had reacted against my father's over-valuation of women relative to men; and the narrow outlook and exasperated tone of some of the pioneers of woman's suffrage had intensified this reaction.[10]

There are three significant differences between Beatrice and the Bloomsbury Group which are illustrated by this passage. In the first place, Bloomsberries were, on the whole, supporters of the femininst movement, Virginia Woolf, in fact, supporting it to the point of magnifying it out of all proportion. Aileen Pippett points out that Virginia's friends were disturbed by her extreme sensitivity to inequities in the treatment of women well into the 1930's, and thought that she appeared to feel excessive anguish over the problem.[11] In the second place, where Beatrice was conservative--in the sense that she wanted to make small, comfortable advances in practical ways, giving here and gaining there, to obtain her own limited, and therefore achievable, goals--the Bloomsberries were radicals--in the sense that their goals were ideals based on principle, and they did not think that principles should be compromised. In the third place, while both Beatrice and

[10]Webb, Apprenticeship, pp. 353-4.

[11]Aileen Pippett, The Moth and the Star (Boston: Little, Brown, 1955), p. 56.

and Bloomsbury were anti-democratic, they were so for entirely different reasons: Beatrice because she had been in very close contact with Demos, warts and all, and did not think that he was fit to rule himself, and Bloomsbury because they were, on the whole, completely unacquainted with the gentleman, thought of him only in the abstract and found no room for him on their intellectual plane. Only Leonard Woolf among the Bloomsbury members had any intimate claim to knowledge of poverty or the common man--and Leonard himself was thoroughly anti-democratic in everything but theory. He was perfectly willing, as was Beatrice, to fight to the end for the betterment of the masses, yet he had no wish to associate with them.

> I hated the stuffiness and smell of human beings, and, if a bomb was going to get me, I preferred to die a solitary death above ground and in the open air. Like so many convinced and fervent democrats, in practice I have never found human beings physically in the mass at all attractive--there is a good deal to be said for solitude whether in life or in death.[12]

The stuffiness and smell to which Leonard refers were part of life during the Second World War. But they were even more pronounced in the nineteenth century, and it is the nineteenth century above all which forms the background to Beatrice and Bloomsbury. Beatrice lived as a subject of Queen Victoria for exactly forty-three years (the Queen died on January 22nd--Beatrice's birthday--in 1901), and she could never hope to escape wholly from the all-pervading moral aspects of the era.

[12]Leonard Woolf, The Journey not the Arrival Matters (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1970), p. 59.

Virginia Woolf had her nineteenth birthday three days after the Queen died. There is no evidence that the gap between nineteen and forty-three was any less in 1901 than it is to-day, and this particular gap lay between two worlds as well as two women. Virginia and the majority of Bloomsbury Group members were climbing out of the dark canyon of the nineteenth century into the promising sunshine of the early twentieth. They, however, had started the climb well up the canyon wall; only Beatrice had seen the depths.

Chapter III

Education and Beliefs

In discussing the relationship between Beatrice and Bloomsbury, we must be careful to bear one point in mind--that there is no question that the members of the Bloomsbury Group were influenced by Beatrice Webb. All of England was influenced by Beatrice Webb. She was, in the early nineteen-hundreds, a highly visible, very much talked about personality. As an eccentric grande dame who had rubbed shoulders on intimate terms with peers and prostitutes, she was, to many, the figure-head for Fabian and socialist ideas. Reactions against such ideas were often personalized as against "the Webbs", while hopes in favour of the ideas were just as vociferously tacked to their coat-tails. In this way, the Bloomsbury Group could no more escape being influenced by the Webbs than a fish can escape being wetted by the water through which it swims.

The thing that is in question is exactly what that influence meant to Bloomsbury members and to Beatrice. Some agreed with her and some disagreed; some adopted her phrasing or ideas in their writing; some ignored her; and some angrily rejected everything she stood for. Why? What was there in the makeup of individual Bloomsberries which caused them to react to her in such diverse fashion? We have already discussed the background to the age. There is no question that there had

been vast changes, nor that the Webbs had helped with some of them. These changes, however, are not in themselves sufficient to account for the mental differences between Beatrice and Bloomsbury. There had to be some new ingredients or a change in quality of the ingredients already available to produce these daring young thinkers. In this chapter, we shall examine some of the basic ingredients that went into Bloomsbury. How were they educated, what were their beliefs, and how did they compare with those of Beatrice? Since Beatrice and Virginia were in so many ways alike, yet so different, emphasis will be placed on their relationship in particular.

A case in point is the striking similarity between their families. Both were large, Victorian families; both were comfortably well off, though they had experienced monetary difficulties in the past; both had one parsimonious parent (Beatrice's mother and Virginia's father); both had very intelligent parents with a wide range of acquaintances among contemporary intelligentsia; both educated their daughters at home in sporadic fashion; both operated in an atmosphere of free thought and discussion, and both produced strong-minded daughters who married men who were in many ways also alike (Leonard and Sidney). What were the significant differences? The time gap we have already covered. A smaller difference is that Beatrice's father was forty-one at the time of his daughter's birth, and Virginia's was fifty. Virginia's mother was her father's second wife, and there was an older family--

but Beatrice was a younger daughter and had sisters up to thirteen years older than herself. Only two things really seem to have mattered: Beatrice joined her father's gatherings willingly, while Virginia did not--and Virginia had two brothers.

These factors are tied very closely together, and their impact is enormous. Virginia loved her brothers, Thoby and Adrian, very deeply, but she also resented them, not on a personal level, but on a purely sexual one. She was intensely jealous of their masculine prerogatives. Masculinity to Virginia meant A.E.F.--Arthur's Education Fund. She was bitter about Arthur's Education Fund:

> Ever since the thirteenth century English families have been paying money into that account. . . .
>
> It is a voracious receptacle. Where there were many sons to educate it required a great effort on the part of the family to keep it full. For your education was not merely in book-learning; games educated your body; friends taught you more than books or games. Talk with them broadened your outlook and enriched your mind. In the holidays you travelled; acquired a taste for art; a knowledge of foreign politics; and then, before you could earn your own living, your father made you an allowance upon which it was possible for you to live while you learnt the profession which now entitles you to add the letters K.C. to your name. And to this your sisters, as Mary Kingsley indicates, made their contribution. . . . It was a voracious receptacle, a solid fact--Arthur's Education Fund--a fact so solid indeed that it cast a shadow over the entire landscape. And the result is that though we look at the same things, we see them differently. . . . So magically does it change the landscape that the noble courts and quadrangles of Oxford and Cambridge often appear to educated men's daughters like petticoats with holes in them, cold legs of mutton, and the boat train starting for abroad while the guard slams

the door in their faces.[1]

This bitterness remained with Virginia all her life--a conclusion easily attested to by the fact that Three Guineas, in which the passage appears, was not published until 1938. By 1938 women were well entrenched in universities throughout the English-speaking world, at least as students if not as faculty, and although there remained a sizeable gap between the educational opportunities afforded to women and those afforded to men, it was not enough to justify the depth of feeling which Virginia expresses. Three Guineas is certainly packed with enough facts to demonstrate that inequities--often large ones--continued (and still continue) to exist, yet her rage at the fact of the inequities is not in consonance with the fact that the inequities were rapidly being reduced.

As we have seen, Beatrice also was concerned about the education and status of women. She did not, however, feel the rancour which gnawed at Virginia. This was not due to any equanimity or forgiveness on Beatrice's part. She had very long claws and was perfectly capable of employing them if she felt slighted. (Sidney was the tranquil member of the partnership of Webb and Webb.) Beatrice felt no bitterness because her appreciation of the status of women had been reached after calm reflection, and had then been neatly docketed and filed away as another job to be handled in the routine of changing

[1]Virginia Woolf, Three Guineas, Harbinger Books (1938; rpt. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1966), pp. 5-7.

the world. There were other problems of far more pressing urgency on her calendar. Besides, Beatrice had no surviving brothers.

There is some evidence that had her ownly brother survived infancy she might have encountered sufficient cause to encourage jealousy of masculinity in general. We know from Laurencina Potter's diary and from Beatrice's that Mrs. Potter thought little of the capabilities of her eighth daughter, and was, in fact, harsh with her. Part of this antipathy can no doubt be traced to the fact that Beatrice was not a boy. The rest, in all probability, arises from the death of Dicky, the ninth, and only male, child at the age of two. Kitty Muggeridge writes that

> Laurencina had, up till now, been a severely undemonstrative mother, but she was openly affectionate with this child, caressing him constantly, making excuses to keep him close to her, letting him play on her bed in the mornings and taking him out with her when she went for a drive, while Beatrice was left at home.[2]

Beatrice had, not unnaturally, shown signs of jealousy at this, and had been cast out of favour for her sins. After Dicky's death, the problem increased even more for a while, as Mrs. Potter worked out her grief in self-recrimination and in drawing unfair comparisons between Dicky and Beatrice, whose life she would have traded for the boy's.

Had Dicky survived, he doubtless would have gone to either Oxford or Cambridge, as did Virginia's brothers Thoby and Adrian.

[2]Kitty Muggeridge and Ruth Adam, Beatrice Webb: A Life 1858-1943 (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1965), p. 25.

There would have been a D.E.F. from which Beatrice and her sisters would probably have been excluded. Under such circumstances, and having suffered through such an inauspicious beginning, Beatrice might well have developed some of the jealousy and bitterness which characterized Virginia's feelings towards masculinity. As it was, she merely turned herself inwards, and set about the process of educating herself without giving formal tuition much further thought. In the end she suffered under a succession of governesses who attempted to stuff her with the basics of grammar and arithmetic; spent six months in Germany studying music and literature and another six months in Italy looking at Italian art, and languished a season at an exclusive finishing school for girls--all to no avail. She had a distinct aversion to any externally imposed educational routine, irrespective of the subject, and was happy to abandon them when the opportunity arose. In fact, short bouts of regular hours in the schoolroom usually left her sick and bedridden, and she was eventually excused from formal tuition after her elder sisters had "come out."

In spite of this, there is no question that both Beatrice and Virginia were well, if unevenly, educated women. Since neither went to university, and since the education which they did receive led them into totally different realms, it is important to determine just what their father and brother relationships implied in providing that education. As we have seen, the presence, or absence, of brothers did have an effect on

their eventual attitudes towards masculinity in general, and towards formal education. Beatrice, having grown up in an atmosphere in which university education was completely lacking, did not really notice its absence; Virginia, having grown up in an atmosphere saturated with the air of Cambridge, became aware of her lack and brooded over it. The difference in attitude is striking, since the education which Virginia acquired via her brothers and their Cambridge friends was in many ways much closer to a true university education than was Beatrice's.

Beatrice acquired her education in two ways: by a strict, self-imposed regimen of reading and summarizing books, and by close association with her father's friends. This is where the second great difference between Beatrice and Virginia arises. Both girls had famous fathers--although Virginia's father was more widely known than Beatrice's--and both fathers brought home even more famous friends. Perhaps because of the slightly lesser gap in years between father and daughter, Beatrice appears to have paid far more attention to her father's friends than did Virginia.

> The circumstances of my life did not permit me to seek out one of the few University institutions then open to women. It is true that "the Potter girls" had enjoyed from childhood upwards one of the privileges of University education. We had associated, on terms of conversational equality, with gifted persons; not only with men of affairs in business and politics, but also with men of science and with leaders of thought in philosophy and religion. In particular, owing to our intimacy with Herbert Spencer we were friendly with the group of distinguished scientific men who met together at the

> monthly dinner of the famous "X Club". And here I should like to recall that, among these scientists, the one who stays in my mind as the ideal man of science is not Huxley or Tyndall, Hooker or Lubbock, still less my friend, philosopher and guide Herbert Spencer, but Francis Galton whom I used to observe and listen to--I regret to add, without the least reciprocity--with rapt attention.[3]

Such was Beatrice's experience. Virginia's, on the other hand, appears to have been much more formidable. If her fiction can be equated truly with aspects of her life, Virginia did not find her father's friends at all instructive. In Night and Day, Katharine Hilbery grows up in a house which bears all the hallmarks of the Stephen home. The same famous visitors pass and re-pass; the same attitudes abound; the same poses are kept up, and Katharine, like Virginia, meets the famous:

> Again and again she was brought down to the drawing-room to receive the blessing of some awful distinguished old man, who sat, even to her childish eye, somewhat apart, all gathered together and clutching a stick, unlike an ordinary visitor in her father's arm-chair, and her father himself was there, unlike himself, too, a little excited and very polite. These formidable old creatures used to take her in their arms, look very keenly into her eyes, and then to bless her, and tell her that she must mind and be a good girl, or detect a look in her face something like Richard's as a small boy.[4]

If we accept this as an accurate representation of Virginia's own experience, it is easy to see how there could be a vast difference in learning processes between her and Beatrice. On the one hand we have a highly intelligent, highly impression-

[3]Webb, Apprenticeship, pp. 148-150.

[4]Virginia Woolf, Night and Day (1919; rpt. Harmonsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1969), p. 34.

able girl who met her father's friends on an equal footing, and on the other a highly intelligent, highly impressionable girl who was passed from hand to hand like an illustrative specimen at a seminar of sages. The first found the atmosphere conducive to the absorbtion of knowledge; the second most assuredly did not. One point of interest is that it is possible that both girls met the same people. We know from her diaries that Beatrice considered Huxley a family friend and that she was close enough to him (though she calls the acquaintance "slight"[5]) to have discussed her acceptance of Herbert Spencer's literary executorship with him in May of 1887. At roughly the same time, Huxley was also considered to be a friend of the Stephen family--close enough to have recommended a housekeeper to Sir Leslie at the time of his re-marriage in 1878.[6] Since in 1887 Huxley was sixty-two, Beatrice twenty-nine, and Virginia five, it is reasonable to except that his effect on the two girls would be different. A charming dinner companion for the one could easily become a "formidable old creature" for the other.

Both women absorbed the greater part of their literary and philosophical education from books, since both had free use of large, adult libraries. The difference is that Beatrice gained her interpretations of books from discussions with old estab-

[5]Webb, Apprenticeship, p. 51.

[6]Quentin Bell, Virginia Woolf: A Biography (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1972), I, 13.

lished authorities, and in the process gradually withdrew from the gay, social whirl and away from people of her own age, while Virginia gained her interpretation from free discussion with her brothers, and grew into a gay, if somewhat special, social whirl with persons of her own age. It is in this sense that Virginia came closest to a university education, since those who taught her--the recipients of Thoby's Education Fund and Adrian's Education Fund--formed, with their friends, the classic university structure of the community of scholars.

In spite of this acceptance by brothers and friends as a free and intelligent mind, Virginia minded very much her lack of a university education. What about Beatrice? We know that she felt she came close to having one--and rightly so. Every now and then, however, she did feel that something was missing, and recorded in her diary her "pitifully ineffectual attempts"[7] to educate herself. Beatrice felt that these efforts were failures, yet she felt that failures or not, they did not matter in the end. Margaret Cole has pointed out that

> In after years, Beatrice occasionally wondered whether she herself would have done better with a university education; but was consoled by the reflection that she might have become a Woman Don. Having regard to her character and talents, one could be very glad that the experiment was never tried.[8]

As a point of interest, no matter how bad her algebra or geometry might be, they were certainly adequate compared with the

[7]Webb, Apprenticeship, p. 151.

[8]Margaret Cole, Beatrice Webb (New York: Harcourt Brace & Co., 1946), p. 15.

female members of Bloomsbury, since neither Vanessa nor Virginia was proficient at arithmetic, and Virginia usually counted on her fingers.[9]

The generation gap aside, both Beatrice and Virginia sprang from the same general pastiche of education and influence: the one deeply affected by paternal figures and the other by fraternal ones.[10] This difference between paternal and fraternal, between essentially authoritarian and essentially egalitarian, was to remain forever a deep schism between the two women. Above all, it related to their difference in beliefs, since the final ingredient which had not been available at the time of Beatrice's making, was now at hand to mold Virginia, and was transmitted to her through the activities of her brothers. That ingredient was G.E. Moore's Principia Ethica.

Principia Ethica was published in the autumn of 1903. It had an immediate and electrifying effect on the group of young Cambridge intellectuals who were about to join Vanessa and Virginia Stephen in Bloomsbury. It could be suggested that the effect of Principia Ethica was simply another manifestation of the generation gap between Beatrice and Bloomsbury--that the impact of the work was a culmination of a multitude of slow

[9]Quentin Bell, Virginia Woolf, I, 26.

[10]I have not included Vanessa in this discussion for two reasons: one, she had very little to do with Beatrice at any time, and, two, her art studies did, in fact, amount to the formal education which Virginia lacked. She did not, therefore, have the same impetus to be bitter about masculine privilege.

changes over the twenty-five-year gap between their adult phases--but that would be too simplistic an interpretation. The book did not affect an entire generation at that time. Its immediate effect was on those who formed the mucleus of the Bloomsbury Group, and on few others. It became generally influential later largely because of their proselytizing. The vast majority of the generation to which Bloomsbury belonged was still imbued with a sense of duty--something which Principia Ethica definitely lacked.

