

QUEST

*Adventure
of
Ideas*

April — June 1958

HUMAYUN KABIR

Faith For A Complex World

DAYA KRISHNA

'Determination' in Social Science

BISHNU DEY

Michael Madhusudan Datta

ABU SAYEED AYYUB

Historical Materialism

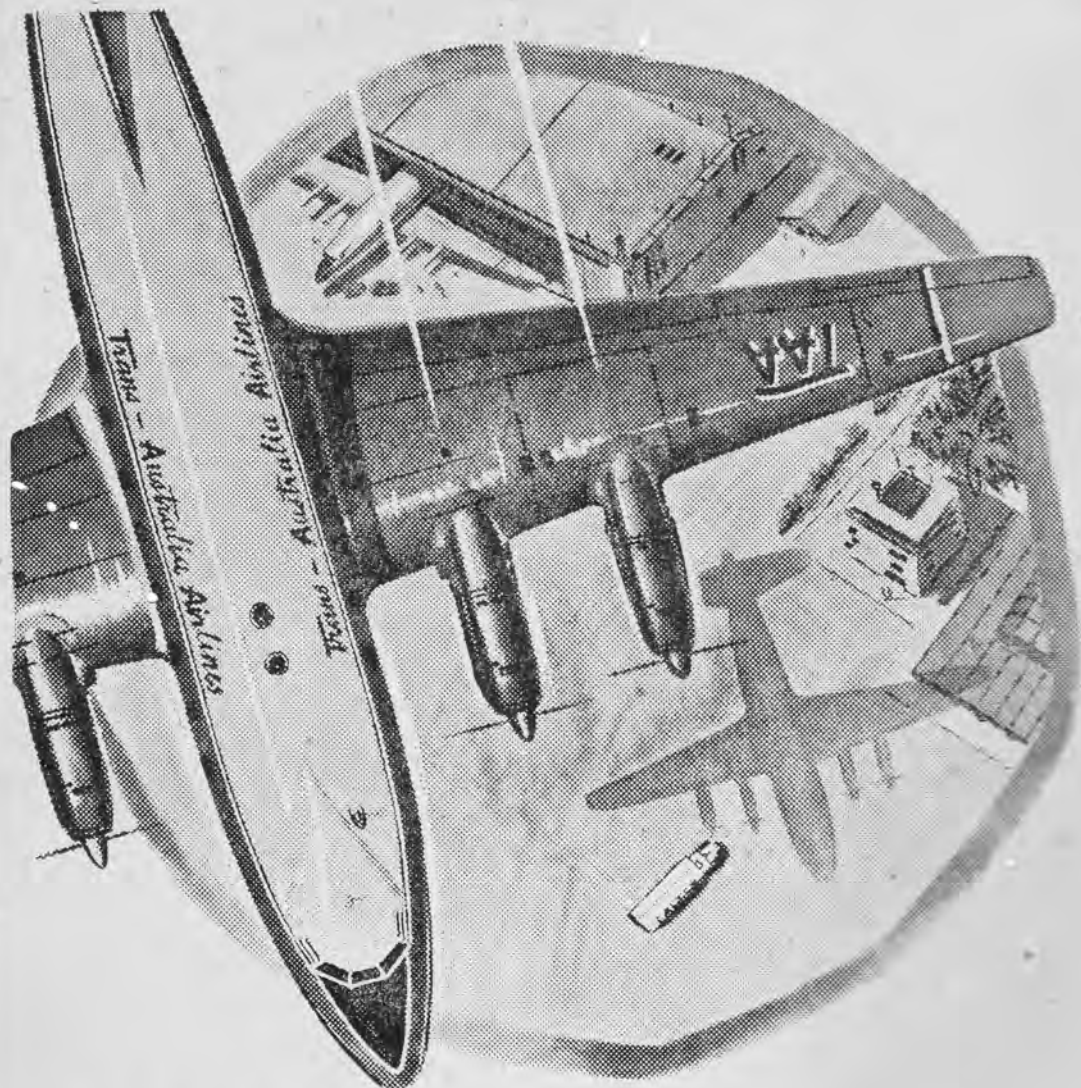
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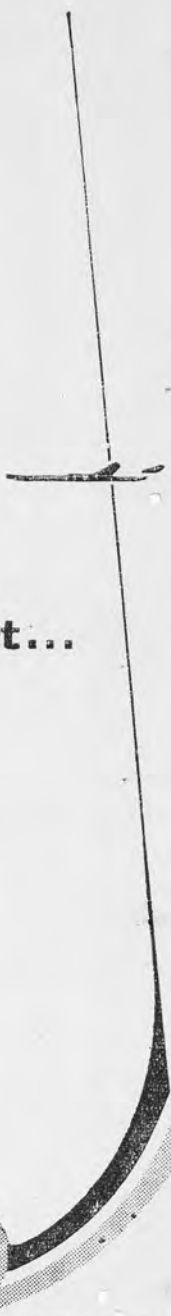
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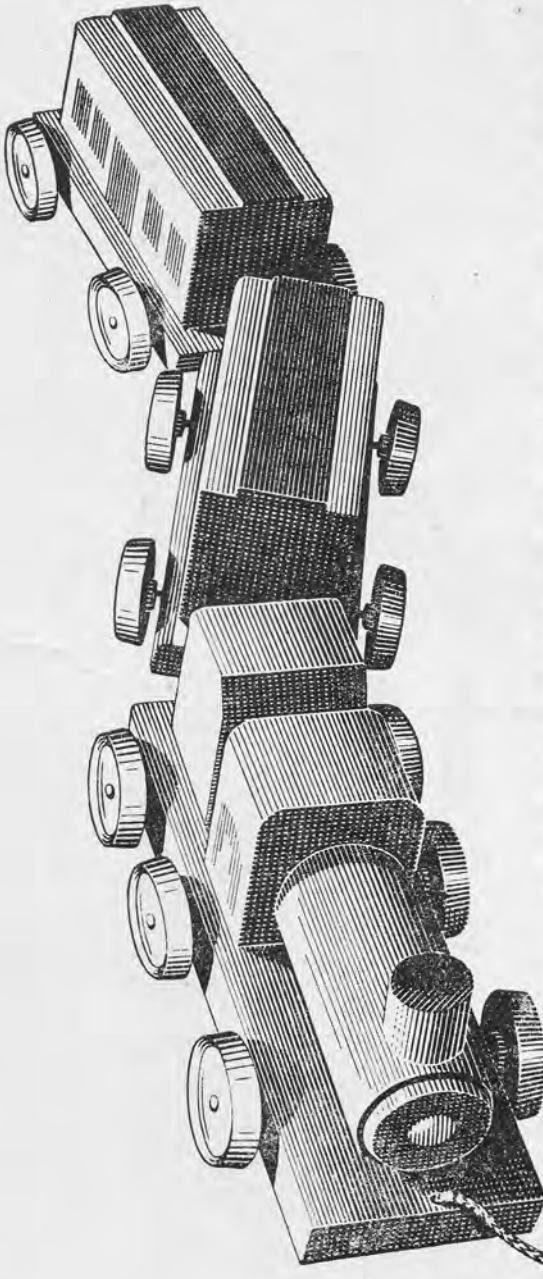
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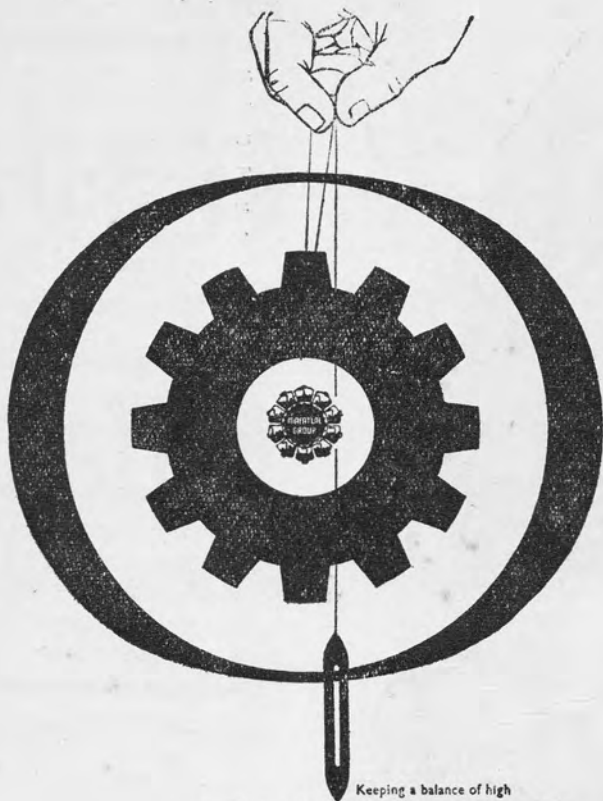
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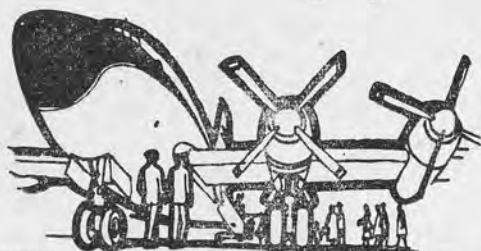


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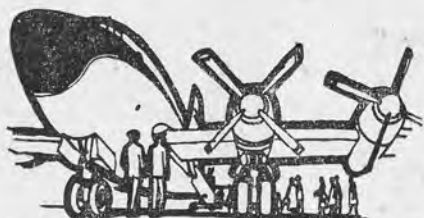
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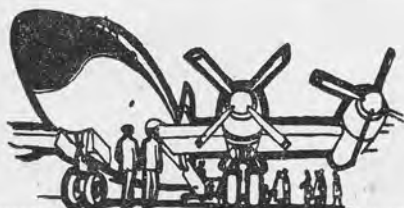
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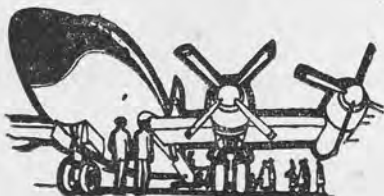
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Q U E S T

A Quarterly of Inquiry, Criticism, and Ideas

Edited by ABU SAYEED AYYUB and AMLAN DATTA

APRIL - JUNE 1958

No. 17

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ENCOUNTER magazine, in association with INTERNATIONAL P.E.N., is offering the following prizes for the best English translation of short stories originally written in one of the Asian, Arabic or African languages:

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Editorial

WITH this issue *Quest* assumes a new look and a new editorial personnel. These outward changes are intended to coincide with and to indicate an internal change in the character of the journal. It is being changed from 'a bimonthly of arts and ideas' to 'a quarterly journal of inquiry, criticism and constructive thought'. If that sounds a bit ambitious, we must say at the outset that we *are* a bit ambitious. How far *Quest* will live up to the ambition of its editors depends upon a number of factors: on the ability, sincerity and diligence of its editors no doubt, but no less on the co-operation of its writers, and on the response of its present and prospective readers. We must add that it is by no means our intention to eschew creative literature and the other arts altogether, though the emphasis henceforth will be on 'ideas' rather than on 'arts'.

