book for a synthesis of Dryden's philosophical ideas, from earliest to latest works. And he must be referred to Professor Bredvold's *The Intellectual Milieu of John Dryden* for a more coherent exposition of Dryden's thought in relation to its setting. The present book does have virtues, but not on the order of the two above.

I suggest that Dryden's poem is rooted not in day-to-day political events, but in old and tenaciously held philosophies. In politics as in poetry Dryden followed Ben Jonson, especially as Jonson's political vision is expressed in "To Penshurst." It is in this remarkable poem that "Absalom and Achitophel" has its ideological roots: in "To Penshurst" we see expressed the love for a native English social tradition which is "ancient" and "reverenced"; the sense of a nearly mystical organic union in the range of creation from its orchards, fish, birds and kine through the "farmer," to the "great lord" and king; the intense respect for "the mysteries of manners, arms, and arts" which, in the later poem, are threatened by commerce, revolution, and unsanctified wealth. If "To Penshurst" describes a world which is linked by Christian unity, a kind of miniature cosmos secure from the flow of history, Dryden's great work differs profoundly in its sense of the uneasy equipoise in the poet's culture. The cosmological principles of politics have by now been subjected to enormous strains by the Restoration no less than the Revolution. It is not only the surge of party interest which concerns Dryden: he is far more obsessed with the powerful attacks of human nature itself on the polity. "Natural instinct" is something of which Dryden is contemptuous in politics as in poetry. His work is a defense of natural law and of tradition, and his toryism is only a vehicle for this defense. He defends the idea of kingship while he maintains a properly equivocal attitude toward Charles. The "vigorous warmth" of the king is praised only ironically; it is connected to the "warm excesses" of the royal bastard, to the "raging fevers" of the mob, and to the "fiery" turbulence of Achitophel. All are of a piece, and point to Dryden's angry and tragic sense of the passionate individual will destroying the polity.

Whether in this poem about the 1670's or in the great range of his works Dryden's sense of history was impressive. His works are a great review of the seventeenth century, a criticism of far more than literary scope. And they are an affirmation as well of the central tradition of Humanism. He brought to his time not only the rhetoric of classicism but an overriding sense of proportion. He demonstrated that art served a moral and intellectual purpose. When he wrote in the last weeks of his life "We hope much better of the coming age," he could look back on a career which had largely prepared for the peace of the Augustans. Eliot's opinion is surely borne out: Dryden was a man of his age and better, of his civilization.

Reviewed by R. S. Berman

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*Nineteenth Century Unrealism*


At a coffee table in a faculty lounge, a young mathematician recently described to me the professional activity of physicists: "Scientific theories are not about the real nature of the world, they are explanations of the movements of needles." Morse Peckham's book surveys nineteenth century art
(literature, painting, music) in terms of this epistemology in order to explain how such an epistemology came to be.

As prologue, Professor Peckham defines the problems of the historian. The historian is not talking about the past; rather, he talks about documents and relics. Furthermore, he talks about them in terms of an orientation, which is part of the historian, not part of the documents and relics. This orientation determines what the documents and relics seem to be. Victimized by the drive toward orientation, that is, by the desire for order and value — Professor Peckham seems to regard them as equivalent, certainly inseparable — victimized by his desire for value, the historian erroneously attributes his orientation to the data rather than to himself, and thereby creates a quite non-existent past.

The historian, acting thus, resembles Western man before the Enlightenment, except that his predecessor had two orientations, Hebraic and Greek, which disagreed as to whether order and value existed in time or out of it. The drive toward reality finally made man aware of this discrepancy, and in the Enlightenment he attempted to find a reasonable solution. When the French Revolution showed his failure to find a socially viable solution, and order, value, and therefore identity were lost, the modern age had begun.

The body of Professor Peckham's book cannot be summarized adequately. It traces, through four major stages and some subdivisions, the efforts of nineteenth century artists to develop a satisfactory understanding of the relationship between order (orientation), value, the self (identity), and the world (ultimately, the world as experienced by the senses, since other approaches are mere expressions of an orientative preference). The final, satisfactory understanding (itself an orientation), is Nietzsche's. The self creates value by exerting itself (joyously) in successive orientations. The artists discussed enroute to this conclusion include forty-three poets, novelists, philosophers, painters, and musicians named in the table of contents.