In My Apprenticeship Beatrice details the unending solitary search which she made through book after book, philosophy after philosophy, to develop some sort of creed or belief to sustain herself. She tried Christianity, and found it wanting; Buddhism, and found it wanting; science, and found it wanting. She read Racine and Corneille (disliking them), Goethe (with deep interest), Shakespeare, Thucydides, Plato, Marcus Aurelius, Lucretius, Diderot, Voltaire, Balzac, Flaubert and Zola--but for content, not for style, which she considered to be unimportant. The closest she came to an acceptable creed for some years was her old friend Herbert Spencer's Synthetic Philosophy, and that eventually crumbled before the onslaught of doubts which her ever-probing mind continually brought to the surface. During the 1880's she studies positivism, delving into the writings of the best of Auguste Comte's English disciples and working through George Eliot. Even these studies could not hold up, however, and we find her in 1889,

after listening to a lecture by Frederic Harrison (president of the English Positivist Committee, and a personal friend), saying,

> His address seemed to me forced--a valiant effort to make a religion out of nothing; a pitiful attempt by poor humanity to turn its head round and worship its tail. Practically we are all positivists; we all make the service of man the leading doctrine of our lives. But in order to serve humanity we need inspiration from a superhuman force towards which we are perpetually striving.[11]

In the end, or at least in November, 1915, which is an appropriate date for comparison with the Bloomsbury Group, she attempted to define her position clearly:

> What exactly is my Metaphysic? I share with other rationalists, faith in the scientific method as the only means at present open to the human mind, of discovering the processes of the external world, including in this term the processes taking place within the human mind. But the scientific method seems to me to provide no ground for the choice of one state of mind rather than another, and therefore of one state of society rather than another. This supreme choice must rest upon emotion, it may be the emotion of Fear, or Anger, or of Love. The guide to this choice of one emotion rather than another rests somewhere in the human mind; it is the conscience or Will to Believe, the religion or metaphysic of the individual soul. The guide may reside in a Spirit outside ourselves working in the Universe, with whom we come into communion. But in this great voyage of discovery on which we all go at some time in our lives, we seem to have no one star to guide us. I read the metaphysicians: they all seem to me to argue in a circle; I read the theologians: they all seem to me to make a series of childish assertions about past history and future life which are either demonstrably untrue or unproven. I read the moralists and they seem to me to assume as premises the very conclusions they start out to prove. Hence I am thrown back on my Intuition--on my emotional Will to believe. Why do I believe that the heart of man, if it is to remain sane, if it is to rise to higher things, must concentrate on the emotion of Love? I can give no reason for this faith--it remains an Act of Faith. Why do I believe that this concentration of the mind on Love is fur-

[11]Webb, My Apprenticeship, p. 164.

> thered by Prayer, by the attempt to attain the consciousness of communion with a spiritual force outside oneself? It may only be the promptings of the old habit of religious worship, taught me in my childhood and reinforced by the inherited tradition of my race. And yet this faith in Love as the one befitting purpose for the human being seems, as I go through life, observing the motives of men and the results of these motives on personal conduct and social organisation, that this End of Universal Love is constantly proved to be the only valid faith, even tested by the processes of the Intellect. To that extent I suppose I am a pragmatist. But my pragmatism is only an afterthought, a sequal to my intuition.[12]

This passage and the few paragraphs which follow it express one main point in Beatrice's philosophy which is at variance with the philosophy of Principia Ethica. In spite of her emphasis on a rational approach to the world and her trust in the scientific method, her innermost feelings are bound up in an "Act of Faith". No matter how she sees the scientific method, she is careful to point out that it leads to discovering the "processes of the external world". She can be led only so far down the rigid path of machanistic logic before she jettisons it all for the comfort of intuitive belief. She said in 1882,

> Rationally, I am still an agnostic, but I know not where my religious feeling, once awakened from the dreams of a vague idealism, and acknowledged as helpful in times of trial, sorrow and endeavour--where this religious feeling will lead me: whether I may not be forced to acknowledge its supremacy over my whole nature.[13]

[12]Beatrice Webb, Beatrice Webb's Diaries, 1912-1924, ed. M.I. Cole (London: Longmans, Green, 1952), pp. 48-49.

[13]Webb, My Apprenticeship, p. 121.

Twenty-three years later, by 1915, she is settled in acceptance of emotion and in a firm, though unaffirmed, faith in "an abstract Being divested of all human appetite but combining the quality of an always working intellect with an impersonal Love".[14]

While Principia Ethica does not deny the existence of such a Being, it is, nonetheless, a book which gets on very well without having to resort to a Divine Presence as a cornerstone for ethics. There is mention of a "Divine Omnipotence" or "Divine Existence"[15] from time to time, but for all practical purposes the book professes agnosticism. It does not argue against the existence of a Supreme Being; it merely points out that He is not necessary to the argument at hand.

For the most part, the Bloomsbury Group accepted agnosticism without question. There were exceptions, of course, as there were to all of the general terms with which the Group has been described so far. E.M. Forster was not an agnostic; nor was Roger Fry. Lytton Strachey, on the other hand, could be quite vehement about Christianity and his opinion of it.

Beatrice, in spite of her anguish over agnosticism, and faith in prayer, could never bring herself to admit wholly to religious belief. She did not have to, however, since her commitment was obvious to those who knew her. Bertrand Russell states:

[14]Webb, Diaries, 1912-1924, p. 50.

[15]G.E. Moore, Principia Ethica (1903; rpt. Cambridge, England: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1971), p. 83.

> She was deeply religious without belonging to any recognized branch of orthodoxy, though as a Socialist she preferred the Church of England because it was a State institution.[16]

This ultimate grounding of faith must be considered when examining her relationship with Bloomsbury, since it was the basis of many an argument with the young Cambridge intellectuals at the Fabian summer schools.

In her expression of Metaphysical belief in 1915, Beatrice makes statements which bear a superficial similarity to concepts expressed in Principia Ethica. She states, for instance, that she finds the rites of the Christian Church appealing when they are "beautifully and sympathetically rendered", but that "the same rites are repellant, even offensive . . . if they take place in an ugly building, without music, or are performed by a mediocre man".[17] The feeling expressed here could be associated with Moore's emphasis on taste--an emphasis amplified greatly by Bloomsbury. In Moore's philosophy, it is the consciousness of beauty which matters most--a consciousness which implies taste, or the ability to discriminate that which is valuable (or beautiful) from that which is not. The members of the Bloomsbury Group made this concept a cornerstone of belief in general, although as usual, one or two may have disagreed. In fact,

> Roger Fry, whose aesthetic principles J.K. Johnstone claims were closely integrated with Moore's work,

[16]Bertrand Russell, The Autobiography of Bertrand Russell 1872-1914 (Toronto:McClelland and Stewart, 1967), p. 77.

[17]Webb, Diaries, 1912-1924, p. 49.

and in a sense completed it, actually dismissed Principia Ethica as "sheer nonsense".[18]

In spite of this, however, it would be difficult to overemphasize the importance of "taste" to the Group at large.

Beatrice's own statement of the desirability of beauty, superficially similar to Moore's though it may be, in all probability reflects a simple search for beauty at an emotional level rather than an intellectual choice of the Beautiful as the quiddity of the Good. For Beatrice, interest in beauty at this level is an indicator of a sensual involvement which she did her best to deny. She states very clearly that 'Physical appetites are to me the devil: they are signs of the disease that ends in death, the root of the hatred, malice and greed that make the life of man a futility",[19] and she certainly did her best to curb her own. On the other hand, a point many critics appear to miss in their estimate of her as cold, hard and unfeeling, addicted to meagre meals and Victorian morals, is that she had appetites. Her mind was almost totally victorious over her body, but her body was no mean adversary at that. My Apprenticeship has already revealed that "personal vanity was a 'occupational disease' of London Society" and that Beatrice suffered from "constitutional excitability in this direction" (pp. 70-71). Kitty Muggeridge notes that "Perpetually, she was obsessed with thoughts about men--'impure thoughts'--and warned herself against the danger of becoming

[18]Michael Holroyd, Lytton Strachey (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968), I, 419.

[19]Webb, Diaries, 1912-1924, p. 40.

like Rosamund in Middlemarch".[20] (This was, of course, a much younger Beatrice than the one associated with the Bloomsbury Group--but Beatrice nonetheless.) She also loved dancing and fine dresses--everything, in fact, that a healthy young girl should have an appetite for. In chapter two of this study, much was made of Beatrice's masculinity of mind. This masculinity did not extend to her body, and in all probability repressed sexual attraction accounted for much of her rigidity in morals. It is interesting to note that in her descriptions of personalities throughout her diaries the term "sensual" is employed with unexpected frequency. She may have used it as a personal recognition of virility in the subject, but this would be very hard to prove. No matter how it was employed, consciously or subconsciously, the implication of its use is always pejorative. Beatrice was very rigid in her moral attitudes, probably as the result of a combination of three factors: the prevailing Victorian atmosphere of her youth; her solitary habits as a child, which prevented her from comparing her own urges with those of her contemporaries; and her early experiences as a rent collector and trouser hand among the brutish inhabitants of the London slums. She was in the unhappy position of being capable of deep, emotional "gut" responses to pleasurable stimuli, yet incapable of allowing herself the luxury of surrender.

Bloomsbury, of course, was capable of almost anything;

[20] Muggeridge and Adam, Beatrice Webb, p. 51.

even if it meant that Principia Ethica had to undergo considerable "interpretation" along the way. Even those who felt most deeply about Moore's philosophy were perfectly capable of ignoring minor details which did not quite fit the spirit of the moment; and since it is a short step from ignoring minor details to ignoring major ones, the step was often taken. As John Maynard Keynes said,

> There was one chapter in the Principia of which we took not the slightest notice. We accepted Moore's religion, so to speak, and discarded his morals. Indeed, in our opinion, one of the greatest advantages of his religion was that it made morals unnecessary--meaning by "religion" one's attitude toward oneself and the ultimate, and by "morals" one's attitude towards the outside world and the intermediate.[21]

This is a point to which we shall return later.

Although it seems clear that Beatrice's attitude towards beauty bears only a superficial resemblance to that of Principia Ethica, we must concede that there is some possibility of influence. She was, after all, familiar with the book, having read it about 1908. She did not pretend to understand it, in spite of earnest tuition by Cambridge Fabians. Rupert Brooke, who became the third president of the Cambridge Fabian Society in 1909, said that,

> She'd a long story about handing Principia Ethica to Mr. Arthur Balfour, who skimmed it swiftly and gave it back, saying "clever, but rather thin. The work of a very young man."[22]

[21]Quoted in R.F. Harrod, The Life of John Maynard Keynes (1951; rpt. Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1972), p. 91.

[22]Muggeridge and Adams, Beatrice Webb, p. 204.

James Strachey, Lytton's youngest brother, also described "A remarkable scene in which Rupert and I tried to explain Moore's ideas to Mrs. Webb while she tried to convince us of the efficacy of prayer."[23] Neither side seemed likely to win such an argument, but the fact that it took place is all that really matters. This was, after all, in 1909, supposedly some three years before the Bloomsbury Group actually formed (according to Leonard Woolf). Beatrice did not write her diary entry until 1915, so she had had at least six years to turn those arguments over in her mind, and, possibly, absorb a little of the feeling involved.

To be scrupulously accurate, however, we must note that the question of taste as a philosophical ideal had occurred to Beatrice as early as 1901. She had been reading Leslie Stephen's Utilitarians and for January 25th of that year, she wrote:

> I prefer to define my end as the increase in the community of certain faculties and desires which I happen to like--love, truth, beauty and humour. Again, I have a certain vision of the sort of human relationships that I like and those that I dislike. But we differ from the Benthamites in thinking that it is necessary that we should all agree as to ends, or that these can be determined by any science. We believe that ends, ideals, are all what may be called in a large way "questions of taste" and we like a society in which there is a considerable variety in these tastes.[24]

[23] Ibid. This text attributes this statement to Lytton Strachey, but Mrs. Muggeridge in a personal communication to the writer states, "I'm afraid our reference on page 204 of Beatrice Webb is an overlooked printer's error and should read 'Strachey' . . .". Since the incident appears to have taken place at the Fabian Summer School of 1909, which was attended by James Strachey, Rupert Brooke and Gerald Shove, it seems reasonable to attribute it to James. See Christopher Hassall, Rupert Brooke (London: Faber and Faber, 1964), pp. 232-233.

[24] Beatrice Webb, Our Partnership, pp. 210-211.

It is very clear in this passage that her ends are fixed firmly in sight, and that they have not been developed through step-by-step logic. They are what "ought to be" in her eyes and she offers no excuse for them. She is exercising her own particular "taste"--yet we must be very careful to note that it is taste in terms of appetite, not in terms of discrimination. Perhaps the greatest point of significance in the entire passage is that it was stimulated by a reading of Leslie Stephen--Virginia Woolf's father.

The fourteen year gap 1901-1915 had lent a little polish to Beatrice's feelings on metaphysics--and perhaps even on ends to be desired--but they had not changed her emotion-charged approach to life in any great way. Bloomsbury, at the same time, had gone on to polish and refine their basic concepts of taste and friendship to a level rather beyond that at which G.E. Moore had seen fit to stop.

The concept of friendship itself has a bearing at this point, since in spite of her knowledge of Principia Ethica (in all probability long forgotten, but perhaps lodged somewhere in the depths of her subconscious), Beatrice was writing in her diary:

> Last night I lay awake thinking over the absence of any recognized ethic of friendship. To most men friendship does not entail the continuance of the feeling of friendship when the intimacy has ceased to be a pleasure to both sides. Successive friendships seem, on this assumption, to have, each one, its natural life: to be born, to grow, to decay and finally to die. Sometimes the friendship will die a violent death, but among well-bred persons death

> by senile decay is preferred. "We have ceased to be friends" is no more tragic a phrase than "we have ceased to be neighbours". . . . A friend is a book which you read and when you have satisfied your curiosity the thing is put on the shelf, in the waste-paper basket, or sold. This assumption of the lack of permanence is to me tragic--and the few troubles of my life have arisen from broken friendships. But if all friendships are to permanent then it is unwise to enter into personal intimacy and mutual affection unless you are certain of your own and the other person's faithfulness.[25]

The Bloomsberries, of course, were convinced at this time that they had a recognized ethic of friendship, and that it worked. For the most part it did work for them, but there were instances in which it did not work, and at such times the hurt was great. The rift with Rupert Brooke is a case in point, as to a lesser degree would be the quarrel with Wyndham Lewis over the Omega Workshop. Their ethic of friendship worked, but they were perhaps not aware that it worked only in their world. Moore, after all, was a detached mind, freed from the necessity of scratching for his next meal, and while his ethics inevitably led to a life completely taken up with love, friendship and the discrimination of beauty, it must be borne in mind that the possibility of achieving such status was--and still is --incredibly remote for the great majority of the world's population.

For Beatrice, such a life was out of the question, in spite of the fact that she also was free from the necessity of scratching for a living. She had many friends, of high rank

[25]Beatrice Webb, Diaries, 1912-1924, pp. 34-35.

and low; friends such as George Bernard Shaw, Dada (her old nurse) and others, but the nature of her profession was not conducive to lasting relationships. It was relatively easy for Bloomsbury to turn in upon itself, to select the appropriate personalities very carefully, and to exclude those who were incompatible. The pre-screening process for the majority of the male members had already taken place at Cambridge. On the other hand, Beatrice, exposed in the Fabian Society to members from all walks of life, in the committee rooms to political opinions ranging from receptive to openly hostile, and in the London slums to the dregs of society, had to take people as they came. To do her work she had to associate with people she disliked, bargain for favours with organizations whose policies she detested, and offer dinners at evening to politicians who would cheerfully throw her to the wolves before breakfast next morning if it seemed expedient. Under such circumstances the recognition of an established ethic of friendship is understandably difficult.

In the end, the major contribution of Principia Ethica to the philosophy of the Bloomsbury Group lay in the realm of duty. We have already seen that Keynes recognized later in life that Moore's chapter on morals had been discarded by the Bloomsbury Group. Strangely enough, it was largely because of his ideas on duty that "duties" were neglected--even his own. The basic reason for this is that in demonstrating logically that "Ethics, therefore, is quite unable to give us a list of

duties",[26] Moore unintentionally misled the Bloomsberries in such a fashion that they neglected to note that he followed it up with:

> It seems, then, that with regard to any rule which is generally useful, we may assert that it ought always to be observed, not on the ground that in every particular case it will be useful, but on the ground that in any particular case the probability of its being so is greater than that of our being likely to decide rightly that we have before us an instance of its disutility. In short, though we may be sure that there are cases where the rule should be broken, we can never know which those cases are and ought, therefore, never to break it.[27]

In passing over this discussion, Bloomsbury members focussed rather on that which followed--actions to be taken by an individual it general utility cannot be proved. In this case the individual "should rather judge of the probable results in his particular case, guided by a correct conception of what things are intrinsically good or bad".[28] For Bloomsbury, this was interpreted to mean that the individual was free to judge any action at any time, and Moore's other conclusions were ignored. That this was done in conscious fashion is again attested to by Keynes:

> In short, we repudiated all versions of the doctrine of original sin, of there being insane and irrational springs of wickedness in most men. We were not aware that civilisation was a thin and precarious crust erected by the personality and the will of a very few and only maintained by rules and conventions skilfully put across and guilefully preserved. We had no re-

[26] G.E. Moore, Principia Ethica, p. 149.

[27] Ibid., pp. 162-163.

[28] Ibid., p. 181.

> spect for traditional wisdom or the restraints of custom . . . . It did not occur to us to respect the extraordinary accomplishments of our predecessors in the ordering of life (as it now seems to me to have been) or the elaborate framework which they have devised to protect this order.[29]

This unique attitude of Bloomsbury--the idea that each one was free to interpret the rightness of an action and decide whether to obey it or not--became of supreme importance during World War I. Hitherto, the results of the freedom of choice in such matters had been simple eccentricities of speech, manner, dress or morals. With the advent of war, exercise of such freedom of choice led it many instances to the refusal to participate on the basis of conscientious objection--and that led to trouble. Not all Bloomsbury members made this choice, but a significant number did, and there is little doubt that the predisposition to do so can be traced directly back to Moore's emphasis on personal interpretation of duty, expediency and virtue, and to his lack of emphasis of the fact that he had agreed that there were some actions which ought to be taken. Moore's failure to carry this point with Bloomsbury is a failure of communication, not of reasoning. The idea of duty was simply not one of the strong points of Principia Ethica.

