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ABSTRACT

The following thesis is concerned with Samuel Johnson's authority both as a personality and as a writer. It is almost impossible to think of Johnson in terms other than those of an authority. The use of Johnsonian aphorisms to clinch an argument, as though they were imbued with inherent legitimacy, is frequent, and throughout the pages of Boswell's Life, which is the organ through which Johnson is most often revealed, his role as an authority, and in particular, a moralist, is stressed.

Johnson's authority is viewed through various aspects of his life. There are chapters on: his life as a social agent, his Dictionary, his Literary Criticism, his troubled religious life and the Rambler Essays which did more to secure him authority in his own age than any other writings.

There is a common thread working through all the chapters. It becomes quite clear that the authority which Johnson obtained was based upon his honest acceptance of his own humanity. Though this fact gave his views legitimacy, it often prevented the type of consistency of thought which we feel that we are entitled to from the pen of a serious moralist. It is this strange fact which provides the matter and the interest of this thesis.

SAMUEL JOHNSON

AUTHORITY FOR AN AGE

M.A. Thesis

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1991.

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21 APR 1992

DEDICATION

TO:

D.C.

J.P.M.

R.C.T.

JOHNSONIANS.

With Grateful Thanks To:

J.B.L.

A.S.W.

and many others.

INTRODUCTION

The following thesis is concerned with Samuel Johnson's authority both as a personality and as a writer. It is almost impossible to think of Johnson in terms other than those of an authority. The use of Johnsonian aphorisms to clinch an argument, as though they were imbued with inherent legitimacy, is frequent, and throughout the pages of Boswell's Life, which is the organ through which Johnson is most often revealed, his role as an authority, and in particular, a moralist, is stressed.

The first chapter considers his authority from a social point of view, investigating the way in which Johnson attempted to create and retain authority. This process produced strains, which are identified, and placed in the context of his desire to be loved. Johnson's views upon society are explained in terms of his need for authority, and an examination of the biographical artform clarifies our views upon the nature of the authority sought by Johnson.

The first part of the second Chapter concerns itself with the Dictionary and discusses the links between Johnson and his creation. A dictionary, more than any other literary form, seems to be an authoritative document, in that its purpose is to act as a final arbiter of right and wrong, a characteristic traditionally shared with the moralist. As

becomes clear, Johnson's Dictionary cannot be seen so simply. The second half of this chapter views Johnson's literary criticism. Johnson's attempts to create an authoritative method with which to judge literature are shown to be inadequate, whilst, paradoxically, it becomes clear that he does speak about literature with genuine authority. This is explained.

The third chapter takes an extended view of his religious life, a panorama which gives us further understanding of Johnson's authoritative struggles. The central problem seems to be that Johnson was most authoritative when speaking of God, and yet in doing so, he was creating another authority which was more powerful than his own. The troubled religious life which Johnson endured can be seen in terms of his desire for authority.

Finally, in the fourth chapter, the Rambler essays are examined. It will be found that these essays hold the key to an understanding of Johnson's authority, as it was, after all, they which secured him his position of leading moralist of the day. Curiously, the essays rarely contain a consistent moral direction, and, with examination, reveal their basis in a far more genuinely authoritative quality than at first might be imagined.

Though the attempt to gauge Johnson's authority has been made by approaching the concept from differing angles as described above, it will be found that there is a common thread working through all the chapters. It becomes quite clear that the authority which Johnson obtained was based upon his honest acceptance of his own humanity. Though this fact gave his views legitimacy, it often prevented the type of consistency of thought which we feel we are entitled to from the pen of a serious moralist. This characteristic of Johnson's has given this thesis a strange aspect in that in seeking to capture the germ of Johnson's thought, it has been led down strangely winding paths, and cannot, therefore, run in an entirely consistent direction. As readers of Johnson, we are constantly being made to adjust our focus and to turn in the opposite direction. The reader will be required, therefore, to hold many strains of thought at one and the same time, a task which may, at the outset, seem confusing. However, it will be found that once the differing foci have been held together, the thesis will approach a whole, a whole which I believe Johnson himself would have understood. Any genuine attempt to understand Johnson's thought involves a juggling of seemingly irreconcilable ideas, the whole canvas only revealing itself once the differing brushstrokes have been drawn back from and seen from afar. Like the Ramblers, the meaning of this thesis will be grasped when it is viewed as a whole, rather than in parts entire unto themselves.

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CHAPTER ONE

Johnson: The Social Authority

The name of Samuel Johnson is irreversibly linked with that of James Boswell, Johnson's famous biographer. My first task in this thesis is to justify my use of Boswell's Life of Samuel Johnson, LL.D., in my investigation into the nature of Johnson's authority. Reactions to Boswell's Life are extremely varied. G.B. Hill, in his preface to the famous 1887 edition of the work, writes that it is "the biography which of all others is the delight and boast of the English speaking world."¹ More recently Donald Greene has written that:

It is difficult to deny that, whatever title Boswell decided to give his book, the five - sixths of it purporting to describe Johnson's life during his last twenty - two years can only with the utmost courtesy be called, by modern standards, a biography, a serious attempt to provide a connected narrative of an individual's life.²

Laying aside the question as to whether a modern biographer would really accept an interpretation of



his craft so firmly based upon narrative, we note that Greene's chapter attacks Boswell on many fronts, but especially on his notion of Boswell's creation of a Johnsonian myth which says more about the biographer than his subject. He focuses upon Boswell's way of apologising for Johnson's weaknesses; Greene continues:

What we seem to have here is the well - known pattern of the disciple, the 'Candid friend', cutting down the Master, in the most reverent way of course, to a little closer to his own size, or even a little below it...³

I cannot say that this idea is particularly well known, but nevertheless, there is definitely an unearthing of a raw nerve here. Johnson is seen through the eyes of the biographer, which if we accept the concept of Boswell's relative "smallness", will entail a diminishing of the subject. But this should not, even if it can seriously be maintained, detract from the work, because a perfectly authentic biography is not possible. Biography, in its very nature, involves a dialogue between biographer and subject, (in the particular case of Boswell's creation, Johnson is very much involved with the creative forces of the work, as will be shown) as creation is essential for any art form, as indeed Johnson himself believed. He told Lord Monboddo that

he esteemed biography "...as giving us what comes near to ourselves, what we can turn to use." ⁴ and hence interpretation was almost its core. Boswell, though he did not see biography in such didactic terms, would not have been able to conceive of a biographical form which did not attempt to interpret, and indeed he would not have allowed himself the illusion that he could have seen Johnson in any other way than from his own point of view. Frank Brady, in a brilliant defence of Boswell suggests the obvious:

Boswell's aim was authenticity, not 'objectivity'. There never was nor ever can be an 'objective' Johnson; even Johnson's own view of himself, though privileged, is only one view among others.⁵

The modern and justly acclaimed biography by Walter Jackson Bate⁶ is a view of Johnson seen in terms of post - Freudian psychology. Because it is written from a certain standpoint, it does not make it any the less valuable, in fact it is the personal (and identifiably so) approach which makes it successful. There is, as we are dealing with humanity, no such thing as objective biography and hence, no such thing as definitive biography.⁷ In fact Boswell's biography, in its very subjectiveness, plays a large part in our understanding of the nature of Johnson's authority, the matter at the heart of this thesis. Boswell was in a perfect position to understand and

appreciate Johnson's authority as it was he, more than any other, who came to know Johnson as a disciple. Boswell needed Johnson to be the authority and in this way fulfilled a need on Johnson's part. For this reason then, I place the Life in such a position of importance.

Towards the end of the Life, there is an illuminating passage concerning the relationship between the two, which deserves close attention. It occurs in Oxford, in Johnson's last year. Boswell talks to his subject about the roughness of his speech.

While we were upon the road, I had the resolution to ask Johnson whether he thought that the roughness of his manner had been an advantage or not, and if he would not have done more good if he had been more gentle. I proceeded to answer myself thus: 'perhaps it has been of advantage, as it has given weight to what you said: you could not, perhaps, have talked with such authority without it.'⁸

Johnson agrees to this, emphasising Boswell's point by the authorising "no sir".⁹ The passage brings to light much about the relationship between the two. Boswell's view of Johnson as an authority is obvious as the effectiveness of Johnson's speech is excused in terms of this. There is an element in Boswell's speech here which suggests reluctance to ask. The question is the result of a "resolution", a word which suggests that the approach was made after

considerable thought. His almost instantaneous answering of his own question is probably the result of nervousness, as he does not wish the force of the question to remain, and so renders it harmless of his own accord. This is the type of approach one might make to someone whom one held in reverence, an authority. Furthermore, this action demonstrates the necessity of the disciple to any relationship involving authority. No one can be a teacher without there being those to learn. Equally so, an authority can only become authoritative if he has a disciple, and hence it is hardly surprising to discover Boswell's depth of understanding. Authority is almost always more fully realised by the disciple than by the master himself, and as shall become apparent, the regard of others for his authority was vital to Johnson. This double - faceted nature of authority is what gives the Life its meaning, and again I feel justified in highlighting this work in my quest for an understanding of Johnson's authority. Johnson himself gives us reason to take this course of action as he did not object to the fact that Boswell intended to write the Life. Here Boswell writes:

I said, that if it was not troublesome and presuming too much, I would request him to tell me all the little circumstances of his life; what schools he attended, when he came to Oxford, when he came to London, etc etc. He did not disapprove of my curiosity as to these particulars; but said, 'They'll come out by degrees as we talk together.'¹⁰

A year later Boswell again asks him to communicate the particulars of his early life; Johnson replies, "you shall have them all for two-pence. I do hope you shall know a great deal more of me before you write my life." ¹¹ Mrs Thrale too, despite not being a great friend of Boswell's, ¹² was in no doubt as to his qualifications to write the life: "Mr Boswell," she wrote, "is the man for 'Johnsoniana': he really knows ten times more anecdotes of his life than I do who sees so much more of him...".¹³ Furthermore, the peculiar relationship involving both authority and disciple which made Boswell's writing of the Life so appropriate, manifests itself in the way Johnson allowed himself to be drawn out into conversation by Boswell, something that would have been frustrating in the extreme, had not there been some other motive on the part of Johnson. The extraordinary incident of the discussion about the baby in the castle¹⁴ is not a conversation at all, but an interview. Here we do not see any form of mutual relationship developing between the two, but merely a confirmation of the relationship of disciple and master through speech. Boswell's role is that of a journalist not that of a friend. He asks the questions to provoke a response from Johnson, thereby presenting him to the reader as one to whom it is worth listening. Throughout this

long piece we see the establishing of Johnson as an authority through Boswell's assiduous questioning. Knowing the type of person Boswell was, Johnson could have realised how ideally he suited the task of constructing this aura of authority. What might be called sycophancy, combined with a need for the stability provided by an authority, led Boswell to become devoted to Johnson. He wrote, while the two were alone in Johnson's study:

...for during all the course of my long intimacy with him, my respectful attention never abated, and my wish to hear him was such, that I constantly watched every dawning of communication from that great and illuminated mind.¹⁵

Undoubtedly, social vanity is involved here from the points of view of both men. Boswell was delighted to be associated with his mentor,¹⁶ whilst Johnson would have enjoyed the verses written after his death on the publication of Boswell's Journal by Courteney.

With Reynolds' pencil, vivid, bold, and true,
So fervent Boswell gives him to our view:
In every trait we see his mind expand;
The master rises by the pupil's hand;¹⁷

It seems then, that the relationship between Johnson and Boswell makes the Life a particularly valuable source for the discussion of the nature of Johnson's authority.

The relationship between Johnson and Boswell was extremely close, and a discussion of the reasons for this will reveal much about Johnson's authority. It was Johnson who proposed Boswell for the Literary Club against considerable opposition,¹⁸ and throughout the curiously intermittent correspondence between the two, there are many assurances of affection on both sides. An explanation for the intermittent nature of the correspondence is two - fold. Firstly the fact that both men were busy meant that letter writing was a luxury, but secondly, and more importantly, it is difficult to see how else the two could have sustained a friendship based upon the authority/disciple relationship over a long period of time, as either intimacy or alienation would have resulted, either of which would have been disastrous for the Life. This is not to say that Johnson's need for Boswell was in no way emotional, in fact, he needed what Boswell stood for to delineate his identity. The two major components of this need are the idea of himself as the authority and the more basic human need to be loved. As will become clear, the two desires react together in a way which is strange in that it is both mutual and antagonistic. One of the letters written to Boswell in Johnson's last few months, shows Johnson's needs:

Write to me often, and write like a man. I consider your

fidelity and tenderness as a great part of the comforts which are yet left me, and sincerely wish we could be nearer to each other.¹⁹

What Johnson values, then, in Boswell are the two qualities "...fidelity and tenderness" in which are met Johnson's two major emotional needs namely for authority and love. With them comes a feeling of self completion, as Johnson wrote in his final letter to Boswell: "In this uncomfortable state your letters used to relieve...".²⁰

In his biography of Johnson, Walter Jackson Bate focuses our attention upon the visit which Boswell made to London over Easter 1783. Here I quote Bate, who in turn quotes from Boswell's Life. At this time, Johnson was both mentally and physically low:

" 'I am glad you are come,' said Johnson; 'I am very ill.'" But the conversation soon began to lift Johnson's spirits, and he said gratefully, " 'You must be as much with me as you can. You have done me good. You cannot think how much better I am since you came in.' " The compliment, which Boswell naturally treasured, came from the heart....Boswell, though he was now settling into middle age (forty two), was still young enough, still curious and spontaneous enough, to draw out Johnson in a way that few people any longer were able to do.²¹

Here we see Johnson's 'coming out' of himself which is so characteristic of the relationship between the two and which Johnson needed for his emotional happiness. Company, and Boswell's in particular, seems to have drawn Johnson away from the sufferings which plagued him throughout his life. Indeed, with

great poignancy, he described his life as a "narrative of misery."²² Thus for Johnson conversation is more than a means of communicating, it is his lifeline. And just as we have seen him brought out of depression by it, it is likely that, if he is to be an authority, it will be through this means. It is in fact because of the authoritative nature of the conversation between him and Boswell that the relationship was so potent a force in his salvation from misery, and it is also for this reason that the Life is a collection of conversation, rather than a simple narrative. In conversation, his need for authority and his desire to be loved came together. To investigate these two emotions, and to justify what I say about them, an investigation of his conversation is appropriate.

Boswell considered Johnson "...entitled to the honour of unquestionable superiority"²³ in the field of wit, a title to which Goldsmith reacted: "Sir,...You are making a Monarchy out of what should be a Republic." Goldsmith's resentment is obvious, but it is based upon the idea of conversation as a formal procedure, an art, and more significantly, a contest, involving experts. Johnson too saw it in these terms. On a visit to Oxford, Boswell asks Johnson whether there might "...be very good conversation without a contest for superiority?"

Johnson replies: "No animated conversation, sir, for it cannot be but one or other will come off superiour...his superiority of parts and knowledge will necessarily appear..."²⁴ It is in terms of "parts and knowledge" that Johnson built up his authority. So vital was this to him, that on occasions, he would take extreme measures to avoid defeat. Boswell describes Johnson's obsession:

Johnson could not brook appearing to be worsted in argument, even when he had taken the wrong side, to shew the force and dexterity of his talents....Once when I was pressing upon him with visible advantage, he stopped me thus... 'you'll make nothing of it. I'd rather have you whistle a Scotch tune.'²⁵

Paradoxically, there is something deeply emotional in this desire to be triumphant rationally. Here, we see Johnson needing to win the argument at all costs. Authority seems to be emotionally necessary to him. Presumably, rational argument is an area into which the emotions should not intrude, as rationality, by its nature, is distinct from feelings. The idea of the rational is to move beyond the powerful forces that impel us, and thus, to determine how we should attempt to control them. Thus it is extremely strange that Johnson, the acknowledged master of conversation and indeed a product of a rationally determined 'classical' tradition, should have been so controlled by his emotions in his thought, in the form of his obsession with victory. The idea of Johnson as an authority is based upon the premise

that he is an expert precisely because he has considered all the sides of the argument in a neutral manner and is thereby capable of objective permanence. Yet so desirous was he of achieving this position that he allowed himself to become emotionally involved, and as will become apparent, needed to be emotionally involved. We are given a glimpse of this need by a comment made by Garrick, Johnson's old pupil, upon Johnson's wit; at this point, Garrick compares him to all other wits: "You may be diverted by them; but Johnson gives you a forcible hug, and shakes laughter out of you, whether you will or no." ²⁶ Here Johnson's conversation is linked with the emotion of tenderness, which is its major motive force. His desire for authority and his desire for love seem closely linked.

George Irwin, in his study of Johnson, maintains that Johnson's main psychological problem was that of a feeling of rejection, a state of affairs which had been caused by his mother's lack of interest in him. This failure of relationship can be shown by his peculiar conduct to her at the time of her death; and indeed during her last nineteen years he did not visit her once, despite the numerous occasions when he promised to do so.²⁷ The result of the difficulty with his mother was a strong desire to be loved, as Irwin puts it:

All this grand old bull-dog asked of life was love. He whose feelings ran to extremes felt more keenly than most people the inescapable human need to be loved and wanted.²⁸

But because of the peculiar circumstances of his life, this desire was one that was not allowed fulfilment, and as we shall see, its very motivation made this impossible. Bate, too, focuses on his sense of rejection in a chapter early on in his book entitled: "Breakdown and despair; the psychology of the young Johnson." He does not, however, see it in terms of the relationship between mother and son, but in terms of failure, which when combined with his peculiar physical and psychological characteristics, led to a strange form of self-torture, which could possibly have led to insanity. The failure of his life, symbolically displayed by his scrofula, and actually revealed in his having to leave Oxford after only one year, were felt extremely strongly. Johnson, who was by nature aggressive, could not allow himself to express his tender emotions outwardly; instead he developed a method of internalising them, which led to a crippling sense of guilt; this in turn spiraled back upon him making him feel even more inadequate and unlovable. So runs Bate's thesis. I shall quote him at length:

He was also left completely naked and vulnerable to the cruelest of psychological burdens that he was to face throughout life (though it was naturally to prove an indispensable source of his greatness when kept in healthful interplay with other qualities). This was the fierce and exacting sense of self-demand - for which Freud gave the now-common term "superego" - with its remorseless capacity, in some natures, to punish the self through a crippling sense of guilt and through the resulting anxieties, paralysis, and psychosomatic illness that guilt, grown habitual and strongly enough felt, begins to sprout. ²⁹

We only need to dip into the Diaries, Prayers, and Annals to see how strongly Johnson was affected by guilt.³⁰ Bate suggests that this mental trauma led to the convulsive mannerisms for which he became so well-known later. Bate explains: "These tics and convulsive movements - often extreme - were certainly of Psycho-neurotic origin and not, as has sometimes been assumed, of organic origin."³¹ Indeed, Sir Joshua Reynolds suspected that: "Those actions always appeared to me as if they were meant to reprobate some part of his past conduct."³²

In turn these became a constant reminder to him of his inability to cope with the world, so strongly were they associated with his inward agitation, thus increasing his perturbation. But the most important aspect of this condition, which is only dwelt upon briefly by Bate, was the feeling of intense hopelessness of which they seemed to remind him, in terms of affection. He mentioned to Henry Thrale that he "never sought to please till past thirty years old, considering the matter as hopeless."³³ Johnson's enormous ability for gratitude where affection had been shown³⁴ demonstrates how much he desired it, but how little he got. The clue to his desire for authority lies in this combination of his emotional craving and the sense of despair which accompanied it. We are directed to this conclusion by a famous passage in the Life, when Hogarth was visiting Richardson's house:

While he was talking, he perceived a person standing at a window in the room, shaking his head, and rolling himself around in a strange ridiculous manner. He concluded that he was an (SiC)ideot...To his great surprize, however, this figure stalked forwards to where he and Mr Richardson were sitting, and all at once took up the argument....In short, he displayed such a power of eloquence, that Hogarth looked at him with astonishment, and actually imagined that this ideot had been at the moment inspired.³⁵

Ozias Humphrey had a similar experience, imagining at first Johnson to be a "madman"; but when he began to speak, he was astounded: "...everything he says is as correct as a second edition: 't is almost impossible to argue with him, he is so sententious and so knowing."³⁶ In both accounts, we see Johnson acting as the authority. Not only is this exactly the reverse of the initial impression given, but also it brings acceptance, acceptance through means of his authority, and indeed it is acceptance of superiority that is the basis of authority. We see in both cases, that the acceptance comes through his conversation, and his display of knowledge. Johnson's physical appearance worked against his being accepted, as C. E. Pierce has written, "His flawed personal appearance destined him from an early age to be an outsider and to feel uncomfortable in many social situations",³⁷ and when acceptance is not possible, love certainly is not. This has very interesting effects, and much that we associate with Johnson can be seen in these terms. We see more clearly now why authority was so

necessary for Johnson and how it is based in his desire to be loved.

However, his desire to gain love through authority was not so easily resolved as this. The crux of Johnson's problem was that in some senses authority and love are opposites; after all, love at its most profound is a reciprocal emotion based upon equality, whereas reverence is not. (We shall come across this problem in another manifestation, when discussing Johnson's religious beliefs.) This difference is highlighted by an interesting conversation^{tion} between Johnson and Dr Joseph Warton, concerning the former's edition of Shakespeare. It is reported in the Life that Warton had dared to criticise the Shakespeare, at which Johnson had taken offence." 'Sir, I am not used to being contradicted...' Warton replied: 'Better for yourself and friends, sir, if you were; our admiration could not be increased, but our love might.' " ³⁸ Human beings are essentially motivated by love, though of course this is not the only driving force, and indeed Mrs Thrale reports Johnson as having said that "Those who never were in love, never were happy."³⁹ We see this strain manifested in the way in which Johnson would apologise profusely and sincerely when he had been rude to someone in argument. There is an incident recorded by Boswell, where Johnson has a contretemps with the Dean of Derry. When the Dean asserted that one could not improve after the age of forty-five,

Johnson responded:

'I differ with you sir... a man may improve; and you yourself have great room for improvement.' The dean was confounded, and for the instant silent. Recovering, he said, 'On recollection I see no cause to alter my opinion, except I was to call it improvement for a man to grow (which I allow he may) positive, rude and insolent, and save arguments by brutality.'....Dr Johnson immediately rose from his seat, and made him sit on the sophy by him, and with such a beseeching look for pardon and with such fond gestures - literally smoothing down his arms and his knees. ⁴⁰

Not only do we see Johnson childlike in his desire for affection, but the Dean has pinpointed his weakness, namely that of 'winning' the argument through "brutality". It is this combative quality which leads us to deduce the necessity of triumph for Johnson, a necessity which stems from the emotional basis of the force. We see, here, how clearly his authority is governed by his desire for affection and also how this tends to limit his power of real authority, as this should be based upon objective truth - the stresses are explosively evident.

There is another interesting moment in the Life which hints at Johnson's realisation of the strains. Someone suggests that, "...Kings must be unhappy, because they are deprived of the greatest of all satisfactions, easy and unreserved society." Johnson's response is particularly close to the bone; "That is an ill-founded notion... Great Kings have always been social... and our Henrys and Edwards were all social." ⁴¹ For Johnson this is remarkably vague.

There is a discrepancy between the initial testiness of response and the subsequent generality of explanation, which is basically inconclusive. His problem is that there seems to be the element of the outsider in Johnson that corresponds to the King, a parallel forced by his authoritative position. He cannot partake fully in the humanity of others as they consult him for wisdom, argument and advice, but rarely, if at all, for love. It was Boswell who wrote of his relationship with Johnson:

I do not believe that a more perfect attachment ever existed in the history of mankind. And it is a noble attachment; for the attractions are Genius, Learning and Piety.

Not only does he make no reference to love in any of its manifestations, but the attachment thus conceived is purely one way, and not reciprocal, despite the strange emotional needs of both parties for the relationship. (See p.9).

Another complicating factor which worked towards the inefficient functioning of his authority towards his quest for love was a certain element of condescension in the attitude of contemporaries towards Johnson, a condescension which seems to occur simultaneously with the intense admiration, for this reason being particularly dangerous. This is a difficult thing to prove. The admiration is obvious and undoubted, but involved with this is a necessary recognition of difference, and it is characteristic of a

majority to condescend to those who are less numerous, however exalted. Man is essentially a social animal and self-fulfilment is seen in terms of his fellows, in terms of the group. Johnson was in so many ways outside the group, and in this way, was seen as a misfit, with the result that he was at the very least sympathised with, and on another level, laughed at. He was, as is well known, described as "Mr Oddity"⁴³ by many. We see something of this in the reaction of the German who was sitting next to a talkative Goldsmith. The German:

...perceived Johnson rolling himself, as if about to speak, suddenly stopped him [Goldsmith], saying, 'Stay, stay, - Doctor Shonson is going to say something.'⁴⁴

Though of course we must note the obvious wish to hear the authority speak, there is a sense in which the party is being silenced to hear the person outside it speak. It is here that we may legitimately refer back to Donald Greene's point about Boswell's supposed method of reducing Johnson to his own size.⁴⁵ This reaction is in fact a natural phenomenon of admiration, and I feel merely goes to emphasise Boswell's commitment to Johnson, despite its complicating effect upon Johnson's desire to be appreciated through authority. An example of this, which is one of many, occurs in the passage where Johnson reveals himself as a "good humoured fellow." Boswell introduces the passage in order to show

...how little a man knows, or wishes to know, his own

character in the world, or, rather as a convincing proof that Johnson's roughness was only external, and did not proceed from the heart..."⁴⁶

Boswell's way of judging Johnson, devoted as he is, seems to place Johnson under the microscope, treating him as a peculiar zoo exhibit. This reaction is brought about because Johnson is an authority and thus, different. Johnson's basic dissimilarity from those close to him, made love difficult. Another demonstration of his difference in social terms is the fact that he formed clubs, rather than joined ones already existing. Here again we see his social difference, one created by his authoritative nature. Johnson is the one who brings these social situations into being; the social situation is played out in his terms, and hence he is master of the rules, he is on authoritative territory.

This social difference is also demonstrated by his attitude to the poor and down - trodden in society. His love towards the poor was well - known and Mrs Thrale wrote "...but to return to his notions concerning the poor; he really loved them as nobody else does..."⁴⁷ He had spent a substantial length of time in Grub Street which was anything but affluent, and thus he felt a special bond with these socially "inferior" people. But more importantly he could relate to them in the manner in which they were "outside" in a way similar to himself, as far as those who considered him as an authority were concerned. A similar impression is

given by the strange inhabitants of his house, people whom Hawkins described as "such necessitous and undeserving people as he had about him."⁴⁸ To Johnson they were invaluable, and whenever he could, which was virtually every night, he would drink tea with Mrs Williams. In a justly celebrated passage, Boswell arranges for Johnson to dine with his great adversary Wilkes, but his plans were brought to a halt when Boswell discovered that Johnson had arranged to eat with Mrs Williams: "I knew that if she should be obstinate, he would not stir." Boswell went to her and begged that his friend might be allowed to go:

She gradually softened to my solicitations... and was graciously pleased to empower me to tell Dr Johnson, 'That all things considered, she thought he should certainly go.'...as soon as I announced to him Mrs Williams's consent, he roared, 'Frank, a clean shirt'...⁴⁹

The incident's importance lies in its portrayal of the conflicts both between Johnson's two social worlds, and between the contradictory pull of his need for authority, and his need for love. On the one hand we have the world of which Boswell is a member, where essentially Johnson is an authority, whilst on the other hand, we have the world of which Mrs Williams is a member, where essentially he is a fellow human. In the world of Mrs Williams, the world of social misfits, Johnson is an equal; he does not have to survive through the use of his mind. The way in which Mrs Williams looks after him means that he is totally accepted

and loved. In society, on the other hand, he has always to maintain his authority, always to play a role. In Rambler 101, we see Johnson warning against the person who sets himself up as a clown, and the way in which he always has to fulfil the expectation of society. I feel that Johnson was similarly placed, but in terms of authority. We are therefore brought back to the notion of authority as a defence, as, whilst it is obvious that Johnson needs to be treated as a human being, he finds this difficult in society, where there was always the possibility that he might be rejected if he revealed his true character, and risked being dismissed as "ideotic". In this armour of authority we see the conversion of Johnson from one form of difference to another. The authoritative species has the advantage of respect, but unfortunately, it seems in its inequality to rule out the basic possibility of love.

So far, we have examined Johnson's authority from the point of view of Boswell, but further clarity will be obtained by examining Johnson's relationship with Mrs Thrale. It can be justly levelled against Boswell that he did not realise its importance; but as I hope to show, it would have been impossible for him to have done so. This is, of course, not to say that the importance of the relationship was unrecognised at the time: Arthur Murphy, who brought the two together, congratulated himself upon

supplying Johnson with the "resource, which contributed more than anything else to exempt him from the solitudes of life." ⁵⁰ Even Boswell grudgingly admitted that:

He had at Mr Thrale's all the comforts and even lux^uries of life; his melancholy was diverted, and his irregular habits lessened by association with an agreeable and well-ordered family.⁵¹

But there was much more to the relationship than is suggested above. There has been a well-known difference of opinion about the relationship, between Katherine Balderston and Bate, both of whom suggest that Johnson became in some way dominated by Mrs. Thrale. Balderston sees the relationship in terms of a masochistic desire on Johnson's part, whereas Bate explains the relationship in terms of Johnson's fear of madness which forced him to rely upon Mrs Thrale for the retaining of his sanity. It is difficult to distinguish between the two arguments, but the fact remains that whichever one we accept, we must posit the idea of Mrs Thrale's domination of, or in other words, her authority over, Johnson.⁵²

John Riely, in an excellent article entitled "Johnson and Mrs Thrale: The Beginning and the End" follows George Irwin's line in highlighting Johnson's inadequate relationship with his mother.²⁸ Irwin notes the resulting "transference relationship", which Johnson:

...had unconsciously sought but failed to establish with his wife and also with Hill Boothby [but which] was at last to be realized and completely fulfilled [in Mrs. Thrale] ⁵³

Irwin elaborates: "Henceforth the rejected child- within- him, when threatened, turned to her for comfort and security"⁵⁴ and indeed Mrs Thrale was willing to play her part, writing to Johnson in a letter that he would soon be returning "...to the iron dominion of your most faithful and obedient servant." ⁵⁵ Riely focuses upon Johnson's letter in French as revealing "...his need to feel the kind of authority that a parent or Governess ["patronne"] has over a child",⁵⁶ and once more we are brought back to the matter of authority, though here it is Mrs Thrale who is the authority rather than Johnson. Authority, it seems, was absolutely necessary for his survival, the vital lifeline in a swirling sea of insanity. It was Mrs Thrale who "undertook the care of his health, and had the honour and happiness of contributing to its restoration." ⁵⁷ In the words of John Riely, Mrs Thrale seems to have served "as a sympathetic and discreet listener who could inspire Johnson's complete confidence." ⁵⁸ and indeed the pinnacle of this attachment was when Johnson revealed to her the "...secret far dearer to him than his life"⁵⁹ whether this be his temporary insanity, his masochistic desire, or indeed both. The attachment then, has everything to do with Johnson as a person and thus we see authority and humanity coming together in a deeply mutual way. It is ironic that the fears

which others identified in him and which he attempted to control by the creation of authority, were best dealt with by the government of Mrs Thrale, a fact which allowed him to realise himself as a person. By allowing this, he was able to accept her care and love, which involved him in a human relationship, very different from his social position as the authority with all the strains which that implied. It is indeed for this reason that Boswell could not really understand the relationship between the two; for to him, Johnson was the authority.

It was because of this peculiar reversal of roles that the Thrale relationship became Johnson's greatest tragedy, as with it came his realisation that ultimately authority was the only way for him to survive. The stresses are apparent as early as May 1773, the date when the extraordinary correspondence between the two, which we have already mentioned, occurred. Johnson's letter can be seen as a plea for Mrs. Thrale to treat him as a child and to spend more time with him⁶⁰ instead of nursing her dying mother. In her reply, Mrs. Thrale demonstrates how "completely aware" she is of "what he is really craving."⁶¹ We see, with both anxiety and understanding, her attempt to distance herself from his needs. She tells him not to blame her for "not using the rod enough", and there is already an element of thrusting him away: "...and let me not hazard what I esteem beyond kingdoms." But particularly instructive is

the remark that "Dissipation is to you a glorious medicine, and I believe Mr. Boswell will be at last your best physician."⁶² Despite the obvious remedial effect that she had on him, it is evident that she could not really cope with him, and for this reason she suggests Boswell, to whom Johnson is the authority.

