

Lytton Strachey's disparaging views on the spirituality and thought of Florence Nightingale, A Meta-Critique

SUNWALL, Mark R.

Abstract

During the Edwardian (early 20th century British) reaction to Victorian (mid to late 19th century British) culture Lytton Strachey (1880-1932) wrote his classic biographical sketches of influential and powerful persons of the previous century, entitling this collection *Eminent Victorians*. Strachey wrote about four people : Thomas Arnold (1795-1842) an educator, Henry Manning (1808-1892) a priest, Florence Nightingale (1820-1910) a nurse and social reformer, and George Gordon (1833-1885) a soldier. In his mind, as well as that of many of his contemporaries, the Victorian era was characterized by excessive moral severity and required criticism. In some ways Strachey's views are understandable reactions to the excesses of the past. However this critical attitude reveals its limitations when applied to Florence Nightingale, the lone woman of the anthology and in some ways the most psychologically complicated as well. This paper explains how Strachey's criticism of Nightingale seems to be centered on her religious views, and the way in which her spirituality impacted her morality. He himself was an atheist, and a spokesman for a literary and aesthetic sect, the Bloomsbury Group, which espoused religious skepticism and philosophical naturalism. His biographical essay does not refute any of Nightingale's ideas or policies using logical arguments. Rather, Strachey, who was basically a literary man, not a historian or a social scientist, uses clever rhetoric to ridicule Nightingale. Therefore he doesn't prove that his ideas are better than Nightingale's, or even clearly articulate what his own ideas are. Instead, he tries to get his readers to adopt his own attitudes by writing a story which will make them see Nightingale and the other Victorians in an unflattering light. None the less, in this paper, by investigating the works of Strachey and other Bloomsbury thinkers it is determined what their own ideas actually were, and these are compared to the dominant ideas of the Victorian period. In such an objective comparison it is not clear that the ideas advocated by the Bloomsbury group were always an improvement on the ideas of the Victorians in general and Florence Nightingale in particular.

Key words : Florence Nightingale ; Lytton Strachey ; Ethics ; Theology ; Victorian society

1. Strachey's Aim and Methods

During the Edwardian (early 20th century) reaction to Victorian culture Lytton Strachey (1880-1932) wrote his classic biographical sketches of influential and powerful persons of the previous century, entitling this collection *Eminent Victorians*. Strachey originally intended the biographies to be more comprehensive, but considerations of time and effort forced him to limit his treatment to four people: Thomas Arnold (1795-1842), Henry Manning (1808-1892), Florence Nightingale (1820-1910), and George Gordon (1833-1885). In Strachey's mind, as well as that of many of his contemporaries, the Victorian era was characterized by excessive moral severity and required criticism. In some ways Strachey's views are understandable reactions to the excesses of the past. However this critical attitude reveals its limitations when applied to Florence Nightingale, the lone woman of the anthology and in some ways the most psychologically complicated as well. Since Strachey is generally sympathetic to many of Nightingale's aims, for example the professionalization of nursing, the progress of women in the workplace, and the reform of military and civil bureaucracies, it is important to locate the aspect of Nightingale's life which draws out his ire. As will be explained subsequently, Strachey's criticism of Nightingale seems to be centered on her religious views, and the way in which her spirituality impacted her morality. Strachey himself was an atheist, and a spokesman for a literary and aesthetic sect, the Bloomsbury Group, which espoused religious skepticism and philosophical naturalism.

Strachey never makes a clear argument which sets Nightingale's spirituality against his own naturalistic world view. Rather, he sets out to diminish her respect in the eyes of the reader through irony and innuendo. Since Nightingale is an attractive character, and the lone female of the set which

otherwise includes Arnold, Manning and Gordon, her biographical sketch is the section of *Eminent Victorians* most vulnerable to criticism. None the less, Strachey is unrelenting in his goal, which is to convince the reader that 19th century British moralism was driven by a false objectivism which rendered its advocates harsh, aggressive and judgmental. He makes no exception in the case of Nightingale.

Strachey clearly announces the way that he intends to treat Nightingale at the very beginning of the essay.