As we have seen, Beatrice was not at all impressed by Moore's reasoning--in spite of the fact that her own behaviour

[29]Keynes, quoted in R.F. Harrod, The Life of John Maynard Keynes, p. 94.

was always based firmly on her own interpretation of the rightness of an action. She had been raised on Mill and Bentham; she had served the poor in their need, and she knew exactly what she wanted to do to improve things. She could never bring herself to accept totally that the ends justified the means--Sidney was the truly unemotional Machiavelli of the Partnership--but she would balk at very little to achieve those ends. Her sense of duty was the paternalistic duty to save mankind in spite of itself. Keynes, quoted above, had pointed out that Bloomsbury did not believe in "there being insane and irrational springs of wickedness in most men". The Webbs felt otherwise. In a somewhat tongue-in-cheek passage, E.T. Raymond said,

> Let us have more reason, says Mr. Webb, and if reason is incompatible with human nature, let us get rid of human nature. We shall be much better without it.
>
> Mrs. Webb, on her side, is credited with a rather severer basis for her views. She believes in shepherding the masses not so much because they are foolish as because they are desperately wicked. She distrusts the natural man, just as she distrusts the natural mother. The latter will probably feed her baby (which she should never have had, and would not have had but for the gross neglect of eugenic science) on porter and chipped potatoes. The former will indulge, if he gets the chance, certainly in pitch-and-toss, and quite possibly in manslaughter.[30]

Raymond is exaggerating, but his message is clear: Beatrice felt it was her duty to aid the masses. The Bloomsbury Group felt no such compulsion. Their aim in life was

[30]E.T. Raymond, Uncensored Celebrities (Toronto: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1919), pp. 128-129.

twofold: to uncover truth (a hangover from the Cambridge Apostles), and to subject every action to the most intense scrutiny to determine its value in terms of conduct (an interpretation of Principia Ethica). Neither Beatrice nor Bloomsbury succeeded as they intended, but they both went a long way in trying.

Chapter IV

Beatrice Meets Bloomsbury

The opening pages of this study indicated that many different relationships are possible. They may be physical, conceptual, very clear, purely speculative, reciprocal, one-sided, social or political. All have a bearing on our purpose. We have already described the background against which specific relationships may be viewed, and the educational and philosophical ingredients which gave them meaning. Having done that, we may now examine such relationships as existed between Beatrice and specific Bloomsberries, always bearing in mind that they operated within that solid framework of influence which the Webbs had extended over Britain. In each case the point of the discussion will be to indicate what relationships there were, whether there was physical contact which could lead to direct influence, and, in the case of purely conceptual relationships, what attitude was adopted by each side towards specific topics of interest to both.

In many ways, Beatrice met Bloomsbury before there was a Bloomsbury. Many scholars have pointed out the great intellectual dynasties which flourished during the nineteenth century--the Huxleys, the Darwins, the Stephens, the Wedgewoods, and so on--and Beatrice's own family was certainly well mixed in with these. Since the dynasties also contributed largely to the

Bloomsbury Group, Beatrice's acquaintance with some of the members or their families went back for many years--long before the 1906 formation of Bloomsbury (according to J.K. Johnstone) or its 1912 formation (according to Leonard Woolf). The Strachey family is a case in point.

Part 1. LYTTON STRACHEY

Beatrice's association with the Strachey family extended back to a point well before she encountered Lytton himself in any truly significant manner. She first met General and Mrs. Strachey at Como, Italy, in May of 1894. At that time, Lytton was fourteen and suffering the rigours of Abbotsholme School under Dr. Reddie. Beatrice and the Stracheys hit it off at once, and they spent their evenings together at the hotel after the day's touring. General Strachey's general insignificance was evident to her at that time, since in her description of them she mentions "the General, an old experienced Indian administrator, and Mrs. Strachey, a strong, warm-hearted enthusiastically literary woman."[1] Once we have grasped the idea that General Strachey was an administrator, we are free to let him slide into limbo and concentrate on his wife. Although this initial meeting was of the usual tourists-in-faraway-places-thrown-together type, their friendship was continued after their return to England.[2]

[1]Beatrice Webb, Our Partnership, p. 43.

[2]Ibid., p. 204.

During this same period--the 1880's through until 1905--she was also very friendly with Marie Souvestre, the displaced French free-thinker who spent many years as a school mistress in England. That connection between Beatrice and Lytton Strachey which passed through Marie Souvestre may well be one of the most significant of all their connections. There are two reasons for this: the first being that Marie Souvestre had earned a great deal of respect from Beatrice for her intelligence and strength of mind--particularly in the area of religion, in which they differed so much--and the second being that she exerted great influence on the developing Lytton. Holroyd points out that,

> Unable to comprehend a deity who would pay any regard to such insignificant creatures as human beings, she [Mlle. Souvestre] was a declared atheist, a humanist, and, in politics, fervently pro-Boer. And though she did not attempt to indoctrinate Lytton, it was not in her nature to conceal her strong feelings before adults or children.[3]

Beatrice had commented in her diaries on Mlle. Souvestre's passionate hatred of ecclesiasticism, and we have already seen that Lytton was, himself, very outspoken in his opposition to Christianity. We can reasonably assign much of his religious antipathy and almost all of his interest in French literature to the Souvestre influence, and there is little doubt that the same arguments which seemed so razor-keen to Lytton had earlier been honed on Beatrice Webb.

A third approach to Lytton for Beatrice was through James,

[3]Holroyd, Lytton Strachey, I, 37-38.

his brother. James Strachey, Arthur Waley, Gerald Shove and four others stayed with Beatrice in a farmhouse, in which she was on holiday, on their way to the Fabian Summer School of August, 1908. They met again at the Summer School of 1909, at which time she recounted the story of Mr. Balfour and Principia Ethica referred to in Chapter III. Since our knowledge of this story devolves from a letter written by Rupert Brooke to Lytton Strachey, it is clear that Lytton was well aware of her by this time.

Whether Beatrice was as aware of Lytton is harder to define. Although she had been friendly with his parents since 1894, friendly with Marie Souvestre for an even longer period, and friendly with his brother James since James's entry to the Cambridge Fabians, there is evidence to show that Beatrice did not meet Lytton himself until after 1914--perhaps as late as 1919. In April of 1914 Lytton attended a meeting of New Statesman subscribers in London. The meeting was chaired by the editor, Clifford Sharp, backed up by Sidney and Beatrice and George Bernard Shaw. As Lytton afterwards described it:

> I've no notion of what the point of the meeting was--no information of any kind was given, and I could only gather from some wails and complaints of the Webbs that it wasn't paying. B. Shaw made a quite amusing speech about nothing on earth. I'd no idea that the Webb fellow was so utterly without pretentions of being a gentleman. She was lachrymose and white-haired. Altogether they made a sordid little group. At the end there were "questions" from the audience--supposed to be addressed to the editor qua chairman, but the poor man was never allowed to get in a word. The three Gorgons surrounding him kept

leaping to their feet with most crushing replies.[4] Clearly, if Lytton felt compelled to mention the colour of Beatrice's hair, he had not been well acquainted with it previously. The generation gap between them is also illustrated by this remark, since its very tone implies a weepy senility in Beatrice--the contempt for the old and weak expressed by the young and strong. The fact that at fifty-two, Beatrice was far from being old and weak, while Lytton himself at thirty-four was just as far from being young and strong (he was to be rejected for military service on medical grounds later in the war) should not go unnoticed.

Lytton's comment on Sidney is also worthy of note for two reasons: one, it demonstrates the influence of Principia Ethica once more, since it involves both "taste" and the concept of personal beauty as a measure of a man's worth, and two, since Sidney possessed a great measure of the essential qualities of kindness, tact, and respect for the feelings and opinions of others (he might ignore opposition--but he would listen to contrary opinions) which we nowadays find to be "gentlemanly", it is evident that Lytton based his assessment primarily on Sidney's lower class accent. Sidney, born and bred in small-shopkeeper London, never did learn to use "H" properly. This appears to have condemned him utterly in Lytton's eyes. Lytton was reinforced in this opinion, of course, by the fact that Sidney was small, rotund, and oddly

[4] Ibid., II, 108.

proportioned, while Lytton was exceedingly tall and willowy. Moore had stated that "the most valuable appreciation of a person appears to include an appreciation of his corporeal expression".[5] Bloomsbury seized on this very quickly, and drew from it the inference that truly worthy people must also be personally beautiful. That was one of the reasons for their attraction to Rupert Brooke--he was a very good-looking man. If beauty meant worth, it was equally obvious that lack of beauty was a great handicap--which eliminated Sidney from serious consideration, at least in Lytton's opinion. There is also a certain amount of ingratitude in Lytton's comments at this time, for some eleven years earlier, in 1903, when Lytton was seeking a career after taking a Second in the second part of his History Tripos, it was to Sidney Webb that his mother turned for help. Sidney was at that time chairman of the London County Council Technical Education Board, and he introduced Lady Strachey to Sir Robert Laurie Morant, Permanent Secretary of the Board of Education. Lytton was then interviewed by Morant, after which the entire scheme slid into oblivion, along with Lady Strachey's hopes for a career for him in the Civil Service. Sidney had done his part; it was Lytton who flubbed the interview.

The main point is, however, that the entire episode of 1914 leads one to the conclusion that Lytton had not been on close terms with the Webbs prior to this time, in spite of the pre-

[5]Moore, Principia Ethica, p. 204.

vious cross-relationships they had had with his parents, his brother, and Marie Souvestre. That he was not to be on close terms with them after this initial encounter either is attested to by the fact that their next meeting--and perhaps their first face-to-face--appears to have taken place in 1919. At that time Virginia hosted a luncheon which was attended both by Lytton and by the Webbs. Virginia had been very nervous about the luncheon (she tended to be very nervous around Beatrice anyway) in case Lytton had thought fit to indulge in one or two of his unprintable bons mots, but all went well. Lytton was on his best behaviour, and the luncheon was a success.

Virginia's fears on this occasion were not unfounded. Lytton was perfectly capable of saying something to shock Beatrice just for the pleasure of watching the effect. The real wonder is that they did survive the luncheon in equanimity, since their views were almost totally opposed on any given subject. From their taste in literature (Beatrice disliked Racine; Lytton thought he was marvellous) to their taste in sex (Beatrice normal, but self-denying; Lytton a sensual homophile) they were exact opposites. Strangely, of the very few things they had in common, one got both of them into trouble. This was their tendency not to let fact interfere with style. In spite of her professed love of truth, Beatrice was always inclined to stretch facts--from the very best of motives--to fit the situation. In her younger years, particularly at boarding school, she had worried herself about lying: "I wish I could be more

truthful. It is such a dreadful fault, and yet I find myself constantly telling downright lies".[6] Again, in her researches as a sociologist and trouser hand in East London, she made another slip which got her into hot water (mostly with her own conscience) in exaggerating the amount of time spent on her reseaches. Ultimately, in her work on the Royal Commission on the Poor Law, we find that when pressed for evidence, Beatrice kept her aim firmly in mind before sending it:

> That evening I looked through the correspondence, took away all letters that were at all compromising to the authors (I had to remember Provis and Downes) and a due proportion of stupid conservative ones, and bundled the letters and reports off to the commission. To be frank, I had qualms of conscience in making any kind of selection of those I did and did not send. But it was clear that Mrs. Bosanquet was not playing the game fair. . . . So I swallowed the tacit deception and sent exactly what I thought fit --without, be it added, in any way giving the Commission to understand that I had sent them the whole or the part.[7]

It seems clear that to Beatrice truth was not necessarily a simple concept of demonstrable fact, but a more complicated state, an ideal, perhaps, toward which the facts should be directed. Since it was obvious (at least to her) that her ideal was the "true" one, it followed that the suppression of uncongehial items, which would only serve to complicate affairs anyway, was simply an economy of effort--particularly since there were mitigating circumstances. Truth was always what one had to point out to the other fellow--but her conscience never

[6]Beatrice Webb, Apprenticeship, p. 99.

[7]Beatrice Webb, Our Partnership, pp. 392-393.

really allowed her to believe it.

Lytton felt much the same way. The concept of truth which arose from the Apostles was an absolute frankness between friends, rather than an adherence to some ideal of ultimate fact. Not "Is my paper true?" but "Tell me the truth--what did you think of my paper?" Principia Ethica, of course, had considered "truth" in various ways--particularly that

> No truth does, in fact, exist; but this is peculiarly obvious with regard to truths like "two and two are four" in which the objects about which they are truths, do not exist either.[8]

Moore in this context had no intention of denying an existence for truth; he was denying the existence of an object "truth". His aim is to point out that others have often erred in defining truth in the past. Lytton, accustomed to finely-hewn arguments along such lines, developed a style of writing in his biographies which often brought him into conflict with more pedantic scholars because of his attitude towards truth.

Examples of his approach to truth abound in his most famous works: Eminent Victorians, Elizabeth and Essex, and Queen Victoria. The essence of his idea in biography as he himself expressed it was

> Uninterpreted truth is as useless as buried gold; and art is the great interpreter. It alone can unify a vast multitude of facts into a significant whole, clarifying, accentuating, suppressing, and lighting up the dark places with the torch of imagination.[9]

[8]G.E. Moore, Principia Ethica, p. 111.

[9]Lytton Strachey, quoted in Holroyd, Lytton Strachey, II, 270.

The operative word, of course, is "imagination". Beatrice was guilty of "suppressing", in her dealings with the Royal Commission, but Lytton's "imagination" got him into hotter water, because "imagination" was very close to "fabrication" in the minds of many of his critics. As his own biographer points out:

> All biographers . . . inevitably fall into some errors of fact and of interpretation of fact. But Lytton's small deviations from the strictest documentary truth were seldom haphazard; they have a peculiar consistency which shows them more likely to have been calculated than accidental, and which partly invalidates his high-toned claim to write "dispassionately, impartially, and without ulterior intentions". Several pertinent facts in Manning's life are omitted and their implications ignored, while both his character and that of Newman are over-simplified in order to fit in better with Lytton's personal point of view, and enable him to present this point of view to his audience with maximum ease and lucidity.[10]

This particular reference is to "Cardinal Manning", the first of the lives in Eminent Victorians, but each of the others is subject to the same complaint. Lytton was bent on expounding the truth as he saw it, just as Beatrice was bent on giving Mrs. Bosanquet only those facts (or opinions) which supported the truth as she saw it.

In addition to their approach to truth, however, there is a second, far more positive, relationship between Lytton and Beatrice. Again, it finds them firmly fixed on opposing sides. Lytton's choice of subjects for his famous biographies is curious. Although the introduction to Eminent Victorians contains a disclaimer of any intent to select subjects to prove

[10]Holroyd, Lytton Strachey, II, 270.

a theory or to relate them by anything other than art, there is a certain connection between Cardinal Manning, Florence Nightingale, Dr. Arnold and General Gordon. All four can be fitted neatly into the category of "do-gooders" or noble souls who place "Duty" over all. They did not have a simple sense of duty; it had to be "Duty" writ large. Beatrice was wrought from similar metal, and had she predeceased Lytton, she would have been a perfect subject for his delicate vindictiveness. She was Victorian herself, undeniably eminent, and thoroughly paternalistic. Throughout Eminent Victorians the mocking biographer while ostensibly deflating individual images of pomp and piety is, in fact, subtly hewing at a more important figure --the corporate image of paternalism. The English public school system normally indoctrinates children in one of two attitudes: they emerge either as images of the Dr. Arnold-type stuffy prefect, or as intensely free-thinking individuals who abhor authority in all its guises. Lytton, having undergone such indoctrination, was certainly not cast in the mould of moral rectitude. His graduation was reactive rather than doctrinal, and as a consequence antithetical to much that Beatrice stood for. In attacking his eminent Victorians, Lytton was far less interested in saying, "Look, your idols have feet of clay", than he was in saying, "The forces that motivated these people were the forces of interfering paternalism and moral righteousness, and you must learn to recognize and combat them". His attitude was typical of those whose main interest is in the

primacy of the individual over the organization. He believed in freedom for the individual and had a violent dislike for those like Beatrice who suggested that the efficiency of the organization was of greater importance. As a consequence, his choice of subjects and even of the terms in which he described them was such as to throw Beatrice's ideas in a bad light. Even his subtle stretching of the truth helped. So Dr. Arnold had disproportionately short legs: how could such a figure "stand tall" or "tower over his peers"? Shortened legs bring him closer to the clay of common men. But Dr. Arnold did not have short legs. Lytton suggested that he did because he felt that such a man should have short legs. He was attacking Beatrice and her ideas with a familiar weapon--stretched truth. The public schoolboy with the weak father image and years of externally imposed discipline behind him, and the self-educated, self-disciplined woman with the strong father image were fencing on the field of freedom with blades which, as they found to their cost, were all too double edged.

Aside from their very similar attitudes towards truth, there is very little else that was shared by both Beatrice and Lytton. He disliked all that she stood for, and she returned the feeling with interest. They do not appear to have met in any significant way again. Only one other relationship of sorts between them deserves some attention, and that is their attitudes towards conscription during the war. This will be covered later, as conscription affected many of the Bloomsbury

members, and should be seen as a whole.

