

**FEELING vs. THINKING;**

*The 19th c. American revolt against dried-up Puritanism.....Elliott #1324*

When I heard the producer-director of the 1979 NET version of Hawthorne's THE SCARLET LETTER say that his motives were to celebrate (1) feeling and (2) the courage of those who, against the conventions, live their feelings --a straight-out sermon for romanticism--I thought to myself, "How inappropriate for most Americans today, in ghettos-barrios and in the middleclass leisure psyche! We are inundated by the gospel of feelings, and so much in need of hard, sustained thinking!" So I went to ruminating on how we got here: this thinksheet is on the 19th-c. roots of the current American mind. I use my diamond model of the four energies of the person: "S" [spirit] the decisional-attentional energy; "B" [body] the physical; "L" [left-brain] the analytic; and "R" [right-brain] the holistic-imaginal ("M" being "mind" in narrow sense, as "P" is "psyche"). If you wish to explore this by the names on the diagram, a great book to use would be Sydney E. Ahlstrom's A RELIGIOUS HISTORY OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE (Yale/72+): use the index.

NOTES further on the diagram: (1) "Gothic" refers to the pervasive presence of the ominous supernatural, the ghost of the shadow side of the dying/dead Puritan God. (2) "Transcendental" refers to the Hinduish escape from dried-up Puritanism (the Hindu classics hitting Boston in the early 19th c.). (3) The horizontal split of the diamond is the Puritan/Cavalier split in British cultural history, transposed to New England. (4) Edwards I consider the Aquinas of American intellectual-spiritual history: the angelic doctor drawing together, before explosive fragmentation, the wisdoms of the past, and giving a vista on the present and future. (5) Bushnell, with his CHRISTIAN NURTURE, launched "the religious education movement" with its emphasis (like Edwards) on Christian experience; his understanding of the paradoxical relation of thinking/feeling is still relevant (and his infl. on Andover set that seminary against the Old Puritan Princeton). (6) I've put Poe below, for he's the occult, horror-story quintessence of the Gothic in Am.lit.! (7) Hawthorne and Melville are symbol-masters: respectively, their Hester Prynne and Capt. Ahab became characters in American history, not just American fiction. Hester, e.g., wore the law-imposed scarlet "A" (adultery) as though it also meant "angel"--or at least as an affirmation of the natural vs. the life-denying, and as defiance against institutionalized bigotry and unforgiveness. Her affirmation/defiance are feminine (so, the right half of the diamond), as Ahab's are masculine (so, the left half of the diamond).