Every one knows the popular conception of Florence Nightingale. The saintly, self-sacrificing woman, the delicate maiden of high degree who threw aside the pleasures of a life of ease to succor the afflicted, the Lady with the Lamp, gliding through the horrors of the hospital at Scutari, and consecrating with the radiance of her goodness the dying soldier's couch—the vision is familiar to all. But the truth is different. The Miss Nightingale of fact was not as facile fancy painted her. She worked in another fashion, and towards another end; she moved under the stress of an impetus which finds no place in the popular imagination. A Demon possessed her. Now demons, whatever else they may be, are full of interest. And it so happens that in the real Miss Nightingale there was more that was interesting than in the legendary one; there was also less that was agreeable.¹

This paragraph may be considered a summary of Strachey's attitude toward Nightingale and his plan of attack for the essay, the only thing that remains is for him to fill in the contents of her biography and give it an ironic slant. In doing so, Strachey succeeds in creating one of the most interesting biographies in English literature, for it is certainly true that critical biography is far more entertaining

than hagiographies which simply praise their subjects as perfect saints. Naturally, Strachey has plenty of embarrassing material to work with, since Nightingale had many flaws and failures. However Strachey's moral posturing as an enlightened post-Victorian fighting against prejudice is just as much of an illusion as "the perfect Nightingale" since Strachey has his own prejudices.

A contemporary reader of Strachey's essay might wonder what possible disagreement Strachey might have with Nightingale. After all Strachey was not a nurse, a social activist, or a statistician, and Nightingale was not a literary critic. However it is not Strachey and Nightingale as individuals who are in conflict, but two comprehensive world-views in collision. In this paper we will designate one the Victorian and the other the Bloomsbury view. Again it might be objected that the Bloomsbury group was a literary and esthetic movement, not a comprehensive philosophy or world view. Later we will see that due to the foundational influence of its leading thinker, J. M. Keynes (1883-1946), the Bloomsbury group not only had a comprehensive philosophy but also impacted British and world society in a significant way.

The fundamental conflict between these world views is also obscured by the method which Strachey uses to promote his aims and values at the expense of the Victorians. As a literary critic, his biographies are almost exclusively works of rhetorical persuasion rather than dialectical argumentation. Richard Weaver explained the difference between these two methods of influencing listeners and readers.

Dialectic is abstract reasoning on the basis of propositions ; rhetoric is the relation of the terms of these to the existential world in which facts are regarded with sympathy and are treated with that kind of historical understanding and appreciation which lie outside the dialectical process...Dialectic must

*be regarded as the counterpart in expression in language of the activity of science.*²

Like all masters of rhetorical persuasion, Strachey sets out with a realistic estimate of his readers' attitude toward the subject at hand. He acknowledges that most readers, both in Edwardian England and abroad, will have a favorable understanding of Nightingale and her accomplishments. He also estimates that their knowledge of Nightingale will be shallow and romantic. On this basis he is able to make the plausible suggestion that they are mistaken in their general understanding, in other words

*The truth is different*¹

Which of course it is bound to be, since real lives seldom, if ever, follow the pattern of a typical hagiography, the tale of a perfect saint. However Strachey moves on to make the radical claim

*A Demon possessed her.*¹

With these words Strachey announces his basic attitude in this critical essay. It will not only be "critical" in the technical sense of a scientific evaluation, but in the popular sense of criticism which uncovers faults, since it is hard to imagine any context in which "demon possession" has a favorable meaning.

Strachey, as a naturalist and atheist, has no room for demons in his world view (neither did Nightingale the theologian) so the reader is expected to understand that "demon possession" is a metaphor for some phenomenon related to Nightingale's mind and/or behavior. A clue is provided in the previous sentence which states that

*She worked under an impetus which finds no place in the popular imagination.*¹

And Strachey would seem to be supplying the "popular imagination" with an image, that of the demonic, which somehow approximates "an impetus" which he is otherwise incapable of defining or else reluctant to make more explicit. A diligent reader of *Eminent Victorians* will search

the “Nightingale” biography in vain for a clear discussion and evaluation of the impetus in question. This is only to be expected in a work which relies on rhetorical persuasion rather than dialectical argumentation to influence its reader. Strachey wants to adjust the reader to his point of view through the use of entertaining innuendo rather than reason, so that at the conclusion the reader will have a tacit notion of what Nightingale’s “impetus” was and be able to concur with Strachey that it is something which is not entirely “agreeable.”