Part 2. CLIVE AND VANESSA BELL

The relationship between Beatrice and Clive and Vanessa Bell was a very distant one in the physical sense, yet their awareness of each other, and mutual distaste, was strong. As far as can be determined at such a stretch of years from their demise, Beatrice and Vanessa never did meet. Clive, on the other hand, met the Webbs once at a hotel in Northern Scotland when they happened to stop for the night. Quentin Bell reports that, "He liked Sidney, and thought Beatrice completely odious!"[11]

In all probability, Clive thought Beatrice odious for exactly the obverse reasons for her dislike of him. We have observed the aura of moral rectitude and rigid self-discipline which wreathed Beatrice in all her doings. The aura which surrounded Clive Bell was, if anything, the exact opposite. Beatrice was well aware of this, of course, and noted in her diary for February 5th, 1927, that the Woolfs were "wholly unconventional in their outlook on life and manners, belonging rather to a decadent set (Clive Bell is her brother-in-law) but themselves puritanical".[12] The horrified emphasis on the parenthetical aside is obvious, and the fact that her estimate of Leonard and Virginia may have been somewhat incorrect detracts little from the vigour of her feelings about Clive. For her,

[11]Quentin Bell, personal communication to author, February 22nd, 1973.

[12]Beatrice Webb, Beatrice Webb's Diaries 1924-1932, ed. Margaret Cole (London: Longmans, Green, 1956), p. 131.

Clive Bell represented "the Flesh"--and she had fought against "the Flesh" all her life. Clive, of course, did not reciprocate by viewing Beatrice as "the Spirit". To the philandering Bell, she was merely an interfering busybody who was trying to ruin his freedom and artistic licence by circumscribing them with with myriads of socialistic "thou shalt nots". The fact that she was also grimly ascetic simply made matters worse.

The surprise of their entire meeting is Clive's professed liking for Sidney. This says a great deal for Sidney's personality, since he was at one accord with Beatrice in almost all her schemes. It is fair to record them as her schemes, since there is universal agreement among their critics and biographers that Beatrice had the ideas and Sidney dutifully carried them out. Clive's antipathy to socialism, or rather to the regulation of community life, was very marked, and he could not refrain from touching on it in a bitter manner at various points in his writings. His main complaint is against "busybodies", and it is quite clear that Beatrice fell well within this category. The interesting point is that Clive's highly valued freedoms are not the great ones of political liberty or free speech (although he pays lip service to them in passing), but the libertine freedoms of the right to drink alcohol in public whenever one pleases, read pornographic novels, play cards and "regale himself all night long with as much female society, bad music, dancing even and sweet champagne, as his

heart desires".[13] They are the victimless crimes which receive much attention to-day as anachronistic hangovers from the Victorian era, yet still remain (often ignored) on the books. The fact that they are victimless has often led reformers to urge that such crimes be struck from the books purely on the grounds that they do infringe on the rights of the individual. Those who do urge the reforms are usually people who are not so much interested in pursuing forbidden activities as they are in carrying a point of principle to the utmost limit. On the other hand, the very vehemence of Clive's writing indicates a deep personal involvement which detracts from his argument. It is very clear that he does want to do such things, and that his resentment at being denied them is on a largely self-indulgent basis. His own words explain his feelings:

> He was a wretched slave who had never heard of Magna Charta or the Bill of Rights, for his sake no Bright or Gladstone or Wells or Webb had made a fortune or a name; but the free Manchester wave-ruler is shot out of the bar at ten, haled before the magistrate if he winks at ("annoys") a wench on his way home, and fined if to console himself he indulges in a quiet game of put-and-take.[14]

Again, he plunges in to attack health regulations:

> Even were the sole end of existence the perpetuation of a race of long-lived, straight-limbed, eupeptic numbskulls, the doctors with their boards of health, sanitary regulations, commissions, supervisions, vexatious meddlings, and abysmal ignorance could not be sure of achieving it. And suppose the proper end of existence be, as some think, to produce a Keats or a Raphael, a Plato, a Mozart or a Sappho; can Mr. and Mrs. Sidney Webb themselves, with all the boards they

[13]Clive Bell, On British Freedom (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1923), p. 7.

[14]Ibid., p. 6

> rig and the wires they pull, with Dr. Saleeby's science at the service of their whims, with Dr. Addison to wipe up the mess and the Ministry of Health to push it down the sink, give us these?[15]

Finally, to make it clear that his objection is to all busybodies, not just socialistic ones, Clive points out that,

> you will hear these little tyrants boasting in the very faces of their victims (the general public) that they understand each other perfectly . . . I believe them. Zeal-of-the-land Busy falls on the neck of the disciplinarian prelate, Lady Astor is kissed all over by Mrs. Sidney Webb:--"My long lost brother!--My dear, dear sister! Conservatives, Liberals and Socialists, we are not divided: all one army we: are we not all philanthropic and all strong-minded? Have we not one end in view?" And so they unite to tell the public which side of the road it is not to walk on; how many times it is to chew each mouthful; or how it is to rejoice in the marriage of a young princess.[16]

Clive's point is simply that to live encumbered by a myriad of prohibitions is not really living. There were, and are, many who would agree with him. On the other hand, three things cast very grave doubts over his argument. The first is simply his vehemence. Argument by sarcasm is usually ineffective because it alienates the moderate and the logic must often be stretched to score a telling point. The second is his obvious self interest in the prohibited acts he favours. Arguments involving principles such as these are much easier carried by disinterested ascetics than by those whose lifestyle has already demonstrated sensuous self-indulgence. The third is that there are telling arguments against his own.

[15] Ibid., p 66.

[16] Ibid., pp. 75-76.

Beatrice would have said that these victimless crimes are not as victimless as they appear. To Clive's charge that a free man should be able to buy a drink when he pleases, Beatrice could point out that in her own slum experience easily available liquor meant simply that wretched ghetto families starved while the breadwinners spent their wages on cheap gin. To his support of a quiet game of put-and-take, she could reply that the same applied: too many children lived in squalor while their fathers gambled the family money away. To his wish for risqué literature, Beatrice could assert the immoral effects of pornography on children. (As far as I know this question has never been proven one way or another--but Beatrice would have used it.) For every hour he wished a shop to stay open longer, Beatrice could point to an extra hour's labour for some poor shop assistant. Every wink to a wench on his way home was an invitation to the prostitution and white slavery Beatrice had known in the East End of London. Every health law removed meant a slum child drinking milk adulterated with chalk and water or drawn from tubercular cows. Clive could say that the regulated life was not worth living, and Beatrice could say that without regulation, many would not live at all.

The argument was never resolved between Clive and Beatrice. It rages on to-day, and will no doubt continue to rage as long as there are people on earth. There will always be someone who believes that human kind is basically good and there will always be someone who believes that human kind is basically sinful.

As long as these two beliefs exist, the argument will revolve endlessly. Clive, having known nothing but university friends and good companionship, was obviously a believer in unfettering man to let the good emerge. Beatrice, having worked in the gutters of London, was interested mostly in chaining the wickedness in.

Our purpose in examining the argument, however, was not to choose a side, but simply to illustrate the great gulf between Beatrice and Clive, and the fact that they were very much aware of and antagonistic towards each other. Although it probably did not make Beatrice feel any better about it, Clive had a much harder task than she. Beatrice, after all, was trying only to impose socialism upon Britain; Clive was trying to expunge culture from the world. He had been carrying this torch since 1913:

> Human sensibility must be freed from the dust of condition and the weight of tradition; it must also be freed from the oppression of culture. For, of all the enemies of art, culture is perhaps the most dangerous, because the least obvious.[17]

Even at this time he was unable to refrain from expressing his sensuality: "No soul was ever ruined by extravagance or even by debauch; it is the steady punctual gnawing of comfort that destroys".[18] Strangely enough, one of his last expressions in this book is, "The least that the State can do is to protect people who have something to say that may cause a riot".[19]

[17]Clive Bell, Art (New York: Frederick A. Stokes, 1913), p. 167.

[18]Ibid., p. 274. [19]Ibid., p. 275.

Beatrice's whole point all along had been that the least that the State could do was to protect people who could not protect themselves.

Part 3. DESMOND MacCARTHY

Desmond MacCarthy was one of the few Bloomsberries who had a long, and generally amicable, relationship with the Webbs. As we have seen (Chapter II), he and Sidney were agreed on one point: that neither was particularly interested in the pursuits of the other. In spite of this lack of interest in their pursuits, however, Desmond was interested in the Webbs themselves--as studies in character if nothing else.

He first met Beatrice at a luncheon in 1904, and from his description of her at that time it is clear that at forty-six she was still capable of impressing men with her looks:

> I thought her beautiful: I was to notice afterwards that Beatrice like most women enjoyed being admired, although she was as much on her guard against allowing anybody's admiration to influence her in his favour as she was against being biased in her judgements by what she used to describe as the "gracious deference of aristocratic manners".[20]

Their association was to last almost forty years longer, yet it was held together almost exclusively by one thing: the New Statesman, founded by the Webbs in 1913. As dramatic critic, and later, Literary Editor, for the New Statesman, Desmond was to be in constant contact with the Webbs, spending weekends with them, and lunching at editorial meetings. The impression which

[20] Desmond MacCarthy, The Webbs and their Work, p. 122.

he gained of them at these meetings has resulted in some penetrating descriptions of the workings of the Webb mind, but they are penetrating only insofar as they apply to the Webbs and persons other than Desmond himself. He apparently either misread Beatrice's attitude towards himself, or did not care to write it down. His own statement is that:

> They were in the habit of jokingly dividing those they knew into two categories, the A's and the B's. The first included those who for one reason or another could be described as either anarchistic, aristocratic or artistic (these came second in their estimation) and those who were bourgeois, bureaucratic or benevolent and were more reliable. I was one of the A's and to some extent a fish out of water, or shall we say, for I never felt uncomfortable in their company, and was often interested, a fish in a strange pool.[21]

From this, it would appear that Desmond was slightly damned in the Webb eyes by his "flighty" associations with artistic friends. This was certainly true of other people, who were clearly A's, but not altogether true of MacCarthy. Beatrice did have a certain dislike for him, but not because of his fuzzy ways or childish inability to finish a major work or adhere to a schedule. Her dislike was founded on far more basic principles: his morals.

In a slightly later passage than the foregoing, Desmond said:

> I never discussed literature with Beatrice Webb, let alone with Sidney, nor do I remember ever asking either of them if any article of mine in the New Statesman had interested them, not even when the subject of it was a new play by Shaw. Nevertheless, I used to like

[21] Ibid., pp. 126-127.

> listening to Beatrice discussing human nature, because, however much I might differ from her conclusions, her analysis of people was invariably detached and often acute--apart from her moral judgements of them, which were, of course, largely determined by their political or social attitudes.[22]

It is clear that Desmond did not trust Beatrice's moral judgements, and it is equally clear from earlier portions of this study, that he was correct in his distrust. At the same time, he was wrong to attribute her judgement of him either to his classification as an "A" or to his political or social attitudes (unless by "social attitudes" he meant indulgence in a few of the sins of the flesh). Mrs. Muggeridge, Beatrice's neice and biographer, remarks that "As far as Desmond MacCarthy was concerned, she disapproved of him on account of his being too worldly and interested in the flesh-pots".[23] That sounds much more like Beatrice, who could easily stomach someone who disagreed violently with her politically or was reactionary in social reform, but whose craw stuck tight at accepting plain old sensuous man. On the other hand, such a statement may well do her an injustice. As we have already seen, for all of her distaste for the body and its functions, Beatrice was no stranger to the temptations of the flesh. What she objected to was giving in to them--and only in certain ways at that. Desmond struck a nerve with his flesh-pots, and incurred her displeasure for his weakness.

[22] Ibid., p. 127.

[23] Kitty Muggeridge, personal communication to author, April 7th, 1971.

In spite of this, however, they remained on reasonably good terms for close to forty years. Throughout all this time Desmond was just as involved with the Bloomsbury Group as anyone else, yet he did not seem to raise in her the same deep revulsion she seemed to feel for Clive Bell. Perhaps she recognized that Desmond, in his liaisons or whatever flesh-pot activity had come to her notice, was of the same character as Desmond the literary artist. He was as incapable of producing lasting decadent effects as he was of producing the major novel which his literary friends were attempting to squeeze out of him. He was a weak man, and for that she disliked him in a mild way, but he was not an evil man. He might stray occasionally from the path, but he did not urge that others should follow his example. He was brilliant in minor ways--which were of value to the New Statesman--and his vices were self-destructive rather than contagious to others.

Desmond either did not know, or did not care to admit, that she felt this way about him. He did note that her character judgements were acute, but her moral judgements sometimes awry, and may have felt the need to express this caveat in case she did make known some judgement concerning himself. It is ironic that she did in fact make errors in judgement concerning two of his friends from Bloomsbury; minor errors to be sure, but significant ones. Poor Desmond was mildly condemned for his sins of the flesh, while at the same time Beatrice was positively egging Maynard Keynes forward to virile performance!

Beatrice was very fond of matchmaking, experiencing perhaps in this fashion some vicarious thrills from the indulgence in others of what she fought so hard against expressing in herself. For his sins Desmond had to stand in the corner while Beatrice thought of Maynard that: "As an ardent lover of the bewitching Lydia Lopokova, this eminent thinker and political pamphleteer is charming to contemplate . . . ."[24]

Perhaps Beatrice had never heard of Duncan Grant![25]

Part 4. JOHN MAYNARD KEYNES

As with Desmond MacCarthy, Beatrice had a long and generally harmonious relationship with John Maynard Keynes. Beatrice had begun by disliking him also, though for entirely different reasons than her distaste for Desmond. Keynes apparently suffered from the second of Beatrice's great sins--arrogance. Her initial dislike soon waned as the acquaintance improved, however, and her attitude towards him became one of firm respect. Her description of him in 1926 outlines her feelings well:

> There must be a scarcity of politically constructive minds if J.M. Keynes seems such a treasure! Hitherto he has not attracted me--brilliant, supercilious, and not sufficiently patient for sociological discovery even if he had the heart for it--I should have said. But then I had barely seen him; also I think his love marriage with the fascinating little Russian dancer has awakened his emotional sympathies with poverty and suffering. For when I look around I see no other man who might discover how to control the wealth of

[24]Beatrice Webb, Diaries 1924-1932, p. 113.

[25]The love affair between John Maynard Keynes and Duncan Grant which flowered in 1908 was particularly shattering to Lytton Strachey. It is described at some length in Holroyd's biography. The Keynes-Lopokova marriage took place in 1925.

nations in the public interest.[26]

For his part, Maynard seems to have liked Beatrice personally, while disliking most of what she stood for. Although it is probably untrue to say, as Holroyd does, that "Maynard Keynes always despised the Fabians",[27] there is little doubt that he felt many of their theories to be far-fetched. He could not despise the Fabians because many of his very close friends were Fabians. At the same time, we must not overemphasize their importance to him. Anne Freemantle claims that "in the twenties, too, the 'Bloomsbury Group' led by Virginia Woolf, were almost all Fabians, and all 'Left' in politics",[28] but she is wide of the mark. Both Leonard and Virginia Woolf were members, as were James Strachey, Gerald Shove, and a host of fringe-Bloomsberries such as Rupert Brooke, but other, equally important Bloomsbury members such as Clive Bell were well removed from them. Clive, although unwilling to fight in the war, saw no objection to lending a hand as a non-combatant, and, as we have already seen, his vehemence against those who would circumscribe his freedoms placed him smack in the middle of the nineteenth century Liberal sharks. We may say safely only that Maynard did not care for Fabian ways, but enjoyed many Fabian friends among the Bloomsbury members, most of whom were left of centre. He also had many non-Bloomsbury Fabian friends,

[26]Beatrice Webb, Diaries 1924-1932, p. 112.

[27]Holroyd, Lytton Strachey, I, 250.

[28]Anne Freemantle, This Little Band of Prophets, Mentor Books (New York: The New American Library, 1960), p. 241.

among whom were Beatrice and Sidney Webb.

There is very little documentary evidence which describes the relationship between Beatrice and Maynard. It was inevitable that they meet, of course, since both were vitally interested in economics, and Maynard was so closely involved with the Treasury. Again, Beatrice and Sidney were the founders of the New Statesman, and Maynard was Chairman of the Board of the Nation. These weeklies amalgamated early in 1931, and while neither Beatrice nor Maynard sought very actively to influence the editorial policy of the new paper, they remained very interested in it. The Webbs, of course, had always allowed the New Statesman free rein, and Maynard quietly drifted off rather than interfere with the New Statesman and Nation as its policies evolved away from his own. It is interesting to note that the Nation, in 1924 the political voice of the Liberal Party, had Leonard Woolf, a very thorough Fabian, as its literary editor. This appointment again was entirely due to Keynes and his involvement with the Bloomsbury Group. Beatrice and Maynard had much more than mere commonality of professional interests to bring them together, however. They both travelled in the same governmental social circles and enjoyed the same company. Kingsley Martin, editor of the New Statesman, has left one description of a party attended by both Beatrice and Maynard at which they parried and thrust at each other in fine, almost Bloomsbury style.[29] Although Martin does not say so, the

[29]Kingsley Martin, Father Figures: A First Volume of Autobiography 1897-1931 (London:Hutchinson, 1966), pp. 104-105.

reader is left with the general impression that most of their meetings were in the same vein. Whether they were or no, however, this one meeting by itself is enough to permit reasonable inference to be drawn about their relationship. One of the characteristic traits of the English--and one which the French in particular have never been able to understand--is their love of indulging in acerbic, even downright insulting, repartee, without giving or taking offence. To an outsider, the use of such language without a subsequent appointment in a law-court or duelling ground often seems incomprehensible, but in fact it is governed by one almost invariable principle: it is only employed among those with whom the speaker feels completely at ease. It is not the same as the truly devastating put-down occasionally employed to really obnoxious acquaintances, and is easily distinguished from the usual embarrassed diffidence displayed to strangers. The fact that Maynard could engage in a jocular sparring match with Beatrice indicates at one that they were on good terms with each other.