Mrs. Thrale's problems were more profound than has often been allowed for. Her marriage was not a love match and her children had a habit of dying: out of eleven, only four survived infancy. The final grief was Henry Thrale's infidelity, especially towards the end of his life when he became infatuated by the bewitching Sophia Streatfield. It was in these throes of despair that her relationship with Johnson had to change, and again in the following quotation from John Wain's book Samuel Johnson, we are shown the difference between her and Boswell:

He [Johnson] told her of his own anxiety and misery, but he did not like having to hold still while she told him of hers. He clutched at her hand while walking through the valleys of his own private inferno; she had to walk through hers alone. This is the great contrast between Johnson's relationship with Hester Thrale and his relationship with Boswell. Johnson listened for hours at a time to Boswell's confessions and emotional outpourings. But when he was with Mrs. Thrale, it was his turn to do the talking.⁶³

Thus, as Wain summarises, Mrs. Thrale was a "woman, crying out in the silence of her own mind against the frustration of her deep needs" and in being an authority she was unable

to satisfy them. Seeing Johnson ridding himself of his problems must have aggravated Mrs. Thrale's desire to do so; but ultimately the tie which had been created by his childlike need for her, prevented her upon the death of her husband from reaching out for what she needed, namely, reciprocal love in the form of Piozzi. Because of this, Mrs. Thrale felt threatened by Johnson's need for her and eventually had to reject him, thereby allowing Piozzi into her life.

John Riely accurately measures this fracture of their relationship when he notes a "fundamental reversal of roles" ⁶⁴ towards the end of Johnson's life. Despite his surely mistaken comment that Johnson had "ceased to be emotionally dependent upon her", ⁶⁵ he shows how Mrs. Thrale begins to treat him as a father figure, her "friend, father, guardian, confidante", ⁶⁶ and it was easy from there to see him as a troublesome and elderly relative. In 1783 when her desire for Piozzi had become desperately strong, she would go to Bath:

...where I knew Mr. Johnson would not follow me, and where I could for that reason ⁶⁷ command some little portion of my time for my own use.

Despite Johnson's continuing need for her ⁶⁸ she now perceived him as the authority, but one against whom she could rebel rather than love and indeed, the fact that she had persuaded herself to see Johnson in terms of this,

allowed her freedom to marry Piozzi, whereas if she had still thought of him as a child, she might not have been able to bring herself to abandon him. Her letter to Johnson announcing the engagement demonstrates this admirably:

I feel as if I was acting without a parent's consent....
Give me leave however to say that the dread of your
disapprobation has given me many an anxious moment.⁶⁹

His repudiation of her is expressed in terms of an outraged father, but a father whose need of the daughter is far greater than the daughter's need for him.

Thus authority is really a crucial issue in the relationship between the two. When Johnson seems to have least authority, he seems to be able to express himself as a human being more fully than in other situations, but the corollary of this state is Mrs. Thrale's inability to retain her authority in the face of her basic needs. Ironically, she allows Johnson to become an authority so as to be able to reject him and again, therefore, authority becomes a defence, but one used against Johnson rather than by him. Here the clash between authority and love is violent, but we can see how his failure to sustain a loving relationship with Mrs Thrale, must have deepened his reliance upon his authoritative role.

It now remains to take up some different elements of his life to examine how his quest for authority affected his views and actions. Society was the milieu in which Johnson's authority operated, and hence, it is worth taking into account his views of society. His Toryism is a subject which is usually discussed alongside that of his Jacobitism. The major modern work on this subject is Donald Greene's The Politics of Samuel Johnson⁷⁰ which, not surprisingly, aims to refute what the author considers to be Boswell's misinterpretation of Johnson: but as Howard Erskine - Hill comments,⁷¹ Boswell is more subtle than that. The main problem, which both Erskine - Hill and Bate point out, is the modern interpretation of the word Tory which is often thought of as meaning unthinking reactionary. There is little doubt that the Eighteenth Century Tory associated himself with the traditional social order which had existed since about the beginning of the century and which was based upon paternalism. The Whigs, on the other hand, were associated with the modern mercantile ethic which had become important towards the latter stages of Johnson's life, and which he saw as being more divisive than the older ideal in its creation of economic divisions. Johnson, who tended to identify with the "underdog", and who was always suspicious of what he called "cant" or the fashionable, would have instinctively identified with the Tory, especially as Whiggism had become so dominant both in terms of politics and intellectuals, many of whom Johnson knew well. ⁷²

Another important element for Johnson in his support for Toryism was what Bate called its "protective subordination " ⁷³ which might be seen as a philosophy of official charity, which was by definition more caring than the Whig attitude of "laissez-faire" which involved a "free - for - all" resulting in the subjection of the economically weakest. This is why Johnson described Whiggism as the "negation of all principle."⁷⁴ The keystone to Johnson's Toryism was naturally the Monarch;⁷⁵ Johnson believed that the tyranny of one person was a far lesser evil than the tyranny of "market forces" or indeed the tyranny of many. He said in an argument with Sir Adrian Ferguson "If a sovereign oppresses his people to a great degree, they will rise and cut off his head."⁷⁶ It is here that we come up against an emotional tie which has been largely overlooked, and that is, of course, the ideal of authority which is espoused by such a philosophy. Toryism placed in its centre the ideal of the authoritative Monarch in a way in which Johnson himself wished and needed to be treated, as we have seen. Not only did this advocacy of Toryism give him the opportunity to expound a philosophy of authority closely mirroring the way in which he wished people to treat him, but also it allowed him to reassure himself of the human need for authority which would always assure him of acceptance. He once mentioned at a dinner that he was :

a friend to subordination, as most conducive to the

happiness of society. There is a reciprocal pleasure in governing and being governed.⁷⁷

His claim that there is a pleasure in being governed, which is not always apparent, but often true in human terms, is of extreme importance to him as it would assure him of the willingness of others to treat him as the "authority." So strong was the feeling that it sometimes impinged upon his rationality, as Bate suggests in connection with four pamphlets he wrote in the early '70s; they were written as "polemical pieces, that is, rather than as considered political discussion."⁷⁸ It is difficult to see why he wrote them. Baretti, who was Queeny Thrale's Italian teacher, claims that the Thrales put pressure on him and that the Patriot and Taxation No Tyranny would not have been written "had it not been for Mrs Thrale and Baretti who stirred him up by laying wagers."⁷⁹ Nevertheless they are extremely outspoken political statements which can most easily be explained in terms of emotional need. It is, of course, worth remembering that Johnson never found it easy to stir himself to work. Johnson, we note in the context of these pamphlets, sees an attack on the fortress of subordination and authority and so lashes out defensively. Obviously, these pamphlets have much that is of interest, but they are a poor performance, if intense.

We have discussed the way in which Johnson attempted to retain his authority through his conversation. Very

closely linked to this is his humour which was an important element in this conversation. Bate justifies this discussion of humour in the introduction to Chapter 27 of his biography:

Johnson's humour is so important to our understanding of him that we need to pause and look at its implications as a whole rather than merely allowing them to be inferred in a scattered way.⁸⁰

There is no doubt that humour was of extreme importance for Johnson as it is an element of his intellectual weaponry which helped him to retain his authority. We must be careful however, as his attitude towards it was by no means simple. The basic means of his humour is what would be described as wit, the "bound of an elastic mind"⁸¹ as he put it in his Life of Cowley, or to be more precise, the "unexpected copulation of ideas, the discovery of some occult relation in images in appearance remote from each other."⁸² The crucial point here is the extraordinary sense of creation involved in the bringing together of seemingly unconnected ideas and finding the point at which they meet, the "copulation." Here we see Johnson's mind reacting with reality in a manner which is both objective and personal: objective in the sense that what is said is only witty in its applicability to nature, and in particular, other people's acknowledgement of its applicability, but personal in the sense that it is he alone who has had the wit to see the connection. He said "the most common things," remarked

Tom Tyers, "in the newest manner."⁸³ Again we have the idea of Johnson as an authority in his method of understanding the world through wit, an understanding which is entirely original and cannot be claimed by anyone else. He is therefore unique through his humour, and if unique, then wanted. In her diary, Mrs Thrale gives us an example of his desire to, in some sense, "possess" humour:

Johnson loved a frolick or a joke well enough, tho he had strange serious rules about them too, and very angry was he always at poor me for being merry at improper times and places ⁸⁴

Humour was a realm in which Johnson wished to reign unchallenged. His desire to own it, revealed in Mrs Thrale's quotation, shows how important it was to the retention of his authority. Additionally to this use of humour, Johnson understood the way in which humour makes one pay attention; we have seen from Garrick's comment that Johnson's wit was extremely compelling; "Johnson gives you a forcible hug; and shakes laughter out of you whether you will or no."²⁶ Not only do we see in this Johnson's power of compelling attention "whether you will or no" but we can feel what an experience it must have been. We see in Johnson's use of wit the desire of one who is insecure, to force attention. Closely allied to this is the way in which humour gives a phrase or aphorism a power and finality which helps to invest it with a quality of authority. This also operates through an ability to disarm an opponent. When faced with

something that is amusing one is affected at a level which is more than exclusively intellectual, despite its roots (in Johnson's case) in this sphere. In all these ways, we see Johnson shaping his argument and speech through humour, bringing disparate strands of thought together, forcing people to pay attention, and giving arguments added power through the intoxicating effect that the humorous always has.

Though we have seen how humour supported his authority, it also exposed him to the disjunction between humanity and authority, a question with which we were much concerned earlier. It is brought to our attention by Fanny Burney in her diary. In it, she reports that Johnson suddenly becomes convulsed with mirth, at a seemingly innocent situation. After reporting the incident she comments:

How little did I expect from this great lexiphanes, this great and dreaded lord of English Literature, a turn for burlesque humour! ⁸⁵

Fanny is astounded because Johnson portrays a quality not normally associated with authority. Humour is a levelling force both in its ability to cut down the rational and the emotional, and also in its demonstration of something essentially shared by all humanity, despite the fact that humour can often alienate. Humour is above all things a human quality, and it is remarkable how frequently we judge

someone's "humanity" by their humour. The quoted passage from Fanny Burney demonstrates this admirably. And indeed, constantly in Boswell's Life, we see the author reporting humorous incidents. One of these is taken from the collection of Johnsonia amassed by Stevens; it is a story of a firework display which did not work, a situation which produced a riotous flourish on the part of Johnson:

The author of the Rambler, however, may be considered, on this occasion, as the ringleader of a successful riot.⁸⁶

Boswell himself reacts similarly to Johnson's description of himself as a "Good humoured fellow."

The epithet fellow, applied to the great Lexicographer, the stately Moralist, the masterly Critick, as if he had been Sam Johnson, a mere pleasant companion, was highly diverting.⁸⁷

This expectation is to a certain extent associated with his physical nature. Mrs. Thrale described his "countenance" as being "rugged."⁸⁸ Humour of any sort, with its associated physical transformation, would have come as a contrast to this body which was often grotesque and scarred. Bate describes this contrast between the rugged body and the transforming humour, as shall be shown. Thus, though humour was capable of being used as a weapon for authority, it opened him to the truth of his situation, this disjunction between the authoritative and the human. It is interesting that Boswell's opinion of Johnson as an authority is not

altered, despite his discovery, and indeed the whole situation would cease to have meaning if Johnson's authority were capable of being cancelled by the discovery. The humorous clash only occurs because of the expectation people have of Johnson as an authority, and in neither of the examples quoted, is the attitude of the people changed for long. The fact that people's opinions of him were not altered through the humorous incidents, meant that Johnson's humour was often violent. The laughter over the will ⁸⁹is an example of this, as is the case of the Kangaroo,⁹⁰ and it would not be inaccurate to suggest that Johnson often tried to use humour to break away from the authority which surrounded him, however unsuccessful this attempt may have been. So in this peculiar way we have a disjunction implied by the original sobriety and the humour, which shows the contrast between the poles of his divided self.

But it is at this point that we meet with a strange interlinking of spirals, as this disjunction can only be revealed through the coming together of the opposing poles from which his humour arises. Bate makes this point when he talks of Johnson's mimicry:

...the sudden contrast of his features with the play of expression that took place over them made his imitations all the more amusing, as he himself was certainly aware.⁹¹

He goes on to cite the example of when Johnson gave his

imitation of the newly discovered kangaroo; and in the European Magazine, published soon after his death, it mentions the way in which "...he would frequently descend from the contemplation of subjects the most profound imaginable to the most childish playfulness"⁹² both of which qualities highlighted one another. Thus, in a sense, we see humour as bridging seemingly irreconcilable opposites, and perhaps its humanising quality is that it allows us to recognise man's contradictory nature. In the creation of the humour, we see the evidence for the divided self: on the one hand the authority reliant upon a relationship of respect, and on the other the human being reliant upon a mutual understanding. And so, the role of humour serves both to emphasise the differences, and to blend them together, without compromising either quality. The curious clashes set up here are indicative of the strained situation in which Johnson found himself. At times it must have caused him terrifying pain.

Closely connected with this is the well-known incident of the will, when after a conversation about Bennet Langton's will, Johnson laughs immoderately and cannot control himself. It is, of course, Boswell who brings us the incident:

In this playful manner did he run on exulting in his own pleasantry, which certainly was not such as might be expected from the author of the Rambler, but which is here preserved, that my readers may be acquainted even with the slightest occasional characteristic of so

eminent a man.⁹³

The passage is remarkably similar to that reported by Fanny Burney, and, like her Boswell is completely ignorant as to what Johnson finds so amusing. Bate sees behind this otherwise unaccountable outburst, Johnson's realisation of:

...the triviality of all our posturings and stratagems for 'importance' against the large backdrop of the general 'doom of man'⁹⁴

According to Bate, he was laughing at Langton's attempt to control events through the will, and indeed, the situation becomes more ridiculous when we realise the finality and inevitability of the event which he has decided to attempt to control, namely death. Furthermore, he is laughing at his own zeal for subordination and the importance of the honours of birth, a topic that he had been discussing heatedly with Chambers and Boswell earlier. Not only could he, by his own admission, hardly tell "who was my Grandfather" but having the experience and rational mind that he had, it must have been amusing to him to have allowed himself to become involved in so unimportant a concept. Thus in the uncontrollable laughter, we see a revelation of the anarchy of life in the sense that all methods of controlling life are created by humanity and that ultimately we are bound by vast and unfathomable forces, such as death (which Johnson never forgot) and envy. So much of what we consider "essential" is precisely not that, but a creation of mind,

and thus, in terms of reality, arbitrary. Thus again, if Bate is right, and no one seems to have opposed him reasonably, we see, in the incident, Johnson's realisation that his attempt to be an authority based upon a largely artificial system was a fraud. In a sense the only response is laughter, and a laughter made all the more poignant by his success in being an authority. It is ironic that it is from this position that he could see the anarchic nature of life, a position which seems to stand at the opposite end of the spectrum from the regulated, namely that about which one can speak with authority. Thus, in his laughter, he was able to cut through the bonds of authority which he had, and indeed needed to take on, to a deeper awareness of truth. Here again, as detailed earlier, the laughter arises from the disjunction of the authoritative and the human, in other words, from the pulling apart of Johnson's created system and the anarchic truth which underlay it. To explain this fully, I must say a word about the project I am presently undertaking.

It must be evident that I am not presenting an entire portrait of Johnson. My brief is to investigate the relationship between Johnson and authority, and as such, I cannot hope to provide a thorough portrait of Johnson. Frank Brady in his analysis of Boswell's Life, warns against a possible heresy:

...[a] modern Biographer might reduce Johnson to fit the

pattern of what very loosely may be called "the authoritarian personality."⁹⁵

We certainly do not wish to 'reduce' Johnson at all, but in looking at a personality from one angle, there is the possibility that a more balanced portrait will be able to be seen in a tighter form. For instance, much that might remain obscure in a brilliant portrait such as Boswell's or in more modern times, John Wain's, will be made clearer if seen from the standpoint offered by this paper, however essential it is not to see the paper as an end entirely in itself.

Boswell's Life, in a sense, is a working out of the idea of Johnson as a moralist, yet as we go further into the book much is revealed to us which would not perhaps have been expected, but has come precisely because of the angle taken. We have already discussed the way in which Boswell's portrait directs us to the links between humanity and authority, especially through humour. Walter Jackson Bate's momentous biography, which modern critics cannot praise enough, is focussed by John Wain's biography, which views Johnson as a personality affected by himself, and seen in terms which we would in every day life tend to judge others by. Whereas Wain sees personality in terms of humanity, Bate, it seems to me, sees humanity in terms of certain absolutely explicable, psychological and hence, scientific propositions. Thus, though Johnson is in many ways "explained", we do not necessarily come closer to knowing him. There is a scene in Boswell's Life when Johnson and his

friend Taylor have an argument about the Stuart Kings which is conducted ferociously.⁹⁶ Wain's comment on the affair, which we cannot imagine coming from Bate's pen, is both charming and accurate:

...to rant and rave about the Stuarts, in the presence of a wide-eyed note-taking Scotsman, might have seemed to both men a good entertainment.⁹⁷

He continues revealingly: "They will judge who best understand the English sense of humour."

There is an extremely worrying modern tendency, to which Wain, and indeed Bate, is a good antidote, to see Johnson in terms of his writing alone. This approach intends to invalidate all biographies which see Johnson in terms of an individual, and which include other people's opinions of him. For a start it is unfair to Johnson, many of whose better qualities are revealed in the context of his conversation, or in his interaction with others. This approach hardens particularly in the context of his oddities, which it is asserted, play no part in a sympathetic biography. R.B. Schwartz, in an article entitled "Johnson's Day and Boswell's"⁹⁸ actually goes as far as to attempt to explain away Boswell's, and for that matter Hester Thrale's, insistence that Johnson ate voraciously. I quote a passage from Thraliana:

...he loves a good dinner dearly - eats it voraciously, and his notions of a good dinner are nothing less than delicate - a leg of pork boyl'd till it drops from the

bone almost, a veal pye with plumbs and sugar, and the outside cut⁹⁹ of a buttock of beef are his favourite dainties...

Faced with evidence of this sort, Schwartz claims that this is no more than typical of his age. The fact that all of his contemporaries noticed it, in the light of the conditions in which they lived, does not seem to impress him. ¹⁰⁰

Unfortunately for Schwartz, if we carry this analysis too far, we lose so much of that which affected Johnson. Johnson's brilliance can largely be explained in terms of his being different from everyone else. There is little doubt that his physical deformities affected him, as indeed they would have anyone, and thus to understand him, it is crucial to take them into account.

It seems that biography is, therefore, about humanity, and hence relationship. Biography should be seen as being a bridge to a relationship rather than as an authoritative investigation and I would not wish my thesis to be considered in terms of this latter proposition. No viewpoint (due to the humanity of the viewer) can be final, and more particularly, no appreciation of personality can be final as we have the humanity of the viewed to complicate the issue. And here again we are brought up against the dilemma with which Johnson had to battle, between the authoritative and the human. Above all, a man of opinion has to work upon the basis of a temporary understanding as his views, by his nature, have to be stated and because of this,

frozen. The human being is constantly changing, and therefore, so must his opinions. To speak authoritatively entails an understanding of the permanent. But this is ultimately impossible and thus, in a strange way, the authority can only be effective in terms of a temporary position. The very fact that the authority is human means that, in rational terms he could never function fully. Johnson's laughter over the will reflects this, as does the lack of absolute authority obtainable by a biography. In this way, biography must be an on - going relationship just as must be authority. A consistent view of Johnson cannot then be presented, and Boswell's Life, in its method of arrangement, highlights this, by its use of simple chronology rather than discussion by topic. When viewing humanity we must not impose a false system upon it and must lay contradictions side by side, adjusting sympathies as we progress, determining our judgements by means of rationality and the emotions, as this is how the human being both exists and judges. Thus in order to understand Johnson's authority, it is essential for one to realise the limits of one's own authority, and indeed by focussing upon the biographical art, we must come closer to understanding the problems which Johnson had to encounter in facing his own authority. In his violent laughter over the will, Johnson shows that in authority, which surely involves the hardening of what are conceived as certainties, one comes closer to the anarchic, namely that which is not certain; and indeed, the truths of

Christianity with their extraordinary paradoxes, are a demonstration of this. We shall note in the following chapters how Johnson's concept of God as a law giver led him both to the unquestionable certainty of Christianity and to an unending fight against doubts or what he called "scruples". Here again we see the anarchy that lies behind certainty. It is a sobering reflection, however, that the equation must work in the other direction and that anarchy leads to what is truly certain through its ability to shed false formalisations of what is true. Metaphorically speaking, the further the microscope is focused, the more chaotic life is shown to be.

It is here that we must adjust the conclusion to which we are being led. The strains between Johnson's authority and his humanity have been well documented in the chapter already, but this is not the end of the story. It is undeniable that Johnson really was an authority; he was better than others; his views seemed somehow to relate more accurately to reality than did other peoples'. Embodied in this statement is the premise that there are definite truths, as to be authoritative, there must be truths about which one can be authoritative, even though, as we have said, they seem, to a certain extent, to be only temporarily comprehensible. Just as it would be life-denying to dismiss achievement, competition, or envy, it would be impossible to destroy the appreciation of the beautiful or extinguish

morality. These concepts do exist in some objective sense, despite enormous latitude of interpretation. The emotions of humanity which might lead us in the direction of the unchartable, also allow for objective truth in the unanimity of their existence. Envy, a passion which Johnson considered more than any other, relies upon the existence of commonly held standards, and indeed, along with other concepts such as love, is felt by all. In his one novel, Rasselas, Johnson writes:

we are all prompted by the same motives , all deceived by the same fallacies, all animated by hope, obstructed by danger, entangled by desire and seduced by pleasure.¹⁰¹

Thus we must see authority as being reconcilable with the human condition, as it is one in which there are truths. And because Johnson tended to speak authoritatively about the truths of humanity, there was a reconciliation of these two elements. He is an authority precisely because he understands humanity, possibly because the strains imposed by his humanity reacting against his position in society, revealed to him his true nature ever more clearly. The problems arose, however, when people misinterpreted the human basis of Johnson's authority, by having considered it to have been a permanent structure rather than based upon his changing experience of life as a man. As we shall see, the Ramblers, when properly viewed, will reveal the human nature of their authority. But it was

too easy to imagine that Johnson's authority rested in some objective perman^eance, and Johnson's desire to build up his authority to promote love, often led to a playing of his expected role; the rationally objective authority.

In this chapter, then, I hope to have shown the importance of authority in Johnson's life and the effect which it had upon him. The opinions of others, especially that of Boswell, have been highlighted, as an authority can only be gauged in terms of his disciples. But important to this whole affair is the idea that Johnson was indeed an authority, and I hope I have explained how it is that the strains between his role as authority and his condition as a human being make him so important a thinker.

CHAPTER TWO

(PART ONE)

Johnson: The Linguistic Authority

Samuel Johnson's Dictionary was more than just a collection of English words defined; it was the pride of a generation of intellectuals who, before it had been published, felt their inferiority to the rival powers of France and Italy which had sophisticated dictionaries and academies to write them. Johnson's virtually single-handed effort was thus seen as heroic. In the Public Advertiser for April 22nd 1755 David Garrick wrote the following highly nationalistic verses upon the superiority of English intellectuals over those of the Continent:

First Shakespeare and Milton, like gods in the fight,
Have put their whole drama and epick to flight ;
In satires, epistles, and odes, would they cope,
Their numbers retreat before Dryden and Pope;
And Johnson, well arm'd like a hero of yore,
Has beat forty French, and will beat forty more!

And indeed Johnson himself admits this feeling in his Preface:

I have devoted this book, the labour of years, to the honour of my country, that we may no longer yield the palm of philology without a contest to the nations of the continent.²

The Dictionary was a truly magnificent achievement, and although it did not obtain a unanimously favourable response,³ it was seen in semi-mythical terms and earned for its compiler the nickname "Dictionary Johnson."⁴

Much light is shed upon Johnson's achievement if The Dictionary is seen in terms of its intellectual background. The Renaissance was considered to be a glorious genesis of language, an era in which men like Shakespeare literally created language, gaining much of their effect from this process. However, by the time of Dryden and the spreading of the written word to more people, there was an element of nervousness created by a feeling that linguistic mutation might lead to an inability to represent words, and thus to a corresponding inability to be understood. Dryden indeed confessed that in order to decide a correct way of expressing something in English, he would first translate it into Latin.⁵

In his work A History of the English Language, Albert Baugh describes this process of change in detail, naming the relevant chapter "The Appeal to Authority." A strong element in this appeal was the desire to "fix" the language in order that knowledge gained should not be lost. Swift summed up this fear of linguistic anarchy:

How then shall any man, who hath a genius for history equal to the best of the ancients, be able to undertake such a work with spirit and cheerfulness, when he considers that he will be read with pleasure but a very few years, and in an age or two shall hardly be understood without an interpreter.⁶

Whilst Pope wrote more succinctly in his Essay on Criticism "And such as Chaucer is, shall Dryden be."⁷ This desire to "fix" the language is a major intention of Johnson's Dictionary. He writes in paragraph 18 of The Preface that he wishes that words " might be less apt to decay, and that signs might be permanent like the things which they denote." However, as we shall discover, Johnson saw the matter far more accurately than did many of the other pioneers of this conservative linguistic philosophy. We are allowed a glimpse of what was seen as Johnson's task by Chesterfield's recommendation of The Dictionary, which was published in the one hundredth edition of The World magazine, and which earned him a somewhat aggressive rebuke from Johnson: ⁸

The time for discrimination seems to be now come. Toleration, adoption and naturalization, have run their lengths. Good order and authority are now necessary. But where shall we find them?...we must have recourse to the old Roman expedient in times of confusion, and choose a Dictator. Upon this principle, I give my vote for Mr Johnson to fill that great and arduous post.⁹

Thus we see Johnson as an authority in the Age of Authority, a dictator of the very core of the intellectual system, the language. No wonder then that W.K. Wimsatt wrote that the:

...long labour on The Dictionary, from his thirty - seventh to his forty - sixth year [was]...one of the great episodes, the last great episode, in the formation of his mind. From this he emerged the terrifying arbiter and universal cham of the mature years with which we are most familiar¹⁰.

whilst Paul Fussell, in his book on Johnson's writings, describes it as "an emblem of his whole writing career"¹¹. The Dictionary, then, seems to be a focusing of his career, and particularly his attitude to authority. A discussion of The Dictionary is likely then, to tell us much about Johnson as an authority.

A vital question concerning authority generated through a dictionary is that of the role played by language in the particular civilisation. The character of society's views about language will reveal the extent to which the author of a dictionary is authoritative. If language is considered as unimportant, then the compiler will be correspondingly viewed. It is, therefore, through a discussion of this question, that Johnson's authority can be gauged. Ephraim Chambers, in his Preface to The Cyclopaedia wrote that "...an explication of their [meaning the Egyptian sages] marks or words, [would]...amount to a revelation of their whole inner philosophy."¹² This view is amplified by Johnson in The Preface where he outlines what he hopes will be a result of his labours, namely that:

...foreign nations, and distant ages, gain access to the propagators of knowledge, and understand the teachers of truth...[whilst affording] light to the repositories of

science, and add celebrity to Bacon, to Hooker, to Milton, and to Boyle.¹³

And Robert Demaria, in a modern work on The Dictionary, goes as far as to say that "...language means learning to Johnson."¹⁴ Not surprisingly then, Johnson and his contemporaries invested language with great powers. Thomas Sheridan, whom Johnson knew and argued with,¹⁵ attempted to show in a lengthy treatise entitled, British Education:

...that a revival of the art of speaking, and the study of our language, might contribute, in a great measure...[to the cure of] the evils of immorality, ignorance and false taste.¹⁶

Thus in the context of his time, Johnson is acting to clarify the corpus of contemporary thought, and to lay down a perceived ordering of morality. Through The Dictionary, Johnson is bringing into clarification a system that is already there, if not adequately displayed. In this, he is operating authoritatively, an expert in that which undoubtedly exists.

However, there are problems with this analysis which arise from The Dictionary itself. In his book entitled Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language, Umberto Eco dissects the concept of a dictionary into one that is less statically authoritative than might be imagined. Knowledge emerges through the activities of "internal thought and external discourse."¹⁷ It is both an empirical and

accumulative activity which is reflected in the dictionary itself and can be seen as being:

...dissolved into a potentially unordered and unrestricted galaxy of pieces of world knowledge. The dictionary thus becomes an encyclopaedia, because it was in fact a disguised encyclopaedia.¹⁸

Though not wishing to enter into a sustained debate upon the nature of dictionaries, it seems to me that this is particularly appropriate for Johnson's Dictionary. The most innovative aspect of the work was the use of 116,000 quotations to illustrate the words listed, an act which led to much criticism¹⁹ but which made Johnson "...the first to introduce into English lexicography the method of illustrating the different significations of words by examples from the best writers."²⁰ In doing so Johnson hoped to illustrate the words listed so that, as he suggested in The Preface, "the sense may easily be collected entire from the examples."²¹ It is this aspect of The Dictionary which links it so closely with an encyclopaedia or as Robert Demaria put it, a "Forum Britannicum" which "presents a symposium of writers on the whole round of learning". Demaria continues by claiming that The Dictionary in its illustrative context, can be seen as "a standard view of recorded knowledge on these subjects."²² Johnson, then, presents to us the state of thought at his time. In the use of quotations, we see him linking language with learning as Demaria stated and in doing so, he qualifies himself as an

authority upon the learning of his time. Again in The Preface Johnson links these two categories of authority together:

When first I collected these authorities, I was desirous that every quotation should be useful to some other end than the illustration of a word; I therefore extracted from philosophers principles of science; from historians remarkable facts; from chymists complete processes; from divines striking exhortations; and from poets beautiful descriptions.²³

Here we see language and instruction as being inseparable, as well as a statement of Johnson's intention of supplying examples from all branches of knowledge; no wonder that Browning qualified himself for literature "...by reading and digesting the whole of Johnson's Dictionary"²⁴.

However the quotation introduces a paradox which is central to The Dictionary. We see from it that Johnson is heavily involved with the selection of the material for illustration. Demaria has pointed out that he did not choose randomly²⁵ but instead, chose quotations from authors whom he both admired and could gain access to. In the First Volume of The Dictionary (A-K), there are approximately 24,000 quotations from the English Poets, with over 8,500 from Shakespeare, over 5,600 from Dryden, and 2,700 from Milton, whilst there were about 10,000 from the Philosophers, over 1,600 from Locke and 5,000 from Religious writers, especially, Hooker, Bacon, and Boyle.²⁶ Demaria focuses on the way in which he uses many of the quotations in a form of "dialogue" or "colloquy" which he places in the

genre of "Menippean Satire" which was a popular way of presenting truth through argument and contradiction at that time.²⁷ To demonstrate this, he uses as his examples, Johnson's treatment of the words "chance," "misshape", and destiny." In the first mentioned of these, a Shakespearean quotation is qualified by others, eventually being made to uphold a traditional Christian viewpoint, an aspect of The Dictionary which we have noticed. In this way, Johnson is forcing himself upon the evidence by his selection and combination of example. Nevertheless it is obvious that this process takes as its material the authority of others, and indeed, the whole of Johnson's approach was based upon this concept. He states very early in The Preface that his whole method was based upon:

...the perusal of our writers; and noting whatever might be of use to ascertain or illustrate any word or phrase, accumulated in time the materials of a dictionary, which, by degrees, I reduced to method, establishing to myself, in the progress of the work,²⁸ such rules as experience and analogy suggested to me.

and indeed all the principal modern commentators²⁹ follow Bishop Percy's account³⁰ of Johnson's method which involved the perusal of authorities and the extracting from them of words in the context of their quotation. They were only then sorted into alphabetical order so that as Wimsatt claims: "...his discriminations of meanings and definitions grow out of and are determined empirically by the materials gathered from his actual reading."³¹ The quotation from The Preface is

a crucial one. Through it, Johnson reveals that his authority is based entirely upon the authority of others, and that all his decisions are based upon this authority. Not only does Johnson's own authority become compromised, but language reveals itself as being based upon empirical foundations rather than a self-contained method. This leads us to the uneasy conclusions that the language itself does not seem to affect morality or the intellectual life in the same way as might have seemed clearer earlier. It is in fact morality and the intellectual life that seem to be the guiding factors of language. Also, Johnson's willingness to clarify the great writers is compromised by the fact that it is these very same writers who are used to delineate, if not to create the language themselves. Therefore, this reversal leads to complication in terms of authority. Nevertheless, it will be shown that it is by means of this approach that much will be made clear and reconciled.