Putting together Strachey’s world-view and Strachey’s writing, one can be fairly certain that the “impetus” in question is a judgmental attitude. Other possibilities would be that Strachey was accusing her of being a hysteric, a typical accusation of males towards 19c. females. However nothing in Nightingale’s biography, even in Strachey’s version, indicates hysteria. In fact, Strachey, as a representative of the newly emerging 20th century’s emotional expressionism would be more likely to take offence at Nightingale’s rationalism. Another, more plausible identification, is that the impetus represents Nightingale’s power drive. Here again, it is important to note that Strachey does not entirely disapprove of the drive for power, even, or perhaps especially (Strachey was a proto-feminist) in the case of a woman. What Strachey disapproves of is moralism, and the necessity of cloaking the operations of the power drive in what he deems the illusions of morality. One might go so far as to say that Strachey’s attitude towards Nightingale’s accomplishments are essentially commendatory. Where Strachey takes issue with Nightingale is in her own interpretation of her motivations, motivations which were essentially religious.

Indeed, much of the rhetorical power of *Eminent Victorians*, comes from an ironical inversion of religious terms and images. For example, the final page of Manning’s biography concludes with a

description of the giant cardinal’s hat which decorated “his eminence’s” tomb, an image which hints broadly to the reader that the goal of Manning’s existence was not heaven but political power and prestige. Likewise Strachey’s rhetorical inversion of “the Angel of the Crimea” into a creature “possessed by a demon” serves the double purpose of ridiculing religious imagery while hinting at something sinister, an “impetus” which drove Nightingale to seemingly heroic acts.

That the impetus is Nightingale’s drive to make moral judgments can be substantiated by one of the most striking images contained in Strachey’s account of her life. At the height of her career Nightingale receives a brooch from the Queen and the Prince Consort and Strachey’s description is as follows,

*The brooch, which was designed by the Prince Consort, bore a St. George’s cross in red enamel, and the Royal cipher surmounted by diamonds. The whole was encircled by the inscription, “Blessed are the Merciful.”*¹

This inscription is highlighted by Strachey as an ironic counterpoint to some of the harsh treatment which Nightingale dealt to colleagues and antagonists, both prior to and after the award. Here again Strachey is attempting an inversion of religious terms, analogous to the substitution of ‘demon’ for ‘angel.’ In this case he is relying on the reader to understand that the twin attributes of God are judgment and mercy. Nightingale is portrayed as an image of God by her enthusiasts, as being blessed because of her mercy. But Strachey subverts this image by showing up Nightingale in a bad light, as for example in her harsh judgment of Sydney Herbert’s failings, just prior to his death.

Strachey’s innuendo is deliberate. Instead of directly accusing Nightingale of being judgmental, he writes about her failings in a circumspect tone. Thus he attains, at least at the rhetorical level, the cherished objective of all moral relativists, which is

to condemn moral judgments without appearing to be making a judgment oneself. Strachey's imagery and indirectness allow the reader to form his or her own conclusions on the matter. However if they follow Strachey's tacit lead, they will infer that yes, Nightingale was motivated by a desire to imitate God, but not in the "agreeable" aspect of mercy.

As a writer of a critical essay Strachey has numerous targets aside from Nightingale, for example the British army, politicians in general, and the fawning masses of Victorian England just to mention a few. However his ultimate targets are morality and religion, and to get at these he must go through Nightingale's reputation, since she was seen as an exemplar and expositor of both. Furthermore, while the implication of "judgemental" contained in Strachey's essay refers to excessive, harsh, or faulty judgements, it is certainly true that Nightingale did not shy away from making judgments, nor did she feel that making judgments in itself was a bad thing.

Strachey as a thinker and a representative of the Bloomsbury group is constantly engaged in making his own judgments, but these judgments are based on values which are at variance with the basis of Nightingale's judgments. On what basis does Strachey, or rather the Bloomsbury philosophy in general, claim that his judgments are mild, natural, and hardly judgments at all, while those of Nightingale are harsh and puritanical? The best way to understand this antithesis is to compare the Bloomsbury ethos with the theological and philosophical underpinnings of Nightingale's thought.