There is, of course, much better evidence at hand than simple inference from reported conversation. Beatrice's diary entry makes clear how she felt about Maynard, and the fact that he requested that she become the first woman member of the British Academy (in the Economic Section) certainly indicates his feelings for her. The old Fabian Socialist and the middle-aged (at that time) Liberal commodity and currency speculator had an agreement to disagree on many things, but they were

consistent in their respect for each other. Beatrice, as a Fabian, and somewhat above mere party politics, saw little problem, in fact, in having Keynes emerge as a leader of the Labour Party. Along with Leonard Woolf, Maynard Keynes was probably the greatest influence on Beatrice of any of the Bloomsbury members, and there is no doubt that she affected him in turn.

Beatrice must have been aware of Keynes's association with the Bloomsbury Group, and by implication with Clive Bell and Lytton Strachey. Whether she was aware of his earlier homosexual activities is another question entirely. Had she been so, it is doubtful that she would have been quite so favourably disposed towards him. She was bred a Victorian, but by no means a cloistered Victorian, and her life in the slums had taught her much. She was no stranger to the facts of homosexuality, and even commented in that vein when writing about Pearl Buck's The Good Earth in her diary. Beatrice had formed her own opinion of China, which was reinforced by her reading of Buck, and noted that:

> Rich food, sexual indulgence, opium, and the social prestige of great possessions are the "good things" aimed at through lives of unremitting toil. The result, a low standard of livelihood and security: a wasted land, devastated by drought or floods, where man is cruel and nature uncontrolled; where "women are for use and boys for pleasure"; where superstitious rites are fading out and religious emotion is non-existent; where war, pestilence and famine rage.[30]

The reference to "sexual indulgence" is characteristic, and al-

[30]Beatrice Webb, Diaries 1924-1932, p. 304.

though her use of the phrase "boys for pleasure" indicates abuse of children by adults, there is little doubt that she would have been equally repelled by the adult relationships which were woven in and around Bloomsbury and the Cambridge Apostles.

Beatrice had been somewhat off the mark in describing Leonard and Virginia as "puritans"; she was unconsciously ironic in her thoughts of Keynes as "an ardent lover of the bewitching Lydia Lopokova", and had she been aware of Maurice, she would probably not have been quite so taken with the literature of E.M. Forster.

Part 5. EDWARD MORGAN FORSTER

Although Quentin Bell indicates that E.M. Forster was at best a "fringe" Bloomsberry, he had very great effect upon individual members of the Group. He enjoyed the deepest respect from everyone, including Virginia Woolf, who was never at ease until Morgan Forster had said his piece about her most recent work. Such respect was, of course, based upon two things: his talent for literary criticism, and his own elegant prose. There were very few gems in his casket, but Bloomsbury recognized them as jewels of great price.

Beatrice, too, was appreciative of Forster's writing. This is highly unusual, for after her initial bouts of self-examination in My Apprenticeship she rarely mentions literature of any kind except blue books and reports. Forster, however, made an

immediate impression on her with the publication of A Passage to India. In July 1924 she wrote,

> E.M. Forster--a much older man, but one who has written fewer books [than Aldous Huxley] because he has thought and felt as well as searched after "le mot just"--appears to me in his latest novel A Passage to India as a genius, and not merely a man with an exquisite gift for words.[31]

She followed with a quotation from the book of a passage concerning old age in which she felt the phrases "a twilight of the double vision" and "a spiritual muddledom is set up" to be particularly applicable to her own case. She wrote in her diary as if the world were about to end for her; as if she were too tired and worn to carry on with her chosen work. Her point at the time was that she felt her efforts were about to be superseded by those of the younger intellectuals, and she could no longer drum up interest in her life's endeavours. Poor Beatrice: she was to be at death's door in this way for nineteen years more, to find Sidney a cabinet minister and a Lord, and to be herself elected president of the Fabian Society in 1939 at the age of eighty-one.

Nonetheless, her appreciation of Forster was very real, although it was based primarily on the responsive chords which some of his descriptive passages struck in her mind rather than on a strict concept of literary merit. She recognized from her earlier vast acquaintance with the best in literature, that he was a master of style, but her praise of A Passage to

[31] Ibid., p. 34.

India is not based on depth of characterization, unity of theme or continuity of action. She sees the novel as an ediface, but reacts only to the fluting of the columns or carving on the stair case. There is no trace of appreciation for the ediface qua ediface. It is probably safe to say that she liked Forster's work primarily because she saw in it snatches of feeling which she recognized in herself, or which directed her own very mixed-up religious urges into a clearer channel. Whether she would have retained this liking for Forster through publication of Maurice and his shorter erotica is very doubtful. She said later of Aldous Huxley and D.H. Lawrence that she was disturbed by the lack of ethical code or permanent value judgements in their writings:

> Judging by the types of character they choose to portray there is a preference for men and women who combine a clever intellect with unrestrained animal impulses (e.g. Antic Hay and Barren Leaves, Clio).[32]

In 1932 she was still writing of "the D.H. Lawrence cult of sex which I happen to detest".[32] We can infer that the hidden Forster was not at all to her taste.

According to Forster himself, he met the Webbs only once, in 1937. In common with all of their luncheon guests, he ate their standard fare of "mutton, greens, potatoes, rice pudding --simplest of menus, but supreme in quality and superbly cooked; never have I eaten such mutton, greens, potatoes, rice".[34] He

[32] Ibid., p. 80 [33] Ibid., p. 299.

[34] E.M. Forster, Two Cheers for Democracy (1951; rpt. Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1965), p. 221.

admits, however, that much as he admired the Webbs, "I could never have been intimate with them: only those who worked for them could be that, and my own schemes for improving society run upon different lines".[35]

Run upon different lines they certainly did. Beatrice and Sidney, as honest, reliable, civil servants, were firmly imbued with the idea that good government was exactly that: government. It entailed an essentially paternalistic mandarin class wielding the power to direct the lives of an essentially animalistic mob. "The People", in the Webbs' eyes, had little or no idea of what they wanted, never mind how to attain it, and the best possible solution was to have highly trained and dedicated experts shepherding them along through life in the pursuit of Benthamite goals of sufficiency for all. Forster objected very strongly to this, since he was a Liberal at heart, and believed that given his own head, the individual, in concert with other individuals, would eventually muddle his way through. Although he felt strongly the need for an aristocracy, and had little use for the herd, Forster wanted an aristocracy based on taste and sensitivity, not on power or expertise. Crews points out that,

> Forster is even suspicious of the mildest of collectivist movements, English Fabianism, on the grounds that it is latently autocratic. "Our danger from Fascism," he wrote in 1935 "--unless a war starts when anything may happen--is negligible. We're menaced by something much more insidious--by what I might call 'Fabio-Fascism', by the dictator-spirit working quietly away behind the facade of constitutional forms, passing a little law (like the Sedition Act) here, endorsing a

[35] Ibid., p. 222.

> departmental tyranny there, emphasizing the national need of secrecy elsewhere, and whispering and cooing the so-called 'news' every evening over the wireless, until opposition is tamed and gulled".[36]

Forster's attitude towards government is, in this respect, fairly close to that of Clive Bell. That it should be so is not really surprising when we consider their pre-Fabian Cambridge backgrounds. On the other hand, there is some reason for surprise if we compare his attitude to that of Leonard Woolf. Leonard also escaped the Fabian influence at Cambridge, but his subsequent experiences as an administrative officer in Ceylon convinced him that the Fabian approach to government was essentially correct. Forster spent several months in India in 1912-13 and again in 1921, but although the problems of each country were in many ways similar, he was not drawn to the same conclusions as Leonard Woolf. The fact that Leonard was an active manager, involved with the lives of the general population, while Forster was private secretary to a Rajah, may underlie this difference. Forster's letters, written home from Dewas, show clearly that even at thirty-three he had a tendency to act like a schoolboy and to applaud the silly pranks of the Rajah's court. They indicate also that although he was aware of the plight of the Indian peasantry, he felt in no way obliged to help better it. He even boasts at one point of having made his own servant's life miserable:

> Both the wells are dry, and the municipal water is cut

[36] Frederick C. Crews, E.M. Forster: The Perils of Humanism (1962; rpt. Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1967), pp. 20-21.

> off most of the day. Baldeo makes a frightful fuss because the bath won't fill, and he dislikes extra trouble. I am lordly and repeat, "I must have my bath", until he gets the tennis boys and they steal the empty fire buckets and dip them in the ornamental fountain among the fish and carry them dripping up the staircase.[37]

This smacks mightily of arrogance, which would have upset Beatrice. Throughout the entire course of letters in The Hill of Devi, Forster sounds like an effeminate fop. Whether he actually appeared that way during this period is hard to say, but his writing supports the notion. He is not interested in the affairs of state, belittles the Rajah's attempts to develop a new constitution, forgets administrative detail instantly, squabbles with the chauffeurs and refers to the Rajah as "the dear creature" or "so sweet". He also took a distinct dislike to the British administrators who occasionally called in at the Rajah's court. This too may have affected his attitude towards officialdom later in life. There is no doubt that many colonial officials were monumentally useless, but the closeness of Forster's relations with the Rajah may have blinded him to the fact that there were some good ones and that they could have done a lot more for Dewas. Forster is much more concerned with the image of the Rajah as beleaguered and misunderstood genius than he is with the miserable lives of the peasants whose hard-gained rupees went to pay for their ruler's flood of £25 telegrams.

[37] E.M. Forster, The Hill of Devi, Harvest Books (1953; rpt. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, undated), p. 133.

To give him his due, Forster did in some ways redeem himself in A Passage to India from the uncaring attitude (except for the Rajah's welfare) which he displayed in his letters. There is no doubt that in this book he very clearly sides with the Indians against the British. His redemption, as far as his relationship with Beatrice is concerned, however, only goes half way. It is evident that his sympathy lies with Dr. Aziz and Professor Godbole, and that he recognizes not only the fact of the inequities which face them, but their sources in the "Old Boy" English community centred round its ignorant and fearful women. So far, so good. Where he fails to redeem himself --and this is a point which Beatfice herself either did not notice in her delight with his "spiritual muddledom" or simply chose not to mention--is that he offers no alternative.

The ideal of a less fortunate race being taken in hand and led forward by the expert administrators of the British Crown was one which Beatrice looked upon with great favour. Her attraction to the administrators of the Crown was not, as many have supposed, simple imperialism, but a genuine conviction that these administrators were the best available. Her interest was in administration, not in territorial acquisition. Forster destroys, perhaps unfairly, the myth that the advent of the British Raj was the best thing that ever happened to the "poor benighted heathen", but he provides no counter-proposal to fill the gap caused by this destruction. His attitude appears to be that since India is a muddled country, filled with muddled

people, she should be left alone to muddle through. The idea that the country is to be left in the care of people whose idea of a good joke is to pour cold water in the face of Mahommed Latif as he sleeps evokes no concern on the part of Forster. He revealed himself to be perceptive but often childlike and irresponsible in his letters home, and his most sensitive portraits in A Passage to India are of people who display the same traits. Since he was so perceptive it should be no surprise to us that in 1973, after twenty-six years of independence, India is still a country in which young children are maimed deliberately to make them better beggars.

All her life Beatrice sought to protect the weak from the depredations of the strong--to help Mahommed Latif to resist the indignities heaped on him by Dr. Aziz. She succeeded in England, but India was beyond her grasp. A Passage to India aided her in one respect by enunciating clearly the usurpation of native rights by uncaring, or at any rate unfeeling, Europeans. It did not aid her in the problem of how to protext weaker natives from stronger ones. The fact that she did like the book so much is a clear instance of compartmented thinking, in which her response to Forster's vision of the spirit was so great that it shut away in a "logic-tight" compartment the fact that his vision of politics was the antithesis of her own.

Be that as it may, however, Forster certainly gained an appreciative reader for his novels in Beatrice Webb. George H. Thomson, in discussing the relationship between Forster and

Carl Jung, states:

> they saw the central issue of the twentieth century as modern man in search of a soul, they agreed at first that the search should be directed toward the full development of the personality and later that it should be directed toward a more impersonal and universal goal which each called the spirit (A Passage to India and Jung's works on religion and alchemy), and they early recognized that myth and symbol were the most effective way of expressing their understanding.[38]

It is probable that this is the aspect of Forster to which Beatrice responded so well. She was herself in search of a soul, and could not find it among the blue books or County Council minutes.

In Forster, as in Clive Bell, we find the expression of the individual against the group--the Grecian democrat rather than the proletarian democrat. They had no real use for any of the Webbs' socialist ideas, and did not hesitate to say so. There was, within the Bloomsbury Group, however, one individualist who thought he had found a use for socialism--right in Clive Bell's backyard. Roger Fry had fresh ideas as well as fresh aesthetics.

Part 6. ROGER FRY

It is doubtful that Beatrice ever met Roger Fry, although they were friendly with a great many of the same people. If they did meet, little of significance emerged. Beatrice, in spite of her early years at the sketching tablet, and her months in Florence imbibing Italian art, mentions art very little in

[38]George H. Thomson, The Fiction of E.M. Forster (Detroit: Wayne State Univ. Press, 1967), p. 28.

her diaries, and does not appear to have taken much interest in it after her youth. Roger Fry, as pointed out earlier, was therefore of minor importance to her. On the other hand, Beatrice may have been of major importance to Roger Fry.

In common with Clive Bell, Roger Fry felt very strongly that the "true" artist was an innovative aesthete, and that modern commercial life had a very stultifying effect on real art. Unlike Bell, however, he did not set about the destruction of "culture" to generate art anew. Fry thought instead that that creeping socialism which Bell despised might just turn the trick. Of the ages immediately prior to his own, the one ruled by landed aristocracy, and the second by monied plutocrats, Fry thought very little. It was true that the artist managed to struggle by in the former, aristocratic age, but he got nowhere with the Victorian or current plutocrats. This was because aristocrats, by virtue of whatever taste they possessed, had at least been able to accommodate artists, while the plutocrats, with no taste whatsoever, were unable to deal with them. As a result, while the aristocrat occasionally allowed genuine art to develop because he at least knew what to avoid, the plutocrat has to be told what he likes, and will then buy nothing but imitations of this standard--to the great detriment of true art.

In his conception of socialism, Roger Fry was hoping that once the workers gained control, the true artistic impulse would surface once again, and a second wave of "guilds" would

develop. In building this hope, however, he had to resort to several rather naive assumptions, chief among which was that the workman would have a say in how things should be made, and that his innate sense of sound workmanship would develop once more if economic pressures were reduced. In approaching socialism in this way, Fry was effectively drifting away from the path which Beatrice wished to follow, particularly when he continued,

> Guilds might, indeed, regain something of the political influence that gave us the Gothic cathedrals of the Middle Ages. It is quite probable that this guild influence act as a check on some innovations in manufacture which, though bringing in a profit, are really disastrous to the community at large.[39]

Here, as even the name implies, he is verging on G.D.H. Cole's Guild Socialism, which was so much in the ascendency in the early years of the century, and which died quietly in the nineteen twenties. Here again, like Clive, Roger is adopting a position diametrically opposed to that espoused by Beatrice. Although Guild Socialism was socialism, it was socialism looked at through the other end of the telescope. Beatrice looked through her end and saw the State; Cole and the Guild Socialists looked through theirs and saw the individual. The fundamental point of Fry's argument, which places him squarely with the Guild Socialists, is that the artist, i.e. the individual producer, will be able to influence what is produced, and that his syndicate or Trade Union or Guild will then be in a position to impress true art upon the people. Beatrice wanted no truck at all with unions of producers as controllers of supply. She was

[39] Roger Fry, Vision and Design (1920; rpt. New York: Meridian Books, 1959), p. 75.

not interested in the individual as an abstract concept, and thought only of the good of the community as a whole. From her earlier studies of the Co-operative Movement, it had become clear to her that the ultimate say in what is produced should belong to unions of consumers, not of producers, and that production should be in accordance with a blueprint issued by experts who had an overall view of the community. This concept of socialism meant in the long run that the people who buy art would specify what they wished to buy, and that the artists would respond to their wishes. Since that is precisely what Fry had been arguing against in his denunciation of the plutocrat patron, it is clear that their ideas were vitally opposed.

As Beatrice's difference of opinion with Roger illustrates, the concept of the relation of the individual to society had far greater ramifications than the relatively simple liberal-socialist chasm which separated her from Clive Bell. Its roots reached right into socialism itself--and cracked it wide. It split Fabian from Guild Socialist, and in the sense which Roger Fry used it, producer from consumer. It eventually split both the Oxford and Cambridge societies away from the parent Fabian Society. In essence, it could be said that those who worried about quality goods were thoroughly acquainted with the caveat emptor principle opted for Fabianism and state control; those who felt romantic about William Morris and believed in Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité opted for Guild Socialism and the diffusion of responsibility.

Roger originally expressed his ideas in 1912, and republished them in amended fashion in 1920. Both dates are prior to the destruction of Guild Socialism by the abortive coal strikes of 1920-1921, the General Strike of 1926, and the disruptive tactics of the British Communist Party. Fry lived to see this happen (he died in 1934) and to see a battered Fabian Society survive while the Guild Socialists succumbed. Individualist as he was, however, it is doubtful if the labels had meant much to his ideas in the first place. As he aptly demonstrated with the First Post-Impressionist Exhibition in 1910-1911, the British Public could go hang if they did not like his concepts--and that included Beatrice.

Part 7. FRINGE BLOOMSBERRIES AND CONSCRIPTION

The war years 1914-1918 meant a great deal to Beatrice and to Bloomsbury. For Beatrice they were an indication that the forces of human greed and stupidity were coming to the surface with a vengeance. She was very depressed. For Bloomsbury they were the ultimate challenge to the philosophy of G.E. Moore. Could the Bloomsberries stand firm in the face of public opinion? For both, they meant an assortment of strange bedfellows while the crisis lasted.

