[. . .] Mr Yeats and Mr Lawrence present two further ways of dodging those difficulties which come from being born into this generation rather than into some earlier age. Mr de la Mare takes shelter in the dream-world of the child, Mr Yeats retires into black velvet curtains and the visions of the Hermetist, and Mr Lawrence makes a magnificent attempt to reconstruct in himself the mentality of the Bushman. There are other modes of escape open to the poet. Mr Blunden, to name one other poet only, goes into the country, but few follow him there in his spirit, whereas Mr Yeats and Mr Lawrence, whether they are widely read or not, do represent tendencies among the defeated which are only too easily observable. [. . .]

The resort to trance, and the effort to discover a new world-picture to replace that given by science are the most significant points for our purpose in Mr Yeats's work. A third might be the singularly bitter contempt for the generality of mankind which occasionally appears.

The doctrinal problem arises again, but in a clearer form with Mr Lawrence. But here (Mr Yeats's promised treatise on the state of the soul has not yet appeared) we have the advantage of an elaborate prose exposition, Phantasia of the Unconscious, of the positions which so many of the poems advocate. It is not unfair to put the matter in this way, since there is little doubt possible that the bulk of Mr Lawrence's published verse is prose, scientific prose too, jottings, in fact, from a psychologist's notebook, with a commentary interspersed. Due allowance being made for the extreme psychological interest of these observations, there remains the task of explaining how a poet, who has shown himself sometimes, as in the Ballad of Another Ophelia and Aware, to possess such remarkable gifts, should have wandered, through his own zeal misdirected, so far from the paths which once appeared to be his alone to open.

Mr Lawrence's revolt against civilization seems to have been originally spontaneous, an emotional revulsion free from ad hoc beliefs. It sprang directly from experience. He abhorred the atti-
tudes men adopt, not through the direct prompting of their in-
stincts, but because of the supposed nature of the objects to which
they are directed. The conventions, the idealisations, which come
between man and man and between man and woman, which often
queer the pitch for the natural responses, seemed to him the
source of all evil. Part of his revolt was certainly justified. These
idealisations – representative examples are the dogma of the
equality of man and the doctrine that Love is primarily sympathy–
are beliefs illicitly interpolated in order to support and strengthen
attitudes in the manner discussed at length above. Mr. Lawrence’s
original rejection, of a not self-supporting morality based upon
beliefs, makes his work an admirable illustration of my main
thesis. But two simple and avoidable mistakes deprived his revolt
of the greater part of its value. He overlooked the fact that such
beliefs commonly arise because the attitudes they support are
already existent. He assumed that a bad basis for an attitude meant
a bad attitude. In general, it does mean a forced attitude, but that is
another matter. Secondly, he tried to cure the disease by introduc-
ing other beliefs of his own manufacture in place of the conven-
tional beliefs and in support of very different attitudes.

The genesis of these beliefs is extremely interesting as an illus-
tration of primitive mentality. Since the attitudes on which he fell
back are those of a very early stage of human development, it is not
surprising that the means by which he has supported them should
be of the same era, or that the world-picture which he has worked
out should be similar to that described in The Golden Bough. The
mental process at work is schematically as follows: First, undergo
an intense emotion, located with unusual definiteness in the body,
which can be described as “a feeling as though the solar plexus were
connected by a current of dark passional energy with another
person.” Those whose emotions tend to be localised will be fam-
iliar with such feelings. The next step is to say “I must trust my
feelings.” The next is to call the feeling an intuition. The last is to
say “I know that my solar plexus, etc.” By this means we arrive at
indubitable knowledge that the sun’s energy is recruited from the
life on the earth and that the astronomers are wrong in what they
say about the moon, and so on.

The illicit steps in the argument are not quite so evident as they
appear to be in this analysis. To distinguish an intuition of an
emotion from an intuition by it is not always easy, nor is a descrip-
tion of an emotion always in practice distinguishable from an