2. Strachey's Thought and the Bloomsbury Group

The ethos of objective morality began to be challenged by the beginning of the 20th century, and Lytton Strachey's Bloomsbury Group would be among

the early adaptors of the new subjectivism. Later on in the 20th and 21st century, this general tendency towards lawless subjectivity would break out in a profusion of sects and schools. each with their own name and genealogy: existentialism, nihilism, perspectivism, relativism, and most recently post-modernism. However the Bloomsbury groups own moniker for the new way of thought was charmingly candid: Immoralism. The Bloomsbury group's distinctive philosophy emphasized esthetic freedom, sexual experimentation, and the conviction that the pleasures of private life were preferable to public service.

Since the point of view that Strachey uses to criticize Nightingale is not neutral, it becomes of overriding importance to understand what this view is, and whence it came from. Strachey himself was a wordsmith and a critic, not an original thinker, so we can dispense with any idea that his criticism of Nightingale (and others) comes from principles which he discovered on his own. In general, he is considered a spokesperson for the opinions of the Bloomsbury group, which group was heavily influenced by the philosophy of G. E. Moore (1873-1958). However any elements of Moor's philosophy that may have reached Strachey were in fact mediated through Strachey's interaction with a much more influential person, John Maynard Keynes. He was the true theorist of the Bloomsbury group, and any conclusions concerning their ideology have to take his thought into account. Since Keynes is usually thought of as an economist rather than a philosopher, it is revealing to see the assessment made of him by another philosophical economist, who like Keynes began swimming against the current of mainstream society. Murray Rothbard (1926-1995), in many ways the ideological antithesis of Keynes, provides such an assessment in his biography of the former, *Keynes the Man*. With regard to what extent Bloomsbury ideology was

philosophical “Keynesianism” rather than philosophical “Moorism” Rothbard reveals the following,

*.. Keynes and his friends were attracted not so much to Moore's doctrine itself as to the particular interpretation and twist they gave to the doctrine. Despite their enthusiasm, Keynes and his friends accepted only what they held to be Moore's personal ethics. (i. e., what they called Moore's "religion") while they totally rejected his social ethics (i. e., what they called his "morals").*³

Instead of risking the reader's disapproval of this Moore/Keynes hybrid philosophy, Strachey left his premises unstated and thus made his criticism of Nightingale both plausible and irrefutable through avoidance of dialectical argumentation. The readers of the essays contained in *Eminent Victorians* come away with the feeling that the leaders of 19th century Britain were both foolish and wrongheaded. They have never been asked by the author to weigh the merits of the famous Victorians' ideologies against contrary assertions provided by Strachey, rather, all they have been given is circumstantial evidence. This of course is deliberate, since if Strachey can make a convincing case using innuendo he doesn't have to risk losing arguments against intelligent opponents, either living or dead. Strachey, through rhetorical means, has succeeded in making his Bloomsbury ideology incommensurable with Victorian doctrines, thus precluding any impartial evaluation of the merits of each. As the 20th century's leading philosopher of science, Karl Popper (1902-1994), might have put it if he had considered the issue, Bloomsbury's subjective immoralism rendered itself “non-falsifiable”... no amount of criticism could disprove its vague assertions. However, at least Strachey didn't claim that his opinions constituted a “science” of anything.

But it is otherwise with Keynes who was openly ideological in his thoughts and writings. Unlike later

variants of modernist and post-modernist moral subjectivism, Keynes did not try to conceal his views under some compromising label such as “the new morality,” but boldly proclaimed himself and his Bloomsbury colleagues as “immoralists.” In his biography of Keynes Murray Rothbard quotes the former in his own words.

*In our opinion one of the greatest advantages of his [Moore's] religion is that it made morals unnecessary... we entirely repudiated a personal liability on us to obey general rules. We claimed the right to judge every individual case on its merits, and the wisdom to do so successfully. This was a very important part of our faith, violently and aggressively held, and for the outer world it was our most obvious and dangerous characteristic. We repudiated entirely customary morals, conventions and traditional wisdom. We were, that is to say, in the strict sense of the term immoralists.*³

However he also claimed to be a social scientist with objective answers to questions of policy. This has consequences for our ability to assess the relative validity of the Victorian and the Bloomsbury ways of thinking. It should be possible to compare, even in a very roundabout and non-quantitative way, the overall social effect of Nightingale's way of thinking about lawful causality, and that of Keynes. In theory we should be able to pose and answer the question “Which is more beneficial to society, a policy of moralism or immoralism?”