The first World War is a convenient time frame in which to consider Beatrice in relationship to those members of Bloomsbury not already covered individually. It is convenient for three reasons: one, it drew several Bloomsberries and near Blooms-

berries into a relatively tight group which included some of the Cambridge Fabians with whom she had had an acquaintance of several years' standing; two, it developed Bertrand Russell as an important character with connections in both camps; and three, it forced both Beatrice and Bloomsbury to search deep within themselves to determine whether their beliefs were adequate to sustain them through a real crisis.

Those most likely to be affected immediately by the war were the younger ones such as David Garnett and Rupert Brooke. Brooke, born in 1887, was seven years younger and Garnett, born in 1892, twelve years younger than Lytton Strachey, and as a consequence tended to be involved sooner and more conclusively in the conflict. Rupert, of course, cannot be considered a true member of the Group, but he certainly was very close to the admitted members in the few years prior to his violent break with Lytton Strachey. He came to know Beatrice through the Cambridge Fabian Society in company with James Strachey and Gerald Shove in the period 1908-1909, and was apparently the chief reason for Beatrice's relatively low opinion of the Cambridge intellectuals, since he gave her "a super-conceited lecture on the relation of the university man to the common herd of democracy".[40] Brooke is also anomalous in that unlike both Beatrice and Bloomsbury, he was given to violent enthusiasms which quickly waned (witness his Fabianism, which faded out with the Majority Report on the Poor Law) and to the advocacy of principles in which he did not really believe (witness

[40]Beatrice Webb, Our Partnership, p. 415.

his pose as a supporter of Moloch). He was also the fringe-Bloomsbury who did go to war--and the one who did not come back. It would be easy to say that he was so atypical that his inclusion is superfluous, yet he is due some mention, because he was in a way part of both Beatrice and Bloomsbury--and both Beatrice and Bloomsbury lost him. Beatrice lost him through disappointment when he saw his reform efforts on the Poor Law come to naught, and Bloomsbury lost him through emotional overstimulation with which he could not cope. The irony of his death from an infected mosquito bite in the middle of a war of incredible human violence and after the emotional uproar he had left in England is acute.

David Garnett, the youngest of the "true" Bloomsberries, had been known by Beatrice, in a manner of speaking, almost since his birth. As he himself points out, his mother, Constance Garnett, had been in the Fabian Society, "rather a rival of the famous Miss Beatrice Potter, afterwards Mrs. Sidney Webb".[41] Since Constance was elected to the Fabian executive for 1894-95, when David was all of two years old, Beatrice had had him available for her circle of acquaintances from his earliest years. It is clear that as he grew, however, he did not adopt his mother's Fabian ideas. As she developed her life's work of translating Russian novels, Constance drew about her a great gaggle of Russian emigrés and refugees from the Czardom. Association with such as these was more than enough to point Garnett

[41]David Garnett, The Golden Echo (1953; rpt. London: Chatto and Windus, 1954), p. 8.

away from the gradualism of the Fabians and into the revolutionary violence of the exiles. His further acquaintance with the Indian revolutionaries and attempts to free them from jail intensified this impatience. He was not, himself, a violent man, but he associated with those who were, and drew example from them. He was similarly slightly out of tune with Bloomsbury, in that he was not a product of Cambridge, but of the Royal College of Science, and did not have the background of long discussions of G.E. Moore and Principia Ethica. His training was in biology, not in literature, history or philosophy, and he saw things from a slightly more practical side than Bloomsbury. He had firm convictions, but he was not as apt as they to be driven to excess by adherence to principle. With such a background it is perhaps not surprising that Garnett's attitude towards violence and war differed from the run of Bloomsbury. One example of his own writing from just after the war bears this out:

> At that time I was an ardent supporter of the Bolsheviks, not because I was a Communist or a Marxist, but because I thought that they would do for Russia what Danton and Robespierre had done for France. A lot of heads would be chopped off, but a rich happy peasantry and a diffusion of civilisation and good cooking would finally result.[42]

That such an astounding statement should be seriously intended seems incredible, yet the context clearly indicates that it was not meant in jest. As it stands, the juxtaposition of the

[42]David Garnett, The Flowers of the Forest (London: Chatto and Windus, 1955), p. 216.

images of Escoffier's kitchen and the Reign of Terror reaches a level of the ridiculous which makes Thomas Gray's "What cat's averse to fish?" positively sublime by comparison.

As the war developed, Garnett changed from his earlier attitude, which was one of being willing to join up if necessary, to an attitude of complete pacifism. He had spent a considerable time with the Friends War Victims Relief Mission in France in company with Francis Birrell, and his experience there, coupled with a reading of Clive Bell's pamphlet Peace at Once, brought him to the conclusion that a negotiated peace should be sought immediately. His feelings at this time, of course, referred strictly to the conflict at hand, and were not consonant with his belief in the cleansing value of revolutionary bloodletting. They were, however, fully in consonance with the attitude towards authority with which his earlier Russian and Indian friends had inculcated him. A second passage from his writings again illustrates his habit of mixing the vital with the inconsequential, and at the same time shows how far he had come from his mother's Fabianism:

> The fortnight which I spent living alone in Paris gave me plenty of time to think not only about my attitude to the war, but to Established Authority. While I was at Sommeilles I had seen that France was being bled white and that a negotiated peace was essential if Europe was to be saved from ruin, and for that reason I had decided to take no part in the fighting. But the two incidents which concerned my friends: Duncan's being turned arbitrarily back at the frontier and the suppression of The Rainbow,[43] roused me to a pitch of

[43] Refers to the prosecution of D.H. Lawrence and suppression of his new novel, The Rainbow, in late 1915.

> hatred and contempt for Established Authority, and for the whole apparatus of Government. It became clear to me that Government is in itself an evil: no doubt a necessary one to avoid other evils--but that the less Government the better. For the Government is bound, by its very nature, to be blind, ruthless and stupid because stupid and brutal men love power for its own sake whereas sensitive and intelligent men only care for power if there is interesting work to be done.[44]

It seems rather odd to base pacifism on a real regard for a country which was suffering plus the immediate problems of two personal friends, but it was a transitory pacifism at best, and Garnett finally did accept a commission in the war of 1939-45.

The rest of the Bloomsbury Group were neither so emotionally involved, nor so changeable. They disliked war, and they disliked Germans, but they did not let their feelings about the latter influence their attitude towards the former. They too were upset about the suppression of The Rainbow and other forms of British Philistinism rampant, but they did not display the violent overreaction of David Garnett. They were in the unfortunate position of being able to see both sides of the question, and were therefore unable to muster the proper apoplectic shade of patriotism. They simply refused to agree that human greed and petty politics were worth dying for. They were not all Conscientious Objectors by any means. Leonard Woolf was willing to go if necessary. Duncan Grant joined the National Reserve. Clive Bell thought of associating himself with the Army Service Corps, and Henry Lamb, another fringe member, enrolled as a

[44]David Garnett, The Flowers of the Forest, p. 96.

hospital assistant. The problem only really came to a head with the passage of the Military Service Bill in January, 1916, and the Compulsory Bill of May of the same year. The attempt to conscript, to force those who did not wish to fight to join the battle, resulted in a sudden crystallizing of feeling within Bloomsbury. Those who were true pacifist Conscientious Objectors now objected strongly; those whose primary objection was to being forced to serve rallied to the support of the Conscientious Objectors; and those who had been willing to help with the war effort now felt obliged to aid their friends. As a result, almost all of the male members of Bloomsbury wound up far removed from the conflict. Clive Bell became a farmer and employer of agricultural labourers such as David Garnett and Duncan Grant; Leonard Woolf, James Strachey and Lytton Strachey were excused on medical grounds; and Maynard Keynes and Gerald Shove were engaged in work of too much importance to the hation to be relieved for military duty.

For Bloomsbury, avoiding conflict was a philosophical point of honour and reason. For Beatrice, on the other hand, the war, although tragic, was something which had to be won. On August 5th, 1914, she noted in her diary,

> We argued with them [Massingham and Hammond] that if Belgian neutrality was defied we had to go to war— they vehemently denied it. On Monday the public mind was cleared and solidified by Grey's speech. Even staunch Liberals agree that we had to stand by Belgium. But there is no enthusiasm about the war: at present it is, on the part of England, a passionless war; a terrible nightmare sweeping over all classes.[45]

[45]Beatrice Webb, Diaries, 1912-1923, p. 197.

Beatrice's worries were not about the rightness or wrongness of the war--although she did feel concern--but about its possible impact on the goals towards which she had directed much of her life. She was clearly on the side of those who felt that England had to fight, and once she learned that much desirable social legislation would be stimulated by the conflict, and that there would be committeework aplenty for Sidney, she pitched in to help. In spite of her clear conscience as far as the morality of the war went, however, she allowed her fears about the horrors of war itself to undermine her health, and suffered a sort of physical/mental breakdown halfway through.[46]

Although Beatrice could also see both sides of the war, and objected to the febrile patriotism sweeping England almost as much as did the Bloomsbury Group, she could not accept "well worn radical resolutions in favour of universal peace",[47] as proposed by George Lansbury and Keir Hardie. Neither could she be swayed into a hard position by the opinions of friends. The ethic of friendship laid down in Principia Ethica may have helped to crystallize the Bloomsbury feelings, but Beatrice was always her own woman and did exactly as she saw fit. She was, for instance, a good friend of Bertrand Russell, but refused completely to follow him towards the extreme pacifism he practised but claimed he did not feel. Alike as they were in many ways, they interpreted meaning in people, and particularly in

[46]Muggeridge and Adam, Beatrice Webb, pp. 210-211.

[47]Ibid., p. 206.

politicians, quite differently. Beatrice was willing to call politicians stupid, but drew the line at literal dishonesty: Russell was inclined to ascribe deliberately evil motives from the start. It is significant that where Beatrice claimed that "the public mind was cleared and solidified by Grey's speech", Russell saw only

> during previous years how carefully Sir Edward Grey lied in order to prevent the public from knowing the methods by which he was committing us to the support of France in the event of war.[48]

While it is quite true that the exact wording of Beatrice's diary is a statement of the effect of Grey's speech, and not a value judgement on its content, she could not have written that sentence so freely had she considered the man a liar. Perhaps Russell's training in philosophy enabled him to penetrate more accurately to the hidden core of Grey's motives, or perhaps Beatrice's insensitivity to foreign affairs blinded her as to what was going on, but their interpretations, and hence their outlooks, were quite different.

Russell, of course, was not a member of the Bloomsbury Group. During the 1914-1918 period, however, as one of the most voluble of the pacifists, he was certainly an influence on those who were. As an intimate of Ottoline Morrell, he had plenty of opportunity to meet Group members at Garsington, particularly when conscription was brought in in 1916 after the failure of the Derby Scheme for voluntary attestation in late

[48]Bertrand Russell, The Autobiography of Bertrand Russell 1914-1944 (Boston: Little, Brown, 1968), p. 4.

1915. At that time the Bloomsbury dissenters such as David Garnett and Duncan Grant (who had had trouble with the authorities in France and been "deported as a pacifist-anarchist"[49]) were gathering around the Morrells for their aid in gaining work, and therefore exemption from military service, as farm labourers. The fact that it was extremely hard to gain exemption in such a manner was not lost on Beatrice Webb. Having failed to persuade the Labour Party M.P.'s to vote against conscription, or to hold out for some concession as the price for supporting the Cabinet, she accepted the situation and continued her researches.[50] She noted, however, on March 9th that

> the tribunals, under the Military Service Act, are a scandalous example of lay prejudice. . . . The most biased judge on the bench could not have equalled, in malicious bias, the old gentlemen who are now sitting on the claims for exemption. Class bias and local jobbery are rampant, and the decisions are often ludicrous in their shameless inequity.[51]

Two days before this entry, on March 7th, Lytton Strachey had come before his local Advisory Committee and had been told that the committee members would recommend to the Tribunal that he be granted "no relief". A few days later the Tribunal heard his case, but would not grant him exemption until he had undergone an examination by military doctors. Finally, at the end of March he was found medically unfit.[52] Lytton was lucky. He

[49]David Garnett, The Flowers of the Forest, p. 95.

[50]Beatrice Webb, Diaries, 1912-1923, p. 52.

[51]Ibid., p. 56.

[52]Holroyd, Lytton Strachey, II, 176-179.

had been accompanied by a host of sympathizers and very influential friends. Those who had no friends were much worse off.

Beatrice, while recognizing the inequities of the Tribunals, was not a total opponent to conscription. On April 8th, 1916, she described a meeting of the National Convention of the No Conscription Fellowship,[53] pointing out that there were many types of people in attendance. She described three distinct attitudes: that of the "intellectual pietist", who believed in pacifism; that of the "professional rebel", anxious only to smash all authority; and that of the "misguided youths", who sought only to avoid fighting. On the platform she found "older pacifists and older rebels"--among whom was Bertrand Russell. As she saw, the main problem with the Fellowship was that it was not content to fight consciption, but insisted on battling all militarism. In her feeling,

> These men are not so much conscientious objectors as a militant minority of elects, intent on thwarting the will of the majority of ordinary citizens expressed in a national policy.[54]

Beatrice felt rather strongly about the will of the majority--in spite of her aristocratic ability to impose her own wishes on that will--and though she counted Bertrand Russell among her friends, she was dismayed at the course which the Fellowship

[53]Among those who helped with or belonged either to the No Conscription Fellowship (N.C.F.) or to the National Council against Conscription (N.C.C.) at this time were: James and Lytton Strachey, David Garnett, Duncan Grant, Vanessa Bell, Adrian Stephen and R.C. Trevelyan. See Holroyd, Lytton Strachey, II, 167.

[54]Beatrice Webb, Diaries, 1912-1923, p. 60.

was taking. Curiously enough, she has, in her diary entry for July 1st, 1901, made a most penetrating analysis of Russell's character in which she said:

> He is intolerant of blemishes and faults in himself and others, he dreams of perfection in man: he almost loathes lapses from men's own standards . . . a right conclusion come to by bad argument is offensive to him: it is the perfection of the reasoning that he seeks after, not truth of the conclusions . . . . He is almost cruel in his desire to see cruelty revenged.[55]

Fifteen years later she was having the opportunity to see her assessment vindicated. Her ultimate conclusion concerning the morality of conscription was that once it had been imposed by the will of the majority, it should be accepted as an unpleasant social obligation. There should be exemption for bona fide conscientious objectors, but there should also be a means of exposing shirkers or cowards.

> Hence, the State, in defence, must make the alternative to fulfilling the common obligation sufficiently irksome to test the conscience of the objectors. A wise statesman will make the test sufficiently severe to turn back the slackers without inflicting too great a punishment on the genuine dissenters.[56]

Within her, the paternalistic administrator had triumphed once more over the philosophical moralist.

Just how much influence Bertrand Russell did exert at Garsington is hard to determine. As usual, Lytton Strachey agreed with neither Beatrice nor Bertrand. Unlike Beatrice, he was a pacifist, but surprisingly like her, he felt that Russell and

[55]Beatrice Webb, Our Partnership, p. 217.

[56]Beatrice Webb, Diaries, 1912-1923, p. 61.

his Fellowship were seeking martyrdom. "Lytton suspected that Russell, like so many professional reformers, wanted bad conditions of one sort or another, so that he might have the personal joy of altering them".[57] Again, unlike Bertrand, who fought for pacifism with every weapon at his disposal, and unlike Beatrice, who worked on wartime committees--and even tried knitting socks for soldiers--Lytton found his answer in retreat from the conflict. Leaving London as much as possible in search of more congenial habitation, he was still constrained to spend much of the war physically within its grasp. Nonetheless, he contrived through his work and newly found relationship with Dora Carrington to avoid most of the conflict.

Many of the war years were spent for Beatrice, as for some Bloomsberries, in a churning, nerve-wracking state of self pity, uncongenial or often useless work, and a great dismay at the utter stupidity of humanity in general. Within that period, however, someone was working--and working for Beatrice--on a volume dedicated to international government, the prevention of future wars, and faith in humanity. That man was Leonard Woolf.

[57]Holroyd, Lytton Strachey, II, 114.

Chapter V

Webb and Woolf

Of all the relationships between Beatrice and Bloomsbury, none is so vital as that she shared with Leonard and Virginia Woolf. Virginia was important because she, above all, was the symbol of Bloomsbury, but Leonard was critical, because he was the ultimate link, the bridge which united the Fabian and Bloomsbury camps.

Leonard was a bridging figure in a philosophical as well as a physical sense, since he also spanned the famous gap between Beatrice's experience and the Bloomsbury interpretation of Principia Ethica. As an Apostle, and long-time friend of Lytton Strachey and Maynard Keynes, he was thoroughly versed in Moore's philosophy. At the same time, his earlier work in Ceylon had shown him that there was more to life than the colleges of Cambridge. Again, like Beatrice, he had joined the Charity Organisation Society, and done work in the London slums, following her footsteps away from the Society when he realized that it could do little to alleviate the problems. Although there is no evidence to show that he ever tried, he was in a far better position to explain Principia Ethica to Beatrice than was the young Rupert Brooke. Had he done so, Beatrice might have been spared Rupert's super conceit, and Cambridge might have gained a larger share of her respect. Since Brooke's deal-

ings with Beatrice antedated those of Woolf by some five years, however, the best he could have done was to repair a little of the damage.

Leonard's experience with the CharityOrganisation Society Care Committee in Hoxton, in the east end of London, was very depressing, and as he pointed out in Beginning Again, completed his political conversion from Liberal to Socialist.