In the first policy statement of this journal occurs the sentence: '*Quest's* policy is to deal specifically with cultural questions and with politics by implication.' We endorse that, but would like to be a little more analytical. The word 'politics' is used in two different though interdependent senses. In one sense 'politics' borders on 'ethics' and refers to the goals and ideals which society puts before itself; it is concerned with the investigation and evaluation of social growth. In this sense politics is very much a cultural question, and will be treated as such by *Quest*. Which does not mean that we are intending to turn it into a journal of political science. Politics will have to take its place alongside of history, economics, sociology, metaphysics, ethics, the positive sciences, the theory and criticism of literature and other arts, as well as creative literature. We are inviting contributions on all these topics, only reminding our contributors that they will be writing not for the specialist but for the generally intelligent and educated layman. The attempt should be at simplicity without superficiality, at thoroughness without the minutiae of scholarship.

It is politics in the other sense, in the sense of day to day political practice, of the party line, of national and international conflict, which will be dealt with only by implication, i.e., in so far as it has bearing on cultural questions. On one particular cultural question, however, even current politics has the strongest bearing—the question of cultural freedom. And our journal, sponsored by the Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom, is naturally concerned with that question in a very special way.

It is sad to reflect that here in this country, by and large, we are not so deeply stirred by the issue of cultural freedom as are the thinkers and writers of the West. That is so for two reasons. Firstly, we are not fully aware of the threat to cultural freedom that has been rumbling in the political clouds of the last few decades. We know what political subjugation means; we have also felt the pinch of cultural starvation and stagnation. But, in happy contrast with most Western countries, we have had neither any first hand experience nor any close-up view of what cultural regimentation means in the hands of dictatorships of the right or of the left. We are also fortunate in being in a position to keep out of the hot blast of the cold war which the greater part of the world is currently waging.

Secondly, it would not be wrong to point out—though the point may be disputed—that Indian workers in the cultural field are not as deeply appreciative of the value of cultural freedom itself as are their fellow-workers in the West. We have had a long tradition of being reconciled to or even happy at the fact of culture (to be more specific, thought and art) serving as the handmaid to theology and religion. And we are not quite over that tradition yet. One of the most vital elements in the European renaissance was the assertion of the freedom of thought and art from any kind of subservience, the assertion of their claim to be spheres of experience possessing intrinsic worth. Such a renaissance has yet to come to fruition on the Indian soil. Its very promising efflorescence in mid-nineteenth century Bengal was largely swept away by gusts of revivalism and nationalist hyperaesthesia to everything Western. The reasons behind that historical process can be understood, nonetheless its future effect remains deplorable.

But we will not be dogmatic about our conception of cultural renaissance. If any one wants to hold forth that knowledge and art have other ends beyond themselves, e.g., moral upliftment, the establishment of a classless society based on justice and human brotherhood, or deepening our intuition of unity with the Cosmos, we shall not dispute his right to maintain that. But we must insist that what ends knowledge and art are to serve, whether intrinsic to themselves or extrinsic, is for the individual thinker and artist to determine. *This* is what we mean by the freedom of culture; and we hold that this freedom is a sacred right of all those who work in the fields of culture, and of those who enjoy its fruits. No party, institution or state has the slightest moral justification for encroaching upon it, whatever be the pretext—the only conceivable exception being where one man's freedom obviously derives from another's unfreedom. If 'cultural freedom' can be charged with political meaning like the term 'peace' (the point is taken from our first editorial), the above is the particular shade of its political meaning in which this journal stands for cultural freedom, and will try to

uphold it against all forces which attack it—whether in the name of blood and soil, religion and revelation, or history and economics.

That does not mean of course that *Quest* will deny space to those who interpret freedom in a sense different from ours, or even repudiate its supremacy. We will treat with respect all views and attitudes however different from ours provided they are presented with reason, tolerance and competence. As believers in the primacy of freedom, we cannot naturally claim to possess *the* truth or any monopoly of wisdom. Against one thing only our opposition is total—and that is anti-reason. Although we are ready to admit the limitations of reason, and certainly of our own reasoning powers, we reject totally its total rejection. If that is intolerance, then we are intolerant to that extent, but precisely to that extent. With unreason we intend to hold no truck; with reason that follows a line different from ours we shall always be patient, ready to be persuaded and eager to persuade. We extend our invitation to all those who have views which they consider worth expressing, whether they agree with us or differ from us. This journal is an open forum.

It is good to have moorings in one's past culture but not so firm that we are unable to set sail even when the wind favours us. As we have just pointed out, our cultural sea-change from medieval to modern times was checked in the latter part of the last century by revivalist currents originating not in culture but in politics. Our compass oscillates between the past and the future, between infatuation for scriptural authority and a spirit of free intellectual inquiry and adventure. We can never resist the temptation of spangling our latest thought with quotations from the most ancient texts. The cultural tradition of India, though basically religious, has been on the whole unusually tolerant and receptive as compared to most other religious cultures. This is a point that we as Indian lovers of freedom must note with pride and with hope. Nevertheless, as M. N. Roy has brought home to us, the medievalist-authoritarian trend in our culture makes us very susceptible to totalitarian influences. The leap from one source of infallible authority to another is easily negotiated, and cannot be compared to the chasm that lies between the essentially liberal and the essentially authoritarian tempers.

On the other hand, Michael Polanyi has ably developed the point that when liberal habits and freedom of thought are carried to their utmost logical conclusion resulting in the uprooting of all moral standards and all belief in ultimate values—as was done in full earnestness by the countries of Central and Eastern Europe after World War I—then freedom collapses like a house of cards. He has pointed out 'the speculative and practical restraints which saved liberalism from self-destruction in the Anglo-Ameri-

can area.' In the absence of these restraints liberalism moves inexorably towards nihilism, and nihilism lacks the spiritual resources which alone can stand up against the totalitarian onslaught. Indian lovers of freedom must look beyond the authoritarian trends in their own cultural heritage, but not as far as the ultra-modern, self-destructive liberalism of large parts of Europe. The middle way of freedom is not an easy way to find, and when found is easily lost. Let us hope that deliberations in the pages of *Quest* will be of some help to its readers and writers in this quest, as well as in the other great quests of life which in their totality constitute culture.

It is true that when a man lacks the bare necessities of life or the means of education, or has no security of job (probably more than half the population of the world, certainly a great majority of the non-whites, lives under these conditions), absence of political restraints on his cultural activities will have little meaning for him or a very different meaning. 'The massive habits of physical nature, its iron laws, determine the scene for the sufferings of men. Birth and death, heat, cold, hunger, separation, disease, the general impracticability of purpose all bring their quota to imprison the souls of women and of men' (Whitehead). Freedom from the constraints of physical and economic laws is no less important in our lives than freedom from arbitrary political restraints. What however is sometimes cruelly forgotten is that political subjugation of the human spirit is not necessary for bodily freedom from the rule of nature's iron laws. If we have spoken so far about the peril of political control over culture and not of the physical constraints which circumscribe it, that is not because we underrate the latter evil, but because the struggle against the former kind of unfreedom is directly a cultural struggle, whereas the other struggle belongs specifically to the sphere of politics, with which *Quest* is concerned only 'by implication'.

A Note on Michael Madhusudan Datta

By BISHNU DEY

'I apprehend nothing to be so little useful as reasoning by analogy from Europe to India': Canning's letter to the Board of Directors, 1817.

MICHAEL Madhusudan, one of the most stupendous figures in our meagre literature, was a victim of this reasoning by analogy. Born in 1824, the same year which saw the birth of the Hindu patriot Harish Chandra Mukherjee, Michael was a spoilt son. Thanks, however, to his mother, the boy Michael had grown quite familiar with the usual volumes of Bengali verse, a fact which is of significance in any explanation of the later phenomenon of his own Bengali verse.

Like many members of the new gentry in Bengal of those days, he wanted to follow and live up to this analogy and that, even when he was a quite young boy. But the Ramayana and the Mahabharata and Kavi Kankan Chandi were hard to shed off. As a matter of fact, the peculiar nature of Michael's genius may be said to have flourished on and through this split, the division which was at the back of the whole of our Indo-Anglian period, socially, politically, psychologically. He picked up, with age, Sanskrit, Persian, Latin, Greek, English, French, German and Italian, but in the depths of his consciousness, Bengali had her submarine hold. That is why the absurd Anglo-Indian from Madras had to write his first notable play and his first still readable poem in Bengali.

Educated in Hindu College with remarkable teachers like Richardson and Derozio, Michael went along on his primrose path to Europe. It was unnatural, no doubt, but it was unnatural in the midst of the most unnatural imposition on a whole people. As a matter of fact, there is a kind of whole-hogger logicity in Michael's anglicisation of himself. Most of our pioneers had given away their souls to Albion, though not the safer sanctities of the native home and social life. There were very few exceptions among our intellectual forerunners like Vidyasagar who did not allow violence to his inner being, who intellectually faced Europe and was rightly fascinated by her humanism and not by the glamour which need not be taken as a necessary concomitant of the mad though superficial rush of the English bourgeoisie. Michael was impelled by his nature to exhaust the analogy to the lees, and his conversion to Christianity was more for ingloriously

secular reasons than spiritual. Unlike the Banerjees, poor Michael turned Christian in order to go to England! and at any rate managed to go to Madras.