Lest anyone think this is an obvious question, it should be remembered that it is the policies of Keynes which have guided the governments of the developed world through the 20th and into the 21st centuries. We now have ample data to see the effects of policies which penalize savings and result in misallocation of capital. By way of contrast, the influence of Nightingale's reforms on the economies

of the developed world, though impossible to measure, would surely constitute a net gain. Of course this is hardly a scientific conclusion, to paraphrase Nightingale's it is little more than a "suggestion for thought." However it has enough plausibility to cast doubt on Strachey's assumption that he won his battle against, at least all of, the Victorians.

Keeping the primacy of Keynes in mind, we can see that behind the fuzzy and allegedly non-judgmental rhetoric of Strachey is an objective ideology which makes sweeping judgments on the complete spectrum of social and metaphysical issues. It is simply a matter of these judgments being opposed to those of the Victorians. Therefore, gleaning the scattered points of argument from the rhetorical campaign of Strachey against the Victorians, and attempting to put them into clear antitheses, suggests the following chart.

Victorians	
Vs. <i>Bloomsbury</i>	
Psychological	
future-orientation	
<i>present-orientation</i>	
Fiscal/Economic	
low-timepreference/saving	
<i>high-timepreference/consumption</i>	
Moral	
duty	
<i>pleasure</i>	
Epistemological	
rational	
<i>emotive</i>	
Metaphysical	
determinism	
<i>voluntarism</i>	
Theological	
theistic (with dissent)	
<i>predominance of atheism</i>	

Sexual

repressive

expressive

In common parlance the connotation of "Victorian" as a term of ridicule is restricted to the last antithesis, indicating that in this universally appealing area the development of the modern Western, and now globalist, cultural consensus has followed the lead of the Bloomsbury group. However a meta-critical consideration of Strachey's work reveals troubling indicators that post-Victorian thinking may have, along with the onerous burden of sexual repression, abandoned some other essential requisites of economic and social stability.

3. The Philosophical and Theological Foundations of Nightingale's thought according to Strachey and herself

Nightingale's religious and philosophical thinking was a surprising combination of experiential mysticism and doctrinal rationalism. Strachey mocks her for having religious experiences and aspirations which would seem abnormal or eccentric to the average reader. At the beginning of the essay he compares Nightingale to two other women who today are only known to historical specialists, and who would have been somewhat arcane to even the average Edwardian reader of Strachey's day.

...but unto what state of life had it pleased God to call her? That was the question. God's calls are many, and they are strange. Unto what state of life had it pleased Him to call Charlotte Corday, or Elizabeth of Hungary? What was that secret voice in her ear if not a call? ¹

These rhetorical questions posed by Strachey are difficult to understand without some historical background. Charlotte Corday (18th c. French Revolutionary period) and Elizabeth of Hungary

(12th c.) share little except being women who's visionary callings led them into peril and persecution. A more recognizable example of the same "type" for contemporary readers might be Jean d'Arc. The atheistic and secular Strachey seems to imply through these comparisons that while it may be one's perfect right to go mad with religious experiences, one must be prepared to suffer the consequences by ending up as a tragic figure.

Strachey, as a representative of early 20th century expressionism and subjectivism, does not condemn religious experience as such. After all, he was supportive of the far more morbid, but secular, expressionism of his Bloomsbury colleague, Virginia Woolf. The cause of Strachey's patronizing and sarcastic attitude towards Nightingale's religious sentiments is explained by the fact that these sentiments were connected to objective theological and ethical doctrines. It is important to remember that Nightingale's religious life had two aspects. On the one hand there was an experiential mysticism which characterized her early attraction to Catholicism and certain monastic variants of Protestantism. On the other hand there was the rationalistic and philosophical revision of Christian doctrine which began to take up her attention in mid-life, and which resulted in the production of her sole theological opus in 1860, the *Suggestions for Thought for the Searchers After Truth among the Artizans of England*. Whether or not these two facets of Nightingale's spirituality were complementary or in conflict is not a question which will be examined here. Rather, it is sufficient to note that Strachey was quite aware of the difference between them, and it was the doctrine, not the experiences, which was the true object of his disapproval.

With regard to the experiential aspect, Strachey could sketch a portrait of Nightingale's spiritual state with mixed empathy and detachment.