The book is thus an ambitious undertaking, and one would like to give the author credit for a noble effort at understanding the past. Unfortunately, the author will not accept this credit; he has presented not what may be the truth about the past, but an instrument for the comprehension of documents. Since this instrument, although it includes the word reality, ultimately denies the possibility of knowledge of any reality outside the self, verification is presumably impossible. So, too, is disproof, which the reviewer will therefore not attempt (with a sigh of relief for his own inadequacy).

The arguments against historical verity, however, deserve scrutiny. For example, Professor Peckham argues that we cannot be convinced that Booth shot Lincoln, because the historian "cannot predict that Booth will shoot Lincoln . . ." (Some might find such a prediction reason in itself to doubt the historian.) "... or that, affirming a law of regular recurrence, some patriot or madman will shoot our next president." History, he says, is thus not science, which predicts. But physics itself, in the statistical method, does not predict what one photon will do; what is more, the Heisenberg principle of indeterminacy states that such an individual prediction or determination is a theoretical and practical impossibility. Peckham is thus wrong about not only history, but also science, when he says, "... since he [the historian] is proceeding on the basis of real though inaccessible events, surely the patterns he discovers have the same reliability as those events which together go to form the patterns." But that the South lost the Civil War is in fact more certain than any event in it, just as the explosion of a hydrogen bomb is more certain than what
happens to any molecule in it, and just as the actuarial tables are more certain than the longevity of any policy holder.

One may note, in addition, an interesting reflexiveness to the instrument offered. Since orientations determine perceptions, Professor Peckham offers an orientation as an instrument: to wit, that orientations determine perceptions. With this instrument, the nineteenth century may be seen as a hard-won acceptance of the concept that orientations determine perceptions. This simplification is gross, but, I think, legitimate. In many of the specific discussions, it is hard to tell whether Professor Peckham is offering evidence, or incorporating details. He regards the latter, incorporating details, as the only possibility. The reader who asks, "Must this detail be so understood? or should it probably be so understood? or can it just barely be so understood?" has a difficult task. The cause of this difficulty is an equation of what is being proved (a non-Peckham term) with what is proving it, an equation of the instrument with the data, of the orientation with the documents. This is surprising in a book which states, paraphrasing Nietzsche with approval, "... an instrument is necessarily other than the object it manipulates."

The book is a difficult one, and although often stimulating and informative, could perhaps have been clearer. One sentence among many that I grasped syntactically but not conceptually was, "From Jean Paul Friedrich Richter he [Schumann] learned how late Enlightenment sentimentalism could be transformed into nineteenth-century imaginative fantasy by using it to symbolize the symmetrical idealism of the century's first decades." Occasionally, an obscure statement is clarified later; thus: Wagner, in The Ring, is saying that man can live without Mephistopheles. Since everyone but the Rhine maidens dies, this statement requires explanation. The explanation occurs fourteen pages later: "It is the self, embodied in the music [italics mine] that endures even though society and the hero have both been destroyed . . . ."

The title states Nietzsche's location. Tragic orientation, per Peckham, is that man is inadequate to life; comic orientation is that man is adequate. Nietzsche's orientation is that life is irreconcilable opposites: he therefore is beyond both the tragic reconciliation (inadequacy) and the comic reconciliation (adequacy).

Tragedy is thus rejected because "tragedy reconciles us to life by persuading us to submit to it." This is the lowest level at which Aristotle's definition of tragedy may be understood, and is not the definition of such contemporaries as Richard B. Sewall or Arthur Miller. Sewall's definition of tragedy, assertion of the reality of evil without denying the value of good, actually is Nietzsche's orientation, except that Nietzsche (and Peckham) have removed the objective reality.

Loss of reality is serious. To admit the uncertainty of one's knowledge is one thing; to deny that one is trying to know is another. In conclusion, then, I must take issue not with the sometimes illuminating specifics of this book, but with Professor Peckham's general position: "Is it true? But that is the wrong question." It is the right question, and it matters. My mathematical friend at the coffee table would have trouble convincing the survivors of Hiroshima that the physicist's theories about little needles do not reflect the real world in which living people were truly disintegrated in an actual past that is remembered too seldom by too few.

Reviewed by C. Carter Colwell