It is interesting to speculate over Michael's reason or reasons for the return of the prodigal son. Obviously there was in the air the cry of 'Go back to Bengali.' Vidyasagar, Debendranath Tagore, Akshay Kumar Datta and Kaliprasanna Sinha were four of the notable figures in this movement. The Paikpara Singhas and Jotindramohan Tagore also had their share, and we know how Michael took to Bengali writing for the Belgatchia Theatre. Michael wanted to be an Englishman, but it did not pay. But surely that cannot be the sole reason. Michael had the poet in him, and he came to find out that however finely one can speak and write letters in English (and, my dear fellow, as he would have said, he wrote real good letters in amazingly good English!), one cannot write poetry in an alien tongue.

That is why we find Michael writing to his great friend, the pedagogue of Midnapore, who had such astonishing good taste and such understanding of literature: "I never study to be grandiloquent like the majority of the 'barren rascals' that write books in these days of literary excitement. The words come unsought, floating in the stream of (I suppose I must call it) Inspiration...." In another letter he says to Rajnarain: 'I had no idea, my dear fellow, that our mother tongue would place at my disposal such exhaustive materials, and you know I am not a good scholar. The thoughts and images bring out words with themselves—words that I never thought I knew. Here is a mystery for you.'

Indeed, the mystery is there for all of us. How could this outsider get in touch with the very genius of the language? It is true, his vocabulary was poor, for the choice of synonyms he had to ask the help of his pundits; he had many gaps in his semantics. But he did have a marvellous sense of the speech-rhythm and the hang of the idiom of the language. One may feel a little irritated by Michael's excessive use of 'lo' and 'rey' yet one has to remember how frequent these two forms of address, these forms of our *tutuier*s used to be among our women and also our men, and even now they are not uncommon in social areas where speech is still rooted in its native idiom and rhythm. That Michael revealed lapses in his unnatural and too quickly acquired education in Bengali is not the remarkable thing about him; what is remarkable is his uncanny sureness about the sound and movement of Bengali speech rhythm and the raciness of the idiom, in spite of his at times cumbrous sanskriticisms.

The sources of this sureness must have been so deep that it could counteract the entire Hindu College and Madras phases of his Ferringhee youth. It must have sprung from the deeper levels of his psyche, from where

poetry has its ultimate origin and whose play of fantasy is called Dreams. And Michael knew it; he wrote to his friend that he had 'the heart of a proud, silent, lonely man of song!' So he did not have to wait for other people's direction to discover that 'our seven footed verse is our heroic measure, because our language, as regards the doctrine of accent and quantity, is an apostate.' In this connection I should point out that some of us have found this seven-footed verse or *payar* a little too terse and at the same time not iambically sonorous enough and have added two more to Michael's seven. But the result has been usually a tendency towards verbosity and a slight weakness in the fibre of the strophe. As a matter of fact, Bengali verse has shown a certain proneness, after Michael, to linear self-sufficiency and a consequent singsong quality and not enough of the unity of the strophe with its strong toil of grace, so important in any genuine verse. Further, that this source of his poesy was very deep can be guessed at from the two sonnets called 'Shringar' which remind one of the famous love-sonnets by Antonie de Baa, and which curiously reveal how the fascination of the frame symbol of his great poem 'Meghnad-badha' had its strength in the erotic symbology of the battle.

Michael started with this innate sense of the language mixed up in his very nervous organisation and he had enough of the European in him to know what was essential in verse; and he had wonderful good taste, considering that after all he was a provincial in the Victorian Empire of a people who had all the limitations of insularity with all the vices of a worldwide mercantile military domination.

Perhaps here I should remind the reader that the split in sensibility was quite a strong fact even in the good old days of our grandfathers, though awareness of this loss was rare, and men with discrimination and sensibility were few indeed. There were a few men who could courageously react to good things and most of these few were Michael's patrons and friends. But they were few and even among them there is only one Rajnarain Bose, who reveals himself as a man of very fine judgement: Let me make myself clear. I do not mean that only a handful of Hindu College Babus or the Paikpara brothers and their friends could appreciate Michael's poetry. The Bania's assistant could enjoy Michael's verse; so could the Chinabazar shop-keeper. The point is that the number of people with a genuine sensibility was very small, and the dissociation that we find working in the wider field of our social and political life had affected the processes of the mind as well. There are various manifestations of this, direct and indirect, in the singular correspondence between Michael and his few friends. Our Rabindranath himself got quite confused between Michael and Hem. Even that wonderful man (as a man and a scholar, as a student of literature)

Rajnarain had his inhibitions, for example, regarding *Brajangana*. Or think of (most probably that prodigious scholar, critic, editor, historian and what not, Rajendralal Mitra) about whom Michael was compelled to write: 'He reads Byron, Scott and Moore, very nice poets in their way, no doubt, but by no means of the highest school of poetry, except perhaps Byron, now and then. I like Wordsworth better. . . .'

I hope the quotations I have been using serve a double purpose in their immediate context and also as illustrations of Michael's surprisingly mature judgement and sense of values.

The non-Bengali reader will not be far wrong if he forms an idea of Michael as a very nineteenth century Bengali new middle-class person who drew the European analogy too far and thought that the Victorian age in India was equivalent to the Renaissance in Western Europe and who led a sadly untidy life, yet was a giant among Indian poets. But he should underline the last statement; Michael was possessed by poetry. And this poetry was nurtured in the Great Mother as Yeats called it, in our old national life, in the memory of our entire people, in our myths and our popular poetry, before and beyond the split of our so-called Renaissance. Did not the Christian poet say, 'I love the grand mythology of our ancestors. It is full of poetry.'

But the question may be asked: Can any one who is full of poetry, even the poetry of his people, become necessarily a great poet in his own rights? Yes and no. Not unless his mind, or call it his imagination, can relate itself to this poetry with its past and its future; in other words, not unless there is a crisis, a tension which facilitates the growth of a poet's mind, the development of the agonistes. Usually, however, the sense of poetry, the daemonic fulness of it is a part of this other sense, one's own crisis, which is some sort of wakening of the Spring, as Tagore called it in his own case. We find it in Tagore and in almost all the major poets in Europe—some accession of the sense of hollowness, some kind of desertion, blank treachery, or it may be some illuminating joy, which restores the Imagination.

Michael had learnt his lesson in Calcutta and Madras, in London and in Versailles, as Wordsworth did differently when England declared war against the French Revolution. He found out the hollowness, the bitter hollowness of the Indo-Anglian renaissance, and luckily for him, though he could not repair his personal life, he could release himself as a poet qua poet. No wonder that he hated in his rage Rama and his rabble. With his deep strength of a man of song and with his nerves used to the speech and poetry of Bengal, he did bring about a sort of tortured renaissance in India's poetry.

But as he himself knew, though his ambition was to write like Milton,

yet he could not. 'Many say it licks Kalidasa'; perhaps his verse did that in certain ways. But he did not have the self-contained Puritan pride of Milton, the pride which made Milton an active and vehement partisan in his country's liberation, not from a foreign ruler but from old feudal ties. It was not merely Michael's own limitations, it was history which determined for him the limits of his achievement. And he was aware of his achievement in a very lonely manner, because he was almost alone in his knowledge of standards of criticism which are valid for the literature of the world.

Michael knew Europe better than most of his countrymen, and that seems to hold true even to-day; at least his knowledge of European literature was profound. He could enjoy and place Homer and Virgil, Shakespeare and Milton, Racine and Hugo. He knew his Dante, Petrarch and Tasso. With his wide reading and genuine taste he had excellent standards. A believer in Europeanism like T. S. Eliot would have been pleased with this Indian poet, who also happened to be a Christian. Mr. Eliot in his two highly suggestive lectures on Virgil has tried to give his view of this European civilization. He has mentioned two stages; the classical period and the Christian, and the two representative poets Virgil and Dante. Mr. Eliot thinks that the world can be saved and harmony brought about by this European civilisation. By Europe he means the western parts of Europe with its Christian and pre-Christian heritage. Elsewhere he has explained away the post-Christian or capitalist stage of West European civilisation as a mere complication in economics. Humanistically, Mr. Eliot shuts out a large part of mankind and a large part of the world, and he does not want to consider the prospects of a post-capitalistic Europe with all the heritage of the classical, the Christian and the capitalist stages of European civilisation. But it is obvious that only in the last stage can one think of one humanity and the world in harmony. That is the vision we find in the greatest prose epic of modern life, *Das Kapital*.

Michael tried to acquire the earlier heaven of European civilisation, while he lived in the midst of the third stage in action in a highly civilised non-European country, which almost died in contact with this terribly greedy and ruthless hypocrisy. We millions of men outside Mr. Eliot's narrow world of European civilisation, we also know Europe, from the other side of the medal, the most brutalising exploitation man has made of man.

However, Mr. Eliot is most illuminating when he talks about Virgil's appreciation of history, the history of Rome, of Europe, of Virgil's sense of destiny in human history, of labour, pietas and destiny, and of Dante's amor and light. Virgil was fortunate in his Rome, as was Dante in his Florence. Michael could only see the cruellest parody of labour, pietas,

and the destiny of man in history. He tried his best to discover in this dark world of no-love ways of release and only the making of poetry was open to him. That was England's work in India, the work of so-called European civilisation with its unsympathetic rule and policy of acquisition of money. The tragedy of Michael Madhusudan Datta has a symbolical quality; it is the tragedy of false premises in the history of Anglo-India. Michael started to write in his mother tongue, three years after the Great Revolt of 1857. It is for us to learn his lesson and focus the history of our life right, to try to create our Renaissance.

Madhusudan Datta occupies a unique position in the poetry of Bengal—probably of India, for with him begins what may be called our 'modern period', marked by the powerful impact of English and European Literatures on indigenous traditions. The date significantly lies in the intervening four years between the occurrence of the great rebellion and the birth of the greatest poet of modern India.