The contrast between Johnson's authority as a lexicographer and the authority of the sources which he quotes, manifests itself in another strain, namely that it is the lexicographer's task of fixing the language and "the boundless chaos of living speech"³². Towards the end of The Preface, Johnson describes the inevitable process of linguistic change both beautifully and regretfully :

Those who have been persuaded to think well of my design will require that it should fix our language...[But] with equal justice may the lexicographer be derided who

being able to produce no example of a nation that has preserved their words and phrases from mutability shall imagine that his dictionary can enbalm his language.... Sounds are too volatile and subtle for legal restraints; to enchain syllables, and to lash the wind, are equally the undertaking of pride...³³

Hence we are brought up against what Baugh describes as the "Doctrine of Usage."³⁴ It is ironic then that in the "Age of authority" the authority of language was recognised by Johnson as being potentially anarchic since the ways of "using" language are infinite in number.

Nevertheless a closer reading of The Dictionary and its Preface reveals that Johnson perceived this contrast in subtler terms:

Every language has its anomalies, which though inconvenient, and in themselves once unnecessary, must be tolerated among the imperfections of human things, and which require only to be registered, that they may not be increased, and ascertained that they may not be confounded: but every language has likewise its improprieties and absurdities, which it is the duty of the lexicographer to correct or proscribe.³⁵

Thus we see that Johnson divides usage up into that which can be accepted and is in some way genuine, and that which must be eradicated. "Those irregularities that are inherent in our tongue"³⁶ are distinguished from those others "which the ignorance or negligence of later writers has produced"³⁷ by the fact that the former result from the dissimilarities occasioned by copyists' attempts to write down an oral language as Johnson wrote: "different hands

would exhibit the same sound by different combinations."³⁸ Nevertheless, he goes on to state that "...many words have likewise been altered by accident, or depraved by ignorance"³⁹, and it is this inaccuracy which exists in contemporary language, an inaccuracy which creates an extinguishable variable which Johnson wishes to remove.

These disputes Johnson settles by "enquiring" their "...true orthography, which I have always considered as depending on their derivation, and have therefore referred them to their original languages."⁴⁰ We see being developed here a theory of internal linguistic philosophy in that the language has its own authority based upon a process of change. It can be said with accuracy that Johnson sees language in Lockean terms. There are, according to Johnson, basic sources for words, for instance Latin and French, whose reasonings and origins are not questioned. They are, as it were, irrefutable authorities, standing by themselves. These basic words give rise to what Johnson describes as "primitives" for instance the words 'explain' or 'repent' which can be judged in terms of their origin. These "primitives" in turn, lead to derivatives such as 'explanation' or 'repetition'. This is a line of reasoning very closely paralleled by Locke in his Essay Concerning Human Understanding in which he divides ideas in the mind up into the "simple" and the "complex" the latter deriving from the former. "Complex ideas" are explicable in terms of

the authoritative "simples" but these are ultimately irreducible as they are directly based upon experience. For instance, yellow cannot be divided up any further, and can only be known and understood through its occurrence in the world, and indeed, Johnson defines 'yellow' in The Dictionary as "Being of a bright, glaring colour as Gold" and equally interesting, he defines 'red' as "Of the colour of blood, of one of the primitive colours, which is subdivided into many; as scarlet, crimson, vermilion".

The point being made by highlighting the parallel with Locke is that there is something natural about the way in which language works, which is intimately connected with the working of the human mind. Johnson makes this clearer still in paragraph 18, drawing himself closer in the process to Locke: "Language," he writes, "is only the instrument of science, and words are but signs of ideas." The doctrine against Innate Ideas, which Locke puts forward at the very beginning of The Essay links the world directly to knowledge and hence words are the signs used to describe this knowledge, and do not stand apart from it. And in this way, there is a direct correlation between the development of language and the development of thought, with the former being affected by the latter; Johnson makes it clear that this process works in the one direction only:

This recommendation of steadiness and uniformity does not proceed from an opinion that particular combinations of letters have much influence on human happiness;....

I am not yet so lost in Lexicography, as to forget that words are the daughters of earth...⁴¹

Thus we see a natural inherent linguistic authority emerging where language is divided up into 'simples' and 'complexes' but which mirrors thought so accurately that it can be reasonably explained in terms of this and not vice versa, a fact which a Lockean empirical approach would not allow anyhow.

In an excellent article, Elizabeth Hedrick clarifies many of the details of the relationship between Johnson and Locke. At one point, she explains how a Lockean system operates on many of Johnson's definitions. Johnson's impulse is to associate:

...the radical meanings of words with ideas that are closer to the world of sense than those that follow, and to write definitions that move from primitiveness to complication in a way that imitates the actions of the mind as it abstracts, then recombines, ideas to form more rarified notions than those with which it begins.⁴²

To demonstrate this process, Johnson himself, in The Plan, picks on the word 'ground', linking its primitive meaning of earth with a "remoter, metaphorical signification" of background. Hedrick shows how this process operates using Johnson's definitions of the words 'catastrophe', 'crank', 'critick' and 'coffer'. She points out that there is not necessarily a logical connection between the definitions, but often an emotional progression, reflecting human

attitudes towards a radical signification.⁴³ The 'critick' is primarily described as;

- 1.) A man skilled in the art of judging literature; a man able to distinguish the faults and beauties of writing.

The second meaning is a logical enough step:

- 2.) An examiner; a judge.

But there is a jump which reflects a natural human reaction, felt by many towards a judge:

- 3.) A snarler; a carper; a caviller.

- 4.) A censurer; a man apt to find fault.

This process is noted and defined by W.K. Wimsatt in his article in F.W. Hilles' compilation. He writes:

...that metaphor through the ages shows a characteristic direction of reference, from the physical towards the social, psychological, and spiritual.⁴⁴

Thus not only are words naturally progressive, but they will progress in a certain way. This is further evidence for the Lockean process of linking words directly to the world as perceived through the human being. As knowledge becomes more complex it will develop language in the direction of the spiritual, social and psychological, which despite their removal from the original radical significations, will be likened to them through the natural development of thought, reflected through language. In the very insistence upon the progressive nature of words, Johnson moves towards a balance of authority in that the anarchic sphere of usage can now be

seen in terms of the human, something which can be demonstrated by Johnson to be both a state based upon authority, and upon consistency. And thus we see him being governed by "his principles and decisions" rather than by what is merely recorded, but he admits that The Dictionary has authority. We have discussed the way in which it has authority in that it was a milestone in dictionary writing, and in the way that it brought to the surface the underlying human nature of language through authorities and the resultant consistency of etymology, but there is also a peculiar way in which Johnson authoritatively brings together both stability and change through the use of illustration. In the crux of this seeming paradox lies the solution of The Dictionary and its writer's authority. He writes in paragraph 65 of The Preface that the use of numerous authorities will "...contribute something to the stability or enlargement of the language." The linking of two such apparently opposing effects brings together the stabilising purpose of The Dictionary with the acknowledgement that the language will change in the way in which we have discussed. In paragraph 86 Johnson sees language changing due to the enlargement of learning, but it is at the same time evident that learning stabilises a language in terms of consistency. The Dictionary, by demonstrating the history of a word, enables it to be seen in a more permanent and yet more elaborate way. And thus the fixing of the language is achieved by the very forces

which through their literary sophistication, will enlarge it. And indeed this view has been justified by two hundred and thirty years, or more: we can read Johnson far more easily than Chaucer or even Shakespeare, and yet our language has expanded in both its number of words and its sophistication of signification. Thus Johnson's authority rests in his ability to "fix" the language through his very acknowledgement and explanation of its variation. Furthermore, we see that Johnson's authority is based upon the authority of the human nature of language, and indeed the language is pregnant with value and literary understanding because it is this which it is created from. The more internal authority language can be shown to hold, the more Johnson's own authority is enhanced, as through The Dictionary they are linked. Perhaps the peculiar nature of The Preface's final paragraph is a result of this. Nowhere else in his writing is there a greater desire to be congratulated, and indeed a greater certainty that it is deserved, and yet, too, rarely does he feel that, because of the unchanging nature of humanity, his labour is so personally unconstructive:

I have protracted my work till most of those whom I wished to please have sunk into the grave, and success and miscarriage are empty sounds; I therefore dismiss it with frigid tranquillity, having little to fear or hope from censure or from praise.

CHAPTER TWO

(PART TWO)

Johnson: The Literary Authority

The next area of interest in discussing Johnson's authority is his literary criticism, which we take to be chiefly his Edition of Shakespeare and his Lives of the Most Eminent English Poets.

The peculiar interest of this area is that one cannot escape from a sense of disappointment, a feeling that was voiced as early as 1765, the year in which the edition of Shakespeare appeared. Arthur Sherbo, commenting upon contemporary reactions, summarises: "The general impression one gets is that of dissatisfaction or disappointment with the edition." ¹ Whilst Sir John Hawkins, in his Life, wrote "Much had been expected from it, and little now appeared to have been performed"². But this feeling is not restricted to the contemporary reaction. F.R. Leavis, in his well-known article in Scrutiny, punctuates what is otherwise a highly

complimentary essay, with the revealing comment, in answer to his question "What do we read it [Johnson's criticism] for?", namely:

Not for enlightenment about authors with whom it deals (though it may impart some), and not for direct instruction in critical thinking³.

Likewise, C.B. Tinker, in his essay, "Johnson as Monarch", states that Johnson's criticism can "...always be read with profit even when we dissent from the view set forth" and indeed we read it "...to enjoy the humour and the humours; the audacities and the prejudices of a man of genius."⁴ And it would be foolish not to assent to the fact that there is much about Johnson's criticism which we, as readers, cannot accept; but conversely, there seems to be much that is of value. Illustration of this problem will, I propose, give us the key to his criticism, if indeed there is one, and enlighten us to the degree of authority which we may attach to it. How are we able to place his scathing criticism of Milton's Lycidas in context?⁵

The whole question of the criticism is closely affected by our last area of study, namely, The Dictionary, in that, in this work, Johnson had been forced to define what he meant by various terms such as 'harsh', 'forced', 'tender' and 'pathetic'⁶ all of which he extensively used in his criticism. In defining these terms he had been forced to stabilise his critical approach into system, as has been

shown by Sherbo ⁷ who places these terms in the context of the Shakespeare criticism, thus demonstrating their operation within the system. Nevertheless, a more revealing survey has been carried out by John Needham in his book, The Completest Mode where the terms are placed in the context of what he calls Johnson's doctrine of "propriety".⁸ The aim of this approach was to allow the sentiments of the poetry to emerge easily. Needham explains:

The linguistic medium should become, as it were, transparent, so that the reader feels himself in the presence not of words, but of things and experiences.⁹

In this way, the poetry must be, in Johnson's terms 'easy': "Easy poetry is that in which natural thoughts are expressed without violence to the language."¹⁰ Needham's interpretation accurately fits Johnson's discussion of most poetry and both Needham and Sherbo quote fully; for instance, the first two lines of Pope's Iliad produce the following reaction: "In the first couplet the language is distorted by inversions, clogged with superfluties, and clouded by a harsh metaphor..."¹¹ and there are numerous instances of this type of comment.¹² This general approach manifests itself in various different ways. In his Life of Dryden, he introduces the concept of a correct poetical language; he writes "Words too familiar or too remote defeat the purpose of a poet."¹³ This they do by distracting, and so, in Lady Macbeth's speech (Act I, Sc.5,51-55) when she mentions the "keen knife", Johnson comments:

...scarce any man now peruses [the passage] without some disturbance of his attention from the counteraction of the words to the ideas....[and in particular, 'knife' is a term] used by butchers and cooks in the meanest employments....[and therefore] who does not, at last, from the long habit of connecting a knife with sordid offices, feel aversion rather than terror.¹⁴

In his Life of Dryden, which is probably the most perfect of The Lives, Johnson imputes what he calls the "new versification" to Dryden who, by his introduction of "...elegancies or flowers of speech", has saved poetry from the barbarity of "...forced thoughts, and rugged metre." He explains:

There was therefore before the time of Dryden no poetical diction: no system of words at once refined from the grossness of domestick use and free from the harshness of terms appropriated to particular arts.¹⁵

From this Life alone, we can form a complex idea of the way in which Johnson viewed poetry. There is no doubt that there is a strong element of the regulated; "It was reserved for Dryden to fix the limits of poetical liberty, and give us just rules..."¹⁶ Later on in the essay, Johnson states that "To write verse is to dispose syllables and sounds harmonically by some known and settled rule;" but it is not quite so simple; "...a rule however lax enough to substitute similitude for identity, to admit change without breach of order, and to relieve the ear without disappointing it."¹⁷

If verse is seen in such constricted terms, the criticism must, if it is to approach verse on its own level, operate by method, and indeed in Rambler 92, we are told that: "It is, however, the task of criticism to establish principles; to improve opinion into knowledge"¹⁸and, commenting upon the same passage in Rambler 92, George Watson claimed that:

...the object of [Johnson's] criticism was, in a very literal sense, to lay down the law, to ascertain and apply general principles of poetic excellence.¹⁹

And thus again we are made to confront Johnson as an authority. It is obvious that verse must fit into certain pre-ordered categories if it is to be judged 'good' or if it is to be judged 'art' at all. For Johnson, therefore, originality of form was not an alternative, and, indeed, his difficulty in confronting the novel, a newly developed art form, stems from the fact that it presented new criteria. The artist must involve his ideas in a certain way so that the reader (or the audience) who is the rightful judge and object of art, can appreciate the sentiments expressed. Johnson, then, sets out authoritatively, the obligations of the artist. In the light of this, the critic's task is to prevent art from slipping away from the principles of ease and grace to that barbarity from which Dryden had removed it. He explains in his Life of Pope:

All truth is valuable, and satirical criticism may be considered as useful when it rectifies error and improves judgement: he that refines the publick taste is a publick benefactor.²⁰

It is in this way that we can understand his dismissal of Lycidas as well as the well-known criticism of the metaphysical poets in the Life of Cowley. In this Life he deals with the mechanism of the conceit which, as one might imagine, he finds distracting:

Truth indeed is always truth, and reason is always reason; they have an intrinsic and unalterable value and constitute that intellectual gold which defies destruction: but gold may be so concealed in baser matter that only a chymist can recover it; sense may be so hidden in unrefined and plebeian words that none but philosophers can distinguish it; and both may be so buried in impurities as not to pay the cost of their extraction.²¹

The conceit and various other devices for poetic expression distracted the arbiter from the point of the poem, namely its sense; he continues:

As they were wholly employed on something unexpected and surprising they had no regard to that uniformity of sentiment, which enables us to conceive and to excite the pains and pleasure of other minds²²

I have quoted from his Life of Cowley in detail as the two quotations reveal an important aspect of his critical thought, namely the idea that there are universal human sentiments which reflect unchanging truth. It is within these bounds that Johnson's prescriptions operate. Throughout the criticism, we have presented the idea that humanity will react in a certain way. From The Life of Pope, we gather that "...the heart naturally loves truth"²³ and

this ideal leads him to impart a moral purpose in drama. He criticises Shakespeare for sacrificing "...virtue to convenience...for it is always a writer's duty to make the world better, and justice is a virtue independent of time and place."²⁴ He admits that "...from his writings indeed a system of social duty may be selected, for he that thinks reasonably must think morally."²⁵ Morality then, is inherent to the human situation and thus literature must be involved with this. It is because of this, then, that As You Like It is condemned for its "improper ending":

By hastening to the end of his work Shakespeare suppressed the dialogue between the usurper and the hermit, and lost an opportunity of exhibiting a moral lesson in which he might have found matter worthy of his highest powers.²⁶

For Johnson then, "The end of writing is to instruct; the end of poetry is to instruct by pleasing."²⁷

It is now that Johnson's criticism really pulls into focus. To the twentieth century mind, this degree of moralising is intolerable and is an unwarranted imposition of principle upon art which is supposed to mirror life in whatever form it is observed. Leavis described Johnson's moralising as "...his bondage to moralistic fallacy."²⁸ But the vital point exhibited by his criticism is that Johnson saw morality as being inherent to humanity, and art which disjoined the two was not a true reflection of reality. By necessity then, his criticism must be systematic as humanity

is seen in terms of certain stateable and identifiable premises which can be discussed authoritatively by the critic. Thus Johnson's view of human nature compelled him to take this approach to art.

Another effect which this attitude had, and indeed which is confirmation of it, is found in one of his best known paragraphs of The Preface, namely:

Nothing can please many, and please long, but just representations of general nature....the pleasures of sudden wonder are soon exhausted, and the mind can only repose on the stability of truth.²⁹

Humanity, then, must be presented in general terms.

Shakespeare receives great praise from Johnson in that his characters:

...are the general progeny of common humanity, such as the world will always supply, and observation will always find. His persons act and speak by the influence of those general passions and principles by which all minds are agitated, and the whole system of life continued in motion. In the writings of other poets a character is too often an individual; in those of Shakespeare it is commonly a species.³⁰

This links together what I have said, and the focussing upon the general is because art must be didactic and hence relevant to everyone. If it focused upon peculiarity it would merely be curiosity, but as humanity is intrinsically bound up with morality, the working of art in mirroring life will be didactic and hence general; indeed, Arie Sachs wrote, inverting our formula: "The true aim of art is

precisely the aim of the moralist: to show 'the uniformity in the state of man.' "³¹ Thus art is to act as an emblem of the generality of humanity. In line with this is Johnson's insistence that it is the public which is the only true judge of art, which he expounds at the beginning of The Preface³². If humanity, bound together by the common characteristics of truth and morality, is general, it will react in the same way to art and hence its judgements as a whole are what count. It would then, be impossible to see Johnson as being outside of the general critical philosophy of his age. To have believed that the voice of the multitude was of importance, entailed a consideration of current attitudes to criticism. Leavis, in the article already quoted, places Johnson fairly and squarely in his age:

At no other period of English history have literary interests been governed by a literary tradition so positive. Johnson, an indubitably real critic, first-hand and forceful, writes from within it...³³

Furthermore, one of the primary achievements of Sherbo's study of the edition of Shakespeare, is to stress the work's unoriginality as viewed from the standpoint of eighteenth-century criticism. Here, Sherbo discusses The Preface:

Johnson is the spokesman for his age. Some of the ideas in the Preface were current in the periodicals of the time; most were pretty much common property...but the belief, still persistent in some critics, that Johnson had something new to say on Shakespeare in the Preface must be discarded.³⁴

In this way, Johnson's somewhat authoritarian view of

humanity, based upon a moral standpoint, leads him to this position of reliance upon general approbation, which affects his critical approach dramatically. In the light of this, art cannot exist for its own sake, as it will then become redundant and have no link to humanity, something which in Johnson's interpretation, necessarily involves purpose.

The effect of this view of humanity is complex in that it both enhances Johnson's authority, by legitimising it in the sense that he is talking of what is real, namely human nature; but also, as we have said, it minimises his authority as human kind is of a general nature and cannot, therefore be spoken for by an individual.

It is in The Preface that we see Johnson's most consistent outline of a critical theory based upon conditions defined by the nature of humanity; a position which underlies the well-known and effective dismissal of the unities³⁵ where rules are seen as a useful creation of individual poets which has been wrongly transformed into universal laws. This line of thought is set out in detail in Rambler 158 where he writes:

The rules hitherto received, are seldom drawn from any settled principle or self-evident postulate, or adapted to the natural and invariable constitution of things; but will be found upon examination the arbitrary edicts of legislators authorised only by themselves. ³⁶

And elsewhere we see aggressive sallies against authorities

or legislators who concoct rules of art which deny humanity. There is, then, a strong force in Johnson's criticism which backs away from principle, as presumably he must have considered himself in some ways inadequate to a task which is, by nature, collective. In The Life of Pope, he criticises those who judge "...by principles rather than perception"³⁷ whilst in The Preface he describes the critical art as being one which has "...no system, no principle and axiomatical truth that regulates subordinate positions."³⁸ In The Life of Milton he criticises Salmasius who was effectively dismissed by Milton:

He taught only the stale doctrine of authority and the unpleasing duty of submission; and he had been so long not only the monarch, but the tyrant of literature that almost all mankind were delighted to find him defied...³⁹

Leavis summarises:

In fact, Johnson's recourse to experience is so constant and uncompromising and so subversive of Neo-classical authority that it is misleading to bring him under the Neo-Classic head.⁴⁰

Johnson here links this supposed authority to an invented system, something which is opposed to experience. However we must lay alongside this the fact that Johnson believed, as we have seen, that there was something systematic in human nature. Only if there is something systematic will the critic be able to speak for humanity at large. If judgement is purely reserved for the totality of

individual judgements, then the critic can never be authoritative, or at least valuably so. It is not difficult to see that behind these tensions lies the question of the critic's ability to talk about a mankind which is general - though he will never be able to talk with the authority of the generality, he, by being part of it, will have a certain share of the truth. Perhaps, then, these two seemingly opposed lines of thought have much to do with the nature of the critic's authority.

To clarify this problem, I wish to point the reader in the direction of W.R. Keast's excellent article upon "The Theoretical Foundations of Johnson's Criticism."⁴¹ He points out a way through the outlined dilemma in terms of Johnson's:

...habituation to the flexible employment of his dominant assumptions, and, above all, of the generality and adaptability of his principles⁴²

thereby accepting the critic's role as being approximate due to the general nature of the assumptions he is involved with. Again the guiding factor is humanity. Keast argues that the grounds upon which Johnson dismisses prescriptive criticism, give him the basis for his own approach. Johnson criticises prescriptive criticism on three levels:

- 1.) Universal maxims have been derived from particular poets.
- 2.) Nature is the object of the poet's activity and
- 3.) Literature has to satisfy general conditions of

pleasure(394). The poet's imagination roams unconfined over the "...boundless ocean of possibility"(394), thus prescriptive rules are, if based upon authorities alone, arbitrary. Nature itself is ultimately variable and so, therefore, will be its effects - "Nothing which has life for its basis can boast much stability."⁴³(396) and indeed, linked to this, is the fact that an audience requires general pleasures such as both recognition and novelty. (395) Keast sums up

Whichever of these three bases Johnson uses to ground his case against earlier critics...he is endeavouring to replace what he considers narrow principles with principles more commodious.⁴⁴

The art is set in the context of natural processes, hence discernible in these terms (395). Thus we find that the basis for judgement of art is nature and not art itself (398). Yet in nature are found certain basic principles such as truth, from which stand - point we can adjudicate.(398) Furthermore, art can be judged successful if it can satisfy the general conditions of pleasure namely truth and novelty.(399) Thus the audience is the ultimate arbiter, as it is in terms of this, that art is created. The essential uniformity of man allows for a fixed measure, and indeed nature is defined by what we discover in man (400.) Thus judgement rests in "...the common voice of the multitude, uninstructed by precept, and unprejudiced by authority."⁴⁵(403) The poet is viewed in terms of his

historical perspective, which will illuminate the peculiar conditions of his writing(186) This line of thought forms an important strand in The Lives.

Aided by Keast's arguments we may progress without fear. The looseness of the principles used by Johnson allows the external forces of judgement to be catered for and the critic's job then, is to deal in probabilities, pointing out what would be appreciated by an audience as the horizon of artistic form. Nevertheless, Keast's argument leaves us feeling uneasy, precisely because the explanation presented is inadequate, despite its thoroughness. It does not take into account those individual judgements of Johnson's which do not do justice to what might be termed a human reaction, at which I hinted in the beginning of the chapter. In the very linking of authority manifested in precepts, with humanity, Johnson is disallowing a certain type of reaction which one could call an individual emotional correspondence to poetry, and thus he must have realised the irony of his position as critic and hence individual. Johnson's philosophy opens itself up to this type of judgement when two fundamental contradictions are noted; firstly that nature is both infinitely varied (p.176 Keast), "nothing which has life for its basis can boast of much stability" and secondly, the fact that man, the definer of nature, is uniformly "the common voice of the multitude" especially through the inherence of the truth. Thus, despite the fact

that one would not wish to abandon any ideal of common human characteristics there must be some sense of the individual both logically and in terms of the criticism which Johnson puts forward. Only through a realisation of the individual can the authoritative critic explain the fact that he is speaking, in any sense, authoritatively, as he himself can never speak for humanity 'en masse'. One gets the impression that Johnson's warning against authority is directed against the authority of others rather than against his own! There seems to be an element of clearing the ground of other possible opinions, so that he can construct his own authority. We must, therefore, take seriously his role as an individual, as behind much of what he might outwardly write, there is a strong sense that what he says as Dr Johnson is extremely important.

Johnson's individual role in the criticism is highlighted by John Hardy who notes his "...peculiarly human, complex responsiveness to great works of the imagination."⁴⁶ One feels that it is particularly appropriate that Johnson's response is described as "...peculiarly human" as humanity is then seen through a prism of individualism where depth of personal response is taken as a mark of humanity, a humanity which must lie beyond the principled as it has the ability to be "peculiar." Thus we must allow a sense of the individual to direct our criticism, one which will most readily reveal

itself in the area of the senses and the emotions. Because of the variation of human response in this area, as well as the inexplicable nature of the forces which govern our reactions, it is an extremely difficult task to judge critically. It is my belief that Johnson shied away from this task in that he did not allow his personal reactions to affect him, in theory at least. In the laying down of pre-ordained standpoints, he defended himself from having to encounter his emotional responses in their entirety. Furthermore, he must have realised that to carry any authoritative weight, he must do more than just put forward a "personal" view. He had to be seen to put forward the truth, a truth which looked more genuine if systematic.

John Hardy notices tensions in Johnsonian criticism, describing them as "The inherent tensions that can exist in and through Johnson's imaginative and moral engagement with Shakespeare's world...";⁴⁷ and indeed he sees Johnson's greatness as a critic as arising from this in that the focus upon morality allows the real depth of reaction to be revealed through the resulting uneasiness and contradiction. If Johnson had not been so inwardly divided, the strong personal involvement with the works would not have been so obvious. That Johnson reacted to Shakespeare's plays in a deeply emotional way is undoubted. In his criticism of Macbeth, he compares the depiction of night with one from Dryden's Conquest of Mexico :

He that reads Dryden, finds himself lull'd with serenity, and disposed to solitude and contemplation. He that peruses Shakespeare, looks round alarmed, and starts to find himself alone. One is the night of a lover, the other, of a murderer.⁴⁸

This is not what we might expect from Johnson as despite this obvious involvement, he will not allow art to be judged on anything like a purely sensual level. Anyone who treated the pastoral mode with so much disdain could not be said to have been in favour of the purely emotional as Leavis makes clear in his Scrutiny article:

Johnson ... has no leaning towards the taste, so decidedly alive in the eighteenth century, for Spencerian - Tennysonian melodizing, the incantatory play of mellifluousness in which sense is subordinated⁴⁹

James Engell, in his work, The Creative Imagination has written that "...Johnson brings to highest pitch the rationalist suspicion of the imagination"⁵⁰, a view echoed by Arie Sachs who applies this notion directly to Johnson's views of literature:

The main use of poetry, according to Johnson, is as an antidote to Imagination. It must lead us towards whatever sanity we are capable of, protect us from the mad obsessions of the heart, and it can do this only by presenting us with the 'stability of truth.'⁵¹

How else indeed could one excuse this reaction to Macbeth's great speech beginning "Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow," namely: "This passage has been justly suspected of being corrupt....It is a broken speech, in which only

part of the thought is expressed...."⁵². By focussing upon what he sees as "faults" and providing a paraphrase, he is immunising the speech from its effect upon the imagination. He separates the sense from the essential "life-giving" poetry, and in doing so, effectively trivialises it.

In the Life of Pope, Johnson allowed himself to make an important, if two-sided statement, about the power of language, which deserves to be quoted in full. He is discussing The Essay on Man.

This essay affords an egregious instance of the predominance of genius, the dazzling splendour of imagery, and the seductive powers of eloquence. Never were penury of knowledge and vulgarity of sentiment so happily disguised. The reader feels his mind full, though he learns nothing; and when he meets it in its new array no longer knows the talk of his mother and his nurse. When these wonder-working sounds sink into sense and the doctrine of the Essay, disrobed of its ornaments, is left to the powers of its naked excellence, what shall we discover?⁵³

The answer, of course, is not very much. But throughout this passage, though Johnson dismisses the essay for its failure to provide much that is new, and criticises it for the fact that it is reliant upon ornament for any effect that it does have, he cannot bring himself to dismiss it outright. The disguise is the result of the "...predominance of genius", whilst the language used is "seductive", "dazzling" and has "splendour", whilst the words are "wonder-working"- why then, will Johnson not allow into his mainstream philosophy of criticism a place for beauty of language, or indeed the

connected beauty of image? The answer is provided for us in the extract, as well as in our quotations from Engell and Sachs. From the extract then: "...and when he meets it in his new array, no longer knows the talk of his mother." Here Johnson exhibits what is almost fear, fear that he would lose his bearings upon reality, that which he associated with security of the mother figure, what he might have referred to as "The Stability of Truth", a living truth, a basic common sense. Opposed to this are the beautiful and emotional powers of language, which are "seductive", something a mother can never be. And it was these powers that posed a threat to his basic stability found in his reason. His authoritative approach can be seen then as defensive, a defence against his emotions which he feared would seduce him away from his reason. It must be stressed that it was because he was so impressed by the language that it was so distracting, and it was Johnson himself who would use incomparably beautiful language to persuade others and so in turn increase his authority. In this light, then, we can see the idea of transparence of language where the medium does not distract from the sense.

John Hardy sees Johnson's approach to Macbeth as being symptomatic of this general approach, in that, in the general note⁵⁴ he distances himself from the play, by stating that "The events are too great to admit the influence of particular dispositions, and the course of the

action necessarily determines the conduct of the agents."⁵⁵ Thus the play is effectively pushed beyond the moral, and thus Johnson can effectively distance himself from any sympathy which Macbeth might gain through his complexity of psychology or indeed through the depth of language he uses which is enough to elicit sympathy from the most emotionless. The view that Johnson is frightened by the play's attack upon cut and dried morality, is enhanced by the last paragraph of the note which is so extraordinarily and obviously inadequate to the power of the play, and indeed the general feeling of an audience. Hardy notes the irony of Johnson's dismissal of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth on moral grounds, having effectively placed the play beyond the moral sphere earlier in the observation.

The General observation on Hamlet is similar, though strangely unnoticed by Hardy. In it, Johnson refuses to consider the play in terms that would make it psychologically interesting. He writes:

Of the feigned madness of Hamlet there appears no adequate cause, for he does nothing which he might not have done with the reputation of sanity....The apparition left the regions of the dead to little purpose; the revenge which he demands is not obtained but by the death of him that has required to take it⁵⁶

He completely ignores any suggestion that Hamlet is unable to take revenge due to his own nature, and indeed that Hamlet may even have been mad. If one accepts the play in

these terms, one would encounter two subjects which obsessed Johnson, namely madness and procrastination⁵⁷. But if these areas of the play are seen in terms of insufficiency of plot, then they can effectively be ignored. Once more we encounter Johnson's terrible fears which can be said to have affected his entire criticism, and which produced the authoritative approach leading to the divided judgement which occur so frequently⁵⁸. There is the further thought that this fear of the emotional has much to do with Johnson's desire to retain his own authority. To admit that there is something powerful beyond the rational is to be trapped into admitting that the work is effective to the individual alone, as one cannot speak objectively about emotions. To treat something rationally is to systematise it, and hence render oneself able to address it authoritatively. Thus an emotional reaction to a work was potentially dangerous to Johnson's authority.