*Yet her mind, so positive, so realistic, so ultra-practical, had its singular revulsions, its mysterious moods of mysticism and doubt. At times, lying sleepless in the early hours, she fell into long, strange, agonized meditations, and then, seizing a pencil, she would commit to paper the agonized confessions of her soul.*¹

However he reserves his most dripping sarcasm for Nightingale's theological work.

*Yet her conception of God is certainly not orthodox. She felt towards Him as she might have felt towards some glorified sanitary engineer; and in some of her speculations she hardly seems to distinguish between the Deity and the Drains. As one turns over these singular pages [of *Suggestions for Thought*] one has the impression that Miss Nightingale has got the Almighty into her clutches, and that, if He is not careful, she will kill Him with overwork.*¹

The comparison of deity and drains hints at a vulgar utilitarianism characteristic of 19th century Britain. But the mention of "overwork"... in addition to the blasphemous image of a deity who is an instrumentality of human purposes, also calls to mind the slander that Nightingale might have been responsible for the death of her friend Sydney Herbert, a possibility which was hinted at earlier in Strachey's essay.

Clearly Strachey, whatever grudging respect he may have had for Nightingale the nurse, social reformer, and scientist, had no respect for Nightingale the theologian. Quite apart from Strachey's opinion in the matter, it must be admitted that theological excellence is undoubtedly the founder of modern nursing's weakest claim to fame. First of all, she lived at a bad time to be a female theologian, or indeed a theologian of any kind. The Anglican Church of which she was a member was in the midst of

theological controversies which were destroying whatever unity, coherence, and respect it had once commanded, and she found herself allied with the Broad Church faction, a group of liberal scholars and clergy who gained rapid fame in the middle of the century, but who from the retrospect of subsequent developments in theology seem dull, uninspired, and reductionist. Religiously orthodox thinkers of her day would have had even less charitable, albeit less blasphemous, things to say about her theology than Strachey.

None the less, when we set the thought of Strachey over against the thought of Nightingale, it is not the strengths, weaknesses, or peculiarities of the latter's theology which lay at the heart of the matter. The salient factor is that Nightingale is one member of a class of thinkers who might be called moral objectivists. It was the Victorian consensus on moral objectivism which was the ultimate target of Strachey's essays. If such thinkers displayed religious tendencies, then it was all the better since Strachey could lampoon their spirituality for the amusement of his secularist colleagues. However the consensus on moral objectivity during the 19th century went far beyond explicitly religious circles. Of course it included confessional theologies like Calvinism and Thomism, but it also included the atheistic positivism of Auguste Comte and the utilitarianism of James and John Stuart Mill. Regardless of the presence or absence of theological foundations, moral objectivism was the cultural norm of the era, and the idea of "doing your own thing" or value relativism, although a perennial human attitude, had not yet been legitimized as a serious philosophical option.

Nightingale's version of moral objectivism is strongly tinged with what once used to be called "philosophical necessity"... that things are completely determined by cause and effect relations. This pertains not only to the physical

world but to the moral world as well. In Nightingale's philosophy, human beings are constrained by their nature to choose the good.

*What power will the righteous man desire with regard to the will? Is it the power to will either right or wrong? Will he not rather desire a state in which it will be in his nature to will right; in which to will wrong will be impossible to him? A mother who deserves the name does not contemplate a state of will as even possible in which it should be at her "choice" to mangle, ill treat, even starve her baby or to nurse, love and tend it. It is impossible for her to will the first, it is her nature to will only the second.*⁴

This may be determinism, but it is a rather optimistic determinism. Although one might expect that Strachey would appreciate Nightingale's liberal, albeit objective, thought, in fact he opposes it as strenuously as he opposes the religious thought of a conservative like Cardinal Manning. Again, it is not whether the source of objective constraints on human behavior is God or nature, it is any constraint at all which Strachey objects to.

Since Nightingale was, among many other things, a statistician, she was perhaps the Victorian who presented the most profound challenge to the worldview of the Bloomsbury Group. As seen from the quotation above, her view of cause and effect relations, though couched in theological language, was essentially deterministic. The future results of actions were sufficiently predictable to guide present decision making. Therefore since 1) she viewed social results (e. g., a decrease in septic conditions) as objective values, and 2) she felt the probability of future states of affairs could be inferred from a strict law of cause and effect, it followed that there was no room in her morality for arbitrary personal preferences, and that any increase in

knowledge would yield increased certitude about the correctness of any action or policy.