'Determination' in Social Sciences

By DAYA KRISHNA

THE phenomena studied in any of the social sciences are not primary, fundamental or universal phenomena. By 'primary,' 'fundamental' and 'universal' we only mean those phenomena which, at least as far as our experience goes, do not seem to require any other type of phenomena for their existence. The phenomena studied by the science of physics seem to possess such a character. The social phenomena, on the other hand, are embedded in a larger framework of biological and physical phenomena without which they cannot be supposed to exist. They can disappear, just as once they did not exist, without affecting the biological or the physical framework within which they existed.

The framework sets merely the limits within which the phenomena can exist. Within the limits, however, there is a fair play of indeterminacy because of the occurrence of causal factors which cannot be understood in terms of the factors relating to the framework alone. It is due to this that we speak of the *relative autonomy* of phenomena within a particular field—*relative*, because their existence is ultimately permitted by factors within the framework and *autonomous*, because their *specificity* cannot be understood in terms of the factors within the framework at all. Each science, therefore, claims a relative autonomy for the subject matter of its study and rightly so—for, though there can be a real danger of being blind to the horizons that lie around the margin of one's subject, it would be an equal mistake to fix one's eyes on the horizon and forget the specificity of the immediate "what" of one's subject.

The fact that certain types of phenomena are embedded in a larger framework of other types of phenomena, gives to the statements made with respect to the former a peculiar character. They always have a margin of indeterminacy about them, a possibility that they would not come true as we expect them to be. Such a possibility does not follow merely from the fact that they are empirical statements but because, however correct and warranted they may be, the factors within the framework may change in such a way as to jeopardise the very existence of the phenomena them-

selves. The indeterminacy following from such a situation increases directly with the number of frameworks that the phenomena presuppose.

Within such a margin of indeterminacy, however, there is a fair amount of immanent causality within the field of the phenomena themselves. There is, thus, what we may call a transcendent and an immanent determination of those realms of phenomena which depend for their existence on other realms. The transcendent factors, however, do not make the phenomena intelligible except in the extreme generality of their existence. They are, therefore, mostly irrelevant for the *specific* understanding of the emergent phenomena. Unless, therefore, we believe that all the facts of biological and sociological character can be understood in terms of the categories of the physical sciences alone, we shall have to grant the fact of immanent causality within the field of such phenomena.

Social scientists, in general, have argued vigorously for the autonomy of their field of study and have mostly looked askance at the attempts that have tended to show the social phenomena to be entirely determined by non-sociological factors. In their own turn, however, they have been extremely antagonistic to the idea that there may be other phenomena which stand in the *same* relation to sociological phenomena as these do themselves to biological and physical phenomena. Sociologists, like most other scientists, seem to think that all that occurs in the field of human affairs is completely determined by factors which pertain to their own field of study. They are extremely averse to the admission of immanent causality within the field of supra-sociological phenomena.

There seems, however, no reason to believe that the emergence of autonomous realms with their immanent causality ceases at the sociological level. It would be as much a piece of blindness on the part of sociologists to deny this as it would be in the case of those biologists or physicists who would deny autonomy and immanent causality to social phenomena. The mistake in the case of the latter is clearly visible to every sociologist, yet he immediately seems to develop a psychic scotoma when he himself commits it.

The supra-sociological phenomena are indeed dependent on sociological phenomena for their very existence, but this should in no way lead to the conclusion drawn by most sociologists that they are "determined" by them. If the logic of the argument were true in such a case, then we would inevitably be pushed further to the conclusion that the real determinants of any phenomenon are physical and not biological or sociological or supra-sociological in nature. The sociological phenomena, in fact, *permit* the existence of supra-sociological phenomena but do not determine them, in any way, in their specific nature.

The large number of studies that have delineated the 'determination' of cultural phenomena by sociological factors are vitiated, therefore, at their very core by this central fallacy. Marxist thinking, for example, which has had such a large influence in the spread of this tendency, shares it to a pre-eminent degree. It refuses to grant the immanent causality that it admits with respect to a certain sector of social phenomena, to other sectors. The multiple patterns of culture that have been woven by man since Pleistocene times are hardly understandable in terms of the forms and relations of production in which he is engaged.

Marx wrote, 'In the social production of their livelihood men enter into definite relations that are necessary and independent of their wills; these relations of production correspond to a definite stage in the development of their material forces of production. The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real basis on which is reared a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. . . . with the change in the economic foundation the immense superstructure in its entirety is more or less rapidly transformed.'¹

This is a fair presentation of the Marxist thesis and yet, if closely examined, it reveals deep fissures at the key-points of its argument. The first part of the contention is true but is by no means confined to the so-called 'production of their livelihood' only. In fact, it is true of every activity of man and follows from his being born into a pre-existent social structure which has a *pattern* for all of his activities whether they be concerned with the earning of livelihood, the finding of a mate, the giving of a feast, the building of a house, the singing of a song, the dancing of a dance or anything else. Even such a thing as the ornamental pattern on a piece of pottery or the shape of a stone chisel is peculiar to a particular people and forms the basis of far-reaching conclusions with respect to the spread of the people and their culture in modern studies on pre-history. The emphasis, therefore, should be on *social* rather than on economic in the above quotation. The 'necessary and independent' relations into which men have to enter whether they will it or not is again not confined merely to economic activity but is a feature of all activity in general. The chain of causality is so multi-dimensional and stretches into such an unending future that even when one wills the immediate *consequences* of one's action, one cannot but enter into relations that are 'necessary and independent' of one's will. It, further, is not merely a feature of man's conscious activity but, in fact, follows from the very nature of his existence or, rather, *from the very fact of existence*, whether of his or that of anything else.

The second contention of the Marxist thesis is that 'those relations of

production *correspond* to a definite stage in the development of their *material* forces of production'. The word 'correspond' suggests 'fortuitous coincidence' rather than 'strict causation.' But those who are aware of Marxist thinking would know that it means the latter rather than the former. As for the 'material forces of production' they must be *distinct* from the 'relations of production'—for, otherwise, there would be hardly any sense in the latter corresponding to the former. The phrase, then, can perhaps only mean the technological basis of production.² If so, the contention would mean that there is, at least, a one-one *correlation*, even if not strict causation between the technological base and the social relations of production.

If such be the contention, then it seems hardly to be in accord with the facts as historically known. In the primal period of humanity *i.e.* before man turned from a food-gathering animal into a food-producing one, it would be difficult to infer the correlate social relations of production from a stone or bone implement or the existence of some bow or other instrument which was used for hunting. As for the post-primal times, the social relations obtaining in different agricultural and trading communities have been different without involving any difference in the technologies they used. Gordon Childe in his recent study on 'Social Evolution' has brought out this point quite clearly. Discussing the question whether any uniformity or parallelism is exhibited in the transition of various cultures from barbarism to civilisation he comes to the definite conclusion that 'the intervening steps in development do not exhibit even abstract parallelism.'³ If we were to judge from the technological evidence to the social relations of production obtaining in present-day Russia or America we would be sadly mistaken, for we would infer them to be identical.

The third correlation made in the quotation is between the social relations of production and the politico-legal structure of a society. In a later part of the quotation which we have not reproduced, religion, artistic and philosophic activities are put on a par with the legal and the political and considered in the same light. The term 'relations of production' apart from the politico-legal structure of a society seems extremely ambiguous and indeterminate in character. But whatever be meant by the term, it can hardly make us infer the sib or clan organisation, the laws of matrilineal or patrilineal descent, the existence of polygyny, polyandry or monogamy, the relative powers of the chief or the priest or the council of elders, the area of endogamy or exogamy etc. in a society. As for Religion, Art and Philosophy, we would quote Prof. Childe's conclusion: 'The final result—civilisation—was *concretely very different* in each case'.⁴

The fallacy of thinking that there are no supra-sociological realms

which enjoy a relative autonomy with respect to other phenomena is, however, not confined to Marx only. All those persons who try to understand these in terms of some single factor of geography, race or psychology commit the same fallacy—even if they include among themselves names as great as that of Freud himself. The absurdities to which one may be led by ignoring the principle of relative autonomy are well exemplified by a recent work on the social history of Art. Arnold Hauser, for example, has tried to explain the character of the German Philosophy of the Enlightenment by the fact that 'the middle-class intelligentsia... was excluded from the Government of the country and was without influence.'⁵ Even the most elementary student of the subject knows that Kant's thinking has deeper relations to the British empiricists and the continental rationalists than to the political situation prevailing in his country. As for the post-Kantian thought in Germany, it occurs in the context of Kant's philosophy which is more important for it than any of the politico-economic conditions with which thinkers of a certain type seem to be obsessed.

The relative autonomy of supra-sociological realms is implicitly denied by a set of thinkers who are, in spirit, almost completely different from those who seek for a causal factor that may be regarded as 'determining' these phenomena. The unity pervading the different activities of man is sought to be explained not in terms of some causal factor but rather in terms of the mentality, Geist or spirit which expresses itself in them. The deep difference drawn in German thinking between 'Naturwissenschaften' and 'Geisteswissenschaften' may be considered as, to a certain extent, responsible for this. But it certainly is not the only route through which the conclusion is reached. Prof. MacIver's view presented in his 'Social Causation' that it is 'the dynamic assessment' of a total situation by a human mind that is the chief causal factor in understanding social phenomena may lead, for example, in a certain sense to the same situation. The unity here would be derived from the mentality in which the 'dynamic assessment' occurs.

Sorokin's overwhelming data in his *Social and Cultural Dynamics* suggests that the contention is not without some element of truth in it. But just as the different activities of a person form relatively autonomous fields without any necessity of a unity underlying them, so there may also be relatively autonomous supra-sociological fields without any over-arching unity between them. A perfectly integrated society like a perfectly integrated individual is only a methodological norm valid for certain purposes but positively dangerous when treated as actually existent. Sorokin himself has critically examined the notion of 'integration' so loosely employed by many anthropologists and sociologists and has even raised the question as to how

much integration there is between the theoretic articulation achieved in the different arts and sciences and the actual life of the people. His analysis and data both seem to point to the conclusion that while there is a strong tendency towards integration in the articulated structure, it is seldom achieved completely and even when rarely achieved, as perhaps in the early Middle Ages, it persists only for a very short time. As for the integration between 'theory' and 'practice,' it is weaker still.