So where does this leave us? John Hardy sees his contradictions in healthy terms; they are:

...a mark of his strength as a critic that his engagement with literature is so real. Even seeming inconsistencies or self-contradictions can, for that very reason, be instructive, for in Johnson's sometimes divided response, in the capacity his mind has to be embattled against itself, we can be alerted to see more deeply into a work.⁵⁹

This is indeed true, but its direction is aligned wrongly in that this conclusion sees the criticism as revealing more

about Johnson than about the works considered, and it is a jump that rebounds upon itself as in judging the criticism good because it reveals the critic, it ignores the real purpose of the art. J.D. Boyd in an article entitled "Some Limits of Johnson's Criticism" places the criticism in terms of what he sees as being Johnson's mental construction, which he divides into three:

- 1) The hegemony of reason
- 2) A strong moral concern with human life
- 3) The restlessly active imagination.

The combination of these three forces produces certain limitations which he details. He sees this approach in terms of a triangle, with Johnson somehow holding it together in the centre. Boyd astutely points out instances where Johnson's view of literature becomes inadequate.⁶⁰

Nevertheless, it would be unfair to Johnson to end on this note. Arie Sachs, in his excellent book Passionate Intelligence links Johnson's literary criticism to the rest of his experience. Towards the end of the chapter, "The General and the Particular ", he makes the following claim:

Doctrinal criticism (and all critics in some measure are doctrinal) springs from the profoundest of human needs - the need to rest in some absolutely fixed criterion of value and thereby impose an absolute pattern upon the chaotic material of raw experience.⁶¹

The fact that his views failed to respond adequately to

literature in what must be called a 'human' manner, stems, paradoxically from Johnson's own deep humanity, something which required defence from himself. It was this need which caused him to seek the authoritative standpoint which claimed humanity as its 'raison d'etre'. For Johnson, the human and the moral became intimately linked. So long as this was the case, then he could speak authoritatively; but owing to the particular strength of his own human feelings, he had, on occasions, to submerge them, an act which led to an inadequacy of response.

Thus his frequent failure to come to terms with literature is caused by the fact that his conception of humanity was based upon defence, something which was dictated by a vaster and ultimately far more authoritative humanity than that which he displayed outwardly in his criticism. To allow this humanity to the surface would have been to negate himself as an authority, and to open himself to chaos, to admit that humanity was unregulated. It is fascinating to see how the two strains of thought come together. If Johnson was to present himself as authoritative and people were to accept him as such, then there must be something about him which was genuinely authoritative. This would not only prove his position of importance, but highlight the regularities of the world, one of which would be the human assent to the authoritatively systematised. To have people accepting this authority would mean that his

interpretation was right, and hence he would not have to face up to these peculiar emotions. Unfortunately for him, Johnson always got in the way of himself. He reacted emotionally to the works and thus moved beyond his encompassing boundaries.

The whole affair of his criticism is a matter charged with powerful forces pulling against one another. But at the bottom of it all is Johnson's intense humanity, with its corresponding needs, something which often caused a conflicting result on the surface.

CHAPTER THREE

Johnson: The Religious Authority

It was Boswell, who in the final portrait of Johnson in his Life, pointed out that Johnson's "piety [was] constant, and the ruling principle of all his conduct."¹ whilst Mrs Thrale described him as "One of the most zealous and pious [Christians]... our nation ever produced."² In this way, Johnson was seen as a spiritual atonement for his age³. Fanny Burney considered Johnson's Meditations as enabling one to:

...see stronger, than ever the purity of his principles and character,⁴

Thus, he represented for the age, its conservative hold upon orthodoxy, as opposed to the newly found passion for intellectual scepticism. He was, therefore, viewed as embodying the authority of truth opposed to the disciples of modern thought, and indeed, it was Carlyle who wrote that Hume and Johnson were "The two great antagonists of Europe."⁵

In Sermon VII, Johnson puts forward his contempt for the scepticism of the new age, and in doing so, locates his

position accurately:

The prevailing spirit of the present age seems to be the spirit of scepticism and captiousness, of suspicion and distrust, a contempt of all authority, and a presumptuous confidence in private judgement; a dislike of all established forms, merely because they are established, and of old paths, because they are old.,⁶

Johnson's self imposed brief is to defend what he sees as being laid down already, as defending what is "authoritative", and thus his position is prescribed by the beliefs inherited from the Christian tradition, in particular that of his own country. Here we see Johnson's need for the directly authoritative religion which has its own authority. But his support for the establishment was even more specific than that. His support for the Church of England was whole-hearted. He announced at a dinner party at which Boswell was present, that:

I think that permitting men to preach any opinion contrary to the doctrine of the Established Church, tends, in a certain degree, to lessen the authority of the Church, and, consequently, to lessen the influence of religion.

Donald Greene went as far as to state that Johnson was

"...a stout partisan of the Church of England, and of its maintenance of its position in the state... [and that his loyalty to the Church] never seems to have wavered throughout his adult life."⁸

Here again we feel Johnson instinctively reacting towards the establishment, the authority which exists, and indeed in the quotation from the Life, the survival of religion itself is seen in terms of the ability of the Established Church to maintain its authority. Johnson's authority is obviously increased by his adherence to all that would have been viewed as law giving.

However his attitude to scepticism is more complex than might at first seem evident. It appears that Johnson had a very real "fear" of scepticism. He explains in Sermon VII: Personal views of reality will lead to the church becoming "... a scene of confusion, a chaos of discordant forms of worship, and inconsistent systems of faith."⁹ But his rejection of scepticism is based upon more than that:

If it be granted that it is the duty of every man to publish, profess, and defend any important truth, and the truths of religion be allowed important, it will follow, that diversity of sentiments must naturally produce controversies and altercations. And how few there are capable of managing debates without unbecoming heat, or dishonest artifices, how soon zeal is kindled into fury, and how soon a concern for reputation mingles with a concern for truth...That diversity of opinions, which is the original and source of such evils as these, cannot therefore be too diligently obviated; nor can too many endeavours be used to check the growth of new doctrines, and reclaim those that propagate them, before sects are formed, or schisms established.¹⁰

Something very peculiar is happening here. Firstly we note what must amount to a fear of the new and unknown, which it

is not difficult to see is connected with Johnson's own security. It is essential to him that his view should be accepted as the one view that is correct, as we have shown his need for authority, as opposed to the views of others. The sceptics are indeed those who differ from the orthodox view, but just as importantly, they differ from Johnson's view, and any suggestion that his view might be superseded was intolerable to him. What this means however, is that the ultimate truth per se, is only authoritative if Johnson holds to it; but the very reason why he pleads its case, on the surface at least, is the fact that it is the only view, and therefore must be authoritative of its own accord. We can imagine Johnson's dilemma in terms of an assertion that something is right because it is, and because I believe it to be! In Johnson's mind, the two assertions would have lain side by side, but the notion of "topping up" authority per se with one's own authority is in fact one that leads to essential contradiction, in that in attempting to underline something with one's own authority, one detracts from its own innate authority. We shall see in greater detail how this dilemma affected him. We realise from this passage the emotional nature of Johnson's adherence to orthodoxy, but also the problems which this was to bring.

We shall further investigate this idea by putting forward an opposing view. Chester Chapin, in his well-known book, The Religious Thought of Samuel Johnson concludes:

What I have tried to show in this book is that Orthodoxy is "right" for Johnson, that it is not at war with the innermost needs or drives of his being. There is tension in Johnson's faith, there are doubts and fears, but at all major points Johnson finds Christian doctrine and teaching so exactly consonant to the human condition that it is difficult to assume impulses in him constantly at war with his faith.¹¹

He justifies this statement in terms of his belief that Johnson found the religious answer "...the only rational solution to the problem of human life." This he bases on the idea very common in Johnson's writings that man is not satisfied with life; indeed, so unsatisfied is he that he is forced to "...have recourse every moment to the past and future for supplemental satisfactions..."¹² Finite objects will not satisfy him, and thus we must bring in the wider dimension of God, a being whose dimensions are infinite and hence capable of satisfying. As Johnson himself puts it; the only rational "...choice of life..." is the "...choice of eternity..." a mode of existence which shall furnish employment for the whole soul, and where pleasure shall be adequate to our desires.¹³ Thus we move from the nature of man to God in an act which Johnson calls the "...highest exercise of the human reason." ¹⁴ In this way, then, Johnson introduces reason into religion; it was, claims a modern commentator, Johnson's wish that "...his belief should appear reasonable to others."¹⁵ Introduced here is the notion stretching back to St. Augustine, that the rational

man would, by necessity, accept the authority of religion: indeed his acceptance can be considered as the basis of his rationality. Thus reason and authority go hand in hand. In this light can be seen Boswell's comment that:

It will be observed, that Johnson at all times made the just distinction between doctrines contrary to reason, and doctrines above reason.¹⁶

This doctrine allowed Johnson to use reason to allow all that was rationally explicable to be used to support religion, whilst that which could not be precisely fitted into this pattern but was not, in a similar way, capable of being disproved, would be considered above reason. This little loophole allowed him to retain both the idea of reason, and that of the revealed authority. Chapin's task, then, is to discover exactly what role reason played in Johnson's religion, a task which eventually leads him to the placing of Johnson in the orthodox camp. This matter is extremely important as, firstly, it will enable us to see the contradictions forced by Johnson's connection of the rational with religion in more detail, whilst secondly it may well help us to understand the strange gulf between Johnson's religion and the rest of his thought. Boswell highlights this, in discussing Johnson's habit of contradiction. This habit resulted in the fact that:

...there was hardly any topick, if not one of the great truths of Religion and Morality, that he might not have been incited to argue, either for or against it.¹⁷

It is at this point that we are able to uncover what must be seen as one of Johnson's major problems when concerned with religion. From this quotation we form an impression of Johnson's sense of self-importance, and his desire to succeed in argument, in other words, of his authority. The matter that was at dispute was unimportant to him. It was the winning, the assertion of his dominance, and therefore the maximising of his authority that mattered to him. But in the case of religion, he was dealing with a subject which was too dear to him to use as intellectual cannon-fodder. He needed the direction that a self - authoritative religion gave to his life, as we shall see later. However the problems arise when the authority that this religion possesses begins to invade and crush the authority of Johnson the individual. If he always has to look to a Higher Being, then in some way, his own importance is lessened. It is for this reason, then, that rationality becomes so important to him, as in demonstrating the rational nature of religion, he is able to place himself upon it, to shape it with his own mind, and in the process, not to lose his own authority. Thus, at this early stage is revealed the terrifying conflict that religion implied for him. At one and the same time he had both to acknowledge the authority of religion to give his life meaning, and to deny it so that he could retain a sense of personal authority. We must investigate the claims that we are making in the light of the details of Johnson's religious life.

Chapin believes that Johnson's philosophical approach to the nature of religion was two-sided. On the one hand, we have the idea that religion is a system based upon particular provable, or at least, very likely facts which occurred in the history of a particular nation at a particular time, and which are consistent with the nature of the universe, and on the other, we have the idea that in one way, religion had to be above the level of reason. He explained the idea of the historical basis of religion to William Windham very soon before he died. "For revealed religion, he said, there was such historical evidence, as, upon any subject not religious, would have left no doubt."¹⁸ Chapin reinforces this passage (81) with another well-known one from the Life where Johnson argues for the efficacy of "common testimony". He embarks upon a long explanation of how in terms of probability it would have been easy to suggest, convincingly, how Canada could not have been taken, for instance that soldiers are lying to protect their good names. But, as Johnson points out:

...notwithstanding all these plausible objections, we have no doubt that Canada is really ours. Such is the weight of common testimony. How much stronger are the evidences of the Christian Religion?¹⁹

This type of proof was needed by Johnson to pull into focus the philosophical idea of the designed universe, because, as Chapin explains, "The real difficulty for Johnson lay in the identification of this First Cause with the God of the

Bible."²⁰ The first cause argument was summarised by Johnson in the following manner:

Turn matter on all sides, make it eternal, or of late production, finite or infinite, there can be no regular system produced, but by a voluntary and meaning agent.²¹

The work of Newton had reinforced this position, as his research had proved beyond all reasonable doubt that the ordering of the universe was more complete than had ever been imagined. (77) It was no large step from the regular world to a maker and thus to a God. Thus in the combination of these two types of evidences, Johnson's religion is justified.

But as I hinted earlier, there is another strand of evidences focused upon by Chapin. For Johnson, religion without faith is not feasible, as he suggested in the Review of Soame Jenyns' Free Enquiry into the nature and origin of evil. Here, Johnson talks of religion:

Its evidences and sanctions are not irresistible, because it was intended to induce, not to compel; that it is obscure, because we want faculties to comprehend it.²²

If Christianity induced belief there would be no point in the virtue of faith. Chapin explains how we have faith in Christ and therefore accept much that is obscure, he summarises:

At the Last Day faith shall be transformed into certainty, but until then faith for Johnson is belief

based upon credible but not demonstrative evidence.²³

And indeed as Johnson pointed out, most of the decisions we take in life are based purely upon faith:

'Why, sir,'[said Johnson]'the greatest concern we have in this world, the choice of our profession, must be determined without demonstrative reasoning. Human life is not yet so well known, as that we can have it.'²⁴

Thus we have two separate approaches set forward: one based upon proofs, the other upon the fact that God cannot be known in his fulness, except through faith. The one allows a place for rationality as proof, the other denies that it can have a place, as if God existed he would be too extensive for normal human cognition. Put forward here is a system exactly paralleling his dilemma over religion. On the one hand we have his need to prescribe God rationally to retain his own authority, which can be paralleled by his rationalistic proofs just described: on the other hand, we have his need for religion as a force to give his life meaning, a force which relies upon its own self-authoritative nature. It is a force that is beyond the constrictions of the world, one that is greater than anything else in life; it is the type of religion that can be known by faith alone. Thus in the contrast between his two types of proof, we see the same Leitmotif of contrast, played out in a slightly different manner.

A sign that this parallel is an accurate one is Johnson's attempt to reconcile the two systems, thus avoiding tension. It is Chapin who directs us to a quotation that is relevant.

Always remember this, that after a system is well settled upon positive evidence, a few partial objections ought not to shake it. The human mind is so limited, that it cannot take in all the parts of a subject, so that there may be objections raised against anything. There are objections against a plenum, and objections against a vacuum; yet one of them must certainly be true.²⁵

The statement allows for the rational evidences for Christianity, as this is intended to be the basis for one's "...faith [which a] few partial objections ought not to shake..." yet at the same time, the "...human mind is so limited" that it can never see things as a whole and thus can never know the answer for sure. In this way there is a reconciliation between the two approaches; Johnson can endow religion with an authority gained from its rational nature, and can therefore, at the same time retain his own authority, whilst he can protect religion from the ravages of atheistic criticism due to its metarational quality, and hence allow religion the ability to give him purpose. It may be noted too that in protecting religion from the atheists he is protecting his own authority in his adherence to orthodoxy. But as must become obvious from our previous discussion, reconciliation is not something that is going to be so simple. On the level of the quotation we have just

examined it is difficult to understand how a system can be "...well settled upon positive evidence" or that "...one of them, [a plenum or vacuum] must certainly be true" if one has so limited a mind; in other words, Johnson attempts to show that the rational approach is limited and cannot bring the answer, by using a rational demonstration; certain rationally demonstrated facts are used to prove that religion is beyond the bounds of reason. It must be said that Johnson's rationality fails him here, and as always he is left open to the contradictions of his religious beliefs and the competing authority. He cannot prove the unprovable nature of religion, and thus all that is left is faith, something that is too painful for his own authority.

It must be noted that the two passages which Chapin quotes to demonstrate Johnson's rational evidences, namely that on the historical evidence for revealed religion and that on the evidence of common testimony, react together with severe friction. From the first passage we learn that there is no logical reason to doubt Christianity, all the evidence points to it; but, on the contrary, there is every reason to disbelieve that Canada is taken, except that of common testimony, which Johnson considers adequate as proof. Johnson, however, fails to describe what common testimony is based upon, which was a fatal oversight. It was his great rival Hume who used common testimony to dismiss miracles, something that would have made Johnson extremely uneasy.

Hume's dismissal was based upon the fact that the miraculous would always be unprovable as against the evidence provided by common testimony, which Hume shows is based upon empirical observation of the everyday workings of the world. Thus when 'historical evidence' runs against the way things are seen as occurring in everyday life, as in the Biblical stories, they cannot be supported on the grounds of common testimony, in fact they must be rejected. Thus the rational approach to religion was fatally flawed quite apart from its contradiction with Johnson's proof from the necessity for faith. The flaws in his rationality must have made Johnson all the more fearful of losing his own authority in the face of the all - authoritative religion.

Another demonstration of inconsistency in Johnson's beliefs is made by Maurice Quinlan. He points out the strains in terms of Johnson's belief that transubstantiation should be rejected upon empirical grounds, namely:

"That we are as sure we see bread and wine only, as that we read in the Bible the text on which that false doctrine is founded. We have only the evidence of our senses for both."²⁶

In contrast to this, we have the comment that Johnson made to the Quaker Mrs. Knowles, namely; "Why, Madam, the greatest part of our knowledge is implicit faith."²⁷ The contradiction here is almost painful. But this is not all that is unstable about his approach. Quinlan tries to

explain away the problem in the following terms:

If Johnson's religion had been a matter of the intellect alone, it would be easy to say that there were inconsistencies in it. But consistency belongs to the realm of logic and reason; it has little, if anything to do with what is considered above reason. Some might accuse him of being inconsistent in not reconciling these two spheres, in accepting certain mysteries as above reason and rejecting others on a basis of abstract reason or on empirical evidence. But the degree to which one has convictions that may be classed as above reason seems itself to be determined, not by logic, but rather by the will, the temperament, or some other agency.²⁸

Quinlan then, puts the basis of Johnson's religion in another less rational sphere, though admitting that it draws upon many facets.²⁹ But it is here that another problem emerges. Rationality is seen to be inadequate in its inability to explain and reconcile. Quinlan elects to place Johnson's belief in another sphere, a metarational sphere, but in doing so he leads us, quite correctly to the fact that rationality was an inadequate defence for Johnson in his attempt to escape the inhibiting authority of a religion that stands on its own. My attempt to understand this conflict, and to discover exactly what other spheres Johnson's religion operated in, two aspects of the same question, shall be examined later.

Thus, at this point, we must conclude that as our process of examination proceeds, the faculty of the rational is losing authority as it is being undercut by itself; it

is, in effect being logically divested of its legitimacy.
How this must have made Johnson suffer!

Before investigating the sphere in which Johnson's belief operated, as promised a moment ago, we will orientate ourselves better if we consider briefly the well-known debate upon whether Johnson's religious life was a trouble-free, and easily coped - with aspect of his life. Obviously, we would have to reject this thesis if we were to be able to prove our own. Bertrand Bronson wrote succinctly that religion "...was not a mild and sunny element in his life, but crossed with storm and struggle."³⁰ The debate has often been discussed in terms of whether Johnson was a sceptic or not, a fact focussed upon by Robert Voitle, in his book, Samuel Johnson the Moralist." Voitle himself sides with Chapin in believing that scepticism did not enter into Johnson's religious beliefs at all, and that most of his so-called religious difficulties have been imagined. He warns:

...and since the essential religiosity even of saints cannot be successfully defended against the assaults of a halfway competent Freudian, there is no use in arguing Johnson's religious temperament at this level.³¹

Though indeed, one must be careful if one is not a professional psychologist, one must also be wary of becoming too blasé about an inability to interpret mental character and thus to suspend any attempt to discuss the nature of Johnson's belief, something, incidentally which Voitle is



prepared to do. We must, I feel, draw a distinction between overspecialised 'psychology' and a more straight-forward assessment of human character based upon the subject's literary output, biography, auto-biography and statements combined with reflection upon one's self and upon others: in this way only will we be able to chart the difficult passage through individual trait and common humanity. I make no apology for following a method of this sort.

Both Voitle and Chapin resent the allegation that Johnson was in some way a sceptic. Voitle outlines the arguments used to prove this claim.

A few resort to probing deeply into Johnson's Psyche; one cites the hints of Johnson's contemporaries; some reason that his faith would have been more placid had it been strong; and others argue by extrapolation that, because Johnson was a skeptic in some areas, he must have been one in religion, too.³²

We have considered and rejected his dismissal of the first option. The second, that his contemporaries considered him to be a sceptic, is quite correctly ruled out of court by Voitle, who dismisses a claim to this effect made by Mossner very convincingly.³³ As we have suggested at the beginning of the work, Johnson was considered to be the greatest champion of orthodox Christianity of his age. The other two arguments together with the first, need more detailed discussion. The first point to make is that these three arguments are in no way mutually exclusive, and in fact, in

approaching one, one is inevitably led into a consideration of the other. It is important to realise that in an interpretation like ours, namely that there were deep tensions in Johnson's religion, we will necessarily be led to conclude that scepticism did play a part in Johnson's belief. The tensions in it would have led him to associate religion with division and difficulty, with the straining of the rational framework upon which his authority lay. This must have led him to a deep repulsion for religion, a feeling that must have led to scepticism, however infrequent.

In order to counter Voitle's rejection of the three arguments for scepticism which he drew to our attention, (see above p.102) we shall introduce C.E. Pierce's book The Religious Life of Samuel Johnson, which is a very perceptive and complete study, if a little laborious in its displaying of the arguments. Written in 1983, it is the most recent full length study of Johnson's religion that I can locate. It runs in basic opposition to the Voitle/Chapin line in that its basic premise, stated at the beginning of the book, is that: "Samuel Johnson was not an instinctively religious man." The first paragraph is as good an understanding of Johnson's religious life as can be found. It continues:

He was by nature a rationalist who was always happiest when he was employing his reason to cut through cant and to arrive at truth.

Again we see the way in which he uses rationality to retain authority. Pierce continues:

He was also by nature a skeptic, always doubting what others held to be true until such propositions were validated in the court of reason or experience.³⁴

We have discussed much of this aspect of his thought in the first chapter. Pierce continues:

Johnson, however, became a profoundly religious person out of psychological need, out of the need to overcome his sense of the misery of life and out of his desire to give his own life meaning and direction.³⁵

Here then we have a reason for his intensely strong need for religion; misery. Thus Pierce does not suggest that Johnson is a disbeliever, but he is quite adamant that Johnson did not have an easy relationship with his belief, quite the contrary. Thus we are beginning to counter Voitle effectively, even if we cannot prove that Johnson was a sceptic. It is interesting to contrast the idea that he found religious belief difficult owing to the strain it imposed upon him, with that of his fears that we noted at the beginning of the chapter, concerning the new sceptics. Both positions can only be understood if they are seen in terms of Johnson's need for personal authority, as we have proposed. If we follow Pierce's thesis that misery caused Johnson to take on board Christianity, we are in a good position to assert that the minutiae of Christian belief were not at issue, in other words he did not profess the

creed because he believed in an infinitely good God, but instead, because he needed religion to undercut the misery of life, and to give himself direction. Orthodoxy is not so much "right" for Johnson, as a very disturbing and uncomfortable necessity, as Pierce describes:

Convinced that life was at best very uncertain and at worst very unhappy, and determined not to surrender to despair, Johnson turned to the Christian view of life...as the principle means by which he could most satisfactorily endure the "pain of being a man."..."There is but one solid basis of happiness; and that is, the reasonable hope of a happy futurity."³⁶

This positing of misery as the basic raison d'etre of Johnson's religion has the effect of entrapping him in a terrifying vortex. The taking on of the authoritative life-director means as we have said that rationality is of paramount importance in the retaining of his individual authority. However, as we have also seen, rationality does not provide an adequate path to religion, a fact that must have left Johnson defenceless against the crushing authority from above. This must have increased his perturbation, something which in turn would have caused him to look upwards for the life directing force, and so round again, and again.

As if this was not enough, the thesis that Johnson's need for religion resulted from his misery implies a self contradiction. The religion which is not supposed to be based upon anything else, which is self-sufficient, is in fact based upon Johnson himself. Johnson does not assent to

it because it has doctrine that appeals, or indeed because it is the truth that one is not capable of questioning, but because he is miserable. If Johnson were to be completely honest with himself, he could not use this religion to solve his problem. If you like, religion can no longer be called upon in defence against misery. This may indeed allow his own authority to flourish, but as we have seen, this alone did not go far enough; he needed to be given direction from without. So what is Johnson to do? The only factor now left in this equation of conflicting authorities is his misery. Is that the end?

The way out for Johnson can be seen in one of his sermons, namely Sermon XV. James Gray, in his book upon the sermons, divides them into groups defined by their differing ways of discussing happiness; only five of the twenty eight sermons are not included in this list, and thus we can extrapolate the importance of this theme for Johnson's religious life. In fact Gray stresses this in his narrative:

There is scarcely a sermon of his in which 'happiness' or 'felicity' or some variant thereof does not appear. It is the word, the idea, the concernment which binds the entire canon of his sermons together.³⁷

I wish to stress then, that in my use of Sermon XV to investigate the religious tensions, I have chosen a sermon that is typical, and hence legitimately useful.

The sermon is prefixed by a sentence from the book of Job, chapter XIV: "Man that is born of a woman, is of a few days, and full of trouble." I am using the Yale edition of Johnson's works, which asks us to compare this Sermon with XII and XIV , Rambler 17, Idler 89, 103, and a Sermon by Samuel Clarke (whose influence upon Johnson Sachs has stressed). Thus again, we are not concerned with a unique statement of this type of view.

Johnson opens the sermon with a short comment upon the Job quotation:

The position, contained in this sentence, neither requires, nor admits, proof or illustration: being too evident to be denied, and too clear to be mistaken.
(159, 1st para)

This is a very interesting reaction. We would expect Johnson to give us an explanation as to why man is miserable, or at least an elaboration. Instead we receive bald statement only, a mark, I feel, of both the importance of the topic to Johnson and perhaps his lack of confidence that the case for man's misery can be absolutely clearly argued. But why was he so intent upon proving that the natural state of man is miserable? The answer I believe lies in the problems which were outlined prior to consideration of the sermon.

Johnson's dominating passion is misery; beside it religion is of little power, as is rationality. What is he to do? The only way out, it seems to me, is to reintroduce religion by

linking misery directly to it, in other words by saying that misery is the natural state of man. If this is so, then perhaps misery can be seen in terms of religion rather than using religion to get away from misery, and hence the assertion that the natural state of man is misery at the beginning of the sermon.

The next paragraph is an attempt to argue the case for this conclusion, a sign perhaps that Johnson is not so sure of it as he would like to be, and more importantly, that it is crucial to him. His first argument is that a truth often repeated or indeed experienced is almost always ignored due to our familiarity with it. One feels that though Johnson may be right, it would be equally valid to say that people do not always think that life is short and miserable because quite simply it is not. Misery and happiness are not truths of a rational type, but emotions, and thus if one feels miserable then one is miserable, and conversely, if one feels happy then one is indeed happy. One feels here that Johnson is imposing theory upon actuality in a dishonest way. This is because in his circle of authoritative conflict this is the only explanation that will work. Johnson uses theory to try to escape the reality of misery, and this is a secondary reason why he tries so hard to convince us of our miserable state; if there is a suspicion that his attempted means of proof is faulty, then he will apply it more stringently.

In the following paragraph of Sermon XV, (159,para3) Johnson brings into play the idea that we often try to forget our miseries and convince ourselves into believing that we are happier than is actually the case, owing to our fear of being miserable. Nevertheless, Johnson recommends for us a "...just estimate of human life" however painful this is, mainly because it is our duty "...appointed by divine providence." According to Johnson we will be judged with harshness over the evils we commit through "...idleness or choice." What Johnson is trying to do here is to force us to acknowledge our misery through the threat of divine displeasure. But also introduced here is the concept of the present being moulded by the future, and in this way, religion for Johnson is not an explanation of how things are, but a gamble of life, a gamble based upon what will be. Ironically, however, it is a gamble which is brought about by the present situation of misery. Strange as this may seem, it can be explained in terms of the problems we were discussing earlier in that if misery is going to be seen as the natural state of man, there must be some purpose to our suffering. It is inconceivable that a wholly good God could bring us such discomfort without purpose. The one advantage this state of affairs seems to have is its ability to make us wish for a better life, a life of rewards and punishments in the future. Not only does this position make sense of our

misery, but it offers a good incentive to moral action, something of importance to Johnson.

In the next paragraph, (p.160, para2), we realise again that the bald statement made in the very first paragraph was insufficient. To satisfy himself he launches into a sustained appeal based upon "...daily experience". In it, happiness is allowed to be an illusion, whereas misery, if felt, is described as "...the voice of salutary admonition." But one feels that either Johnson is becoming desperate, or more simply, that he is sadly mistaken. Why should one emotion be a fanciful imagining, whereas another be the voice of objective reality? This position, if stated in these terms, is very obviously false. It is brought about by Johnson's need to prove that misery is natural, and not just chronically present in his case, in him as an individual. Not only would the admitting of this cause his precariously balanced sanity to collapse, but it would be another element detracting from his individual authority, as he wished to be able to claim that above all people he experienced fully, and understood correctly, the human predicament. More will be said on this presently.

In the next paragraph, Johnson states that:

As this changeable and uncertain life is only the passage to an immutable state, and endless duration of happiness or misery; it ought never to be absent from our thoughts, that "man born of woman is of few days."

(161, para3)

In so many ways this may be seen as the central statement of Johnson's religious faith. But it is surely a very lop-sided view of life. Nobody would deny that life is changeable or uncertain, we are not soothsayers! But is life really "...only the passage to an immutable state."? There must be more to it than that. Where, for instance, is love? There is something more this-worldly, more complete than a mere temporary arrangement, about true love whether human or that of God for man. And indeed there must be some value for earth if one is to explain Christ's coming. Furthermore, are the beauties of the earth really as unimportant as Johnson's view would seem to allow? The view Johnson is putting forward here is not one that is peculiar to him, and we cannot dismiss it as an idiosyncratic delusion. There is a strong strain of Christian thought which forcibly puts forward the idea that the Christian is merely a visitor upon the earth. Though not wishing to enter into a discussion upon the philosophical merits of such an idea, there is no doubt that the view led Johnson psychologically to confusion and misery, as on the one hand, he is, as we have seen, very much involved with the world, with its miseries and fears, whilst on the other hand, we have this view that it is somehow worthless, and only a preparation for a future state. He must simultaneously have found that he needed to believe in the future life to escape the misery of his life on earth whilst realising that the very misery of the

present life ensured its importance for him, as it concentrated his mind so continually upon his present position. Further evidence of the importance of the emotions of happiness and misery to Johnson, is the way in which he views the future life exclusively in terms of these states. The future life is defined as an "...endless duration of happiness ^{at} and misery...". This is what is seen as important, and there is no doubt, then, that they played a crucial part in his fight with religion and authority.

There is, however, another reason for the way in which Johnson places religion in the future. This is, I believe, another method that Johnson employs to attempt to by-pass the authority demanded by a self-authoritative religion. By placing it in the future, Johnson can make statements about what one has to do, thereby becoming the authority himself. If religion was just about love, there would be nothing more for Johnson to say about it, and hence it would direct him, ruling out the possibility of personal authority. By looking to the future, and assuring ^m the moral character of religion, Johnson is left very much in business as an authority. Furthermore, by being able to shape religion himself, as its demands are about what has not yet happened, and hence are potentially predictable, he can impose his will upon the religion. Yet again we see Johnson trying to avoid the demands of a self - authoritative faith.

Another strain occurs in this same passage not necessarily in terms of logic, but in terms of security, in that on the one hand we have an objectively judging God, whereas on the other, we have a world which seems to operate in ways which are not necessarily fair; here God is disturbing and inexplicable. We shall see this tension very clearly when investigating his review of Soames Jenyn's Enquiry. But again we see this working towards Johnson's conviction that the world is by necessity miserable, and geared towards this futuristic purpose; it is emerging that in choosing religion to help cope with his misery, he is causing more problems for himself, more problems which would presumably detract from his stability, thus decreasing his own authority.