The Bloomsbury view was antithetical to that of Nightingale. In their view the right of personal preference and expression was the most important point of morality, and the ambiguous nature of future outcomes provided a cushion against the charge of irresponsibility. The airy estheticism of members such as Strachey and Virginia Woolf was justified on the grounds laid by Keynes in *A Treatise on Probability* (1921). Murray Rothbard states the conclusions of this treatise.

*To destroy the possibility of applying general rules to particular cases, Keynes's treatise champions the classical a priori theory of probability, where probability fractions are deduced purely by logic and have nothing to do with empirical reality.*³

Rothbard then quotes Keynes's biographer Skidelsky who points out that

Keynes's argument, then, can be interpreted as an attempt to free the individual to pursue the good... by means of egoistic actions, since he is not required to have certain knowledge

*of the probable consequences of his actions in order to act rationally. It is part, in other words, of his continuing campaign against Christian morality. It would have been appreciated by his audience although the connection is not obvious to the modern reader.*³

Nor is the connection obvious to someone who simply reads Strachey's essay on Nightingale out of context and without knowledge of the Bloomsbury group's ideology and social agenda. No doubt Nightingale's spiritualization of 19th century scientific determinism is "old fashioned" to subsequent generations which have discovered the indeterminism of quantum theory. But the initial rejection of this world-view by Strachey and like-minded radicals no longer can be seen as an innocent reaction to a restrictive era. Rather, the liberalism of the Bloomsbury group seems libertine, and a harbinger of subsequent social breakdown, while the work of Nightingale, although far from perfect, seems to be the constructive outgrowth of pure motives.

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リットン・ストレイチーによる、フローレンス・ナイチンゲールの 宗教観と思想に対しての侮辱的見解を批判する

サンワル マークR.

要 旨

英国ヴィクトリア朝時代（19世紀半ばから後半）の文化に反発した、エドワード朝時代（20世紀初め）、リットン・ストレイチー（1880-1932）は、先の時代に影響を与えた力強い人物の伝記“ヴィクトリア朝偉人伝”を書いた。彼は、トーマス・アーノルド博士（1795-1842）ヘンリー・マニング枢機卿（1808-1892）、フローレンス・ナイチンゲール（1820-1910）、ジョージ・ゴルドン将軍（1833-1885）の4名について書いている。彼の考えの中に、ヴィクトリア朝時代の極端に厳しいモラルを批判する世間の風潮に、同調しなければならない思いがあった。ある意味ストレイチーの見解は、過去の時代の過剰さに対しての可能な反発である。しかしながら、この批判的姿勢のレベルは、著書の中で唯一の女性であり、いろいろな点で複雑な精神を持つナイチンゲールに、適応するには無理がある。このエッセーの中では、道徳に基づいた精神論と宗教観を軸に、どうストレイチーのナイチンゲール批判がされたのか説明したい。彼自身は、無神論者であり、哲学的自然主義と宗教的懐疑主義を受け入れたブルームズベリー派思想の代弁者である。彼が書いた伝記は、論理的な議論で、ナイチンゲールの考え方や政策を非難するには足りない。むしろ、基本的に文化人で、歴史家でも社会学者でもないストレイチーは、ナイチンゲールをあざ笑うために、うまく言葉を操っている。しかし結果として、彼は自らの思想を明確にし、ナイチンゲールの思想より、よりよいものと証明出来たわけではない。代わりに、彼は、ヴィクトリア朝時代の偉人達とナイチンゲールに媚びない見方を読者に書いて見せ、読者を取り込んで行こうとしたのである。それにもかかわらず、このエッセーでは、ストレイチーと他のブルームズベリー派の思想家たちの作品を調べていくことで、その思想を理解し、ヴィクトリア朝時代の強い思想と比較していく。このような客観的比較においてブルームズベリー派思想が、一般的なヴィクトリア朝時代の思想、特にフローレンス・ナイチンゲールの思想より優れているとは言えないのである。

キーワード：フローレンス・ナイチンゲール、リットン・ストレイチー、倫理、神学、ヴィクトリア朝時代