The supra-sociological fields for whose relative autonomy we have been arguing as against their 'determination' by social phenomena do not, however, seem to be the last term in the series of those types of occurrents which are embedded in a larger field or phenomena. It seems fairly clear that the specificity of any development, say, in physics is intelligible only in the context of the science of physics and not in terms of the socio-economic politico-jural or the philosophico-esthetic situation of the times. But the possible line of development, though conditioned by the situation prevailing in any particular field at any moment, is never closed as to alternative possibilities. The ultimate locus of autonomy, therefore, seems to lie in the individual. But it is the most *precarious* as it pre-supposes so many realms that permit it to exist. A bullet may kill a Gandhi or the tubercular bacilli, a Keats. The politico-jural institutions may condemn a Socrates or crucify some Jesus. A proletarian dictatorship may not allow you to write or speak and an Orwellian nightmare may not even permit you to think. At a larger remove, the hydrogen-helium Cycle in the sun may (or rather 'must') create such heat as to destroy all life and thus the very foundation of all sociological, supra-sociological and individual phenomena. Yet, however large the number of frameworks which the individual presupposes, he seems to enjoy a spontaneity and indeterminacy that can only be said to be 'permitted' and not 'determined' by the pre-supposed frameworks.

The use of the concept of 'determination' to describe the relation that holds between two realms of phenomena one of which is embedded in the other but does not coincide with it is, it is suggested, an 'abuse' of the term. The relation between the wider and the narrower realm is better described by the word 'permitting,' or any other word that conveys the same sense. The only other alternative to this position seems to be the belief that all phenomena are ultimately determined in their specificity by physical phenomena, and that it is only our ignorance that does not see them as intelligible in terms of the concepts and the categories of the science of physics.

It has been our contention in this paper that there can be no half-way house between this position and the one we have elaborated here, as many

sociologists seem to have fondly imagined. If sociology is to be a relatively autonomous science, then the same relative autonomy would have to be granted to supra-sociological realms and ultimately even to the individuals who constitute those realms. Otherwise, there is no alternative but to treat them as foot-notes in some book of physics—foot-notes that might not yet have been written, but which are bound to be added sooner or later.

¹ Quoted by V. Gordon Childe in 'History' p. 71.

² Marxists generally include besides technology, skill and organisation of production such as division of labour under the term 'material forces of production'. But the latter are not independent factors. They are merely features that follow from the specific nature of the technology itself.

³ Social Evolution, p. 161.

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 161. Italics mine.

⁵ Arnold Hauser: The Social History of Art. Vol. II. p. 606.

SUMMER DAY

This is a thirst that from the soul doth rise,
Yearning for the gold and saffron suns of dusk;
This could well be the resurrection of a fire
Which howls and rages in summer and dies.

It howls and whines in the breast,
Scattering wax blossoms, dead flowers,
Which retain their hard glass fixity
Amidst dear ruins which now lie to rest.

Out of the abyss the firebird cries
For release into the burning day.
Do I dare keep it caged? But no;
I must wait till from slumber it flies.

R. de LOYOLA FURTADO

MANKIND



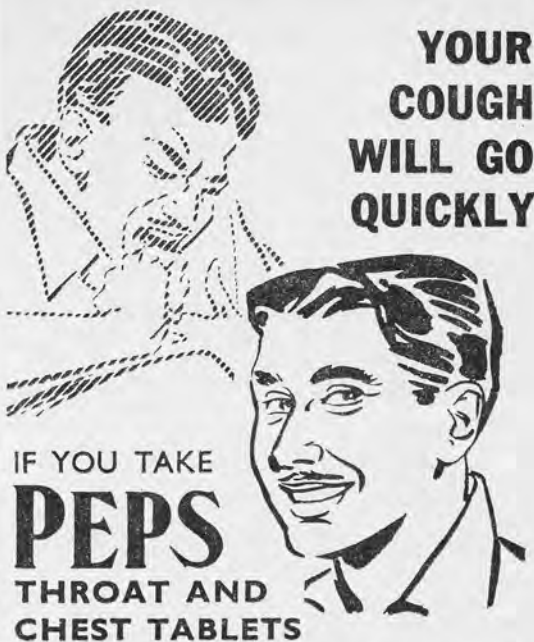
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Historical Materialism

By ABU SAYEED AYYUB

MARX'S theory of history is to-day the most widely known aspect of Marxism. Its exponents have seen to that. On the other hand, it has been examined and criticised threadbare from various angles—with scholarly dispassion as well as with ardent political zeal. Nonetheless it continues to sway the minds of Communists and fellow-travellers to an astonishing, one might say fateful, extent. Joining issues with it more than a century after its formulation may not be very conducive to original thinking and may give little scope for it, but it is certainly not flogging a dead horse. And I venture to add that just as no man can cross precisely the same river twice, so no mind can think old thoughts exactly the way they have been thought before.

Historical materialism is professedly only a theory of history, but in fact it is much more than that. It runs like a thread through the writings of Marx and Engels on which are strung almost all their ideas covering a wide variety of subjects—the social sciences to begin with, but beyond them art, literature, religion, philosophy and even the physical sciences. In point of importance to the Marxist system as a whole I should rank it far above their general theory of dialectical materialism, though it is not unusual for many Marxists, past and present, to treat the former as only a particular application of the latter. But this is only a Hegelian legacy—perhaps more conspicuous in Marx's posthumous disciples than in Marx himself. As a notable instance of Hegelianism in 20th century Marxist thought we may quote the following: 'If nature, being, the material world, is primary, and mind, thought, is secondary; if the material world represents an objective reality existing independently of the mind of man, while the mind is a reflection of this objective reality, it follows that the material life of society, its being, is also primary, and its spiritual life secondary, derivative, and that the material life of society is an objective reality existing independently of the will of man, while the spiritual life of society is a reflection of this objective reality, a reflection of being.' (Stalin*—*Dialectical and Historical Materialism*). Such a presentation of the restricted thesis of historical materialism as a deductive inference from the more general and speculative principle of dialectical materialism (the logical conclusion being expressed

as 'it follows') presumably does not result merely from Stalin's faulty penmanship. It inadvertently gives expression to a recurrent confusion in Marxist thought—the confusion between its claim to be empirical and scientific and its deep roots in Hegelian rationalism.

Before going into the question whether the material life of society is *primary* or not, we may well ask: is it *material* in any but a purely metaphorical sense? The goods produced by man or the raw materials out of which they are produced are of course material, i.e., made of physical substance; and so are his implements of production. But these, though comprised in the material life of society, surely do not by themselves constitute that life. They come into human life only because of certain needs, desires, impulses and motives, not to mention thoughts and ideals, of man—all of which are mental and not physical or material. The desire for potatoes is not less mental than the desire for poetry. To describe our needs for material objects or the techniques we employ in their production as 'material' is just a figure of speech. When Marx bases his theory of history on the proposition 'being determines consciousness,' what he means is not that material phenomena determine mental phenomena, but that purposeful human activity directed toward economic needs (this is the 'material life' of society) determines purposeful human activity directed toward non-economic—scientific, artistic, ethical, political needs.¹ The truth of the doctrine is to be seen, but this is the only intelligible meaning that can be given to it. As such, 'the economic conception of history' would be a far more appropriate name for it than 'the materialistic theory of history' or 'historical materialism.' But names are not important, though they can be misleading.

There is a strict and rather dogmatic formulation of the theory of historical materialism to be found in the earlier works of Marx and Engels, and a more broad-minded self-critical reformulation of the same theory which was taking shape in their later writings, particularly in their correspondence. The earlier theory was both deterministic and reductionist; and the determinism was a strict one-way determinism. Reciprocal action between the economic layers and the politico-cultural 'superstructure' was not only not indicated, it was often denied: 'It is not the consciousness of men which determines their existence, but on the contrary their social existence which determines their consciousness.'² The untenability of such a rigid conception of one-way determinism was later realised by its originators, and corrected. We may recall the well-known passages from Engels' letters in which he frankly admits that 'Marx and I are partly responsible for the fact that at times our disciples have laid more weight upon the economic factor than belongs to it,' denies that 'the economic element is the only determining one,' and even emphasises the role of factors other than eco-

nomic in the dynamics of history. Nevertheless, he must add that 'there is an interaction of all these elements in which the economic movement finally asserts itself as necessary.'³

What is the point of insisting that the economic movement alone 'asserts itself as necessary' when it is being admitted that other factors—elements from the superstructure—are also among the determinants of history, and that the economic and non-economic factors jointly constitute the totality of conditions which alone can be properly designated as the cause of any historical change? If the other, i.e., non-economic factors, are not necessary, then what precisely is their status: are they only accidental adjuncts, or purely epiphenomenal shadows of the necessary, i.e., economic factors? When cornered by their critics Engels, Plekhanov and the present-day Marxists concede that there is a reciprocal action between economic and non-economic factors, that the latter 'also exercise their influence upon the course of historical studies and in many cases preponderate in determining their form.' But in the very next sentence all of them invariably add a qualifying clause beginning with 'in the last analysis', 'ultimately', etc. which takes us back to the earlier rigid theory of one-way determinism and historical monism. What is grudgingly yielded by one hand is readily if somewhat surreptitiously taken away by the other. We are left with the supremacy of the economic factor not only undiminished but underscored each time. There is undoubtedly some point in Max Eastman's jibe that 'Marxists defend their philosophy of history by darting back and forth between a truism and a quite fantastic assertion and never getting caught in either the one position or the other.'⁴

To be sure, economic activity is *necessary* in a sense in which non-economic activities are not. We can do without art and philosophy and the higher principles of morality, but we cannot live without food and shelter. Taking a leap from this simple fact which nobody ever thought of denying, Engels does a couple of logical summersaults to land on his reductionist historiography. If 'necessary' in that sense then 'the economic developmental phase of a nation or an epoch constitutes the foundation upon which the state, institution, the legal outlooks, the artistic and even religious ideas have been built up'. If foundational, then 'it implies that these latter must be explained out of the former whereas the former have been explained as issuing from the latter.'⁵ Apart from its logical unwarrantability, this even goes against a fundamental tenet of the dialectical philosophy itself. Marxist philosophers are never tired of reiterating their belief in the difference of levels, in the emergence of qualitative novelty. And qualitative difference in levels means—that is what we have been told—that the pheno-

mena at the higher level cannot be reduced to, or explained in terms of, the phenomena at the lower level.