> There was no doubt about the poverty in the east end of London in 1912; I would rather have lived in a hut in a Ceylon village in the jungle than in the poverty stricken, sordid, dilapidated, god-forsaken hovels of Hoxton. And the momen' that I, stood in their grim rooms and began to speak to the dejected inhabitants, whose voices and faces revealed nothing but the depths of their hopelessness, I realized my hopelessness and helplessness there.[1]

Leonard had been induced to join the Care Committee by one of Virginia's cousins, Mary Vaughan. He had not yet been influenced by the Fabianism which had swept Cambridge during his absence in Ceylon. He was not, therefore, as were most of his near contemporaries, drawn to socialism by its appeal to the mind. Rupert Brooke and the others had come to Fabianism in an aura of ideological and intellectual exercise; Leonard came to it in the manner of Beatrice Webb, through the gutters of the London slums. It is perhaps because of this that his commitment to social causes lasted so long.

No matter its derivation, however, his interest in social matters rapidly brought him to the attention of the Webbs:

In June, 1913, the Manchester-Guardian published an

[1]Leonard Woolf, Beginning Again, Harvest Books (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, undated), p. 100.

> article which I wrote for them about the Newcastle Congress of the Women's Guild. The Webbs, sitting in the centre of their Fabian spider-web, always kept an eager eye watching for some promising young man who might be ensnared by them. They read and were impressed by my article, and the result was an invitation to lunch, and on July 12 I ate the first of many plates of mutton in Grosvenor Road. The Webbs thought as well of me as they had thought of my article and they got me to join the Fabian Society at once.[2]

Although Leonard does not say so in this passage, Virginia was also present at the luncheon. It can be said, then, that any direct influence which the Webbs may have had on Virginia began on July 12th, 1913. The Woolfs at that time had been married eleven months, and Virginia was already exhibiting the symptoms of her upcoming nervous breakdown. Her first novel, The Voyage Out, was in the throes of publication.

Having seized upon him so abruptly, the Webbs and the Fabian Society soon had Leonard buried in work. By 1915 he had completed two long reports and a draft treaty containing articles suggested for adoption by an international conference at the termination of the war, which were published together in 1915 as International Government. This book had great impact on political thought at the time, but its value to this study belongs primarily not to what it contained, but to what it did not contain. At the time of the book's completion, Leonard discovered that George Bernard Shaw had written a preface for it. Woolf objected immediately:

> I insisted that the book should be published in England without Shaw's preface on the ground that, as a young man and writer, I wanted my book to be judged

[2]Ibid., p. 114.

> on its merits and defects; it should stand solely on its own legs, and not those of a great man's preface. I agreed to the preface later appearing in an American and a French edition.[3]

The question of the preface serves to illustrate two things very well: one, the equanimity of the Webbs and Shaw, since they readily acquiesced to not publishing the preface in the English edition, and, two, the strength of character and principle in Leonard Woolf. He was, after all, young and relatively unknown, and he was taking the risk of antagonizing such a well known dramatist, critic, novelist, and publicizer of socialism as Shaw. The point of character and principle in Woolf is particularly important, since it has a bearing on his later relationship with the Webbs when the question of colonies arose.

Virginia, at the time of the publication of International Government, had recovered to a certain extent from the violent madness which had seized her in 1915. Sometime during the 1914-1915 period she had herself joined the Fabian Society, and had travelled with Leonard to one or two Fabian conferences. In June of 1916 they spent a weekend in Sussex with the Webbs and Shaw. These few years from 1913 to 1918 were the period of the first relatively strong interactions between the Webbs and the Woolfs. Since they were also the time of the greatest flowering of the Bloomsbury Group, there is reason to suppose that they represent the period of the second strongest infusion of Webb

[3]Ibid., p. 123.

ideas to Group members--this time through the medium of Virginia. The first basic infusion had been through the early Cambridge Fabians in 1908-1909. No one would claim of course that the Group members consciously accepted any of Beatrice's ideas at this or any other time. The great beauty of much of the Webb output of ideas was that by the time they were accepted by others they no longer appeared to be Webb ideas. They enjoyed a certain Fabian permeation process of their own by which they slowly lost their makers' marks and took on eminently respectable attributes which a reasonable man could accept without qualms. Leonard himself noted how this could come about (without actually describing the process): "Hundreds of people have poked their fun at the Webbs and they were so absurd that you could not caricature them for they were always caricaturing themselves".[4] It is difficult to poke fun at someone without including some of their ideas which seem funny. Hundreds of people outlining the same ideas from the same source can eventually lead to an excellent dissemination of those ideas. The fact that the Webbs were so easy to talk about made it easier for reports about them, and their ideas, to flourish. Virginia was never one to pass up the opportunity to characterize someone so flagrantly open to description, and the chances are that each little discussion with its attendant ideas was dutifully passed on for the delectation of Bloomsbury. From time to time a passing shadow of Webb thought surfaces in one of Virginia's

[4] Ibid., p. 115.

works--the merest glimpse perhaps, but ultimately traceable to Beatrice or Sidney. One such occurs in Mrs. Dalloway in Sally Seton's thoughts on the aging Peter Walsh:

> And did he say it out of pride? Very likely, for after all it must be galling for him (though he was an oddity, a sort of sprite, not at all an ordinary man), it must be lonely at his age to have no home, nowhere to go.[5]

Leonard points out in his autobiography that

> Beatrice had a characteristic habit of classifying all her friends or acquaintances in a kind of psychological and occupational card index. Thus Virginia was "the novelist", I was "the ex-colonial-civil-servant" and anything connected with novels which arose in conversation would be referred to Virginia, anything connected with Asia or Africa to me. Beatrice always treated Shaw as the generalized or universal artist and his department was therefore not only the arts generally but anything connected with the embellishment, non-utility side of life.[6]

Kingsley Martin, writing some fifteen years earlier, also describes this assignment of categories, but notes that "Shaw never fitted anywhere; so Mrs. Webb put him into a special category of 'sprites'".[7] Is the "sprite" category of Peter Walsh a half-remembered Webbian classification for Bernard Shaw? We shall probably never know with certainty, but even this most tenuous of connections lends credence to the thought that the ideas of the Webbs slowly drifted through the minds of others, leaving a thread caught on a notion here, snagging on a rough concept there, tearing off sufficient of their substance to be

[5]Virginia Woolf, Mrs. Dalloway, Harvest Books (1925; rpt. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, undated), p. 289.

[6]Leonard Woolf, Beginning Again, p. 119.

[7]Kingsley Martin, "The Webbs in Retirement", in The Webbs and their Work, ed. M.I. Cole (London: Frederick Muller, 1949), p. 291.

gatherable years afterwards, laundered a little, and woven into fresher dreams.

Leonard Woolf and the Webbs worked together for many years. Their business relationship, for the most part, was good; but what about their personal relationship? We have Leonard's statement that,

> I came to know them I think, as well personally as anyone of my age could get to know them. . . . But behind the fantastic facade there were two human beings for whom I eventually acquired real affection. I do not think that Sidney ever felt much affection for anyone except Beatrice, but he liked me, and I liked him. Beatrice, who was highly strung and neurotic, came to have a certain amount of affection for Virginia and me, and I had a real affection for her.[8]

The "I" of the last sentence is significant. Leonard liked Beatrice, but Virginia's attitude towards her was largely one of awe. This is not unusual, since Beatrice went through life overawing people right and left, and Virginia was inordinately sensitive to the opinions, real or imagined, of others concerning herself. In her diary for September 23rd, 1918, Virginia, describing a weekend Webb visit to Asham, said, "This grey view depressed me more and more; partly, I suppose from the egotistical sense of my own nothingness in her field of vision".[9] As we have seen from earlier references, Beatrice did not really think of Virginia as "nothing". She considered her to be talented, but perhaps too much of an "A" to be of practical

[8] Leonard Woolf, Beginning Again, p. 115.

[9] Virginia Woolf, quoted by Leonard Woolf, Beginning Again, p. 118.

use in terms of politics.

The use of the term "A" itself appears to have had its mark upon Virginia. According to Desmond MacCarthy, as we saw in Chapter IV, the Webb habit of dividing people into "A's" and "B's" was well known. When we find Virginia writing in the late thirties in The Years,

> But where are the Sweeps and the Sewermen, the Seamstresses and the Stevedores? he thought, making a list of trades that began with the letter S. For all Delia's pride in her promiscuity he thought, glancing at the people, there were only Dons and Duchesses, and what other words begin with D? he asked himself, as he scrutinized the placard again--Drabs and Drones?[10]

it seems that an echo of Beatrice has once more found its way into her work. It is a short step from Aristocrats and Bourgeoisie to Seamstresses and Duchesses, and such a step would fit easily into the Webbian permeation of ideas. Virginia makes the implied value judgement very clear in this passage, and it is equally clear that in her own mind at least she saw herself as an "A" or "D" where Beatrice was concerned. She was partly right, in that Beatrice did tend to look askance at her association with the others of the Bloomsbury Group, but in spite of the fact that Mrs. Muggeridge, her niece, said that "Virginia Woolf's novels struck her as gibberish, and she disliked her",[11] Beatrice did encourage Virginia to write, at the very least by buying the first product of the Hogarth Press. Beatrice's name

[10] Virginia Woolf, The Years, Harvest Books (1937; rpt. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, undated), p. 404.

[11] Personal communication, Mrs. K Muggeridge, April 7th, 1971.

appears on the first list of purchasers (at one shilling and sixpence) of Two Stories by Virginia and Leonard Woolf. Again in her diary for 1927, after the Woolfs had spent a weekend at Passfield Corner, Beatrice noted that, "We had lost sight of them, and were glad to renew relations with this exceptionally gifted pair".[12]

But there was more concerning the Webbs for Virginia to worry about than their concept of her worth as a writer and human being. There was their unique "togetherness", for instance. Virginia, as I have noted earlier, felt very strongly about the importance of the individual and in particular about the relationship between the female individual and the male. Orlando bears this out very clearly, especially in the scenes immediately following Orlando's sexual metamorphosis in Turkey and her return to England. In the Webbs she had an example of a marriage which ran contrary to her expectations, and it seems to have bothered her inordinately. Is there, for example, some shadow of the Webbs in Mrs. Dalloway as that lady thinks of Peter Walsh in the early morning:

> For in marriage a little licence, a little independence there must be between people living together day in day out in the same house; which Richard gave her, and she him. . . . But with Peter everything had to be shared; everything gone into. And it was intolerable, and when it came to that scene in the little garden by the fountain, she had to break with him or they would have been destroyed, both of them ruined.[13]

[12]Beatrice Webb, quoted in Fremantle, p. 242.

[13]Virginia Woolf, Mrs. Dalloway, p. 10.

The Webbs, by any account, were the most integrated couple in England, and for Virginia, to whom integration meant "suffocation", the fact that they could so exist was incredible. She did, on her own part, do her best to share Leonard's political interests, but she was never able to do so really successfully. Although she joined the Fabian Society, it appears to have made remarkably little impression on her. The descriptions of Mrs. Seal and of Mary Datchet in Night and Day, for instance, are clearly drawn from her experiences with the Women's Co-operative Guild, and not from the Fabian Society. There may be a sprinkling of Beatrice Webb here and there--particularly in the emphasis on research and the printing of pamphlets--but the portraits are of those she had known through Margaret Llewelyn Davies (secretary to the Guild, and an old family friend) and written about in Memoirs of a Working Women's Guild. Even the conditions in the London slums of the 1840's described in Flush appear to arise as adaptations of the scenes which Leonard encountered in Hoxton rather than from her own sense of the injustice of society and the utter hopelessness of the lives of the poor. The reader's sympathy in Flush is directed towards the dog, suffering in his temporary confinement, and not towards the people who are condemned to permanent confinement under such conditions. In short, Virginia's concern is with the portrayal of people as individuals, and in particular as individual women, and with their living conditions as statements of fact. While she could express horror at the slums and their content

of human wreckage, she could not spark the fire to crusade for their betterment. She could not strike that spark because at bottom she was not interested in the ideals of social reform or political economy. She was interested in people, in women, in improving the conditions of women (as opposed to the conditions of humanity), and in descriptive arts. Her interest in the working class women of the Women's Co-operative Guild is precisely because they were women--not because they were working class. Although Dorothy Brewster attempts to show that Virginia was concerned about social conditions generally:

> At one Labour party meeting at Brighton (Diary, Oct. 2, 1935), she was moved by a speech by George Lansbury and worried if her duty as a human being required her to work at altering the structure of society--"but when is it altered?"[14]

it is obvious that her interpretation of Virginia's attitude is wrong. Had Virginia been truly interested, there would have been no need for worry in her diary; her course would have been clear. The fact that one must decide where "duty" lies is a distinct indication that the subject is not sufficiently exciting to produce a spontaneous action. Finally, Kingsley Martin, who knew the Woolfs well, said in a comment concerning Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson that "he was always concerned with the universals of politics and philosophy, which bored Virginia so unspeakably".[15] (italics mine) Brewster points out also that Mrs. Dalloway hears the bands of hunger marchers as she walks,

[14]Dorothy Brewster, Virginia Woolf (New York: New York Univ. Press, 1962), pp. 25-26.

[15]Kingsley Martin, Father Figures, p. 121.

and interprets this to imply that Virginia felt strongly about social reform. It is more likely, however, that the sounds are merely an authentic descriptive touch to the background of the novel. They are demonstrative of the novelist's art, not her feelings. The safest inference throughout is that Virginia was intellectually concerned about the plight of the poor, and anxious to support her husband, who was passionately concerned, but she was unable to muster the emotional interest required. As a consequence, her own marriage had the separation of individual unshared interests which Mrs. Dalloway desired (and which Virginia really felt it was her duty to avoid). Virginia did her best to support Leonard as she felt she ought in his interest in socialism, but she could never achieve the perfect blend which came automatically to the Webbs. There is little wonder that she found Beatrice so unnerving.

To be scrupulously fair to Virginia, we should note two things at this point: one, she faced totally different political conditions than had Beatrice at the same age, and two, her natural interest in women was stimulated by the suffragette movement at the opening of the century. Beatrice was worried about seats for Labour members of Parliament because in her youth there were no working class representatives of the people. By 1892, however, there were twelve Liberal-Labour and three independent Labour M.P.'s, and in the election of 1906 the Labour Representation Committee had twenty-nine victorious candidates. By the time of Virginia's young adulthood, members

of Parliament were being paid (£400 a year in 1911), trade unions had favourable legal status (the criminal penalties relating to strikes had been removed in 1875), and the Workmen's Compensation Act of 1897 had placed at least some tradesmen in a much better position than before. One could not assert that the evils of Hoxton did not exist, but one could assert that the urgency for reform had been slightly diminished by the gains which had been made.

If the urgency for trade unions and working class representation had diminished, however, the urgency for attention to the problems of women was increasing drastically. In 1909 the House of Commons was attacked by stone-throwing women, of whom over a hundred were arrested. By 1913 the suffragette movement had resorted to arson, smashing windows with hammers, and even bomb attacks. The novelty and colour of the militancy of women tended both to attract a great deal of attention and to overshadow the labour union problems, to the extent that Virginia was driven to thinking much more about the problems of women than Beatrice had been at a corresponding age. Incidents such as the death of Emily Wilding Davison, first-class honours graduate of Oxford and letter-box arsonist, who threw herself under the hooves of King George's horse Anmer during the Epsom Derby of 1913, were available in plenty to affect the young Virginia, and to direct her primary interest away from simple poverty or the rights of the downtrodden masses. The suffragette movement effectively died with the advent of war in 1914,

but the legacy of concern about the rights of women which was left with Virginia Woolf remained until her death.

Leonard, in spite of his strong beliefs, which often ran counter to those of the Webbs, was in every way a favoured protegé. As far as Beatrice was concerned, Mrs. Muggeridge writes, "she considered him to be 'a saint', although he and Sidney fell out over colonial policy when Sidney was Colonial Secretary in 1929".[16] Since the "falling out" concerned Virginia also, it is of some importance to this study.

Leonard was, for many years, secretary of the Labour Party Advisory Committee on Imperial Affairs. As such, he bombarded party leaders continually with advice which grew from his years as a civil servant in Ceylon. Little of his advice was taken. He has recorded much of this problem in Downhill all the Way. The most interesting part of his description, however, covers just those dealings with Sidney Webb to which Mrs. Muggeridge refers. When the Labour Party came to power again in 1929, Sidney became Secretary of State for the Colonies and was elevated to the peerage as Lord Passfield. Leonard at this time was particularly incensed about Kenya, and felt that Sidney was not doing his job properly where the rights of the natives were involved. As he said,

> Sidney was in politics curiously ambivalent; he must have been born half a little conservative and half a little liberal. He was a progressive, even a revolutionary, in some economic and social spheres; where

[16]Mrs. K. Muggeridge, personal communication, April 7th, 1971.

> the British Empire was concerned, he was a common or garden imperialist conservative.[17]

This statement ties in closely with Virginia's diary for October 23rd, 1930, which states, "The Webbs are friendly but can't be influenced about Kenya".[18] Leonard carried on with,

> The Committee decided that Charles Buxton and I should ask Sidney Webb to see us, and that we should point out to him that this discrimination against the African was absolutely opposed to the Labour Government's policy with regard to the education of Africans and promotion of African agriculture, and that the Secretary of State for the Colonies should insist upon a revision of the budget. . . . We got, as I had expected, nothing out of Sidney, who was an expert negotiator and had at his fingers' ends all the arguments of all the men of action for always doing nothing.[19]

These passages appear to be rather damning to Sidney, but Leonard obviously felt that his description of Sidney and his attitudes was wholly accurate. After all, as we have seen, Leonard was a man of such firm principle that he would not allow George Bernard Shaw's preface to be used for his book, and he was not the type of man to place blame where it was not deserved. There are, however, slight discrepancies between Leonard's reportage and that of another principal in the case, and as we shall see, Beatrice's diary itself does not agree with his estimate of the Webbs. Leonard also wrote that Drummond Shiels, Sidney's Under-Secretary, was

> dismayed by Sidney's conservatism and his masterly in-

[17]Leonard Woolf, Downhill All the Way (1967; rpt. London: Readers Union and Hogarth Press, 1968), p. 236.