In the next paragraph, (162,para2), we find a repetition of the themes advanced in the preceding two paragraphs with the added rejoinder that though many people may indeed realise the existence of the future state and its importance, they often do not dwell upon it, and that is where the problem lies. One cannot help feeling that it is a peculiar attitude to make the future the only purpose of the present, especially when one considers the empiricist / rationalist attitude which Johnson would have taken to any other matter. One finds it hard to imagine the refuter of Berkeley's speculative philosophy, taking an attitude so different from that of the inductive approach. It does

demonstrate, I believe, the extraordinary tensions with which Johnson has to become embroiled.

The following paragraph is extremely pessimistic and, to be honest, almost perverse, a word which is used in the very paragraph in question. The usually supportive editors of the "Yale" edition describe this as an "...austere passage" and try, in some way, to excuse him by providing references of more encouraging passages to be found in Johnson's work. Here indeed is a mark of its extremity! Johnson is surely looking at life from the wrong angle:

...that every hour, however enlivened by gaiety, or dignified by splendour, is a part subducted from the sum of life; (162, para3)

Surely it is another hour added to the sum of life, not subducted. Johnson seems to see life as being a set ending to which we approach; but it is a particularly strange thing to say when we remember Johnson's passion for life, a passion that led him to puncture his own legs,³⁸ and indeed it was he who rounded upon his surgeon, Dr. Brocklesby, when he proved reluctant to lance Johnson's sar^erocele, saying:

How many men in a year die through the timidity of those whom they consult for health. I want length of life, and you fear giving me pain, which I care not for.³⁹

In the light of his own life then, one would have thought that an hour of gaiety was another hour to add to the mass of gaiety, not one more to subtract. His passionate desire for self-importance, manifested in his aggressive desire to live at all costs, points towards his desire for personal authority. The need for religion and the threat which this brought to this authority, led him to say the most self - contradictory things, for instance the refutation of his basic passion for life. In the very same paragraph, he says something which, although a common thesis in Christian thought, does seem strange in terms of the logic of Johnson's argument. He writes: "...the fabrick of terrestrial happiness has no foundation that can long support it." One is tempted to ask if the Christian should consider belief in God as a moderately solid basis for happiness at the very least. Furthermore, if God cannot provide this upon earth, why should he be able to provide happiness in the future world? Only something very strongly confused could have led him to that conclusion.

In the next paragraph, (162, para4) our suspicions are to a certain extent justified, when we see him write; "If reason forbids us to fix our hearts upon things which we are not certain of retaining...". It is particularly interesting in that nothing on the surface of the paragraph before would lead us to come to this conclusion of doubt, nothing, that is, that Johnson openly reveals. This state

of affairs would have been painful to the rationalistic Johnson; so painful in fact that he attempts a rationalistic explanation for this unrationalistic state of affairs:

...we violate a prohibition still stronger, when we suffer ourselves to place our happiness in that which must certainly be lost;

Again, however, Johnson seems to look at happiness from an unrealistically philosophical angle. I cannot imagine that anyone feeling happy would consider this emotion as an unrealistic delusion because it will not last for eternity. One is happy and that is an end on't, and indeed Johnson slips into admitting this later in the paragraph when he writes that: "Pleasures and honours must quickly perish, because life itself must soon be at an end." Here he admits that pleasures are false because they are not infinite, not because, as he admits elsewhere, they are, in some sense, inherently false. But this is hardly grounds for dismissing pleasure; misery is indeed under the same constrictions, and yet Johnson does not consider it unreal; indeed life itself is not infinite; is it then false? So why should Johnson so begrudge the idea of pleasure? One of the reasons, as I have suggested, is because if man is happy, then Johnson's role as an authority and guide is lost, as people will exist far more in the present, and feel that life is sufficient without having to heed the warnings of one who knows better - the authority. This is the same sort of reaction that we mentioned earlier concerning his fear of a religion of the

here and now. Another interesting interpretation that would make sense of his desire to insist that the natural state of man is miserable, is that if misery were not the natural state of man, then the link between God and misery is not so important. If this was the case then Johnson loses a certain legitimacy in talking of God authoritatively as his own experience of misery was not therefore a natural human condition, but an individual peculiarity. Though we have said that religion threatened his own authority, if religion could be shown to be something other than what Johnson stood for, then his authority would diminish even further as he did not have the sanction that religion offered to him, quite apart from the fact that it provided an explanation for Johnson's own feelings. We can feel the pains with which Johnson had to deal. The pain one can feel. If religion provided the truth, then his authority would be diminished; if it did not, then there would be no possibility of personal authority at all.

The next paragraph is equally lengthy and on the same subject. However it is a fine example of Johnson at his best. I shall therefore quote it in full.

Purposes like these are often formed, and often forgotten. When remorse and solitude press hard upon the mind, they afford a temporary refuge, which, like other shelters from a storm, is forsaken, when the calm returns. The design of amendment is never dismissed, but it rests in the bosom without effect. The time convenient for so great a change of conduct is not yet come. There are hinderences which another year will remove; there are helps which some near event will

supply. Day rises after day, and one year follows another, and produces nothing, but resolutions without effect, and self - reproach without reformation. The time destined for a new life lapses in silence; another time is fixed, and another lapses; but the same train of delusion still continues. He that sees his danger, doubts not his power of escaping it; and though he has deceived himself a thousand times, loses little of his own confidence. The indignation excited by the past will, he thinks, secure him from any future failure. He retires to confirm his thoughts by meditation, and feels sentiments of piety powerful within him. He ventures again into the stream of life, and finds himself again carried away by the current.

It ends with the marvellously intense Johnsonian image: "He ventures again into the stream of life, and finds himself again carried away by the current." (164, para1). After reading a passage of this sort it is impossible to claim that Johnson did not care for the present world. It is far too real for him to live in comfort even. It is highly ironic that it was the very real desire for self - importance which led him to place such importance in the future, making it the futuristic judgement's very raison d'etre. It is impossible to claim that one could not approach life with so blatant a contradiction without there being a very strong impulse to do so; one which seems to be closely linked to authority.

On p.165 we encounter a sustained passage upon the difficulties of reformation, and hence the necessity of effecting it. One point of interest is introduced by the following sentence:

The penitential sense of sin, and the desire of a new

life, when they arise in the mind, are to be received as monitions excited by our merciful Father: (165, para4)

There is of course no necessary link between the two, but for the sake of argument let us make one. One can imagine people who do not feel their sin; does this mean that they have no sin, or that God does not communicate with them; it is difficult to imagine Johnson accepting predestination, especially after his dismissal of its place in the thirty nine articles.⁴⁰ This is an example, I believe, of Johnson's attempt to reinforce his own authority by the putting forward of the interpretation of phenomena, and the instruction to act morally upon them.

The next paragraph is probably the most crucial. After the extended moralistic paragraph upon the necessity for repentance, where detailed reasons are given for this course of action, he writes simply, and I quote the entire paragraph:

The motives to religious vigilance, and diligence in our duties, which are afforded by serious meditation on the shortness of life, will receive assistance from the view of its misery; and we are therefore to remember, secondly, that "man born of woman is full of trouble."

Johnson, after much intellectual twisting and turning allows his real feelings to come to the forefront, without elaboration, life is miserable. It is comments like this which allow Pierce to write at the beginning of his book:

Johnson, however, became a profoundly religious person

out of psychological need, out of the need to overcome his sense of misery of life and out of his desire to give his own life meaning and direction.⁴¹

a statement echoed by Bertrand Bronson in his famous essay, "Johnson Agonistes": "Religion is a pis aller to which one is driven by the desperate character of the quest for happiness."⁴² This surely is the basis of Johnson's need for religion, and as we have seen it becomes a self-generating misery. He admits as much in the next paragraph: "The immediate effect of the numerous calamities, with which human nature is threatened, or afflicted, is to direct our desires to a better state." Here we see Johnson at his best and most heartfelt, a passage reminiscent of the last paragraph of the splendid Preface to The Dictionary. It is indeed a desperately sad testament: "...that in the dead calm of solitude we are insufficient to our own contentment..." Here, as in all of Johnson's most heartfelt passages, we find him dissecting himself upon paper, allowing his tensions and inner contradictions to force themselves out. Here, as much as anywhere, we see Johnson's psychology working authoritatively in the strange linking together of his disparate elements revealed in the grammar and vocabulary of the passages. We shall discuss in the following chapter how this strange force for cohesion operates, how Johnson was sometimes able to pull the complexities of his life together, whilst realising the terrifying nature of the resulting tensions. In this passage

is suggested one of the reasons for Johnson's misery. The passage demonstrates what Krutch described as Johnson's "...enormous zest for living"⁴³ in his deep engagement with life, and indeed the high hopes that he had from it. For most people the expectations of life are sometimes fulfilled, sometimes disappointed, and indeed sometimes bettered. Johnson's powerful mind must have brought into being an idea of perfection which reality could never have lived up to. Thus the future state was necessary to him as a concept of perfection, a fulfilment of his deepest desires and expectations, as indeed was the religion that he posited: "There will no longer be pain or sorrow."

In the next paragraph (166,para2), Johnson introduces the concept that man is not "...afflicted but for good purposes." Can we really take this at face value? We must note that Johnson does not explain what these purposes are, and indeed one does feel that he makes the comment in an almost off -hand way! Could a man who suffered to such an extent really believe it was all for the best? How indeed could Johnson have written his vitriolic review of Soame Jenyns's Enquiry if he believed in purposeful suffering? This strange statement seems to be an attempt to reconcile the suffering of the world with a perfect God, but as we must know, this explanation runs against what we know of Johnson's life; there was never a man who better appreciated the suffering of the world. In many ways this is one of his

most dejected pieces of prose; he seems no longer to have the will to fight. The authority of religion is overwhelming; he sees it looming large across his life. Perhaps he should accept it and abandon his own authority under its weight; there must be a religious purpose in all this suffering, in this need to abandon oneself.

The next paragraph magnifies what has been said. It is an attempt at an explanation of this state of affairs which, though taken from the early tradition of the Church, is rejected by Johnson out of hand at other more truthful moments, such as in the Review. Sin and suffering are connected, he says:

...and he is then to consider his sufferings as the mild admonitions of his heavenly Father, by which he is summoned to timely penitence. (166, last para)

Are we really to consider Johnson's diseases, his sarcocele, his gout, and indeed his scrofula, which he contracted at an age where moral decision making was impossible, and was to affect him for the rest of his life, the "...mild admonitions of his heavenly Father."? Two things are going on here. Firstly, one must note that this is the type of comment one would expect from the most simplistic of moralists; and yet it is a statement uttered from the position of despair into which Johnson had been plunged and which seemed to be of sufficient power to distort his intellectual capacity entirely. And yet, before it appears

that I really cannot say anything in defence of Johnson, I do detect a rallying here. It is almost as if Johnson grasps this position with glee, putting it in such bald and naked terms that its full ridiculousness will be shown up in all its grotesque clarity, and hence, in this strange way, freeing himself from its power. I am sure that these two actions are effected at one and the same time.

Johnson next attempts a limp defence of evils not obviously connected with sin, saying that they do not on the whole exist, but when found "...excite ardent desires of that state, where innocence and happiness shall always be united."(167, last para) They may indeed do so, but one can hardly claim this as their raison d'etre. Besides this, unjust fortune is much more likely to make people doubt the existence of a just God. It is interesting to compare the basic idea put forward in this section of the sermon with that put forward in the review of Soame Jenyns' Enquiry namely: "The only reason why we should contemplate evil is, that we may bear it better..."⁴⁴ How different and more realistic is this statement. (The exact circumstances of this comment will be revealed in my discussion of this work later in the chapter.)

P. 168 produces a strange reaction. Johnson is almost amused. One feels that he is almost enjoying being carried away by his own miserable reflections. It is often

difficult to judge the exact tone of a piece of writing, but even the Pauline phraseology does not hide a certain feeling that the conclusion of the sermon has flipped beyond the serious into the ridiculous.

When we have leisure from our own cares to cast our eyes about us, and behold the whole creation groaning in misery... (168, para2)

an observation which leads on to the final farcical denouement:

But the chief reason why we should send out our enquiries to collect our intelligence of misery, is, that we may find opportunities of doing good. (168, para 4)

This is just grotesque. Did Johnson really believe that misery was a benefit to us in its ability to allow us to do "good works"? I again have the feeling that the overstated and humorous quality (manifested in phrases such as "when we have leisure from our cares" and "...groaning in misery") is another example of the way in which Johnson put the point in all its bland ridiculousness, to escape from it, whilst at the same time allowing it to remain unresolved, as after all misery was not something that he found he could explain.⁴⁵

It is perhaps peculiar, then, that the final paragraph is one with which it would be difficult to disagree, and indeed Johnson's life is a working out of what he suggests in it.

Where then does this complex sermon leave us? It is satisfying to note that it underlines many of the points which we made in the first part of the chapter. One can be left in no doubt that the basic factor affecting Johnson's religion was his misery. The speciousness of the arguments used to attempt to place the religion in a more rationalistic context demonstrate their irrelevance, as much as because Johnson himself spoke against many of them on other more honest occasions. The complexities of the problem of authority have been made far clearer and have been given first hand support.

A consideration of an article by Arie Sachs in the Modern Language Review (1964), together with his book, Passionate Intelligence, should suffice to bring out another important problem. They are both very fine examinations of Johnson's mind viewed through the medium of his works. One of the basic themes of Sachs' work is that much of Johnson's misery was caused by his religion; he writes;

Johnson's God is justice and power personified, recognised rationally, rather than a God of mysterious love, recognised in an extraordinary act of perception.⁴⁶

and indeed Sachs puts this terror down to the rationalistic approach; "It is precisely the rationalism in Johnson's faith that turns it into a religion of terror rather than love"⁴⁷, a view directly supported by C.E. Pierce.⁴⁸ Sachs

explains this feeling of ill ease in terms of Johnson's inability to allow love to enter into his religion due to his connecting of love with the imagination, something which is "...removed from concrete human reality".⁴⁹ Johnson, Sachs maintains, insisted that:

...to conceive of God apart from his aspects of justice and power was not only unorthodox but undermined the entire point of religion as a motive for virtue in a life essentially miserable and tragic.⁵⁰

Again we come across the idea, noted in our discussion of sermon XV, that love and happiness are aspects of the imagination, and that misery linked with a god of justice and of power, has the strong support of rationality. This has much bearing upon what we said earlier. A religion of love would have meant a greater attachment to the authority of religion whereas one based upon the rationality gave Johnson a chance to allow his own authority to emerge; but as Sachs describes, the effects were anything but easy. The basic problems introduced by Sachs are the clash between imagination and reason. In his book, Passionate Intelligence Sachs investigates this aspect of his religious outlook. The book opens with the premise that:

Johnson's observations on many subjects have in common the basic notion of a polarity of faculties: Reason and Imagination.⁵¹

on the one hand, imagination is "the great over reacher"(XI) whilst Reason "...is the diametrical opposite of

imagination. It is the faculty in man which keeps him in contact with his true state."⁵² The importance of this matter is that its solution will provide insight into the reasons for Johnson's melancholy, which should provide us with information on the problem of authority. Sachs bases his notion of this upon passages such as the following from Rambler 17:

The disturbers of our happiness, in this world, are our desires, our griefs, and our fears, and to all these, the consideration of mortality is a certain and adequate remedy.⁵³

The essay is very like Sermon XV in tone, though more concentrated and consistent, and in it, we see both why Johnson saw so much in terms of reason, and furthermore, why his approach is, as Sachs points out, so disturbing. For instance, in Rambler 17 he says that in order to fully appreciate one's state with the true accuracy that pure reasoning allows, one should be reminded each day that one is "born to die."⁵⁴ It is hard to imagine a more pessimistic philosophy. It is not surprising then that this rationalistic approach leads to misery, especially when one remembers Johnson's fear of death.

Chapter three of Sachs's book, entitled "The Art of Forgetfulness" seems to be central. Sachs sets out the problem:

What Johnson meant by imagination may be understood in terms of his frequent discussion of the incompatibility

between the mental and the bodily modes of existence.⁵⁵

Reason keeps mind in tune with body thereby realising physical possibilities, whereas the prevalence of the imagination can lead to a disjunction between the two. In Rambler 17 we note that Johnson writes;

...it is our duty, while we continue in this complicated state, to regulate one part of our composition by some regard to the other.⁵⁶

It is important here to consider what has been said. Sachs maintains that Johnson believed his reason to be the ultimate guide to truth, something that he opposed to the disorientating imagination. The thesis then runs that Johnson felt this so strongly because it was the imagination that sent his mind into a self-enclosed spiral. On the other hand we have the idea that Johnson's religion was so depressing to him because it was based on the rational. The two things do not combine together very healthily, and so I shall attempt to decide whether Johnson's basic problem was that it was in fact his rational approach that increased his misery, or whether it was his imagination that did so. So far, I have placed his religious struggles almost entirely in the rational sphere. An investigation into the relative importance of rationality and imagination should give us some guide as to my interpretation's appropriateness.

To understand this problem more thoroughly, we will be led by Sachs to discuss Johnson's fear of death. To Johnson, the lack of a fear of death is the greatest of imaginative delusions; to fear death is rational as one has no means of telling how God will judge. Johnson explained to Boswell:

Others, and those the most rational in my opinion, look upon salvation as conditional; and as they never can be sure that they have complied with the conditions, they are afraid.⁵⁷

Indeed it is well documented that he followed the motto, "Faith in some proportion to Fear."⁵⁸ This realisation of death is the absolute triumph of reason over the imagination and puts life in perspective. Religion, then, in focussing upon the future life, is linked closely to the rational. Sachs finally concludes;

Johnson's entire expose of man's delusions and fallacies - in philosophy, in morals, in art, in day-to-day life - is reducible to his basic definition of man as a creature who seeks out many subtle ways of forgetting the unpleasant fact that he is destined to die.⁵⁹

So, the explanation for Johnson's fear of death would tend to support the idea that his fears were rationally induced.

In a well - known article in the Journal of Literary History for 1947, entitled "Johnson's fear of death", Jean Hagstrum supports our idea that the fear was rationally based. Hagstrum starts out upon the same lines as

Sachs, criticising those who put down Johnson's fear of death to scepticism with the rejoinder that Johnson:

...considered fear of death a rational and necessary result of his religious position; that he recommended the contemplation of death to others; and that the emotion in its essence is easily recognizable as that religious sensibility which had always been prominent in Christian piety.⁶⁰

In the first section, Hagstrum follows a line similar to that of Sachs in that he explains Johnson's unwillingness to avail himself of greater assurance of his fate through a more mystical religion. Again this leads him to the fear in his religion which is a direct result of "...his rationality and his intense preoccupation with the difficult but necessary task of creating virtue in man."⁶¹ in other words, of retaining his importance as a moral authority. Hagstrum believes that this preoccupation with the rationally definable moral side of religion "... brought to light the doctrine of immortality and judgement, of reward and punishment, and very little else."⁶² which is another factor in the causing of this rationalistic fear of death. Hagstrum then includes a crucial passage from Sermon III which is well worth quoting:

The Bible tells us, in plain and authoritative terms, that there is a way to life, and a way to death; that there are acts which God will reward, and acts which he will punish.⁶³

And here we are back to a point which we mentioned earlier in that we have the religion which stands authoritatively by

itself, crushing his own authority, especially when concerned with living up to the judgement. Thus we see in this fear of death an exact parallel with what we were saying earlier, but now brought into a clearer focus. His own authority was severely limited by this terrible preoccupation with the judgement of God at the moment of death, which as one can tell from his "Diaries, Prayers, and Annals", affected the whole of his life, as he was transformed into a being whose main task was to satisfy his creator. And here we have what we might call the self-flagellating nature of his religion in that the need for the rational defence led to his fear of a judging God. Yes, God he must have, but not one to detract from himself; make it a rationally defined one then so that one retains a hold over him. But that is the fatal move; God has you trapped, as he is seen in terms of judgement, something that leads to a chronic fear of being inadequate to his unremitting moral demands, and hence to the fear of judgement after death. In being a moral authority, Johnson placed himself in the position of having to lead a life of example, and thus to have God's judgement in mind constantly. The pressures and fears that he could not live up to this and that he would be brought to account in the future life must have been crippling. At the beginning of Sermon III Johnson gives us an insight into this exacting position:

Those to whom Providence has granted the knowledge of the holy Scriptures, have no need to perplex themselves with difficult speculations, to deduce their duty from

remote principles, or to enforce it by doubtful motives.⁶⁴

There is no excuse for him or anyone who knows the scriptures not to be moral. Though this allows Johnson the luxury of being able to explain authoritatively the scriptures, as all that we need to know is there, it allows him no excuse whatsoever for behaving immorally. We can see how religion is becoming more oppressive for Johnson, and hence how his fears and confusions are intensified.

Nevertheless, we cannot leave the matter here. My arguments all rest upon the fact that for some reason, Johnson needed religion. I have pointed out that his own personal misery led to this need, and furthermore, that this fed on itself creating a strong spiral. W.J Bate, however sees it from a slightly different angle; he is primarily interested in what he calls Johnson's madness. He sees Johnson's fears of death in terms, not of his rational strainings, as we have concluded, but in terms of the possibility of annihilation: he explains:

But the truth is that for Johnson there was a worse alternative to damnation. It could be expressed by a remark John Wesley once made in a letter to his brother Charles: 'If I have any fear, it is not of falling into hell, but of falling into nothing.'⁶⁵

He quotes a telling remark which Johnson made in reply to Anna Seward's suggestion that annihilation should be likened

to "a pleasing dream".

It is neither pleasing, nor sleep; it is nothing. Now mere existence is so much better than nothing, that one would rather exist even in pain.⁶⁶

Obviously, this has a strong bearing upon the nature of his belief in the afterlife, and hence in God, if indeed this was his fear. But more specifically for our purpose, Bate explains this feeling:

And beneath the uneasy outbursts, in which he is trying to convince himself rather than someone else ('passionately and loudly'), is a deeper anxiety: a need, through a conviction of a future after death (at whatever risk), to find explicit purpose or meaning for human suffering in this world;...⁶⁷

Thus the rational possibility that there was no meaning to life produced the terror of death and indeed, what I hope to prove, the terror of religion. This thesis is supported by C.E.Pierce, who writes:

Death was hard enough to contemplate; damnation was even worse because of the reality of eternal pain; but annihilation was still worse because it involved the complete destruction of the human soul. And such destruction Johnson could not bear to think on, largely because of what it implied about the existence and nature of God. It implied either that God did not exist and that the universe was at the mercy of some amoral force, or that God did exist but was ultimately indifferent to the future of fallen man.⁶⁸

Bate's thesis is potentially damaging to our argument as it is imperative to us that Johnson's problems are rationally generated; death is feared because of the rational nature of the judgement in the afterlife. If this judgement is not

going to occur, as Bate suggests, then the explanation for his terror must be sought elsewhere. I will endeavour to show, however, why I think that the two theses are closer to one another than an initial consideration would lead us to conclude. Bate's thesis suggests that Johnson was prey to worries about the purpose of human suffering and misery in the world - this led him to doubt the existence of God or at least of a good god, which in turn led him to fear of death, as, without a god, an afterlife is impossible and annihilation is too dreadful to contemplate. He expressed his fear poignantly: "Now mere existence is better than nothing...". Here then misery leads to the doubting of God and thus to the fear of death.

But it is my opinion as I have explained in the context of the sermon, that the misery of his suffering led him directly to the need for God, a precondition for the existence of an after life; so in effect what this line of argument points out is that the stakes that Johnson was involved with were even greater; to cope with life, he needed God, but life, according to Bate, led him to suspect that God did not exist, a rational decision. The rational fight to accept his religion, opened up the vista of annihilation. The point here is that again it is Johnson's rational approach to religion which causes him the problem. Rationality is, even if Bate is correct, still the central force. Furthermore, if there is no god, then Johnson is

plunged into another rational battle trying to retain his own authority, as, faced with the absence of the Almighty, he has nothing upon which to base himself. So I feel that both the arguments that he feared death for its rational peril, and that he feared it because of the annihilation which might follow it, have some relevance and in fact, that they are both very closely linked. They are both different sides of the same coin. Religion for Johnson is a rational affair.

I am supported in this line of argument, by the direction in which Bate takes his thesis from this stage. Bate's main idea seems to be that Johnson's doubts that God might not exist led him to feel a terrifying sense of guilt as he could not claim to be a perfect Christian and thus to be a genuine authority, if he was unsure of his beliefs. This feeling of guilt brought on a desire to make up for his failure by a rigorous sense of duty involving tasks that he was not able to carry out. It is not difficult to see how a fear of scepticism over religion played upon his conscience. This would have manifested itself in the idea of "good behaviour" both as a compensation for his guilt and because in approaching religion from this angle, he could bypass the metaphysical issues of which he was so uncertain. However this process has a dangerous side effect; as Bate explains:

When the imagination lures us to things immoral or irreligious, we can at least try to drive these thoughts away. But when they 'take the form of duty,' they lay

hold of the mind without opposition because we are then
'afraid to exclude or banish them.'⁶⁹

The turning of the imaginative temptations into duties through guilt is a rationalisation of them as instead of allowing them to exist on one side, one attempts to encounter them by working out a value for them which can be atoned for by something of equal value. Bate describes the terrifying process of Johnson's "correcting" himself:

enable me to break the chain of my sins ... and to
overcome and suppress vain scruples God help me ...
to combat scruples ⁷⁰

Thus we see the extraordinary guilt becoming rationalised and hence becoming part of Johnson's personality making its way into his psyche.

This process of rationalisation would have gone hand in hand with the other desire to retain a distance from the authority of religion which he had created. In this way, Bate allows us to see everything that we have already discussed gaining speed and he gives us another perspective upon this move towards rationalisation and the profound trouble that it brought. So again we can see the fear of death and his religion in general, welling up in the rationalistic sphere, and when we are involved with the rational, we are very much involved with the authoritative, as if religion is rationally based, then he can speak authoritatively about it.

It is then, in this context, that we can understand his remark: "of the uncertainties of our present state, the most dreadful and alarming is the uncertain continuance of reason."⁷¹ The centre of Johnson's being is his reason. This statement reinforced by any one of the pages of Boswell, and indeed Boswell says of Johnson's fear of madness that, "To Johnson, whose supreme enjoyment was the exercise of reason, the disturbance or obscuration of that faculty was the evil most to be dreaded."⁷² and indeed from his very earliest days he used his intelligence to free himself from the bonds of an unhappy life, and to mark himself out from his contemporaries.⁷³ Despite the enormous contribution to his character made by his emotions, he was welded together by his rationality. Bate describes how Johnson found, from his earliest days, a way to freedom through rationalisation and how he took as his "formative model" Cornelius Ford, a relation of his mother's. He tells us what Ford most admired:

[He] prized activity of mind, a constant and ready exercise of the imagination in applying range of knowledge while simultaneously drawing upon acquaintance with the 'living world' and he believed that these qualities were best found in the energetic give - and - take of conversation.⁷⁴

Thus we see at this early stage, Johnson's mind beginning to apply itself to the matter of everyday life, but in a way which necessitated a rationalistic ordering of it.

We now have a clear view of the problems associated with his rational convolutions, but also we see with more force why he used rationality to defend himself from the authority of religion. In the past, he had used it to carve his way forward as an individual, now he had taken it up as a defence against the Almighty; but as we have seen, the Almighty is in many ways beyond rationality, leaving Johnson somewhat out of his depth.

G.K. Chesterton, in a brilliant little book entitled, Orthodoxy, gives some support to my general thesis. Here Chesterton describes the mind set of a maniac...

And if great reasoners are often maniacal, it is equally true that maniacs are commonly great reasoners....If the madman could for an instant become careless, he would become sane. Everyone who has had the misfortune to talk with people in the heart or on the edge of mental disorder, knows that their most sinister quality is a horrible clarity of detail; a connecting of one thing with another in a map more elaborate than a maze.
(Chapter 2)

We should at this point compare this with Bate's description of one of the aspects of Johnson's mind. He notes, "his habit of instantly 'relating' one thing to another, which Mrs Thrale rightly thought one of the secrets of his mental superiority."⁷⁵

Chesterton carries on:

Perhaps the nearest thing we can get to expressing it is to say this: that his mind moves in a perfect but narrow

circle....There is such a thing as a narrow universality; there is such a thing as a small and cramped eternity; you may see it in many modern religions. Now speaking quite externally and empirically, we may say that the strongest and most unmistakable mark of madness is the combination between a logical completeness and a spiritual contraction. (Chapter 2)

This leads to a cramped mind which causes a cramped rationality:

The moment his mere reason moves, it moves in the old circular rut; he will go round and round in his logical circle....Mysticism keeps men sane. As long as you have mystery you have health; when you destroy mystery you create morbidity....The ordinary man has always had one foot in earth and one in fairyland. He has always left himself free to doubt his gods; but (unlike the agnostic of to-day) free also to believe in them. (Chapter 2)

It is particularly interesting that Chesterton is here talking about the mindset of an atheist, but from what we know of Johnson there is much here that is without doubt relevant. Johnson's religion is notable for its complete lack of mysticism and its reliance upon the rational. If it failed to cause madness in Johnson, particularly when it was so psychologically important to him, religion must have caused him constant perturbation. The narrow circle of rationality, where everything can be seen from all angles, would never have given him the security afforded by a consistency provided by the mystical, where a truth is accepted precisely because it does not rely upon an empirical/rationalistic proof.

With this knowledge then, it is quite possible that the ordering process of rationality could have led Johnson to despair and indeed ultimately, to madness, precisely through its lack of imaginative focus. C.E.Pierce echoes exactly similar feelings, placing them directly in the context of religion.

What Johnson never fully realised, however, was that his frequent fits of depression were rarely the result of the imagination operating upon a consciousness haunted by religious fears. He never fully grasped that the reason he considered indolence his "reigning sin" and possessed a "horror of solitude" was because it was in such listless and lonely moods that he was most apt to reflect on his uncertain spiritual condition.⁷⁶

To add weight to this we must quote two instances where rationality is shown to be the problem. Firstly a passage from Mrs Thrale's diary: "When Mr Johnson felt his fancy, or fancied he felt it, disordered, his constant recurrence was to the study of arithmetic."⁷⁷ Here we are shown Johnson's need for a rational activity which has a solution, thus allowing the mind to progress forward, avoiding the terror of the vortex of unreasonable questions. Surely this is the clue to Johnson's need, and not that he needed arithmetic to distract his imagination. Even more indicative, however, is a well-known passage from Boswell where he reports:

Talking of constitutional melancholy, he observed, (Johnson) 'Man so afflicted, sir, must direct distressing thoughts, and not combat with them.'

Boswell: 'May not he think them down, sir?'

Johnson: 'No sir. To attempt to think them down is madness.'⁷⁸

For Johnson, this is probably quite literal. It is thought which is the problem, and to "think it down" is to aggravate it, by increasing the complexity of the problem, hence leading to more confusion, turbulence, and perhaps madness. Again we find C.E.Pierce in our support. He writes:

Johnson became an unwitting victim of his own rationalism, suffering acute anxiety at the persistence of doubts that could never be dispelled.⁷⁹

And here, once more we come across the seeming contradiction which we encountered in the first chapter, between the ordered and the anarchic, the rational and madness.

So how is Johnson ever going to perform as an authority with all these problems? It must not be forgotten that it was in the area of religion that Johnson most strongly desired himself to be an authority to others (see page 88). To make our final analysis of Johnson's relationship with religion, we shall examine one of Johnson's very finest pieces of writing, his review of Soame Jenyns's "Free enquiry into the nature and origin of evil."
80

It is evident from the beginning that Johnson wishes to throw particular scorn at Jenyns; Johnson's response is too animated to be purely a matter of the intellect. He writes : "He calls it a Free enquiry, and indeed his freedom

is, I think, greater than his modesty."(171) Jenyns's main problem is that he decides "...too easily upon questions out of the reach of human determination." Thus strangely, one might feel, he wishes to put the matter beyond the reach of the fallible human mind. He does not wish religion to be purely a matter of the rational part of the mind, as this denies it any external authority, which for Johnson it must have. Furthermore, when Johnson saw that other people were approaching religion from the rational standpoint, he realised that it would lead to the placing upon religion of someone else's authority. One must remember Johnson's hatred of sermons. Surely this resulted from a similar cause. By putting religion beyond the realm of speculation, as he suggests in the Review, he puts it beyond the authority of others.