Sometimes it appears as if all that Engels means is that of the various elements which are jointly exercising their pressures on the historical process, the economic factors are the most 'important'. Historians before the time of Marx were apt to neglect altogether the role of economic factors (though Ibn Khaldun and Vico are notable instances to the contrary), and due credit should be given to Marx and Engels for having emphasised the effective part played by these factors in historical transformations. But 'important' is really a subjective characterisation and implies a point of view in relation to which the thing has its importance; it implies a purpose. As Communists are great believers in the unity of theory and practice (which in their practice usually amounts to a subordination of theory to practice), it would be natural to think that for them the purpose in question is mainly practical.⁶ It might be said that if one wants to eliminate widespread poverty, insecurity, social injustice, etc., from which our social system undoubtedly suffers, the way to proceed is to attack its economic structure. To those for whom the point is to change the social order and not merely to interpret it (haven't the philosophers done enough of interpretation?) economic factors will appear as the cause and political and cultural factors as their effect.

But even from the point of view of the social revolutionary does not the role of political and cultural factors sometimes turn out to be primary or causal? Don't the Communist pioneers themselves often find it necessary to start their work by setting about making ideological converts in a country hitherto untouched by their movement? In support we can quote the greatest living Communist, Mao Tse-Tung: 'When the productive forces cannot be developed unless the relations of production are changed, the change in the relations of production plays the principal and decisive role. When, as Lenin put it, 'without a revolutionary theory, there can be no revolutionary movement,' the creation and advocacy of the revolutionary theory plays the principal and decisive role.'⁷

Curiously enough, it was more in the interest of theory, of social science, that Marx was led to assign the basic role to economic forces. In his 'Preface' to *The Critique of Political Economy* he says, 'In considering such social transformations a distinction should always be made between the material transformation of the economic conditions of production, which can be determined with the precision of natural science, and the legal, political, religious, aesthetic and philosophical—in short, ideological forms in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out'. These 'ideological forms' by themselves do not present any neat patterns in the

manner of physical events; there is a good deal of 'the contingent and the unforeseen' in their behaviour. If, however, they could be treated not as more or less independent forces with a dynamics of their own but as entirely dependent on 'the material transformations of the economic conditions of production', then the sociologist would be able to bring as much precision into his science as the physicist.⁸ This, however, is a very curious way of making our study of history scientific. It may be a very desirable thing to have a social science operating with regular laws even in the sphere of politics, morality and religion; and it may be a fact that the transformations of the economic conditions of production can be studied with the precision of natural science. But from this it does not follow in the least that we should regard the latter as the determining element ('ultimately' or 'in the last analysis') of the former. No factual conclusion can be drawn from a juxtaposition of two premises, one valuational and the other factual.

Of course in the last analysis (if we may plagiarise a favourite phrase of Marxist writers) the theoretical interest, the desire to have an 'exact science' of society, itself arose out of a practical demand. A social science based upon deterministic laws was needed by Marx to enable him to make an important historical prophecy, viz., the inevitable downfall of capitalism and the emergence of the proletarian state which will end all state. There is an obvious incompatibility between a scientific prediction of the Communist goal as necessitated by rigid sociological laws and the moral call to action for the realisation of that goal, with which all Marxist literature is deeply charged. This is a favourite *point de raptiere* with the critics of Marxism. In my opinion such a criticism misses the mark, for here in any case the proof of the pudding is in the eating. The Communist party undoubtedly believes in the Marxist prophecy with religious fervour (this belief is often expressed in the slogan 'History is on our side'), and yet no other political party has ever shown a fraction of the moral zeal and devotion with which the Communists work for the realisation of their cause. What has proved to be practically compatible could not have been logically incompatible: there must be some flaw in that kind of logic. Or is it human nature itself which is sometimes capable of working in defiance of logical laws?

Hartmann had similarly pointed out the incompatibility between divine or cosmic teleology and the moral responsibility of man for the realisation of the good. His statement of it has now become classical: 'The metaphysical humanisation of the Absolute means the moral annulment of man.'⁹ In order to preserve man's moral dignity and freedom Hartmann felt it necessary to reject all belief in divine providence, or even in any cosmic habitat of values. But like the Communists, religious men and religious-

minded philosophers see no incompatibility between the two. They point out that it is precisely those who believe most deeply that the values they aim to realise in life are 'transcendental' and grounded in ultimate being (which for Marx is 'the material life of society.'), who are freest from the sense of futility and whose spiritual initiatives (political initiatives in the case of the Communists) are most powerful.¹⁰

We cannot argue backwards, however. The fact that the belief in material teleology inspires rather than inhibits political action is not a proof of its truth, any more than the moral inspiration derived from the belief in divine teleology proves the truth of that belief. There is of course the additional complication here that the very passion with which certain irrational beliefs about the future are held sometimes helps to make them true. The intensity of the Nazi belief in the Nordic race being destined to rule the world came within an ace of making it true in 1940-41. Two interesting problems arise in this connection, which I shall mention without discussing. One is that the truth of beliefs about the future needs to be defined differently from the truth of beliefs about the past or the present. And the second can be best expressed in the words of Bertrand Russell in a recent broadcast talk which I quote from memory: 'All along in history nonsense has inspired more zeal and self-immolation than sense or good sense.' I can only trust that this witty but tragic generalisation will turn out to be less true about the future than it has about the past. Else what hope is there for mankind?

We come now to the third and most important sense in which words like 'basic', 'primary', etc. are used by Marxist writers in reference to the mode of economic production. The mode of production of society is basic in the sense that although theories, ideals and institutions, once they appear on the scene, do have an important role to play in history, they always originate, directly or indirectly, as a result of some change or development of the productive forces. Idealists are blamed for placing the causes of historical changes inside men's heads in their ideas and motives, and for not having inquired into the moving forces of the ideas themselves. Marxists credit themselves with having traced the origin of men's ideas and ideals to the changes in the methods of production.

Did they not in their turn forget to ask what causes brought about a change in the mode of production itself? We are told, 'one of the features of production is that it never stays at one point for a long time and is always in a state of change and development'—with of course far-reaching consequences in the entire social sphere. But we are not told by Engels, Stalin or anybody else what causes the forces of production to change and develop. Bukharin talks about the self-movement of the productive forces more or

less as Hegel talked about the self-movement of the Absolute Idea; and Stalin writes, 'First the productive forces of society change and then', as if they are equivalent to the First Cause of the theologians or to the Prime Mover of Aristotle.

We can understand why Communists fight shy of the question. If raised, it is liable to give an idealist turn to the whole discussion. Plekhanov, a greater thinker than Stalin though a lesser man of action, raised the issue courageously, making explicit its idealistic implication. Productive forces develop as a result of the development of our implements of labour. 'And every new step forward in the perfecting of the implements of labour requires new efforts of the human intellect. The efforts of the intellect are the *cause*, and the development of the productive forces the *consequence*. Therefore, the intellect is the prime mover of historical progress, which means that those men were right who asserted that opinions govern the world, i.e., that human reason is the governing element. Nothing is more natural than such an observation, but this does not prevent it from being groundless.'¹¹ In support of his point that this is groundless Plekhanov proceeds, following Darwin, to trace the origin of man's intellect to his acquirement of the capacity to stand erect and make free use of his hands. And this alteration in the shape and disposition of our ancestral limbs was, according to Plekhanov, probably caused by certain peculiarities of the geographical environment. From these considerations he concludes that, 'thanks only to certain peculiar qualities of the geographical environment could our anthropomorphic ancestors rise to that height of intellectual development which was necessary to transform them into tool-making animals.'

All this may be true; but what bearing has it on the materialistic interpretation of history? It is not as if from the conglomeration of purely physical (i.e., geographical) causes the human intellect was evolved at one stroke, and at the next came all our technological inventions which then laid the foundation for all the upper strata of civilization and culture. For the past million years or so the human intellect has been slowly evolving, and the implements of labour gradually improving from stone choppers to turbo-jet engines. Throughout this period, we find intellectual development and the increased freedom gained through improved machinery acting and reacting upon each other in unbroken succession as well as in a complex interlocking of causal chains. Surely the Marxian theory of history is a theory of the history of the continuous movement of civilisation during the past few thousand years, not just the statement of an event that took place more than a million years ago. And recorded history knows nothing of any basis or superstructure, any ultimate or simply dependent factors,

For, as we learn from Plekhanov, the 'last analysis' which is supposed to reveal the primacy or ultimate causality of material forces takes us into remote zoological ages, when there was neither any organisation of production to act as a basis, nor any upper strata of politics and culture which could be superstructural on it.

The relation between the economics of a society and its culture is very complex indeed. No doubt, economic conditions play a great part in moulding the general direction of cultural and artistic activities, still more so in presenting certain problems and suggesting certain themes to thinkers and artists. But the inner dialectic of an intellectual inquiry or an artistic current itself supplies a propulsion of no mean strength in shaping their lines of development and in opening out new vistas for them. Marxists have rightly pointed out the importance of the economic factor in the causation of great historical events. But that in no way takes away the necessity or diminishes the importance from other points of view of other factors, such as intellectual curiosity, moral and religious zeal, national rivalry, racial hatred, etc. And if we look into the causes of these causal factors themselves, the non-economic factors will no doubt include the economic factors amongst their causes, but not exclusively. Equally will the economic factors include the mental and spiritual factors besides the economic and geographical factors amongst their causes. This of course makes the study of history immensely complex and historical prophecy impossible. But why must we presume otherwise?

Is there then no truth in the theory of historical materialism? We have seen before that historical materialism is, properly speaking, historical economism. It can be summed up in two well-known propositions: (1) The economic life of society *determines*—in the last analysis—its political and cultural life; (2) the latter can be *explained* in terms of the former. If the italicised words are strictly interpreted, neither proposition is tenable. That is what we have tried to establish so far. But very roughly and vaguely understood, there is a measure of truth in both. It is not only a question of admitting—as Popper thinks¹²—that all social studies will profit if they are carried out with a view to the economic conditions of society. There is a little more to it.