[18]Virginia Woolf, A Writer's Diary, Signet Classics (1953; rpt. New York: The New American Library, 1968), p. 144.

> activity whenever an opportunity arose to do something different from what the Conservative governments and the Colonial Office Civil Servants and endorsed as safe, sound, and "progressive" for the last half-century.[20]

Shiels, himself, on the other hand, while admitting that Sidney was often troubled by situations which involved emotion rather than fact, said,

> But, although we did not go so fast or so far as many --without his responsibilities--demanded, there is no occasion to apologise for his record in the Colonial Office. It compares very favourably with that of more spectacular occupants. It is, indeed, surprising to see in retrospect, how much he did do or get done.[21]

The conflict appears to lie in Leonard's admitted impatience to get things done rather than in any real conservatism in Sidney. Sidney was inclined to place too much trust in "experts", while Leonard, for all of his Fabianism, was never fully convinced of the "inevitability of gradualness", and as a result the bonds between them were often subjected to extreme tension. They were never really that far apart in conviction or intention, but Leonard thought that they were. Shiels notes that Sidney, in his White Paper of June, 1930, emphasized that,

> the interests of the African natives must be paramount, and that if, and when, those interests and the interests of the immigrant races should conflict, the former should prevail.[22]

This policy did to some extent satisfy the "militant upholders

[20] Ibid., p. 237.

[21] Sir Drummond Shiels, "Sidney Webb as a Minister", in The Webbs and their Work, ed. M.I. Cole (London: Frederick Muller, 1949), p. 207.

[22] Ibid., p. 210.

of native rights"[23] as Shiels calls them, but it was not quite enough to smooth Leonard's ruffled feathers. His opinion of Sidney's conservatism in this respect did not change at any time. He wrote the passage above in Downhill All the Way in 1967, twenty years after Sidney's death, although he had had not only Shiel's own, more reasonable, words to read since 1947 (in the same book in which Leonard had himself inserted a paper which steadfastly proclaimed the conservatism of the Webbs!), but also had access to Beatrice's diaries for the period 1924-1932 which had been published in 1956. In those diaries, in the entry for August 13th, 1929, she wrote (of Joseph H. Oldham),

> He is pressing Sidney to do something to curb the naively barbaric capitalism of the White settlers in Kenya or elsewhere. The policy these settlers are carrying out is to deprive the natives of land ownership and subject them to taxation in order that they should be at their mercy as wage-earners. The wrong turn was taken when the White settlers were given self-government and freed from the control of Whitehall.[24]

There is no doubt that these sentiments were indeed very close to those of Leonard Woolf. In fact, it could be said that the main thing which did separate the Webbs and the Woolfs at this point was Sidney's lack of hurry.

We must be careful here to distinguish the private feelings of the Webbs from the products of Sidney's Ministry, and the policies of the Labour Party or the Fabian Society. In the

[23] Ibid., p. 207.

[24] Beatrice Webb, Diaries 1924-1932, p. 214.

first place, although Sidney was the Minister, he was dealing with a permanent civil service staff. The civil service Mandarin is a very powerful figure in British policy formation, and it would have been very difficult for even the most decisive and determined of Ministers to have changed colonial policies completely. In the second place, although the Labour Party tended toward the opinion that colonial wars and imperialist expansion created more jobs at home and were therefore not entirely bad, Beatrice and Sidney did not necessarily agree. They were often at variance with the self-centred, short-term attitudes of some of the working class men who had been elevated to power, and tried hard to switch them to the long-range view. In the third place, while Fabian policies generally were to look after poverty at home first, and to worry about colonial peoples later, we cannot assume that the Webbs were of the same mind. After all, Leonard was a Fabian himself, and he did not adhere to those views.

There is no doubt that many people thought of the Webbs as imperialists and conservatives. The basis for much of this opinion, however, appears to stem from examination of the products of their industry, rather than its intent. We must bear in mind first, that the Webbs were masters of compromise; second, that they always kept long-term goals in sight, and third, that they were not influenced by the emotion of the moment. To someone who was much affected by the immediate plight of some mistreated native child, the long drawn-out

deliberations of the Webbs could seem like the worst sort of conservatism. It would be easy in the heat of the moment to overlook the fact that their goal was the elimination of all mistreatment for everyone and accuse them of foot-dragging. It would be easy, but it would be wrong. The products which resulted from the interaction of the Webbs, the Labour Party, the Fabians, His Majesty's Loyal Opposition and the Mandarin civil servants may not have been in line with Leonard's wishes, but for the most part the Webbs' intentions were. Sidney was unhurried, and believed in good administration; Leonard was impatient, and thought more of individual freedom.

Beatrice goes on in her diaries to note how great the difficulties were in deciding whether to interfere or to leave things as they were in Kenya, and how all of the possible alternatives had one or more built-in problems. One interesting point she seized upon in discussing self-government and how it was to be granted in some respect to Ceylon was that "The population of Ceylon is more homogeneous than that of Kenya, Cyprus or Palestine".[25] This may be more germane to the issue of the rift with the Woolfs than Beatrice realized. Leonard's expertise in colonial affairs was based on his years in Ceylon, which had a massive seventy percent majority of Singhalese, with the remainder a rough mixture of Veddahs, Tamils, Moslems and Europeans. He was used to dispensing relatively uniform government to a relatively uniform people.

[25] Ibid., p. 215.

Kenya, on the other hand, had a population which comprised not only immigrant Moslems, Europeans and Asiatics, but three more or less indigenous groups, Kikuyu, Masai and Nilotic, who were continually at each other's throats. Since the tribal differences were accentuated by occupational differences (the Kikuyu were farmers, the Msai hunters and herdsmen, the Asiatics shopkeepers and the Europeans exploiters of everybody else) there was little chance of a rapid blossoming of brotherhood throughout. There is reason, therefore, to conclude that Leonard's expertise may not have been transferable to Kenya to the extent that he wished. His desire to see native rights protected was commendable, but it may not have been as easily practicable as he saw it. The pressure which was exerted on Sidney largely as a result of Leonard's vigour in prosecuting the issue was very great, but it was not enough to upset Webb, nor in fact, to alienate the Woolfs completely. This may be due in some small part to Beatrice, who did attempt to explain things to Virginia:

> Ever since the Wilson report about Kenya came out, Sidney has been receiving letters from men of eminence and goodwill, frequently forwarded by other Cabinet Ministers, which to his experienced eye, all came from one source [Oldham]. He has done the same thing so often himself--but I trust with more skill! But watching a Cabinet Minister at work makes one realize how situations are prepared for them by those who manipulate public opinion so that they feel impelled to go this way or that. Thus, when Virginia Woolf exclaimed "How thrilling it must be to watch actual decisions being made--decisions which alter the life of nations", I retorted that it is "outsiders representing interests or enthusiasm who make the decisions", or "permanent civil servants"--Cabinet Minis-

> ters are relatively unimportant--which of course is a paradox--only partially true.[26]

Finally, to top off the problem of Kenya as far as Leonard's recollections and convictions are concerned, we have Beatrice's own words on the involvement of Drummond Shiels. Leonard had used him as a reference point to contrast Sidney's reluctance to act against the firm convictions of a man who had supposedly been rationally convinced of the rightness of things by Leonard's Advisory Committee. Beatrice saw things differently:

> Unfortunately, D.S.'s opinions, tho' held with a stiff obstinacy, do not show much coherence. What he wanted done in Kenya changed from one moment to another, as Sidney danced him through a complicated maze of pros and cons. From insisting on a High Commissioner with the powers of an Indian Viceroy over the Governors of the 3 East African territories [Kenya, Uganda and Tanganyika] he jumped to a High Commissioner who would be strictly limited to the management of the technical services under the direction of the said Governors, and ended up by falling back on the status quo--the last resort of man who cannot make up his mind! . . .[27]

No matter who was right and who mistaken, the idea throughout the entire affair is quite clear. Leonard meant it when he said that he had affection for the Webbs, and the Webbs reciprocated in admiring Leonard. Virginia was a different story. She did not really care for Beatrice, and Beatrice did not feel at ease with her. We have seen in an earlier chapter how great the similarities were between the backgrounds and family lives

[26] Ibid., p. 224.

[27] Ibid., p. 233.

of the two women. This, coupled with the instinctive recognition of one neurotic for another[28] may have resulted in the mutual repulsion of two very forceful and very alike personalities. Beatrice could probably afford to treat Virginia with consideration, since she was the stronger of the two, and did not feel threatened by the relationship. Virginia, however, felt the disparity (as she saw it) between them very keenly, and reacted defensively. In her diary for February 27th, 1926 she wrote: "Mrs. Webb's book has made me think a little what I could say of my onw life. . . . But there were causes in her life: prayer; principle. None in mine".[29] Here, Virginia is downgrading herself quite unnecessarily--her work in literature amounted to a cause in itself--but thoroughly, in the manner of a child seeking reassurance. Her comment on prayer for Beatrice is interesting, since Beatrice did not emphasize it particularly in her writing. It may be fair to assume that she did return to that point in conversation, however, since it is also mentioned by James Strachey, Bertrand Russell, and Kingsley Martin. Virginia had no religion, although she needed one. Only Sidney, and perhaps Leonard, were stable enough to do without.

In spite of all the fundamental disagreements between them during the years from 1913 until Virginia's death, the basic

[28]Leonard Woolf points out in Beginnining Again (p. 115) that Beatrice was "highly strung and neurotic", and Virginia's neuroses are very well known.

[29]Virginia Woolf, A Writer's Diary, p. 88.

respect between the two couples continued unabated. Virginia may have been overawed by Beatrice, but she was not crushed by her. In October, 1939, more than twenty-six years after their initial encounter, Virginia was writing in her diary that "We are asked to lunch with Mrs. Webb, who so often talks of us".[30] The next sentence reads: "And my hand seems as tremulous as an aspen", but although the antecedents are not clear, it does not appear to be Beatrice who is the cause of Virginia's tremor. Virginia was at that time occupied with finishing her biography of Roger Fry, and the pressures upon her were intense. In the end, even Virginia's suicide revealed a relationship with Beatrice, who had for some time been speculating on what she called V.W.L. or "Voluntary Withdrawal from Life". The news of Virginia's demise only strngthened her opinion that V.W.L. was the correct path to take, but she was unable to persuade Sidney of this and so made no attempt herself. Since she was 83 at this time, the question was largely academic anyway.

As the opening paragraphs of this chapter and Chapter I indicated, the Webb-Woolf relationship was the most important of all of the Bloomsbury contacts with the Webbs. It was important first because the Woolfs were Bloomsbury, and second, because the great similarity between Beatrice and Virginia illustrated so well the divergent paths which like minds could take away from Victorianism. Much of the awareness of the Webbs which diffused through Bloomsbury obviously came through the medium

[30] Ibid., p. 295.

of the Woolfs and it would be very difficult indeed to describe Bloomsbury and Virginia correctly without mentioning Beatrice Webb. No matter how Virginia tried to dissociate herself from the grey views she felt that Beatrice held, she could never get away from the association of Webb and Woolf in the minds of others. Even to-day that association continues. Raymond Mortimer, author and critic, in an interview for the B.B.C., illustrated well what impact such concepts have. In answer to the question, "What do you remember most vividly, or struck you most forcibly, about Virginia's appearance?" he replied,

> Well, it was the extreme refinement and something ascetic too. Almost like that of an abbess--in the seventeenth or eighteenth century perhaps. Oddly I felt the same way about Mrs. Sidney Webb.[31]

Virginia couldn't win.

[31]Raymond Mortimer, in Recollections of Virginia Woolf; ed. Joan Russell Noble (New York: William Morrow, 1972), p. 168.

Chapter VI

Conclusion

These, then, were the relationships between Beatrice Webb and Bloomsbury. Often fragile and infrequent in the physical sense, they were, nonetheless, important to the Group, to literature, and to England. In the long run, with certain significant exceptions, the physical relationships were not the ones which mattered anyway. As should have become clear by now, the relationships which counted most were those involving Beatrice's ideas, the changing social structure of the country, and the fiercely individualistic minds of the Bloomsbury Group members. No physical contact was required to transmit vital influence from one to the other.

The fact of the influence of Webbian ideas on Britain is not in question. That has been very clearly expressed by Philip Guedalla:

> That is why one owes to Mr. and Mrs. Webb a double (or perhaps one should say, in addressing this familiar dual personality, a quadruple) debt of gratitude for anticipating by a few years the constitution-making of the English Revolution and getting us successfully past it. Now we can go straight to the Terror.[1]

Guedalla's tongue-in-cheek words are doubly appropriate to this study, for not only do they indicate the Webb influence, they describe accurately the attitude which some Bloomsbury members

[1]Philip Guedalla, Masters and Men (New York: G.P. Putnam Sons, 1923), p. 72.

adopted towards that influence. Clive Bell, for instance, was quite certain that there was a reign of Terror. We have already seen how Clive felt constrained to bring up Beatrice's name not once, but many times, in most pejorative fashion, in his writings. This was not the action of one who had met her only once and did not like her; it was the action of one who felt himself surrounded and suffocated by her ideas and was struggling wildly to escape. Others, of course, were quite in consonance with Beatrice's ideas for social reform, and supported them. Leonard Woolf, James Strachey and Gerald Shove may have differed with her in detail, but certainly not in scope.

The point of this study, however, was to indicate not only those ways in which the Webbs may have affected the Bloomsbury Group, but the reverse process as well. Influential relationships are often two-way paths, and those between Beatrice and Bloomsbury certainly fell into this category. In spite of the fact that Virginia said that the Webbs couldn't be influenced about Kenya, they were influenced. Beatrice's diaries make that clear. Beatrice did listen to the conceited young men of Cambridge. She deliberately set out to attract the young Leonard Woolf, and having caught him in her web she listened with respect to his advice and induced him to produce reports of value to the nation. She was happy to absorb economic theory from John Maynard Keynes, and to discuss religion with Virginia. Forster's A Passage to India may have caught her fancy because of the emphasis on matters spiritual, but we

cannot doubt that her diary entries on native rights expressed in 1930 must have been influenced by Dr. Aziz, Professor Godbole and Ronny Heaslop in 1924. In this way, the feedback from young intellectuals who had in many ways developed in an aura of social reform for which she was largely responsible gave Beatrice the opportunity to reassess both the efficacy of her own plans for future governments and her estimate of the worth of humanity. Unfortunately, it is evident from her feelings towards Clive and the ultra-fringe Aldous Huxley that her opinion of humanity was not altered for the better.

Those who insist that influence upon literary people must produce evidence of literary results should bear in mind that influence may be negative rather than positive. We have already seen that there were faint echoes of Beatrice throughout the works of Virginia, but what about the strong currents which Beatrice generated in other members' works which ran counter to her ideas? Both E.M. Forster and T.S. Eliot, who was considerably beyond the fringe, fought against the grey world they saw the Webbs creating. When we consider that the Bloomsberries were very convivial people who loved social intercourse and good companionship, it is hard to imagine them willing to follow to any extent someone who clung to

> . . . that conception of social intercourse once expressed at Stanway by Mrs. Sidney Webb to--of all people in the world--Arthur Balfour. "Don't you agree with me, Mr. Balfour, that the only excuse for a dinner party is that it should end in a committee?"[2]

[2]Cynthia Asquith, Haply I May Remember (New York: Charles Scribner's, 1950), p. 14.

Future investigators may find it convenient to divide the Bloomsbury Group into two factions: those who liked Beatrice Webb, and those who hated her. In either case, the influence is plain.

One final note: this study opened with the point that the period of the first growth and flowering of the Bloomsbury Group was one of very great social flux, and that Beatrice was vitally involved in the changes that were being made. Symptomatic of the flux were two violent forces: militant feminism, which culminated in the suffragette movement, and revolutionary anarchism, which threatened to destroy all that was understood by the rule of Law. It was a period of mass xenophobia in England, marked by the hunting-down of two foreign "anarchists" in the "Siege of Sidney Street" in 1911[3] and by the force-feedings, jail sentences and physical abuses of militant suffragettes. Both forces dissipated quietly in the face of war in 1914, but not before they had left their mark on the Bloomsbury Group. The rights of women became the particular province of Virginia Woolf, and association with anarchists that of David Garnett. That this was a crisis period was not lost on any of the participants. In Virginia's case, the result was A Room of One's Own, Three Guineas, and "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown", in which she assigns a change in human character to December, 1910. Clive Bell and Roger Fry were busy at the same

[3]For an account of this see J.B. Priestley, The Edwardians (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), pp. 200-202.

time changing art, and Lytton Strachey was preparing to change biography. Beatrice was simply carrying on with her self-imposed task of changing the world, and there is every reason to believe that her involvement extended to the roots of the Bloomsbury Group itself. She was, after all, a reference point for them, a reference point to Victorianism, to social involvement, to feminine success, and to the true value of a room of one's own. In the words of Lord Beveridge,

> The Webbs had time as well as brains for thought. They had social contact also with Cabinet Ministers; they could entertain the owners of power to dinner. They owed both things--time for thought and social contact with the powerful--to Beatrice's possession of £1,000 a year inherited from her father. Where will the next generation of young reformers find their Webbs?[4]

[4]Lord Beveridge, Power and Influence (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1953), p. 70.

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