Many commentators sense Johnson's unease concerning metaphysical speculation. Wain notes his "dislike of speculation" when discussing the Review ⁸¹ whilst Robert Voitle provides a longer explanation:

The closest Johnson comes to being metaphysical in any legitimate sense of the word is when he is chastising Soame Jenyns for his metaphysical efforts, as repugnant as some of Jenyns's specific conclusions are to Johnson, they do not annoy him as much as the fact that Jenyns attempted to determine such matters. ⁸²

One feels that Johnson resents Jenyns's ease of argument - it becomes clear as Johnson bulldozes on that Jenyns's

conclusions have been arrived at in a detached manner, something as we have seen, that Johnson was never able to do. Johnson must have resented Jenyns his ease of argument, as belief for Johnson came at such a great cost.

He lets Jenyns off fairly lightly over the first letter, except for pointing out that he uses the conclusion of his argument as a premise.

Again in the second letter we see Johnson's anger at the ease with which Jenyns approaches the problem: it is an attempt to "cut the gordian Knot with very blunt instruments." It seems to me that here, Johnson is attempting to reassert his authority as a master of religious questions by taking on Jenyns at his own game, namely that of metaphysical speculation, where, not surprisingly, Johnson's brilliant mind crushes the unfortunate Jenyns.

This is followed by his criticism of Jenyns for practising plagiarism, thus again detracting from Jenyns's authority and enhancing his own. It is at this point that Jenyns puts forward his theory of subordination based upon the great chain of being where everything in creation is placed in order ranging from perfection to imperfection, each Being having successively more of either quality depending upon their position in the chain. Johnson's

initial response is as expected: "I have often considered [it] but always left the enquiry in doubt and uncertainty." Again we have the authority knowing better, an authority who was unable himself to bring speculations about religion to a close. At this point it would be helpful to quote Joseph Wood Krutch's response to this type of Johnsonian reaction:

[Johnson] was too much of a rationalist not to welcome anything that would help make Christianity seem rational, anything that would actually justify to human reason the ways of God. But he was also too honest to accept specious arguments merely because they were on his side. He could advise such a man as Jenyns 'to distrust his own faculties, however large and comprehensive,' and he could advise it not because Jenyns was attempting to damage trust in God and not because Johnson delighted in scepticism, but solely because he would not consent to have the grave difficulties which the spectacle of human misery puts in the way of faith of God, difficulties which he himself had painfully faced, explained away with feeble argument.⁸³

This is indeed a perceptive point as it again brings into the arena the conflict between Johnson's rationality and his profound relationship with the miseries of the world. We see here that experience, especially misery, is the ultimate test of rationality, and here indeed we see Johnson allowing it, quite rightly of course, to overturn supposed rational argument. Here we see Johnson ensuring that it is he who can bring us nearer to the realities of God and hence to be an authority; in other words, God has this habit of breaking through rationality in the form of experience - misery brought Johnson to God. Approaching from a slightly different angle, Johnson's authority would have been

increased by his close association with the deity, the ultimate authority, but not one based upon pseudo - rationalistic argument, but one which can be demonstrated to have connection with the real world of experience. Thus the dismissal of Jenyns's ludicrous arguments for the deity would have further enhanced his authority. If Johnson can be honest to God, he can gain authority from that given by an objective God.

Next Johnson dismisses the metaphysical basis of the chain of being quite brilliantly. He writes:

In a passage through the boundless ocean of disquisition, we often take fogs for land, and after having long toiled to approach them find, instead of repose and harbours, new storms of objection and fluctuations of uncertainty. (173 col2)

In this quotation, we feel vividly and pictorially the rational pressures which Johnson must have endured as he sought truth through rational speculation. Again, one feels here the passionate need Johnson had for his religion, both because of his misery and also because he is beginning to acknowledge that rationality could not go the whole way.

Jenyns then produces a facile paragraph outlining the pleasures of poverty and madness which naturally Johnson dismisses both from the heart and from experience. He writes tellingly:

Life must be seen before it can be known. This author

and Pope perhaps never saw the miseries which they
imagine thus easily born. (174 coll)

Rationality is not enough. The human condition is greater than that which the purely rational is capable of describing and Johnson's own experience of the world would not allow him to accept Jenyns's bankrupt arguments. Because someone else is the rationaliser here, Johnson has no difficulty in dismissing him. As I hope to show, this will allow Johnson to see that his own attempts at rationalising God will not be entirely adequate.

The paragraph from 174 to 175 is crucial for an understanding of much of Johnson's religion. He here, dismisses the benefits of ignorance:

Men left wholly to their appetites and their instincts, with little sense of moral and religious obligation, and with very faint distinctions of right and wrong, can never be safely employed or confidently trusted: they can be honest only by obstinacy, and diligent only by compulsion or caprice. (175 col 1)

An authoritative religion beyond man's thoughts or emotions is necessary for life, indeed in the Preface to the "Preceptor", Johnson wrote: "Virtue may owe her panegyrics to morality, but must derive her authority from Religion." We will see, vividly, a little later in the essay, how important Johnson believed religion was in making moral decisions. Morality, then, is based squarely upon the objective authority of religion. Johnson seems in this essay

to be putting forward the necessity of authoritative religion in a more clearcut manner than anywhere else in his writings. But as we shall see, before he can do this he has to work out some of the pressures which we have seen existed. Jenyns was the scapegoat who allowed him to do this.

After the jump to the next section of the review (p251) we have an interesting incident when Jenyns puts forward the value of happiness. Naturally Johnson has to agree with him; we know how strongly Johnson longed for happiness, but he cannot bring himself to accept it on Jenyns's terms. He criticises Jenyns in the following terms:

His opinion of the value and importance of happiness is certainly just, and I shall insert it, not that it will give any information to the reader, but it may serve to show how the most common notion may be swelled in sound, and diffused in bulk, till it shall perhaps astonish the author himself. (251 col2)

This approach, then, allows him to admit Jenyns's claim, which he must do, whilst trying to avoid having to face up to its conclusion by trying to convince the readers that, in some way, Jenyns's presentation of it is ridiculous, thus not needing to be taken too seriously. Furthermore, in subtly circumnavigating what he realises to be an important statement, he does not have to acknowledge the authority which Jenyns would have gained from it. For Johnson to take it and place it in his own terms, would have been a way of

reasserting his own dominance over Jenyns and the knowledge that he has espoused. Johnson then quotes what Jenyns has to say about happiness:

Happiness is the only thing of real value in existence; neither riches, nor power, nor wisdom, nor learning, nor strength, nor beauty, nor virtue, nor religion, nor even life itself, being of any importance but as they contribute to its production. (251 col2)

In my opinion this is not a loose piece at all, in fact it is a striking piece of writing, reminiscent of Johnson's own style, ramming home the point by use of a string of examples to back his argument up. The point is that the passage forces Johnson to face up to the problems of the relationship between happiness and religion in his life. If happiness is proposed as of ultimate importance, it detracts from the authority of the religion that Johnson needed to bring into being to protect him from misery, and thus would be completely ineffective in curing it, as it must be more authoritative than the misery it is intended to dispel. Unfortunately, it must be stressed that the admitting of the importance of happiness would not have been an effective block against the authority of religion as it would have entailed an admittance on Johnson's part that he was a failure due to his sadness.

But one feels that in some way Johnson is not as lost as he might be. There seems to be a power impelling Johnson forward and somehow giving him a sense of authority.

It is not long, therefore, before Johnson is back on the ascendant, a position made easier to attain with Jenyns's elaboration of his great chain of being, which Johnson naturally dismisses as ridiculous, mainly on the grounds of the inability of man to apply human characteristics to the universe. Johnson again criticises Jenyns for lack of thoughtfulness, "For fools march where angels fear to tread." (253 coll). And indeed the criticism is just and telling: we again see Johnson reacting with vehemence against the ease with which Jenyns deals with the omnipotence when it caused Johnson himself so much trouble. After a short respite, Johnson is on the offensive again.

Old age will shew him that much of the book now before us has no other use than to perplex the scrupulous, and to shake the weak, to encourage impious presumption, or stimulate idle curiosity. (301 coll)

Johnson defends whole - heartedly the need for the unknown. Johnson's authority grows here, and indeed the force of this passage is very largely due to its splendid feeling of authority. We accept Johnson's writings here not as interesting speculations but as the truth, newly explained.

Johnson then chastises Jenyns for trying to neatly explain away the problem of evil in a similar way to the way we saw Johnson doing it in Sermon XV. The explaining away in this manner of the problem of evil, seems to be the ultimate delusion, the most heinous example of the placing of the

rational over the experience of real life. There follows from this one of the most famous passages that Johnson ever wrote. Here all this pent up emotion is poured out in scorn for Jenyns's idea that pain in one part of the chain brings benefit to another. Johnson imagines with gleeful irony a set of beings higher in the chain than human kind:

As we shoot a bird flying, they take a man in the midst of his business or pleasure, and knock him down with apoplexy. Some of them, perhaps are virtuosi, and delight in the operations of an asthma, as a human philosopher in the effects of an air pump. To swell a man with a tympany is as good a sport as to blow a frog.(302 coll)

And it continues with sustained vigour. But is this extraordinary display of Johnson's anger at the obscene conclusion of Jenyns's theory, a legitimate disapproval ? On a basic level it does not disprove Jenyns's theory at all; granted it might well make us reject his idea on the ground of disgust, but it is not a refutation. Actually, it says more about Johnson than it does about Jenyns. Johnson is undeniably very angry here; but with whom? Partially Jenyns, maybe, but the fact remains that humans experience life in terms exactly congruent with that described by Johnson. People are indeed struck down in the middle of careers and for no conceivable reason at all - it is a terrible situation, but it is real! There are two conceivable explanations - firstly that there is no god, or secondly, that God is like these hostile beings, who if he does not directly swell a man with a tympany, at least allows it to

happen. I feel strongly that here, Johnson is reacting against the unfairness of God's world, against the agony which he allows to exist, and against the fact that a turning to God produces, for Johnson, greater misery, as we have seen. I do not think that Jenyns's claims are sufficiently important to attract such a reaction from the country's leading moralist, unless they had involved him in some other consideration. However as Jenyns is of no importance, and more importantly, because he is only nominally a Christian, if at all, Johnson could attack without being seen to, or indeed feeling that he was, undermining the ideas of a Christian, or even Christianity itself. Jenyns can then be used as a scapegoat for Johnson's real concerns. Bate, as I have said, is very interesting about the review :

But it is hard to believe Johnson would have bothered to focus on it such an array of artillery had not its glib optimism ... been expressed within the frame of deistic or "natural" religion rather than that of Hellenic Christian teaching. Hence, in facing this particular attempt to excuse or reconcile the evils of life within a larger picture, all the taboos for Johnson are immediately dropped. ⁸⁴

So perhaps then we see Johnson rebelling as he has done against God and in particular against the world of misery that we live in, a misery that in Johnson's case was aggravated by the question of God himself; and indeed he wrote very tellingly to Boswell that God:

must be good as well as powerful, because there is nothing to make him otherwise, and goodness of itself is

preferable. Yet you have against this, what is very certain, the unhappiness of human life. ⁸⁵

He lived too realistic and involved a life to accept any explanation which did not take account of the tragic reality of evil and misery. It must have seemed to Johnson, on some occasions, that Christianity did not seem to do this: but as we have seen, it was not something that he could abandon. Thus again, we see the two authorities which react upon Johnson pulling him apart, namely, human experience and religion. He could not give either of them up, as both of them were the bases upon which his life, and the authority he had for others, rested. He ends this long passage of criticism with the comment: "The only reason why we should contemplate evil is, that we may bear it better...". Here then is an acknowledgement of its power, one which is far more true to human nature than his limp explanation given in Sermon XV which we saw earlier, thus affording him a greater degree of authority in his realistic understanding of life.

Having released much of his pent up anger towards God, and just as we feel that he is able to plunge himself back into his vortex of competing authorities, Johnson turns and surprises us, most probably because he has the limp arguments of Jenyns to uncover his own delusions. As life is so fraught with trouble, we as human beings cannot manage alone. The terrifying conclusion is then set forward:

The consequences of human actions being sometimes

remote, it is not possible in many cases for most men, nor in all cases for any man to determine what actions will ultimately produce happiness, and therefore it was proper that Revelation should lay down a rule to be followed invariably in opposition to appearances, and in every change of circumstances, by which we may be certain to promote the general felicity. (304/305 cols 2/1)

Johnson here is dealing directly with one of his main concerns, happiness. Happiness, not just moral good, will be produced if we follow the dictates of God. This is a statement of faith in revealed religion, and one that is splendidly put. In many ways this passage is one of Johnson's most acute as he places this world in an important position as regards religion, which it undoubtedly held for him. In this world of relativism, where, as he says at the beginning of the essay, we "see but in part", we can never know all. We must therefore rely upon the authority of the Almighty if we are ever to live a life of morality or happiness. Again we see the need of man for authority and from this, we understand more deeply the appeal for Johnson of the authoritative and indeed, the basis of his authority is his realisation of this. Here then, we do not get the clashes between Johnson and his religion. Interestingly, his own authority is strengthened by his avowal of the authoritative God. By becoming the mouthpiece of objective religion, he is being more authoritative, and indeed, people of his own day valued him for this, and it was on this basis that they considered him an authority.

The rest of the Review (only one and a half pages) is not really of particular interest, but is basically concerned with denying the logically deduced conclusions due to the falsity of their premise, the "...great chain of being."

The feelings we have after reading the Review are complex. We see, in its perusal, the tensions inherent in Johnson's religion rearing their heads. On the one hand, he will not allow Jenyns to be accorded any authority through his rational explanation of his theology; Johnson was to be the man to explain the deity. On the other hand, we are given the strong feeling that Johnson cannot encircle God with rational thought, as he often found he needed to attempt in order to keep the deity's authority at bay. We find, however, in this Review, dismissal of Jenyns's attempts to theorise go hand in hand with Johnson's admittance that God cannot be Rationally restricted. It is when Johnson can let go of his need to impose himself on God that he becomes truly authoritative, as he does in the Review. In violently attacking Jenyns, he was able to achieve authority without having to vainly attempt to knock down the God which made his life possible. Mixed in with these thoughts, we must recognise that Johnson's anger, on the surface directed at Jenyns, was most probably a cry of pain at the God who allowed him to live so disturbed a life.

As an authority, he seems to be most successful if he is putting over the authority of the revealed, objective religion. In the Review we see Johnson increasing his authority by dismissing that of Jenyns's but perhaps interestingly, in being honest to himself, to his world, and to his true religion, he comes across as a far more authoritative figure than elsewhere.

The latest edition of the Oxford book of Prayer (1985), includes one of Johnson's very finest prayers, which for me, sums up what I wish to say about the authority and means of his religious life. It is given the Number 378:

O Lord, my maker and protector, who hast graciously sent me into this world, to work out my salvation, enable me to drive from me all such unquiet and perplexing thoughts as may mislead or hinder me in the practice of those duties which thou hast required. When I behold the works of thy hands and consider the course of thy providence, give me grace always to remember that thy thoughts are not my thoughts, nor thy ways my ways. [Here we see Johnson's realisation of his temptation to use religion to enhance his own authority, or at the very least, to fight against its authority.] And while it shall please thee to continue me in this world where much is to be done and little to be known, teach me by thy Holy Spirit to withdraw my mind from unprofitable and dangerous enquiries, from difficulties vainly curious and doubts impossible to be solved. Let me rejoice in the light which thou hast imparted, let me serve thee with active zeal and humble confidence, and wait with patient expectation for the time in which the soul which thou receivest shall be satisfied with knowledge. Grant this, O lord, for Jesus Christ's sake, amen.

If religion was to possess the necessary authority, for Johnson's life, it had to be beyond the world of human

experience. For Johnson, this was both its problem, and its importance. Johnson only became truly authoritative, when he acknowledged without hesitation, the absolute authority of religion instead of trying to place himself in between God and the world ("...that thy thoughts are not my thoughts, nor thy ways my ways.") This implied lack of knowledge, and seeming lack of personal authority, but as we have seen in the Review, in the context of this unpredictable world, it meant the opposite. It is instructive that Johnson became known as an authority precisely because of his accurate and persuasive portrayal of the message of Christianity. Despite doubts and terrifying tensions, he was successful as an authority when he was honest to God, and thus to himself, though, as we have seen, this was never easy and the failed attempts to do so left him deeply scarred.

CHAPTER FOUR

Johnson : The Rambler

The Rambler essays are what truly made Johnson famous in his day. Throughout the Life, Boswell refers to Johnson as "the author of the Rambler", particularly when he wishes to contrast his actual behaviour with that which might be expected of him by the public.¹ It is therefore within these essays that I wish to look for a final assessment of Johnson's authority. One feels that the author himself might well have approved of this approach, for it was he who wrote: "My other works are wine and water; but my Rambler is pure wine."² Tetty's praise was correspondingly enthusiastic: "I thought very well of you before; but I did not imagine you could have written any thing equal to this."³ The reasons for Johnson's pride are important, as by discovering what they were, it will be revealed what he wished to be.

The title, The Rambler Essays, is of course a strange one for so seemingly important an endeavour.

Boswell's account of the naming stresses this apparent oddity:

Johnson was, I think, not very happy in the choice of his title, The Rambler, which certainly is not suited to a series of grave and moral discourses...⁴

and in fact, according to Sir Joshua Reynolds, Johnson chose the title at the last minute after a vigil at his bedside:

I sat down at night upon my bedside, and resolved that I would not go to sleep till I had fixed its title. The Rambler seemed the best that occurred, and I took it.⁵

Boswell was unsure of the name but I believe The Rambler to be a more appropriate title than he imagined. The moral discourses, which indeed they are, are not actually as uniformly grave as he suggests, and indeed as he admitted a few pages further on in the Life; " He [Johnson] has not depressed the soul to despondency and indifference."⁶ and there is in the essays' presentation much that is light, however serious the actual "moral" is. That Johnson himself suffered so much over the title tends to suggest that it meant more to him than Boswell thought, and that the title would have been chosen for a particular reason. Obviously the choice had much to do with arresting public attention as it was a name which chimed in easily with the Spectator or the Tatler, both of which had been highly successful, even though Johnson never intended The Rambler to have so light a character as these two publications.⁷ Nevertheless, I feel that there is a more important reason for the title which

may be discovered through contrasting the prayer that he composed upon the starting of the essays, which Bate consistently omits to quote in its entirety, and the motto which prefixes the collection. Firstly the prayer:

Almighty God, the giver of all good things, without whose help all labour is ineffectual, and without whose grace all wisdom is folly, grant, I beseech Thee, that in this my undertaking thy Holy Spirit may not be withheld from me, but that I may promote thy glory, and the salvation both of myself and others, - Grant this O Lord for the sake of Jesus Christ. Amen. Lord Bless me. So be it.⁸

The prayer's reluctance to end seems to indicate Johnson's grasping for God's assistance. The essays meant a great deal to him, and indeed so great a task did he consider their writing, that God's help seemed more than urgent.

In contrast to this, as we have mentioned above, is the motto which he chose for the essays, taken from Horace's First Epistle:

Nullius addictus jurare in verba magistri,
Quo me cunque rapit tempestas deferor hospes.
(Epistles I 1.14-15)

which was also the motto of the newly formed Royal Society. Johnson also supplies Elphinston's translation :

Sworn to no Master's arbitrary sway,
I range where-e'er occasion points the way.

Both the English and the Latin stress the writer's freedom from external authority, and indeed, the not very accurate

English translation chosen by Johnson here presents the independence of the writer in a suave and confident tone, rather unlike the tempest that snatches and bears away in Horace's lines. One must presume that Johnson considered God to be anything but "arbitrary", however much of a "master" he must have been, and however ordered an interpretation of "occasion" must be posited if it was to be substantially God directed! I think the contrast between the two is important and should not be reconciled too neatly. The two differing statements are almost a wish on the "Rambler's" part that the two will necessarily pull together, and that in this way, God can be seen through the world if viewed without particular direction, but just as it is. Through the very act of "Rambling" his way through life in the periodical form, he would demonstrate the working of God's spirit in the world through man's morality, without interpretative bias. We find frequently in the Rambler essays a dramatic tension between objective and external moral authority on the one hand, and Johnson's trust in his own experience of life, on the other. The two sources of authority negotiate with one another, now more distantly, now more closely; and here at the outset we find the contrast that faces us too at the end of the work.

The final Rambler, (Number 208), provides Johnson with an opportunity to comment upon what he has done. Because an itinerant cannot speak of individuals, he writes: "...in my papers, no man could look for censures of his

enemies, or praises of himself..." indeed the Ramblers are expected to be indulged in by only those "...whose passions left them leisure for abstracted truth, and whom virtue could please by its naked dignity."⁹ He does not wish his essay collection to degenerate into the personal as he is only interested, so he says, in the objective truth, a truth which is relevant for men of any age.

A perusal of the essay will show Johnson at his most abstracted. He ends the essay in the following manner:

The essays professedly serious, if I have been able to execute my own intentions, will be found exactly conformable to the precepts of Christianity, without any accommodation to the licentiousness and levity of the present age. I therefore look back on this part of my work with pleasure, which no blame or praise of man shall diminish or augment. I shall never envy the honours which wit and learning obtain in any other cause, if I can be numbered among the writers who have given ardour to virtue and confidence to truth.¹⁰

Through most of the essay we are told of Johnson's authoritative behaviour; he tells us of his purpose, which is to construct essays fitting into a pre - determined pattern and which have a fore - ordained viewpoint, as he says earlier: "Having hitherto attempted only the propagation of truth..."¹¹

This stance, taken up in number 208 is not, however, fair to his essays as a whole, as he will not allow himself here any credit for discovery, indeed for "rambling". His task, if we are to believe Johnson, has only been to describe what has been given through the Christian

Revelation, which assuredly was not the idea encapsulated in his motto. But even this, one of the most assured of all the essays, involves itself in more than was necessarily intended, through the action of Johnson's "persona", a word I use advisedly, opposing it to that of mind, which might not carry the context of experience. He cannot move beyond himself, as he explains:

He that condemns himself to compose on a stated day, will often bring to his task an attention dissipated, a memory embarrassed, an imagination overwhelmed, a mind distracted with anxieties, a body languishing with disease: He will labour on a barren topick, till it is too late to change it; or in the ardour of invention, diffuse his thoughts into wild exuberance... 12

Much of the essay is devoted to excusing himself from the regard of a public, because his only purpose has been to instruct. But of course the fact that he dwells upon the reaction of others attests to at least some regard of it. He admits that "he has never been much a favourite of the publick" but not only must this have hurt him, but also the producing of the excuse that he has never angled for their interest, must have damagingly reflected upon their attitude towards the "Propagation of truth." For a man who believed and was honest enough to admit that the "...heart naturally loves truth"¹³ and indeed that "The applause of a single human being is of great consequence",¹⁴ the conclusion that he brings himself to, namely that people in general were not interested in the Ramblers or the truth that they were supposed to contain, must not have been an

easy one to have been able to accept. The conclusion of Essay 208 is not necessarily supported by the evidence presented in the rest of the essay, and we see Johnson's authority existing on a more complex level than we had imagined. In the essay we see the two approaches manifested in the motto and the prayer lying side by side, in a strange form of tension. On the one hand we have his assurance that he is only interested in the propagation of truth, on the other, we see him taking into consideration the essays' popularity, a move which bolts the essay to the contemporary moment in a way Johnson is trying to avoid. So in this last essay Johnson's attempt to be objectively authoritative is to a large extent undermined by other circumstances. The object of this chapter is to understand more fully how this authoritative tension operates. As becomes obvious, the quotation of a sentence or even a paragraph disjoined from an essay as a whole is insufficient to determine an essay's meaning or character. To do the essays justice, one must look at them as a whole, pointing out the shifts and contradictions which occur.¹⁵

Modern criticism of the Rambler is varied. Criticism of limited value to my purpose has been written on thematic patterning, symbolic names and imagery¹⁶, all of which tend to list similarities between essays and thereby make a comment upon either the entire series or Johnson's mind as a whole. Secondly, there is a group of critics which attempts

to understand Johnson's passions through the essays, the major exponent of this course being W.J.Bate, both in his Life and especially in his earlier book The Achievement of Samuel Johnson.¹⁷ This strain of thought is both accurate and valuable, but as I hope to show, there is something about it that will not satisfy. Finally, and most valuably for this study, there are those critics who subject individual essays to scrutiny and focus upon Johnson's method as a guide to his mind and views.¹⁸ This final group of critics follows most closely the approach which I hope to take.¹⁹

I wish to embark upon my investigation into the method of the Ramblers with Leopold Damrosch's article entitled: "Johnson's manner of proceeding in the Rambler"²⁰ He focuses upon "two rhetorical modes" used by Johnson which Damrosch explains as the "...dismantling of commonplaces, which exposes all their weaknesses before reassembling them into a positive statement" and as "...a mode of amplification, almost of meditation, which surrounds a subject with reflections that enlarge our understanding but do not advance an argument."²¹ He tests Johnson's manner by selecting Essays 1, 2 and 155. Johnson's purpose, so Damrosch claims, is to focus our minds more fully upon the essay and thereby, by proceeding through the complex system of mental movement, to make the "...conclusions fully our own,"²² and to "...show us how uncritical our thinking usually is."²³ He summarises, "The heart of Johnson's

mission as a moralist is to make us stop parroting the precepts of moralists and start thinking for ourselves."²⁴. Thus the conclusion Damrosch leads us to is that in some way Johnson was not an authority at all, in that it was his purpose to allow his readers to come to their own decision, to think in a sophisticated way for themselves. In fact this approach is the exact reverse of the authoritative, since both Johnson himself and any external authority he adduced would be brought to the bar of the reader's own decision about things. Damrosch uses an example from Rambler 23 where Johnson begins by accepting a maxim of Pliny, and then turning it on its head: "But, though the rule of Pliny be judiciously laid down, it is not applicable to the writer's cause..."²⁵. Damrosch's thesis is well presented and indeed to some degree convincing, but to accept it in its entirety would be, I feel, to oversimplify. The main reason for this is that it would not fit into what we know of Johnson's character. We can accept that he would not wish his readers to accept commonplace aphorisms without thought,²⁶ but in his conversation and in his works, he tried to teach people what he considered real, what he considered true. It is, impossible to imagine the Johnson, who often in the Life was passionate to convince, writing the Ramblers chiefly to educate his readers to think for themselves. Johnson, would write what he thought, and expect his readers to concur! If Pliny's aphorism seemed appropriate, he would use it, if it seemed inappropriate, he would then reject it. The Ramblers

are a far more accurate display of Johnson's mind as it genuinely was, than Damrosch's theory would allow us to accept. He was not simply adopting positions which he might not genuinely have held, to persuade others to think for themselves.

Another approach is offered by Steven Lynn in his article "Johnson's Rambler and Eighteenth Century Rhetoric." He divides eighteenth-century patterns of thought into two forms of rhetoric, firstly the "...traditional, Aristotelian/Ciceronian rhetoric" and secondly the "...new, Lockean or scientific rhetoric."²⁷ Supposedly the old rhetoric concentrates on persuasion by proposing of commonplaces which are subjected to deductive manipulation, whilst the new rhetoric bases itself upon experience and inferential reasoning, as Lynn summarises it: "Proof derived from authorities and words versus truth defined from reality and individual reasoning."²⁸ Lynn's thesis is that in the Rambler Johnson uses both methods. He writes:

Johnson always begins a Rambler with an epigraph, drawn from the classics, which functions much like a sermon text, encapsulating, stimulating, authorising what follows.²⁹

According to Lynn, then, Johnson begins almost all his Ramblers with an authority which is then put to severe testing. Using Rambler 166 Lynn shows the way Johnson subjects an authoritative saying to a pattern of empirical

testing of the Lockean kind, and on the basis of the testing either rejects or accepts the authority.

Again and again we see Johnson testing a proposition in the Rambler not by its intuitive acceptability of syllogistic potential, but rather by its congruence to empirical data.³⁰

This seems more persuasive to me than Damrosch's theory. Nevertheless, before coming to a conclusion, we must consider a debate between Lynn and another Johnson critic, Paul Fussell.³¹ Lynn's belief is that Johnson's approach to the truth is by means of a pattern (namely the one he has described), which however distracting the individual essays are, is always there. However he makes it clear that in some sense, the essay itself is greater than its parts and that the connections between parts are not as logical as they might be.

My contention is that Johnson's essays rely on certain paradigms or formulas, and the formulas are holistic, not connective, rhetorical and not investigative. In fact, I find that Johnson often neglects to make explicit transitions, forcing the reader to supply the relationship - to see the parts in terms of the whole.³²

Thus what Johnson writes in the Rambler is both intended from the beginning, and also involves the reader in a relationship with the author through the bridge of the essay as a whole. He attempts to demonstrate this with reference to Rambler 172.³³ However it must be admitted that if one did not wish to see the alleged process of the essays, Lynn allows us plenty of loopholes. As the system defined above

is often so difficult to see it would probably be more accurate to suggest that it has been invented (and indeed the use of the word "neglects" in the quotation above, in reference to Johnson's making clear transitions, perhaps suggests that Lynn feels he is being a little let down.)³⁴

However Lynn's line of argument becomes interesting when it is compared with Paul Fussell's understanding of Rambler 184, a difference which Lynn is at pains to point out. The difference in interpretation stems from the fact that Lynn considers the essay as running in a consistent direction. The Rambler in question, Lynn claims, attempts to prove the pervasiveness of chance in life and thus the necessity of faith, a conclusion which is reached in a turnabout in the final paragraph. Fussell, on the other hand, sees Johnson's pervasive rationality leading to a conclusion which the author does not like, and which he consequently evades by an abrupt and unforeseen last minute reversal, enabling him to put forward an orthodox position. Fussell writes:

Thus he returns, and with great skill, to the position and tone appropriate to "The Rambler"; but he can do so here only by tacking on a conclusion which follows not at all from the premises.³⁵

For Fussell it is these 'buts' and 'yets' which become the substance of the Ramblers ³⁶, 'buts' and 'yets' being brought into being by the injection into the essays of a human factor which leads Johnson to complicate his original

intentions in that the force of his own experiences led him down a path which he had not intended to investigate. The desired objective truth then has to be reasserted as Johnson has wandered away from it, hence the change of direction. Fussell summarises this type of occurrence, and in so doing explains what is at the basis of Johnson's method.

Boswell's genius in bottling and peddling the Johnsonian ether sometimes gives the impression that the mighty sage operates from a body of principles firmly held and fearlessly applied. But as the method of the Rambler suggests, the fact is quite different. Johnson's 'thought' is not a great fixed structure, as we might be led to assume from, say, the tables listing his 'likes' and 'dislikes' at the end of Krutch's Samuel Johnson. It is rather a varying, dynamic melange of reactions recognizing hardly any fixed principles except an adherence to empiricism and a scepticism about the certainties embraced and promulgated by other people.³⁷

To appreciate Johnson's method more fully, a thorough examination of Rambler 184 will be undertaken.

The essay is prefaced by an authoritative sentence from Juvenal translated as

Intrust thy fortune to the pow'rs above:
Leave them to manage for thee, and to grant
What their unerring wisdom sees thee want. 38
(Dryden)

So we must presume this will be the point of the essay. We begin the essay proper with a reference to writing which very quickly becomes self - reflective; are we to accept the self criticism of the essayist as a person not requiring much preparation ?