Whatever might have been the origins of art, science and philosophy, it would be a gross mis-statement to say to-day that the highest flights of creative imagination or the subtlest exercise of reason in quest of truth are determined by the mode of production or are reflections of the economic structure of society. The movement of culture has been from biological utility to biological superfluity. By and large, it is produced by a small minority of individuals emancipated from the economic forces and pressures

of society—not necessarily owners of private property or their protégés (let us recall only the names of Jesus, Spinoza and Gorki), for economic emancipation is possible and is probably more complete on the ascetic plane. And these emancipated individuals create not primarily for the social utility of their products but because they must seek to quench their thirst for beauty, truth and perfection. Needless to say, I am ignoring hack writers and artists.

But not all, and not necessarily the greatest works of reason, imagination or insight produce any noticeable impact on the course of history. That depends not only on the degree of emancipation of the creators of culture but also on the degree of emancipation of its possible recipients, i.e., the majority of the members of any society. The lives of the vast majority of men, however, are still dominated by the struggle to exist and to continue the species at the barest level of subsistence. The procurement and production of necessities take up almost all their time, and occupy their minds so completely as to leave little room for anything else. Thus it is that the social potency of the cultural activities of the small minority of emancipated individuals depends upon their ability to connect themselves directly or indirectly, deliberately or accidentally with the biological needs and the economic life of the large unemancipated majority—even if it be by way of mere wish-fulfilment. That is the most admissible sense in which not all and not always the best, but the socially accepted, the socially dynamic systems of thought, creations of art, and the moral insight of saints and prophets can be said to be 'the reflection of the economic life of society.' It is not a question of the ultimate origin of our cultural superstructure, as Plekhanov and Stalin thought, for that leads us beyond human history to a sort of theological inquiry into the first cause. And it is certainly not true that the activities of the cultural sphere are merely epiphenomenal and causally impotent, the active causes of historical events being confined to the economic under-currents—as 'the vulgar Marxists' believe.

Our criticism of the Marxist thesis does not prevent us from recognising that not cultural production as such but its ability to introject itself as a major force in the dynamics of history is roughly proportional to its ability to reflect the economic structure of society. Marxist historians have successfully shown how even religious creeds could spread, in other words, appeal to the masses, only when they answered (however indirectly) to some of the basic, i.e., biological, needs of man. With the progress of society from barbarism to civilisation, from necessity to freedom (which has been taking place continuously throughout history though very slowly and along a zig-zag course, and is not due to announce itself explosively on being touched off by the spark of the proletarian revolution), and with the emergence

of larger groups of relatively emancipated individuals like those which constitute the socially unattached or loosely attached middle-class intelligentsia of to-day, this tying up of cultural production with economic production is likely to become looser and progressively a negligible factor in the social importance of culture. That is to say, even those products of culture which do not answer to, or reflect, the economic needs of man will be valued by society at large, instead of by a handful of connoisseurs and congnoscenti as at present. I should like to suggest that the degree of correlation between the intrinsic worth of cultural production and its social potency measures the degree of civilisation reached by the society. As to what measures the intrinsic worth of cultural goods themselves, or whether there is any standard of measurement for it at all, is another question and opens out a different line of inquiry.

⁰ Some of the greatest men in history had to suffer martyrdom physically; Stalin was only a spiritual martyr. This epithet may flatter him a little, for certainly the greater part of the speeches delivered at the 20th Congress of the CPSU contained the bare truth about the man. Equally certainly there was a judicious admixture of what the Americans piquantly call 'character-slaughter'. Anyway, less than a year after his crucifixion began the great resurrection of Stalin, and it appears probable that we are about to witness the rebuilding of his temples on whose rubble his former disciples were dancing the Gopak a short while ago. The major part of Stalin's writings had never quite lost their sacredness, and to-day I suppose one can safely quote him again as the standard authority on Marxism.

¹ Cf. George L. Kline's review of B. Petrov—*Filosofskaya nischeta Marksizma*; Review of *Metaphysics*, Sept. 1955.

² Marx—Preface to the Critique of Political Economy.

³ Engels—Letter to Bloch, Sept. 21, 1890.

⁴ Max Eastman—Marxism, Is It Science? p. 77.

⁵ The quotations are from Engels' Funeral Oration at the grave of Karl Marx.

⁶ Cf. Sidney Hook—Towards the Understanding of Karl Marx. p. 155; also Howard Selsam—What is Philosophy, p. 105.

⁷ Mao Tse-Tung—On Contradiction, p. 50-51.

⁸ Maurice Cornforth—Historical Materialism, p. 113.

⁹ Hartmann—Ethics, Vol. I, p. 290.

¹⁰ Urban—Beyond Realism and Idealism, p. 21.

¹¹ Plekhanov—In Defence of Materialism, p. 149.

¹² Popper—The Open Society, Vol. II, p. 79.

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The two preceding articles might appear to be in the nature of a symposium—the former approaching the subject from a general philosophical standpoint, the latter specifically concerned with the singular merits and demerits of one such theory. This, however, is purely accidental. The articles are brought cut together instead of in successive issues as they supplement each other in important ways. Consequently, it is possible and perhaps profitable to read them as two parts of one article with only a slight overlap between them—of course written independently of each other, by authors with somewhat similar though by no means identical standpoints.

EDITORS.

Indian and Greek Epic

By ROBERT ANTOINE

ONE who undertakes a comparative study between two cultures is usually guided by a half-conscious bias which can assume either of the two following forms. He may so handle the material at his disposal as to concentrate almost exclusively on the similarities, real or apparent, of the terms of the comparison. Or his mind may react more spontaneously to the differences and unconsciously exaggerate them.

The first attitude—which we could conveniently call ‘cultural syncretism’—is often the characteristic of a generous, yet, shallow mind. Generous, because it is anxious to bring about harmony and unity and naturally refrains from extolling one culture at the expense of another. Shallow, because, in order to achieve its ideal of harmony, it rests satisfied with a superficial view of things and avoids the labour of deeper analysis for fear of seeing its conclusions challenged.

The second attitude—to which we give the name of ‘cultural chauvinism’—is that of a mind whose natural sharpness is placed at the service of a partisan spirit. It seeks to establish the superiority and uniqueness of one culture and, in pursuing its end, exercises its ingenuity either to undermine any attempt at comparison or to prove that all similarities are the result of dependence or plagiarism.

Is it at all possible to combine the syncretist’s generosity and the partisan’s acuity while avoiding the former’s simplicity and the latter’s parochialism? A perfectly unbiased mind, if it could at all exist, would probably remain inactive, for the human mind never acts as a passive mirror, but rather as an actively selective organ. Facts, and especially human facts, never speak for themselves. They are made to say what the human observer prompts them to express.

Should we, therefore, give up all comparative studies on the plea that perfect impartiality is impossible? I do not think so. It is enough to know, and to guard oneself against, the dangers which such studies entail. If we keep in mind that, within the general pattern according to which human societies arise and evolve, there remains ample room for individuality and originality, we can safely undertake the fascinating task of comparing cultures.

I. *The General Pattern of Heroic Society*

All the great heroic traditions owe their existence to tribal culture. The basis on which tribal society rests is the principle of kinship and its social unit is the family group. Whereas the higher culture of the territorial state is founded on the idea of individual citizenship and gives rise to urban civilization, the tribal organization ignores national feeling and finds its social expression in feudalism. Feudalism is essentially an exchange of services between defenceless peasants and the military lord. In return for the protection which the lord gives them, the peasants offer him their land and promise to man his armies. When, to the economic necessity of finding a protector, is added the element of personal devotion to the leader, the cult of the hero is born.

On the other hand, epic poetry is usually retrospective. It develops at a time when tribal society enters into contact with a higher civilization and tends to project in the past certain elements of urban culture which give to the old capitals an anachronic aspect of modernity. It is this marginal character of epic poetry which explains how tribal heroes can gradually be transformed into national heroes.

It is interesting to note how epic poetry, in three different historical contexts, blossomed at an intermediary period, a kind of 'Middle Ages' between two urban civilizations. In India, after the disappearance of the Indus civilization and before the rise of the Mauriyas; in Greece, after the decline of Aegean culture and before the emergence of Athenian dominance; in Europe, after the fall of the Roman Empire and of the short-lived Carolingian renaissance and before the urban civilization of the 14th century.

1. *The aristocrats at war.* Heroic society is an aristocratic society. In the Greek Epic, the heroes are called the '*aristoi*', i.e. the best among men. Stereotyped adjectives are used, referring probably to some well-known quality of some ancestor, and the name of the father or a patronymic '*taddhitanta*' continually reminds us that nobility is hereditary. The feuds which result in bloody battles have never the character of national wars in which the common people play the prominent part. In fact, the common people do not appear at all except as a necessary background against which the valour and prowess of the heroes stand out in greater splendour. Most of the fights are single fights, extraordinary duels witnessed by a crowd of spellbound soldiers and retainers.

The origin of the great battles is, in all cases, the personal offence of a hero's honour. And it is generally a woman who supplies the occasion. In the Iliad, it is self-evident. The Greek tribes, personified in their leaders, agree to avenge the honour of Menelaus whose wanton wife has eloped

with the Trojan Paris. There is not the slightest hint of a national campaign and the leadership of Agamemnon has no other reason than the necessity of a concerted attack. Again, it is the wounded pride of Achilles which proves fatal to the Greek armies and brings the Trojans within an ace of victory. The young lady whom Achilles had received as a prize for his bravery is arbitrarily taken away from him by Agamemnon. Finally, if Achilles decides to enter the fray, it is not out of a sense of solidarity with the routed Greeks, but of the purely personal desire to avenge his friend's death. National feeling, if it exists at all in the *Iliad*, is to be found among the Trojans. For them, everything is at stake, as it will be for the Greeks at the time of Marathon and Salamis. Yet, in spite of the simple solution of returning to her lawful husband the woman who is the cause of their extreme misfortune, they choose to fight because the Greeks have challenged them. It is a question of '*panache*' and it overrides the security of the city.