A careless glance upon a favourite author, or transient survey of the varieties of life, is sufficient to supply the first hint or seminal idea, which enlarged by the gradual accretion of matter stored in the mind, is by the warmth of fancy easily expanded into flowers, and sometimes ripened into fruit. (201 para 1)

The peculiar way in which Johnson talks in an objective manner here and in the last paragraph of "the authors of these petty compositions", allows us to ask how his authority is working here. He talks about himself in an abstracted and objective way, making a somewhat critical judgement, "a careless glance..." and "by the warmth of fancy".

In the second paragraph, however, a reversal takes place in Johnson's opinion of the task of an essayist in that we are faced with the fact that actually the short essay is made more "irksome" by the fact that the writer's mind is given no assistance by an imagined environment such as that created by the novelist. The writer of essays has always to choose a topic without having any guiding factors to help; in other words, the essay is more difficult owing to its necessary connection with life and its disjunction from the make believe or the imagined; it requires a more empirical approach. Here, we see Johnson's recognition of this vital part of his essay writing - its relationship to the world around it. The essay will only be of value if it speaks of what is real.

In the next paragraph (202, para 2), Johnson draws life in general and essay writing closely together as the essayist often has to take pot luck, using material which happens to be at hand. This is because there are too many subjects to distinguish between to make a deliberate choice. It often happens that the judgement is distorted with "...boundless multiplicity". In other words the work of an essayist is not perhaps as hard as the second paragraph might have suggested. This type of approach would tend to support Fussell's line of thought as this is a far more 'ad hoc' process than anything else. It is difficult not to see a parallel here with life in general as there must be a close link between the essayist who comments upon life, and the human being who acts within life. The decisions which he makes are often far too complex to be decided upon objectively and so he must just plunge forward and allow himself to be taken by those events at hand, perhaps even to be guided by chance. We shall see Johnson making this transition later in the essay. In the next paragraph we see the relationship between essayist and life made more explicit:

To close tedious deliberations with hasty resolves, and after long consultations with reason to refer the question to caprice, is by no means peculiar to the essayist. (202, para 3).

He then, to elaborate his view, asks us to look at our lives and the manner in which they are outside our control. Here

we see him turning his attention away from the essay and from statements like those made in the first paragraph to look for a more empirical justification. He writes: "Let him that peruses this paper, review the series of his life, and enquire how he was placed in his present condition." (202, para 3) So, to a large extent, life is determined by chance, and indeed Johnson goes as far as to say that, "Of the good or ill which he has experienced, a great part came unexpected...". So we are beginning to see the moral sphere slipping over into the realm of chance.

However in the next paragraph (203, para 2), we notice a subtle shift which one feels may well be the result of Johnson realising where his line of argument is leading him. It becomes not so much a matter of the way things are, but the fact that people "...may be said to throw themselves by design into the arms of fortune..." (203, para 2) and indeed, they are said to "...engage in a ⁰⁰¹case of life". We are in fact, being drawn into a Johnsonian discovery of complexity. How far are we responsible for a situation which, in some ways, we are incapable of avoiding through our lack of ability to understand the complexity of the world? But one cannot help but notice that he has become more critical: "Nor is it any wonder that their time is past between elation and despondency, hope and disappointment." (203, para 3) The use of the word their tends to suggest a distancing by Johnson from the people about whom he is

talking. Johnson is beginning to find that he is trapping himself into conclusions about which he is uneasy .

The same process continues, through the next two paragraphs (203, paras 3 and 4). Even the most cautious will sooner or later have to admit that they are governed by chance, "a subtle and insidious power, who will intrude upon privacy and embarrass caution"(203, para 4). However he goes on to state that "...everyone must form the general plan of his conduct by his own reflections", which presumably we can take to mean that like the essayist we must just accept what we are presented with and forge a general plan of life; for instance, "...whether he will exercise private or public virtues; whether he will labour for the general benefit of mankind, or content¹⁰⁶~~ent~~ his beneficence to his family and dependants." Johnson is attempting to reconcile a basic morality with the tyrannical government of chance to which he has allied himself. However, it must be doubted as to whether this is a possible statement as it would appear that even those who take the 'bull by the horns' do not have the opportunity to direct themselves if life is governed by a power completely beyond their control. The forces in this essay are too strong to allow Johnson to maintain any consistent argument which he might have intended.

Johnson then gives us a short paragraph which seems to be a summary of what he has been saying:

This question has long exercised the schools of philosophy, but remains yet undecided; and what hope is there that a young man, unacquainted with the arguments on either side, should determine his destiny otherwise than by chance? (204 para 2)

We presume the question mentioned here is the role of chance. Most interesting is the way in which Johnson again removes himself from the general and specifies a type of person, namely, "...a young man, unacquainted with the arguments on either side." We are given space to imagine someone who is acquainted with the arguments and who may therefore be able to divert the effect of chance upon himself, but on the other hand, we are able to take the young man as being involved in the only possible scenario. He continues in like manner: "When chance has given him a partner for his bed, whom he prefers to all other women, without any proof of superiority ..." (203, para 3). In other words, even our aesthetic judgements, or indeed our deepest emotions are determined by this force. He then, in the next paragraph, (204, para 4) includes empirical observations as a proof: "Whoever shall enquire by what motives he was determined on these important occasions, will find the ^{m such}..., as his pride will scarcely suffer him to confess..." Thus we see him setting up a criterion of judgement. Our resolves are often confused by chance factors like these: "...for it is necessary to act, but impossible to know the consequences of action..." (204, para 4). Why is it necessary to act? Because humans need to? Is this a

chance necessity? But we must note that morality, or its possibility, is seriously undermined here. If we resolve to do anything it is forced upon us by chance, hence a morality of intention is ruled out of court; at the same time, we can never be sure of what the consequences of our actions might be, and so we cannot operate a morality of consequences. Hence morality of either variety is impossible to sustain. At this point he is driven to write his well known statement: "Since life itself is uncertain, nothing which has life for its basis can boast much stability" (204, para 5). Johnson has not argued for instability in logical terms, but jumped backwards and forwards leading himself down alleys and climbing out of them when it suits him, and indeed he does so again in this paragraph, by instantly pointing out that the philosophical question he is about to raise is beside the point and that actually he is far more interested in behaviour, namely in a moral approach. It must be said that the presentation of the unpredictability of life is far more genuinely brought about by this 'ad hoc' approach than a carefully reasoned argument, as whatever its import, the pattern itself will run against the matter of the argument in its very arrangement.

Johnson continues (205, para 1) by asking how we are to survive in a world where we are blown about like a ship in a tempest: Johnson allows himself at this moment to launch into extremely poetic prose, which actually heightens

our dilemma by bringing our helplessness to us far more forcibly in its convincing presentation of the argument than would have done looser writing, but also by allowing us something which we can latch on to, namely the beauty of the prose which seems to strike a chord within us which would suggest some form of stability, a matter we will mention later. It is only in the final paragraph, (205, para 2) and not earlier, that the epigraph at the beginning of the essay is made sense of by the introduction of God.

"...nothing," he says, "can afford any rational tranquillity...". It is a very strange paragraph indeed; first it admits, as has the rest of the essay that the world is a "... state of universal uncertainty...", so whatever we personally believe, this is the real state. However the only thing that will allow us to cope is the "...conviction that, however we amuse ourselves with unideal sounds, nothing in reality is governed by chance, but that the universe is under the perpetual superintendence of him who created it..." (205, para 2). ³⁹ Not only does this seem practically to make no difference, as the world is in a "...state of universal uncertainty..." as he has said, but even more importantly, it does not actually imply that there is a God. As long as we can believe that there is, even if it is a delusion, we will feel better. But how strange that after twelve paragraphs persuading us that the world is governed by chance, we are told and without reasons, that it will make us feel better to imagine that this is actually a lie,

a delusion, and in fact that God superintends the world, even though this does not seem to make any practical difference to the here and now.

If the line of argument presented above is intended, it is not very well presented. But I do think that my analysis of the essay points towards Fussell's argument in that the positing of the ad hoc arrangement avoids the necessity of putting forward an argument such as Lynn's, that the Ramblers are "...coherent, well-planned, rhetorical instruments."⁴⁰ This interpretation would also correspond with the idea of the the Rambler as interpreted by me as a wanderer.⁴¹ So we seem to have a violent shift at the last moment when Johnson has discovered the strains of his essay which I noted as I proceeded through it. His realisation of where he was leading himself must have been too much to bear. But we must stress the interesting parallel made by the subject matter of the essay, namely that chance governs life and that therefore we must launch forth into life and hope that the current takes us in the right direction, and the compositional techniques of the essay. The shifts of Johnson's thoughts and the material that he uses tends to come to him less by design than by chance. We will see later whether this is a chance that is in some way controlled, as Johnson says life is. It seems to me that linking this essay together is not a logical progression entirely, not empiricism entirely, not emotionalism entirely, but the

author himself. His thoughts pull the essay in one direction whilst his emotions pull it in the other direction. However, the essay stands before us as a whole, and somehow we must acknowledge that there is something decidedly complete about it. We mentioned that the exhilarating prose of the penultimate paragraph both makes chance seem even more terrifying, and at the same time seems to give us something upon which to rest. In the essay this chance which seems to detract from the very possibility of there being a god also seems to strengthen the possibility that there might be a god, perhaps because as we become less and less powerful the question of our purpose on earth becomes even more pressing. Behind this lies Johnson's humanity, which seems to allow the joint authorities of chance and God to exist side by side, just as the reader's humanity allows him to see through the essay. It has an irresistible quality about it, not just because of its logic or its verbal power, but because we share with Johnson the quality of humanity, which in the context of the essay becomes the authority.

In the light of this I do not find Lynn's following comment very helpful, namely that: "In his writing, Johnson ultimately wants to convey the truth to his readers, not discover it for himself".⁴² I do not believe that the two are really capable of being separated, as a discovery made by Johnson seems to be something conveyed to us, and in writing each of the Ramblers he seems to have brought into

being a new tension, a new presentation of himself, which without the essay would be a detraction from his being in its entirety. It seems that in writing down prose, and in particular the prose of his Ramblers, he was expressing himself vividly, in that each piece of writing added to his being, thereby transcending that encapsulated in the particular physical presence of Samuel Johnson. He needed the Ramblers because part of himself seemed by necessity to lean towards the authoritative. Without them, he would have been less of a person. Indeed W.J. Bate, in the Achievement wrote that:

Thought - if it is to be more than floating impressions or abstract agreement - must be incorporated within ourselves, must coalesce with the activity of desire or interest that is already stirring or ready to stir within us, and then be used to carry that desire or activity even further ⁴³

Thus he rightly places thought in the category of the human being in its entirety. He pushes the premise forward and judges it by its relevance to him as a person. This however, must imply that there is something that is static, something that is truthful based upon sincerity to oneself and the humanity which underlies this. Thus despite this ad hoc pursuit of truth that we have seen in Rambler 184, it is undoubtedly so that Johnson believed in truth per se. It is both obtainable and particular; and indeed one of W.J.Bate's favourite themes is what he calls "the stability of truth" in Johnson's writings. But it must be stressed that these

objective forces are falsified if they do not tie into the man himself, and here again, I place myself upon Johnson's razor of contradiction: if these forces of objectivity are so closely bound up with him, do they lose their objectivity? Again, as in the chapter on Johnson's religion, we have this potential contrast between Johnson's own individual authority and authority at large, whether this be empirical or godly. He himself wanted to be authoritatively passing on the truth, but if, as we are trying to say, in the act of doing so, he was creating it, how can we maintain an ideal of objective truth beyond the personality of Johnson himself? Furthermore, if we cannot do this, how authoritative can he be without having recourse to a fixed authority?

As has been stated already, for Johnson the act of writing was part of his reaching for stability. At the time of writing, the most up to date full length study of Johnson is In Mind of Johnson by Philip Davis. One of its main fields of investigation is the link between Johnson's writing and his life. For instance, Davis talks of:

...the stability of his words on the page and the shakingness of the experience which they describe, anticipate and remember off it, that gives Johnson's work its deeper meaning.⁴⁴

He clarifies this a little later:

Johnson piles up the contradictions of our near-helpless state with a paradoxically firm authorial

balance, itself provokingly yet deliberately at odds with the very contradictions it describes and partakes of.⁴⁵

Bate too notes the stability of Johnson's writing at the end of his chapter on the stability of truth:

The active balance of his thought is, in fact, the secret of his formal prose style. For Johnson's is the most symmetrical, as well as one of the most vigorous, of the great prose styles in English. It moves back and forth, with every form of balance and antithesis, always settling, always making order. With vigorous finality, one element is given its due, appearing permanently stabilized; and then its counterpart receives the same justice and permanence.⁴⁶

So far we have both noted the 'ad hoc' method of presentation, and also that there seems to be a desire on Johnson's part for the stability of truth which is found in his writing, his religion, and his rules. In other words, we have been presented again with the question of authority. When we are given a bald and bland statement we will always find it being undermined by Johnson's being. But there is undoubtedly a stability in his writing that we have been describing, which results from this very same process of what we might call "Johnsonisation." But interestingly, this process relies very much upon the reader, something hinted at by Davis: "So much of the power of the Rambler essays seems to be in memory of specific fears behind them and in the imagination of readers' fears before them."⁴⁷ This process of "Johnsonisation" is a focussing of the human

through the personality of an individual, and the legitimacy of the essays seems to be in their ability to be true to the reader. Contradictions are not false if they are humanly true as indeed Johnson admits in Rasselas, through the mouth of Imlac: "Inconsistencies cannot both be right, but imputed to man, they may both be true."⁴⁸ And thus we step beyond the purely logical to the humanly true. Davis again:

Always in this tension and this acceptance of tension we sense Johnson's need for laws, for rules, for definition that offers a verbal hold on the world: for emphatically no one is a more mentally physical writer than Johnson, as his words try to grasp external reality. But those rules often have to be tautological or circular: things are as they are; the first rule often is that there are no rules as such.⁴⁹

Johnson felt we needed to have rules to be human, and again we catch hold of the essence of a Rambler essay in the sense that it seems almost to be a bringing into being through the essay itself of a human reality, without which Johnson would in some way be unfulfilled in his relationship to reality. One remembers the curious actions which he would perform on various occasions such as counting the number of paces taken before going through a door, or hitting the railings by the side of the road with his staff. They almost seem to be a tying up of reality in an imposed ritual; or in a more general way his intense relationship to physical reality manifested in so many of his actions ; the need to roll down the hill in Lincolnshire, his voracious eating habits (or indeed his extreme sympathy for the physical circumstances

of suffering humanity at large.) In all these we see Johnson's desire to impose himself upon the world, and through the Rambler we see him bringing reality into order in the form of the stability of writing; in this way we might say that he was authoritative in his crystallisation of the relationship between man and his environment, or, more correctly, the wider scope implied by reality. This is the area in which truth actually resides for Johnson. The effectiveness of his authority seems to be the way in which he links all these strands together, namely the truth, the reader and himself through his natural human reaction to delineate and order. In other words, 'pure reality' only becomes something if it undergoes a process of ordering in the human mind, or at least we can only know reality through ourselves. In giving reality an order through his own interpretation in these essays, he is authoritatively bringing it to us, as to be relevant to us, it must go through the filter of humanity that Johnson offered. But again, we can see why he might have felt this authoritative clash occurring. If life is the unstable marsh that Johnson wishes us to believe it is, then he must explain how we can ever live life in any way at all. The stability shown in the essay, namely the overpowering humanity of the author (displayed paradoxically by his rambling progress) and the stability and beauty of his language give us firm ground upon which to stand. We are beginning to see therefore the way in which Johnson uses the stability of his writing to

bring into being an interpretation of the human state, an interpretation which seems to be essential for its health. We are locating his authority, then, in the area of his bringing together in the essays the disparate strands implied in the idea of humanity.

There has been a large group of Johnson scholars who have seen it as their duty to identify certain actual beliefs which Johnson would have considered as the truth. Indeed if there is anyone in the history of English Language associated with specific beliefs it is Johnson. His aphoristic statements are quoted as often as anyone's, being used to conclude, or even to introduce, a specific position. Ought it not to be the job of a Johnson scholar then, to elucidate what Johnson actually believes the truth to be? If one were able to do this, one would be in a position to clarify the nature of his authority more thoroughly; for instance, one might be able to assign him the title of Christian apologist, determinist, neo - Marxist, or something of that order, identifying specifically where his authority lay. Many scholars, including Bate, have put forward the idea that Johnson's major belief was that man is engaged in a great contest against the power of the imagination, a force of great strength, and a contest which leads to man's need for the future life. Bate writes on this particularly well in chapter II of the Achievement, which he entitles "The Hunger of the Imagination", where much

reference to Rasselas is made, a book which has this idea as its constant theme, especially in chapters 30-32. This chapter in the Achievement is a fine documentation of this particular aspect of Johnson's life. But to say that this was the major guiding force is over simple. One of the Ramblers which dwells upon this theme at length is Rambler 41.⁵⁰

Firstly, let us consider the first and second paragraphs:

So few of the hours of life are filled up with objects adequate to the mind of man, and so frequently are we in want of present pleasure or employment, that we are forced to have recourse every moment to the past and future for supplemental satisfactions, and relieve the vacuities of our being, by recollection of former passages, or anticipation of events to come.

I cannot but consider this necessity of searching on every side for matter on which the attention may be employed, as a strong proof of the superior and celestial nature of the soul of man. (221, paras 1 and 2)

Here in a nutshell is the 'Batean' view in all its glorious limitation. Compare this with the final paragraph of the essay.

In youth, however unhappy, we solace ourselves with the hope of better fortune, and, however vicious, appease our consciences with intentions of repentance; but the time comes at last, in which life has no more to promise, in which happiness can be drawn only from recollection, and virtue will be all that we can recollect with pleasure. (226, para 5)

In the first two paragraphs we are dealing with a

mechanistic, morally neutral process, whereas in the last paragraph it is a matter of virtue. However, Johnson attempts to make this shift within the first paragraph, with only limited success. We must ask why man's restlessness by necessity leads to superiority of soul? Just because man is inadequate to his existence in the present, it does not by necessity follow that he is therefore blessed: it could equally well mean that he was a failure. We must examine how this shift comes about in the context of the essay as a whole to get a clearer idea of what Johnson is doing here.

Johnson very quickly places the memory in a position of honour in that it is this "...which makes so large a part of the excellence of the human soul..." (222 para2). He compares this with the animal kingdom, whose members do not have such a capacity. Nevertheless, this leads him to a very interesting statement; because we see that animals are so limited we must presume that "...their intellects are produced in their full perfection."(222 para3) This is a challenging thought particularly when Johnson was drawing us towards the idea of the animals' limitation. But is this perfection not a limitation? Is not animal perfection more limited than human imperfection (in its very perfection, so Johnson's remark would make us ask)? What we must (if necessity is ever the correct approach to a Johnsonian essay) conclude is that we are both, humans and animals, better and worse. There is without doubt an

equivocal feeling towards memory and the human mind, as indeed we would expect from someone whose own mind produced so much suffering.

We are then given one of Johnson's finest paragraphs: "It has been asked by men who love to perplex any thing that is plain to common understandings, how reason differs from instinct..." (222 para 4) Not only has Johnson just been discussing the perplexities of the problem, but in the very forceful use of the phrase "common understandings" he has forced the sentence into a position where its philosophy must be considered. If he had been more subtle about it, the two alternative interpretations of this phrase might have been allowed to merge into one another. Instead, however, we have to ask what he means by "common understandings". Is it reason or is it instinct? In other words, Johnson forces his reader to consider the question he has just announced should be dismissed. As in the first chapter, we are shown just how close the rigid is to the anarchic.

He then moves back upon himself, and acknowledges that in terms of accuracy we cannot actually differentiate, and indeed that "...we do not know in what either reason or instinct consist..." (223 para 1), and yet, and it must be on a completely different level, we can tell the difference between a bird's nest and a ship. We can indeed do this, but

we must ask whether in doing so, we are making an instinctive judgement, or whether we are using our reason. One would like to say the latter, but that seems to have been ruled out by Prior's correctness above. The paragraph is dripping with self - criticism, self - understanding and self - denial. Upon reading after reading different things can be seen, different conclusions reached. In a sense, one must decide to accept a view almost arbitrarily, and in this way the idea of the rule, or indeed the completeness of the language, and hence, a new understanding through imposition of oneself upon reality, becomes important, if not a necessity: but note, it does so precisely because things seem to be so arbitrary. This is exactly the same form of manoeuvre that Johnson makes in the beginning of the essay. We have a mind which will never keep still, will never be satisfied; and because this is the only way we can know the world (namely through ourselves), we need the stability allowed by a future life. But this is not a conclusion that Johnson loves. It perplexes him and produces many of his doubts and worries (particularly in the context of his religion, as we have seen). Precisely analogous to this is man's need for the authority; he who produces the rule, the law, that by which men must act. Johnson did do this, but precisely because he realised so acutely the anarchy of life; and again we are given a hint of the way in which the

essays work in their bringing together of disparate strands into a peculiar form of organisation.

The next section of the essay is an amplification of what has been set in motion already. It describes the way in which present, past, and future exist and the strange way in which the present is made up from the past and the future, and the paradoxical way in which it is both never really there and yet with us all the time:

...the present is in perpetual motion, leaves us as soon as it arrives, ceases to be present before its presence is well perceived, and is only known to have existed by the effects it leaves behind.(pp. 223/224)

in other words the very kernel of reality, when considered and broken down into manageable sections, defies interpretation and understanding by the human mind. The solution to life has always just left when we arrive, and yet we all live it. The animal who can only live in the present does so because he cannot understand life. Johnson shows us that the more we understand life, the less we can comprehend it.

But then Johnson steps in the other direction again and shows us that the past is in fact very real indeed. He writes:

Whatever we have once repositied, as Dryden expresses it, 'in the sacred treasure of the past,' is out of reach of

accident, or violence, nor can be lost either by our own weakness, or another's malice... (224, para 4).

In fact we are very much what our past has been; we have a rock to stand on; but again we find, as the essay slides on, that this realisation of the effect of the past, makes the future and thus the present ever more perilous as it is imbued with importance:

...there is not the smallest point of time but may extend its consequences, either to our hurt or our advantage, through all eternity, and give us reason to remember it for ever, with anguish or exultation.
(225, para 3)

It is at this point of perplexity that Johnson forges forward to a conclusion, the one that we have mentioned, namely that we must act morally now. It is the fact that one day we will not be able to be moral that moves Johnson to this assumption. It has of course often been mentioned that on his watch Johnson had inscribed the words of St John's Gospel "I must work the work of him that sent me while it is day: the night cometh when no man can work" (9:4). The conclusion of the essay comes as much as anything from the fact that there does not seem to be any answer to the questions that the human being stumbles across. Here (though it is not made exactly explicit) as elsewhere, Johnson clasps on to the idea of death, of which we can be so sure;⁵¹ and yet of course it is ironic that it is death, above all things, over which we do not have control, just as we have no control over senility. So once more we come

across the close relationship between the ruled and the anarchic which seems to permeate Johnson's work.

The idea, then, that Johnson had some straightforward view of nature and man is too simple. Indeed, he does have favourite topics but the Ramblers show very well the complexity and contradictory nature of Johnson's thought, and perhaps its truth lies in the acknowledgement of this. It seems, furthermore, that his views upon things are very much affected by the situation in which he finds himself. In fact Johnson's thought exists almost through its contradictions, the natural result of someone who seems to be so close to reality and who, as Davis says, "...had more in him than he could quite say."⁵²

Johnson's work is fraught with contradictions; pithy apothegms put, without seeming doubt, often in direct opposition to what has just been put with equal vigour. What are we to accept from Johnson: how is he to be authoritative for us?

After a close reading of the Ramblers, I am convinced that Johnson is not someone whose views can be distilled out and taken as a guide to life. Whenever one wishes to place Johnson in a certain camp, one can find reasons for not doing so. Let us take one or two examples: did Johnson believe that he was to be damned? Did he

believe in a judiciously objective God? "That God will forgive, may, indeed, be established as the first and fundamental truth of religion."⁵³ So perhaps he did not. Did he really believe what he said in essay 17? "...nor would ever any thing wicked, or often any thing absurd, be undertaken or prosecuted by him who should begin every day with a serious reflection, that he is born to die."⁵⁴ Wishful thinking, surely? He goes on: "The disturbers of our happiness, in this world, are our desires, and our fears, and to all these, the consideration of mortality is a certain and adequate remedy." (92 para3) He may well have written this but just as surely he did not, in his life, believe it. In fact, the contemplation of death very often led, in his case, to exactly the opposite; fear of judgement. There are of course numerous examples of this, both in Boswell's Life and in his own writings.⁵⁵ Fussell cites many occurrences of this type of consideration, for instance: Rambler 23; Rambler 139 (where Fussell notes something he calls "the involuntary 'turn'", which involves the second half of a sentence radically contradicting the first); Ramblers 151, 184, 207, 177; and the relationship between 82 and 83, where the essays are directly in opposition to each other.⁵⁶

Another interesting essay is Rambler 180, entitled "The Study of Life Not to be Neglected for the Sake of Books."⁵⁷ It is pretty evident what it will be about, and yet when we

come to read it, we realise that it is far from clear cut; in fact it is very confusing. A wealthy trader decides to test the University tutors to decide under which one his son should study. He finds out that, in fact, the tutors are all jealous and resentful. Therefore:

...he resolved to find some other education for his son, and went away convinced that a scholastic life has no other tendency than to vitiate the morals and contract the understanding. (182 para1)

Naturally, Johnson immediately tells us that academics are like other men and defends them from criticism, and throughout the essay there is a wonderful to-ing and fro-ing between criticism and defence. As we draw towards the end of the essay we are given a splendid clash. He admits "...such, however, is the state of the world..." (185 para2) and contents himself with a blanket definition of the way things are. The student also,

when he comes forth into the world, instead of congratulating himself upon his exemption from the errors of those whose opinions have been formed by accident or custom, and who live without any certain principles of conduct..."

does likewise. Instead, Johnson advises, as the conclusion, that "...the candidates of learning [should fix] their eyes upon the permanent lustre of moral and religious truth..." (186 para3). Indeed, this should probably be so, but the world is as Johnson has described it and is probably not therefore going to be changed, as he said earlier. Taken in

its entirety, the essay approaches as truthful a position as can be achieved, and Johnson, as he is a moralist, extracts the religious conclusion. This is all we have to help us through life. We have to close our eyes and jump in! As Johnson himself said in an earlier Rambler :

Among the precepts, or aphorisms, admitted by general consent, and inculcated by frequent repetition, there is none more famous among the masters of antient wisdom, than that compendious lesson, 'Be acquainted with thyself....'

This is, indeed, a dictate, which, in the whole extent of its meaning, may be said to comprise all the speculation requisite to a moral agent. For what more can be necessary to the regulation of life, than the knowledge of our original, our end, our duties, and our relation to other beings?

It is however very improbable that the first author, whoever he was, intended to be understood in this unlimited and complicated sense; for of the inquiries, which, in so large an acceptation, it would seem to recommend, some are too extensive for the powers of man, and some require light from above, which was not yet indulged to the heathen world.⁵⁸

Thus even the great moralist admits that perhaps we cannot know! Johnson always shows us that life is more complex than we could imagine and that if we settle upon any view we will find the ground giving way below our feet.

How are we to cope with his complexity of thought? How are we to interpret such an extraordinary essay as Rambler eleven, entitled the "Folly of Anger"? written by a man who, even the most inexperienced Johnsonian will know, did not have the closest reign over his temper? Fussell sees this essay in terms of a mask:

In the Rambler Johnson assumes many masks. The main one is that of the 'Rambler' himself, the moral instructor who speaks with secure authority, entertaining no doubts about his right to instruct others.⁵⁹

This is an interesting line of thought, and indeed Johnson himself seems to have had this in mind as his first plan was to keep his identity secret. He even avoided a gentleman who invited him to his house to "...enlarge his acquaintance...". Bate interprets this as his wish that "...the purity of the work [would]...be accepted objectively, without the personal comparison people are naturally eager to make between the writings of a moralist and his own life."⁶⁰ Resulting from this incident was Rambler fourteen, one of the most interesting of all the essays as he focuses upon his role as writer, and in doing so reaches as close to objective authority as he ever did. He writes:

It is not difficult to conceive, however, that for many reasons a man writes much better than he lives. For, without entering into refined speculations, it may be shown much easier to design than to perform. A man proposes his schemes of life in a state of abstraction and disengagement, exempt from the enticements of hope, the solicitations of affection, the importunities of appetite, or the depressions of fear.... The speculist is only in danger of erroneous reasoning, but the man involved in life has his own passions, and those of others, to encounter, and is embarrassed with a thousand inconveniences, which confound him with variety of impulse, and either perplex or obstruct his way.⁶¹

This is what life is, never clear cut, always drifting, always cheating expectation. Even the moralist is unable to carry out what he proposes. But Johnson was too honest a

moralist for even this statement. The very fact that the essays weave and soar about mirrors the way he lived. In Johnson's case there is a very strong link between his life and his moralising. Johnson says something interesting a little later in the essay. "It is, however, necessary for the idea of perfection to be proposed, that we may have some object to which our endeavours are to be directed..." 62

This, I feel is the mask, if there is one. The Ramblers appear from the attempt by Johnson to inject his idea of the guiding perfection into the unpredictable, imperfect world. The more energetically he tried to push this perfection upon the world, the more obvious it became that it could not fit; but Johnson is too good a moralist to leave the matter here. The very reality of the world becomes Johnson's abiding interest, and the need to incorporate an idea of perfection in the world begins to show itself as a necessary human endeavour, just as religion is necessary to imperfect man, as rules are to an anarchic world. And again we are brought face to face with the way in which Johnson's essays add something to his own person which is emotionally necessary. By the addition of Johnson to reality, we get the proposition of perfection which is so necessary to us, and indeed it is the moralist's task to write better than he lives. Throughout the writing of the essays we gain an extra dimension upon the world that allows us to live it - but it is essential that Johnson is human and indeed, an essay devoid of this quality would be worthless.

Further confirmation of my view that Johnson's moralism lay in his humanity is received from the pages of Boswell's Life. Compare the following passage with Johnson's early fear of being known. "...I had for several years read his works with delight and instruction, and had the highest reverence for their author...".⁶³ The result was a desire to meet the author, something which we all know happened in the back of Tom Davies's bookshop. The result was the greatest of English biographies; and the wonderful tribute to Johnson at the end of the work shows full knowledge of him as a personality, with both good qualities and bad. But it did not occur to Boswell that knowing Johnson as a man implied a rejection of the Ramblers. Quite the reverse. The knowledge of this "Great and good man", enhanced their power, as he was able to see a working out of them in a real human life. Boswell was often surprised by the things that this "grave" moralist did, as like many, he conceived of a moralist as being a human being of inhuman proportions. Boswell realised what his Life had achieved, however, as he had shown to all the world the genuineness of Johnson's moral contradictions. In the very last sentence of the Life, Boswell writes: "...the more his character is considered, the more he will be regarded by the present age, and by posterity, with admiration and reverence."⁶⁴ It is extremely important that Boswell tells us to look at Johnson the man in the raw rather than as Johnson the collection of opinions. This is the type of moralist Johnson was; a man wholly devoted to

human kind, and hence whose morality is bound together by his own personality, namely that which involves him in the human race as an individual. This is where his authority lay. He was very much an individual; people would stop in the street to stare at him, but this is the key to what we might call his "heightened humanity." In being so different, he was forced to look at himself, to reflect upon his nature with greater intensity than would someone less extraordinary. Davis has said something of this:

For sometimes an exceptional human being such as Johnson has to stand as representative in the personal of what is more than personal, and so it was that for Reynolds Johnson was the representative of the human tradition itself.⁶⁵

He therefore thought more about himself and hence humanity, knew more, and thus, meant more. His obsessive need for rules was because he clearly saw the incompleteness of the human being, and wished constantly to give it meaning and to pin it down within this sphere. Reality can only be perceived through the prism of humanity, and it was Johnson above all, who squared up this prism most accurately. Just in the same way that light separates into its constituent colours, humanity breaks reality down into the disordered, and the ordered, the anarchic and the ruled, which seem to lie in contradiction, but, coming from the same source, namely the interpretation of reality through the human, lie together. We quoted earlier from Rasselas:

"inconsistencies cannot both be right, but imputed to man, they may both be true."

Johnson's authority rested on many things, the belief that he knew the way to God, that his faith was always certain, that he was different and hence objective, quite simply that he knew more, and indeed upon the fact that he needed to be loved, and hence deliberately cultivated attention through expertise. But it was he after all, who wrote, "It is always necessary to be loved, but not always necessary to be revered."⁶⁶ Love is, in essence, the glorious manifestation in a human being of life in its most real and present form; and above all, Johnson's authority lay in the fact that, in his writings, he was unreservedly honest to himself, and in everything he said or wrote, we see the raw experience of life, even if it manifested itself in a prejudice, a very real human necessity. One cannot deny that he followed the path of existence laid down by Imlac in the understanding which lies behind his rejoinder to Rasselas: "It seems to me... that while you are making the choice of life, you are neglecting to live." Therein lies Johnson's authority.

APPENDIX

The Johnson - Thrale Relationship

An important facet of this relationship has been illuminated by Katherine Balderston in her essay "Johnson's Vile Melancholy" ¹. Using certain scattered allusions, for instance, the sale of a padlock belonging to Mrs Thrale, labelled, "Johnson's padlock, committed to my care in 1768";² a note in Johnson's Diary "De pedicis et manicis insana cogitatio" which she translates as "insane thought about foot - fetters and manacles."³; two letters, one written by Johnson in French, one by Mrs Thrale in English, dwelling upon their relationship with each other⁴. These objects are, in Balderston's opinion, focused by an admission in *Thraliana* that Johnson trusted the author (Mrs Thrale) "...with a secret far dearer to him than his life."⁵ This is clarified by two further references in *Thraliana*, namely, "And yet says Johnson a woman has such power between the ages of twenty five and forty five, that she may tye a man to a post and whip him if she will" and there is a marginal comment on this, namely "This he knew of himself was literally and strictly true I am sure."⁶ The scene has been set for Katherine Balderston's denouement, which is the revelation that:

At the crisis of his illness it seems inescapably evident that his compulsive fantasy assumed a masochistic form, in which the impulse to self abasement and pain prevailed.⁷

Katherine Balderston is opposed by Bate, who, in attempting to rescue his hero from infamy, explains away the above evidence in terms of Johnson's fear of insanity. He writes:

Plainly the fear of insanity, hypnotically working on his imagination, had mounted to such a degree that he finally, in exhausted despair, bought the fetters and padlocks...⁸

He attacks the Balderston line with uncharacteristic ferocity:

With touching historical naivety, our minds leap to sex...at the mere mention of anything connected with either "secrecy" or "guilt"⁹

He explains in considerable detail, dovetailing his explanation with previous psychological statements in other chapters, the way in which Johnson internalised his aggression, an action which led to a crippling sense of guilt which became so strong that it bordered upon insanity. The revealed secret and the padlock can be seen in terms of this, whilst the curious Latin sentence about the insane thought is explained in terms of Johnsonian figurative imagery, in the context of which fears are often seen as being closely connected with physical confinement.¹⁰ The long letter in French, from which he quotes extensively, is seen as showing:

The strong element of infantilism, always potentially present in individuals subject to constant "superego" demand. ¹¹

He quotes as example of this the way in which he saw Mrs Thrale as his "patroness" and the hope that she would continue to keep him in that "slavery you know so well how to make me happy." Bate notes Johnson's demanding of a letter telling him "...what is permitted me and what is forbidden" and his desire for her to take the initiative and "...spare me the necessity of constraining myself."¹² Mrs Thrale's reply to this letter is also interesting in its assumption of considerable powers of government - she ends:

I will detain you no longer, so farewell and be good;
and do not quarrell with your governess for not using
the rod enough. ¹³

Bate and Balderston would interpret this last sentence in different ways, the latter taking it on a more literal level than the former. It is surprisingly difficult to determine between the two theories. Bate one tends to feel, defensively glosses over some of Balderston's evidence, for instance he does not seriously consider the implications of the words "strictly" and "literally"¹⁴ whilst Balderston, on her part, seems confused as to the degree of consciousness involved in the relationship. At one point she describes Mrs Thrale as "...the unrecognised erotic object" and yet it appears that the article's main purpose is to prove that the "...secret far dearer to him than his life" was his

masochistic tendency, which he thus must have both revealed and hence recognised.

Though I do not see a clear way out of this dilemma, there is one element which both arguments have in common, namely the government which Mrs Thrale exercised over Johnson. In support of her thesis, Balderston cites Krafft - Ebing, an early twentieth century psychologist; he writes:

[The masochist]...is controlled by the idea of being completely and unconditionally subject to the will of a person of the opposite sex.¹⁵

Undoubtedly there was an extremely strong emotional tie between the two. As I have explained in the main body of the work, this has very interesting repercussions as far as Johnson's personal authority is concerned. The strength of the emotions involved in this relationship demonstrate the importance of personal domination in Johnson's life. Authority is a crucial issue.

ABBREVIATIONS

- Bate:** Bate, W.J., Samuel Johnson, New York, 1977.
- J.M.:** Hill, G.B. (ed.), Johnsonian Miscellanies, (2 Vols), Oxford, 1897.
- Letters:** Chapman, R.W. (ed.), The Letters of Samuel Johnson, (3 Vols), Oxford, 1952.
- Journal:** Chapman, R.W. (ed.), A Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland and Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides, Oxford, 1924.
- Life:** Boswell, James, The Life of Samuel Johnson, LL.D (6 Vols), Hill G.B. (ed.) revised and enlarged by Powell L.F., Oxford 1934 - 50.
- Lives:** Johnson, Samuel, The Lives of the Most Eminent Poets, G.B.Hill (ed.), (3 Vols) Oxford, 1905.
- Preface:** Preface to the Dictionary Johnson, Samuel.
- Review:** Johnson, Samuel, A Review of Soame Jenyns's 'Free Enquiry into the Nature and Origin of evil, reproduced in Samuel Johnson and the Problem of Evil, R.B. Schwartz
- Thraliana:** The Diary of Mrs Hester Lynch Thrale, 1776 - 1809, Katherine C. Balderston, (ed.), (2 Vols), Oxford, 1942.
- Yale:** Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson (15 Vols), New Haven, 1958 - 1985.

NOTES

Notes - Chapter One.

1. Life I, p.xxii.
2. D. Greene, 'Samuel Johnson' in The Craft of Literary Biography, ed. J. Meyers, New York, 1985, p.17.
3. op.cit. p.20
4. Life V, p.79, Sunday 21st 1773.
5. Frank Brady, James Boswell: The Later Years(1769-1795), 1984, p.431.
6. Walter Jackson Bate, Samuel Johnson, New York, 1977.
(From henceforth referred to as Bate.)
7. Biography is by necessity, a personal view, and as such, I find it difficult to see how Boswell can be criticised for involving himself in the biographical process.
8. Life IV, p.295, Aetat 75, June 11th 1784.
9. Boswell explains Johnson's use of the expression 'No Sir' in Life IV, p.315, Aetat 75, June 19th 1784.
10. Life II, p.166, Aetat 63, March 31st 1772.
11. Life II, p.217, Aetat 64, April 11th 1773.
12. For more information see Bate, p.602.
13. 'Thraliana', ed. K. Balderston, Oxford, 1942, Vol I, p.195.
14. Life II, p.100, Aetat 60, October. 26th 1769.
15. Life II, p.357, Aetat 66, April 14th 1775.
16. Life II, p.308, Aetat 66, February 18th 1775; and Life III, p.412, Aetat 70, October 22nd 1779.
17. Life II, p.268, Aetat 64, November 1773.
18. Life II, p.235, Aetat 64, April 30th 1773; see also the discussion between Boswell and Johnson in Boswell's

Journal, where Johnson reemphasises his support for Boswell: Journal, p.207, August 21st.

19. Life IV, p.379, Aetat 75, July 26th 1784.
20. Life IV, p.380, Aetat 75, November 5th 1784.
21. Life IV, p.166, Aetat 74, March 21st 1783.
22. Life IV, p.362, Aetat 75, 1784.
23. Life II, p.257, Aetat 64, May 7th 1773.
24. Life II, p.444, Aetat 67, March 20th 1776.
25. Life IV, p.111, Aetat 72, March 21st 1781.
26. Life II, p.231, Aetat 64, April 27th 1773.
27. George Irwin, Samuel Johnson: a Personality in Conflict., Auckland, 1971, p.90.
28. op.cit. pp.42-43.
29. Bate, p.121.
30. Yale I, p.146, April 18th 1772; p.139, March 31st 1771; p.66, January 23rd 1759; p.264, March 30th 1777; etc.
31. Bate, p.125.
32. Bate, p.126.
33. H.L. Piozzi, 'Anecdotes of the late Samuel Johnson, LL.D.' in Johnsonian Miscellanies, ed. G.B. Hill, Oxford, 1897, Vol 1, p.318.
34. Bate, p.79.
35. Life I, pp.146-47, Aetat 30, 1739. Boswell noted in the Journal that Johnson "...had a loud voice, and a slow deliberate utterance, which no doubt gave some additional weight to the sterling metal of his conversation." p.171. The effect upon Hogarth must have been considerable!
36. J. M. II, p.401.
37. C.E. Pierce, The Religious Life of Samuel Johnson, Connecticut, 1983, p.18.
38. Life II, p.41, note 1, Aetat 58, February 1767.
39. Thraliana I, p.197.

40. Life IV, p.431, Appendix A.
41. Life I, p.442, Aetat 54, July 20th 1763.
42. Life III, p.105, Aetat 68, February 24th 1777.
43. Life III, p.209, Aetat 68, September 29th 1777.
44. Life II, p.257, Aetat 64, May 7th 1773.
45. see Note 3.
46. Life II, p.362, Aetat 66, April 18th 1775.
47. Thraliana I, p.185.
48. John Wain, Samuel Johnson, 1974, p.266.
49. Life III, p.67, Aetat 67, Spring 1776.
50. Arthur Murphy, 'An Essay on the life and genius of Samuel Johnson, LL.D.' (1792) in J. M. I, p.422.
51. Life I, p.495, Aetat 56, Early 1765.
52. See Appendix I.
53. George Irwin, A personality in conflict, Auckland, 1971, p.128.
54. idem.
55. Letters II, p.40.
56. John Riely, 'Johnson and Mrs Thrale: The Beginning and the end', in Johnson and his Age, ed. J. Engell, Harvard, 1984, p.69 .
57. H.L. Piozzi, 'Anecdotes of the late Samuel Johnson, LL.D.' in J.M. I, p. 234.
58. Riely, op.cit. p.61.
59. Thraliana I, p.384.
60. See Bate, p.439.
61. Bate, p.441.
62. Letters I, p.323 and p.331; or Thraliana I, p.384, N.4.
63. John Wain, Samuel Johnson, 1974, p.269.

64. John Rieley, 'Johnson and Mrs Thrale: The beginning and the end', in Johnson and his Age, ed. J. Engell, Harvard, 1984, p.71.
65. idem.
66. Thraliana I, p.528.
67. Anecdotes, J.M. I, p.340.
68. John Rieley, 'Johnson and Mrs Thrale: The beginning and the end', in Johnson and his Age, ed. J.Engell, Harvard, 1984, p.77; or Letters III, p.35.
69. Letters III, p.173.
70. Donald J. Greene, The Politics of Samuel Johnson, Yale, 1960.
71. Howard Erskine - Hill, 'The Political Charachter of Samuel Johnson', in Samuel Johnson: New Critical Essays, ed. I. Grundy, 1984, pp.107-136.
72. Bate, pp.192 and 195.
73. Bate, p.195.
74. Bate, p.196.
75. Bate, p.197.
76. Life II, p.170, Aetat 63, March 31st 1772.
77. Life I, p.408, Aetat 54, June 25th 1763.
78. Bate, p.444.
79. James L. Clifford, Hester Lynch Piozzi, Oxford, 1941, p.74 note 2.
80. Bate, p.480.
81. Lives I, p.37.
82. Bate, p.483.
83. Bate, p.482.
84. Thraliana I, p.190.
85. C.B. Tinker Dr. Johnson and Fanny Burney, Connecticut, 1970, pp.61-62.
86. Life IV, p.324, Aetat 75, 1784.

87. Life II, p.362, Aetat 66, April 18th 1775.
88. Thraliana I, p.189.
89. Life II, p.262, Aetat 64, 1773.
90. Bate p.466.
91. Bate, p.484.
92. 'The European Magazine', 1798, p.376; quoted in J.M.
Vol II, p.396.
93. Life II, p.262, Aetat 64, May 9th 1773.
94. Bate, p.487.
95. Frank Brady, James Boswell: The Later Years, 1984,
p.434.
96. Life III, p.155, Aetat 68, September 17th 1777.
97. John Wain, Samuel Johnson, 1974, p.295.
98. R.B. Schwartz, 'Johnson's Day and Boswell's', in The
Unknown Samuel Johnson ed. John J. Burke and Donald Kay.
99. Thraliana I, p.185.
100. R.B. Schwartz, 'Johnson's Day and Boswell's', in The
Unknown Samuel Johnson ed. John J. Burke and Donald Kay,
pp. 85-86.
101. Rasselas Chapter xlvi.

Notes - Chapter Two (Part One).

1. Life I, pp.300-1, Aetat 46, Aug 7th 1755. The "forty" refers to the number of people in the French Academy who took fifty five years to complete their Dictionary, a figure which Johnson used to calculate that the proportion of Frenchmen to Englishmen was three to 1,600 (Life I, p.186, Aetat 38, Dec 30 1747.)
2. Preface, para 92.
3. See James L. Clifford, Dictionary Johnson, New York, 1979, pp.138-144.
4. op. cit., p.148.
5. A.C. Baugh, A History of the English Language, New York, 1935, p.315.
6. op. cit., p.322.
7. idem.
8. Letters I, p.64.
9. Baugh op. cit., p.338.
10. W.K.Wimsatt, "Johnson's Dictionary", in New Light on Dr. Johnson ed. F.W. Hilles, New Haven, 1959, pp.84-5.
11. Paul Fussell, Samuel Johnson and the life of writing, New York, 1972, p.195.
12. E. Chambers, Cyclopaedia, 1728, I: XVI.
13. Preface, para 92.
14. Robert Demaria, Johnson's Dictionary and the Language of Learning, North Carolina, 1986, p.32.
15. Life I, p.385, Aetat 54, Early 1763.
16. Thomas Sheridan, British Education, 1756.
17. Umberto Eco, Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language, 1984, p.68.

18. idem.
19. For a more general discussion of the reactions to The Dictionary, see Sledd and Kolb, Dr. Johnson's Dictionary, Chicago, 1955, Ch.V.
20. Joseph E. Worcester, A Dictionary of the English Language, Boston, 1860, p.lvi.
21. Preface, para 48.
22. Robert Demaria, Johnson's Dictionary and the Language of Learning, North Carolina, 1986, p.x.
23. Preface, para 57.
24. W.K. Wimsatt, Philosophic Words, Yale, 1948, p.24.
25. Robert Demaria, Johnson's Dictionary and the Language of Learning, North Carolina, 1986, p.32.
26. James L. Clifford, Dictionary Johnson, New York, 1979, p.147.
27. Robert Demaria, Johnson's Dictionary and the Language of Learning, North Carolina, 1986, p.27.
28. Preface, para 5.
29. W.k. Wimsatt, "Johnson's Dictionary", in New Light on Dr. Johnson ed. F.W. Hilles, New Haven, 1959, pp.68-71
30. J.M. II, p.214.
31. W.K. Wimsatt, "Johnson's Dictionary", in New Light on Dr. Johnson ed. F.W. Hilles, New Haven, 1959, p.85.
32. Preface, para 28.
33. Preface, paras 84-85.
34. A.C. Baugh, A History of the English Language, New York, 1935, p.349.
35. Preface, para 6
36. idem.
37. idem.
38. Preface, para 7.
39. Preface, para 11.

40. idem.
41. Preface, para 17.
42. Elizabeth Hedrick, "Locke and Johnson's Dictionary", E.C.S., Summer 1987, p.434.
43. op.cit., p.435.
44. W.K. Wimsatt, "Johnson's Dictionary and the Language of Learning", North Carolina, 1986, p.88.
45. Elizabeth Hedrick, "Locke and Johnson's Dictionary", E.C.S., Summer 1987, p.440.
46. Letters of Noah Webster ed. Harry R. Warfel, New York, 1953, p.284.

Notes - Chapter Two (Part Two).

1. Artur Sherbo, Samuel Johnson, Editor of Shakespeare, Urbana, 1956, p.47.
2. Sir John Hawkins, The Life of Samuel Johnson, LL.D., 1787, p.441.
3. F.R. Leavis, 'Johnson as Critic', Scrutiny, Vol XII, no.3, (Summer 1944), p.187.
4. C.B. Tinker, 'Johnson as Monarch', in Essays in Retrospect: Collected Articles and Addresses, New Haven, 1948, p.28.
5. Lives I, p.163, Milton para 180.
6. Arthur Sherbo, Samuel Johnson, Editor of Shakespeare, Urbana, 1956, p.65.
7. op.cit., pp.65-70.
8. John Needham, The Completest Mode, Edinburgh, 1982, p.104
9. op.cit., p.104.
10. Yale II, p.239.
11. Yale II, p.240.
12. Eg. Yale VIII, p.652.
13. Lives I, p.420, Dryden para 220.
14. Yale V, pp.127-128.
15. Lives, I, p.420, Dryden paras 217-221.
16. Lives, I, p.422, Dryden para 223.
17. Lives, I, p.467, Dryden para 349.
18. Yale IV, p.122.
19. George Watson, The Literary Critics, 1964, p.75.
20. Lives, III, p.242, Pope Dunciad.
21. Lives, I, p.59, Cowley, para 182.
22. Lives, I, p.20, Cowley, para 57.

23. Lives, III, p.235, Pope, para 342.
24. Yale VII, p.71.
25. idem.
26. Yale VII, p.265.
27. Yale VII, p.67.
28. F.R. Leavis, 'Johnson as Critic', Scrutiny,
Vol XII, No 3, (Summer 1944), p.197.
29. Yale VII, pp.61-62.
30. Yale VII, p.62.
31. idem.
32. Yale VII, p.60.
33. F.R. Leavis, 'Johnson as Critic', Scrutiny,
Vol XII, No 3, (Summer 1944), p.188.
34. Arthur Sherbo, Samuel Johnson, Editor of Shakespeare,
Urbana, 1956, p.60. Sherbo points out the similarities
between Johnson's destruction of the unities with that of
Lord Kames's parallel criticism in his Elements of
Criticism, published in 1763, which we know Johnson
owned (Letters III, p.262.)
35. Yale VII, pp.75-81.
36. Yale V, p.76.
37. Lives, III, p.248, Pope para 374.
38. Yale VII, p.109.
39. Lives, I, p.114, Milton para 69.
40. F.R. Leavis, 'Johnson as Critic', Scrutiny,
Vol XII, No 3, (Summer 1944), p.200.
41. W.R. Keast, 'The theoretical Foundations of Johnson's
Criticism' in Critics and Criticism ed. R.S. Crane,
Chicago, 1952.
42. op.cit., p.391.
43. Yale V, p.204, Rambler 184.
44. Keast op.cit., p.375.

45. Yale III, p.280, Rambler 52.
46. John Hardy, 'Samuel Johnson's Literary Criticism', Essays and Studies, 1986, p.62.
47. op.cit., pp.64-65.
48. Yale VIII, p.369 - 70, Macbeth II.i.49.
49. F.R. Leavis, 'Johnson as Critic', Scrutiny, Vol XII, No 3, (Summer 1944), p.191.
50. J. Engell, The Creative Imagination, Harvard, 1981, p.60.
51. Arieh Sachs, Passionate Intelligence, Baltimore, 1967, p.77.
52. Yale VIII, p.792, Macbeth V.v.17.
53. Lives, III, p.243, Pope para 365.
54. Yale VIII, p.795.
55. Yale VIII, p.1011.
56. See Bate, pp.115-29, pp.371-89, 75-76.
57. For further examples see John Hardy, Samuel Johnson a Critical Study, 1979, Chaps 7 and 8.
58. John Hardy, 'Samuel Johnson's Literary criticism', Essays and Studies, 1986, p.69.
59. J.D. Boyd, 'Some Limits of Johnson's Criticism', in Johnson and his Age, ed. J. Engell, Harvard, 1984.
60. Arieh Sachs, Passionate Intelligence, Baltimore, 1967, p.88.

Notes - Chapter 3.

1. Life IV, p.429, Aetat 75, 1784.
2. J.M. I, pp.157-8
3. See R. Voitle, Samuel Johnson the Moralists, Harvard, 1961, p.170 for egs.
4. C.B. Tinker, Dr. Johnson and Fanny Burney, 1970, p.194
5. See R.D. Stock, The Holy and the Daemonic from Sir Thomas Browne to William Blake, 1982, Ch 6, p.203
6. Yale XIV, p.77.
7. Life II, p.254, Aetat 64, May 7th 1773.
8. Donald Greene, The politics of Samuel Johnson, New Haven, 1960, p.236; quoted in Chester Chapin, The Religious Thought of Samuel Johnson, Michigan, 1968, p.118.
9. Yale XIV, p.77.
10. Yale XIV, p.78.
11. Chester Chapin, The Religious thought of Samuel Johnson, Michigan, 1968, pp.155-6.
12. Yale III, p221.
13. Chapin op. cit., p.159.
14. Thraliana I, p.183.
15. S.G.Brown, 'Dr Johnson and the Religious Problem', in English Studies XX, (Feb 1938), p.1-17.
16. Life IV, p.329, Aetat 75, June 23rd 1784.
17. Life III, p.24, Aetat 67, End April 5th 1776.
18. J.M. II, p.384.
19. Life I, p.428, Aetat 54, July 9th 1763.
20. Chapin op.cit., p.78.
21. The Works of Samuel Johnson, LL.D., Oxford, 1825, Vol VI, p.19.

22. Review, p.306, col II.
23. Chester Chapin, The Religious Thought of Samuel Johnson Michigan, 1968, p.75.
24. Journal p.189.
25. Life I, p.444, Aetat 54, July 21st 1763.
26. Journal p.203.
27. Life III, p.299, Aetat 69, April 17th, 1778.
28. Maurice Quinlan, Samuel Johnson, a Layman's Religion Madison, 1964, pp.177-8.
29. op.cit., pp.178-9.
30. Bertrand H. Bronson, Johnson Agonistes, Cambridge, 1946, p.41.
31. Robert Voitle, Samuel Johnson the moralist, Harvard, 1961, p.168.
32. Idem.
33. op.cit. p.169. He dismisses Mossner's 'evidence' that a contemporary had considered Johnson a sceptic. Mossner's whole argument rests upon a tiny paragraph not published until 1855, and reported third hand, the original source having died in 1854 at the age of 91. See Ernest C. Mossner, The Forgotten Hume, New York, 1943, p.206.
34. Charles E. Pierce, The Religious life of Samuel Johnson, Connecticut, 1983, p.15.
35. Idem.
36. Idem.
37. James Gray, Johnson's Sermons, Oxford, 1972, pp.166-7
38. Maurice Quinlan, Samuel Johnson, a Layman's Religion, Madison, 1964, p.200.
39. Sir John Hawkins, The life of Samuel Johnson, LL.D., 1787, p.588.
40. Life II, p.104, Aetat 60, 26th October, 1769.
41. Pierce op.cit., p.15.

42. Bertrand H. Bronson, Johnson Agonistes, Cambridge, 1946, p.41.
43. Joseph Wood Krutch, Samuel Johnson, New York, 1963, p.1
44. Review, p.304.
45. Review, pp.251-2.
46. Arieh Sachs, 'Reason and Unreason in Johnson's Religion' in M.L.R., 1964, p.521.
47. op.cit. p.522.
48. Pierce op.cit., pp.54-7.
49. Arieh Sachs, 'Reason and Unreason in Johnson's Religion', in M.L.R., 1964, p.521.
50. Idem.
51. Arieh Sachs Passionate Intelligence, Baltimore, 1967, p.xi.
52. op.cit. p.xiii.
53. Yale III, p.92.
54. Idem.
55. Arieh Sachs, Passionate Intelligence, Baltimore, 1967, p.42.
56. Yale III, p.97.
57. Life IV, p.278, Aetat 75, 1784.
58. Yale I, p.269.
59. Arieh Sachs, Passionate Intelligence, Baltimore, 1967, p.118.
60. J.H. Hagstrum, 'On Dr. Johnson's Fear of Death', in E.L.H., 1947, p.309.
61. op.cit, p.312.
62. Idem.
63. Yale XIV, p.29. (Sermon III, para 1.)
64. Idem.
65. Bate, pp.451-2.

66. Bate, p.452.
67. Idem.
68. Pierce, op.cit., p.38.
69. Bate, p.384.
70. Yale I, p.82, September 18th 1764.
71. Bate, p.384.
72. Life I, p.66, Aetat 20, 1729.
73. Bate, p.91, or C.E. Pierce, op.cit., p.21.
74. Bate, p.51.
75. Bate, p.35, and also pp.68-9.
76. C.E.Pierce, op.cit., p.60.
77. J.M. I, p.200.
78. Life II, p.440, Aetat 67, March, 1776.
79. Pierce op.cit., p.54
80. Review being a facsimile of the Review's original publications, is divided into three issues, thus the page refernces may appear confusing.
81. John Wain, Samuel Johnson, 1974, p.198.
82. R. Voitle, Samuel Johnson the Moralst, Harvard, 1961, p.177.
83. Joseph Wood Krutch, Samuel Johnson, New York, 1944, p.164.
84. Bate, p.375.
85. Life III, p.317, Aetat 69, April 19th, 1778.

Notes - Chapter Four.

1. For instances see Life II, p.262, Aetat 64, May 10th 1773, or Life IV, p.324, Aetat 75, June 22nd 1784.
2. 'Roger's Table Talk', p.10, in Life I, p.210, (Note 1.) Aetat 41, 1750.
3. Life I, p.210. Aetat 41, early 1750.
4. Life I, p.202, Aetat 41, early 1750.
5. idem
6. Life I, p.213, Aetat 41, early 1750.
7. Bate, p.289 for Murphy's explanation.
8. Yale I, p.43, D.P.A. 1750.
9. Yale V, p.316, Rambler 208, para 3.
10. Yale V, p.320.
11. Yale V, p.317.
12. Yale V, p.318, para 3.
13. W.J. Bate, The Achievement of Samuel Johnson, Oxford, 1955, p.140
14. Bate, p.305;
15. I am directly supported in this view by Leopold Damrosch in his essay 'Johnson's Manner of Proceeding in the Rambler', E.L.H. Vol 40, p.71
16. Edward A. Bloom, 'Symbolic Names in Johnson's Periodical Essays', M.L.Q., Vol XIII, (1952), pp.333 - 352.
A.T. Elder, 'Thematic Patterning and Development in Johnson's Essays', Studies in Philology, Vol LXII, (1965), pp.610 - 633.
J.C. Riely, 'The Pattern of Imagery in Johnson's Periodical Essays', E.C.S., Vol III, (1969-70), pp.384 - 398. All these essays are well researched and are useful for a general appreciation of the essays as a whole. For my purposes, however, they can only be regarded as background material.
17. W.J. Bate, The Achievement of Samuel Johnson, Oxford, 1955. Another interesting work taking this approach is

Paul Kent Alkon, Samuel Johnson and Moral Discipline,
Northwestern, 1967.

18. Particularly relevant here are: Steven Lynn, 'Johnson's Rambler and Eighteenth Century Rhetoric', E.C.S., Vol xix, (1985-86), pp.461 - 479. In the article, Lynn supplies a comprehensive list of contributors to this debate, which is, effectively, a bibliography. Also interesting is Claudia L. Johnson, 'Samuel Johnson's Moral Psychology and Locke's "Of Power"', S.E.L., Vol xxiv, 1984, pp.563 - 582.
19. I found Paul Fussell's discussion of the Essays in his book, Samuel Johnson and the Life of Writing, New York, 1971, particularly helpful.
20. Leopold Damrosch, 'Johnson's Manner of Proceeding in the Rambler', E.L.H. Vol xl, (1973), pp.70 - 89.
21. op.cit., pp.71 - 72.
22. op.cit., p.78.
23. op.cit., p.81.
24. idem.
25. idem. From Yale III, p.128, Rambler 23.
26. See Yale IV, p.7, Rambler 71.
27. Steven Lynn, 'Johnson's Rambler and Eighteenth Century Rhetoric', E.C.S., vol xix, (1985-86), p.465.
28. idem.
29. op.cit., p.466.
30. op.cit., p.468.
31. Paul Fussell, in Samuel Johnson and the Life of Writing, 1972, pp.143-180.
32. Lynn op.cit., p.470.
33. Lynn op.cit., pp. 470 - 473
34. Lynn must prove, I feel, if he wishes us to accept his argument, that the transitions he talks of do occur. He himself admits that Johnson does not always make them clear, and as such, must find Johnson frustrating to say the least.

35. Fussell op.cit., p.164. (Though this is said about another essay, it demonstrates the same process.)
36. op.cit., p.163.
37. op.cit., pp.173 - 174
38. Yale V, 200-205.
39. To be fair to Johnson, his view of chance is not peculiar to him. In the corpus of Christian thought, the view that chance is no more than the providence of God seen from below, with uncomprehending human eyes, has a long history, most famously expressed by Boethius in De Consolstione Philosophiae.
40. Lynn, op.cit., p.465, note 8.
41. See above p.4(to be changed!)
42. Lynn, op.cit, p.465.
43. W.J. Bate, The Achievement of Samuel Johnson, Oxford, 1955, p.41.
44. Philip Davis, In Mind of Johnson, 1989, p.31.
45. op.cit., p.33.
46. W.J. Bate, The Achievement of Samuel Johnson, Oxford, 1955, pp. 171 - 172.
47. Philip Davis, In Mind of Johnson, 1989, p.8.
48. Rasselas, Ch. VIII.
49. Philip Davis, In Mind of Johnson, 1989, p.34.
50. Yale III, pp.221-226.
51. Compare with: Yale III, pp.92 - 97, Rambler 17; Yale III, pp.156 - 157, Rambler 28; Yale III, pp.292 - 294, Rambler 54; Yale IV, pp.45 - 50, Rambler 78.
52. Philip Davis, In Mind of Johnson, 1989, p.40.
53. Yale IV, p.221, Rambler 110, 2nd para.
54. Yale III, p.92, Rambler 17, 2nd para.
55. See Life II, p.106; Life III, p.153; Life III, p.295; Life IV, p.253, note 4; Life IV, pp.259, 278, 280, 289, 299-300, 366, 394-5, 399-400.

56. Paul Fussell, Samuel Johnson and the life of writing, 1972, pp.161-167.
57. Yale V, 181-186.
58. Yale III, pp.130-31, Rambler 24, 1st - 3rd paras.
59. Fussell op.cit., p.150.
60. Bate, p.293.
61. Yale III, pp.75-76, Rambler 14.
62. Yale III, p.76, Rambler 14.
63. Life I, pp.383-384, Aetat 54, early 1763.
64. Life IV, p.430, Aetat 75, 1784.
65. Philip Davis, In Mind of Johnson, 1989, p.12.
66. Yale V, p.224, para 2, Rambler 188.

Notes - Appendix.

1. "Johnson's Vile Melancholy", Katherine C. Balderston, The Age of Johnson, Yale, 1949.
2. op.cit., p.4.
3. op.cit., p.5.
4. op.cit., pp.6 and 7 or Letters I, pp. 323 and 331.
5. op.cit., p.9 or Thraliana p.384.
6. op.cit., p.10 or Thraliana p.386. n.2.
7. op.cit., p.11.
8. Bate, p.385.
9. Idem.
10. Bate, p.386. For an explanation of the circumstances of the letter see Bate, p.440.
11. Bate, p.387.
12. Bate, p.440.
13. Bate, p.441.
14. Bate, p.387.
15. Psychopathia Sexualis Krafft - Ebing, (Tr. Redman), Chicago 1908.

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