The tragedy of the *Ramayana* begins with the foolish claim of a vain woman, Kaikeyi. King Dasaratha who knows her claim to be unreasonable considers himself bound by the sacred duty of keeping his word. The welfare of his subjects and their undisguised disapproval count for nothing before his misconceived obligation towards Bharata's mother. And thus Rama, Sita and Lakshmana leave for the forest. Bharata is the only one whose attitude must have made sense to the more enlightened. But his efforts are all in vain. The capture of Sita by Ravana, constitutes a lesser national problem than Helen's elopement, for the people of Ayodhya have nothing to do in rescuing her. It is a personal injury to Rama who, instead of calling on his own people to fight with him, for their beloved princess, gets involved in the family dispute of a monkey tribe and gains the allegiance of the winning side. After Ravana's defeat and the recovery of Sita, it may be argued that Rama gives up the arbitrary rule of a feudal lord and rates very high the feelings and opinions of his subjects. The fire ordeal and the second banishment of Sita are undeniable proofs of his new policy. Yet, one wonders if that new policy heralds the dawn of a new era. It is so much in keeping with Rama's submissiveness at the time of his banishment. Rightly has Rama been given as the ideal of the '*santa*' hero and one aspect of his love for peace seems to be that trouble should be avoided at any cost: neither his right to the throne, nor his absolute conviction that Sita is innocent can arouse in him the passion necessary to resist the trouble-makers.

The destinies of the Pandavas and the Kauravas are decided in a game of dice. This is typical of a feudal setting where the rulers dispose of their kingdoms as they would of their private fortunes. The overbearing pride of the winners and the spiteful humiliation of the losers reaches its climax

in the Draupadi incident. It is around the ill-used Draupadi that the personal antagonism of the feudal lords crystallizes. The terrible imprecation of Bhima against Duhsasana: 'I shall split his breast and drink his blood', is the real declaration of war and the long exile will be unable to delete its memory. Its gruesome realization can easily bear comparison with the savage profanation of Hector's body at the hands of Achilles.

After the exile, when the Pandavas delegate Krishna to Duryodhana in order to reach a compromise, it is Draupadi, with her untied hair as a perpetual reminder of her humiliation, who passionately opposes all kinds of peaceful settlement. The way in which Krishna conducts the interview with the leader of the Kauravas is strongly influenced by the bellicose attitude of Pancali.

2. *The aristocrats in peace time.* Success in war being at the same time the condition of survival and the highest glory to which the heroes aspire, it is quite natural to see the young aristocrats apply themselves enthusiastically to their military training. Under the wise guidance of Drona, the young Pandavas and Kauravas vie with one another in the display of their skill, while the elders and a crowd of simple admirers look on with immense delight. Their loud acclamations fill the air.²

In the Ramayana, young Rama receives his training from Visvamitra. The expedition against the demons is not just a game but is meant to give Rama an idea of the evil forces with which he will have to grapple in his maturity. Homer has not depicted the early training of his heroes. Old Phoenix, however, gives us a glimpse of Achilles' education. Pleading with the sulking hero, Phoenix tells him: 'My noble Lord Achilles, if you really think of sailing home and are so obsessed by anger that you refuse to save the gallant ships from going up in flames, what is to become of me without you, my dear child? How could I possibly stay there alone? Did not the old charioteer Peleus make me your guardian when he sent you off from Phthia to join Agamemnon? You were a mere lad, with no experience of the hazards of war, nor of debate, where people make their mark. It was to teach you all these things, to make a speaker of you, and a man of action, that he sent me with you; and I could not bring myself to let you go, dear child, and to stay behind, not if God himself undertook to strip me of my years and turn me into the sturdy youngster I was when I first left Hellas, the land of lovely women.'³

Skill and strength are the necessary qualities of warriors. But these qualities have also a social importance which cannot be ignored. They are rated so high that a king is ready to give his daughter in marriage to the strongest, irrespective of the caste to which he belongs.

Dhrstadyumna, brother of Draupadi solemnly declares: 'Be he a

brahmin or a king or a merchant or a sudra, he who will string this excellent bow will get my sister in marriage."⁴

Sita is won by Rama because he alone can bend the bow. Draupadi is won by Arjuna for the same reason. Arjuna, to avoid detection, had come in the guise of a brahmin. The amusing scene describing the misgivings of the brahmins as one of them rises to perform a feat which the well-trained princes were unable to accomplish, makes us guess the pride and joy they felt when Arjuna defeated the kings at their own game. At the end of the Odessey, Ulysses, having reached Ithaca after his long peregrinations, finds his palace occupied by the suitors. Penelope, prompted by Athena, decides to put them to the test: 'Listen, my lords, you have fastened on this house in the long absence of its master, as the scene of your perpetual feasts, and you could offer no better pretext for your conduct than your wish to win my hand in marriage. That being the prize, come forward now, my gallant lords; for I challenge you to try your skill on the great bow of King Ulysses. And whichever man among you proves the handiest at stringing the bow and shoots an arrow through everyone of these twelve axes, with that man I will go, bidding goodbye to this house which welcomed me as a bride.' The suitors fail. No doubt, they are grieved at the loss of Penelope, but, as Eurymachus puts it, 'what does grieve me more is the thought that our failure with his bow proves us such weaklings compared with the godlike Ulysses. The disgrace will stick to our names for ever.' Like Arjuna, Ulysses appears unrecognized and humbly asks to be allowed to test the strength of his hands. The suitors are annoyed: "We don't want the common folk to be saying things like this, 'A poor lot, these; not up to the fine gentleman whose wife they want to marry! *They* can't string his bow. But in comes some casual tramp, strings the bow with the greatest ease and shoots through all the marks!' That is the kind of thing they will say; and our reputation might suffer."⁵ We live here in the same world and breathe the same atmosphere as in Drupada's palace and Janaka's capital.

3. *The aristocrats facing the mystery of life.* Life in the Epic age was essentially active. Games, gambling, conquests and military campaigns kept the heroes occupied, while the recital by bards of the glorious deeds of their ancestors gave an ever new lustre to the flame of chivalry. Before the compilation of the main epic narratives as we have them to-day, there must have existed a great number of independent lays celebrating different families or dynasties. The Mahabharata contains a great wealth of such stories quoted as examples to the heroes. The Iliad and the Odessey, though less rich than the Mahabharata, use the same device and the Greek tragedy testifies to the existence of numerous epic cycles not incorporated in the works of Homer. The teaching which appealed to the knights of old was a

concrete teaching which left out abstruse speculations. It may be reasonably surmised that the Arjuna and the Krishna of the Bhagavadgita belong to a later age when speculation had taken precedence over action.

In fact, a life of action has its own problems. Man realizes that his plans are often thwarted and that he is not the sovereign master of his destiny. There are mysterious forces at work which must be reckoned with. Above all, the great mystery of death is ever present in the precarious life of warriors. The heroic mentality acknowledges the presence of the mystery, is deeply impressed by it, but does not attempt to give it an abstract solution.

In the face of the mystery of life with its passions, its failures, its cruelty, the hero, while feeling responsible for his actions, knows that the divine power ordains and guides everything. To our rationalistic minds, his position may seem to be illogical: either one is a fatalist and denies human freedom and responsibility, or one believes in freedom and denies the supreme power of fate. But our argument would not disturb the hero's belief. It is reality which interests him and reality is complex. The human and divine worlds are not juxtaposed, they intermingle so intimately that to consider one apart from the other destroys the very texture of reality. It is the divine world which gives to human existence its third dimension and makes of it a living and full-blooded tragedy. Who would be so devoid of sensitivity as to affirm that the epic heroes are mere marionettes activated by the mechanical device of a hidden magician?

Naturalism which has cut off human life from its mysterious roots and claims to explain everything by an analysis of superficial psychology would have made our heroes smile. They knew better and the modern tendency to re-affirm the mystery is much closer to the heroic mentality than the so-called realism of the last century. It is not without significance that depth psychology borrows from the Epic some of its most important symbolism. The inner mystery it tries to penetrate may not be without connection with the transcendent mystery which the heroes of old acknowledged with awe and trembling.

Death, the lurking and inevitable menace, is a constant reminder of life's precarious stability. Sadly recalling the forebodings of defeat in a long and beautiful threnody, old King Dhritarashtra, in a crescendo of despair punctuated by the recurring refrain 'tada nasamse vijayaya Sanjaya,' (तदा नाशंसे विजयाय संजय) concludes by expressing his desire to leave this fruitless existence: 'O Sanjaya, since life is such my desire is to die without delay, for I do not see the slightest advantage in keeping alive'.⁶

In true epic fashion, Sanjaya replies by quoting the examples of hundreds of kings and warriors, far superior to the Kaurava princes, who have lived, fought and died. Their death takes nothing away from their fame and

valour, and life is worth living as long as fate does not snatch it away. Sanjaya does not speculate about future life or rebirth: he states the mystery of life and death and accepts it as a matter of fact: 'There is no reason to lament over what is to be. Who can, through endeavour, change the course of fate? Time is the root of everything, of life and death, of happiness and adversity.'⁷

In the Iliad, the scene between Hector and Andromache has the same message to convey. Andromache is frightened by the bellicose enthusiasm of her husband: 'Hector, you are possessed. This bravery of yours will be your end. You do not think of your little boy and of your unhappy wife, whom you will make a widow soon. Some day the Achaeans are bound to kill you in a massed attack. And when I lose you I might as well be dead. There will be no comfort left, when you have met your doom—nothing but grief.' Hector is not indifferent to his wife's appeal. He loves his son and his wife dearly. Yet, he is a warrior and fate calls him to battle. 'My dear, I beg you not to be too much distressed. No one is going to send me down to Hades before my proper time. But Fate is a thing that no man born of woman, coward or hero, can escape. Go home now, and attend to your own work, the loom and the spindle, and see that the maidservants go on with theirs. War is men's business; and this war is the business of every man in Ilium, myself above all.'⁸

II. Indian and Greek Perspectives

Although much more might be said about the similarity between the Indian and the Greek Epic, we must now turn our attention to what makes them different. For they are different. There is an atmosphere, a spiritual climate proper to the Indian Epic, as there is an outlook and a perspective which characterize the Homeric world. Why is it, for instance, that not a single Greek hero decides, after a life full of activity, to end his days in the peaceful retirement of the forest? Or how is it that the Ramayana and the Mahabharata have been and still are religious books from which millions draw spiritual comfort and guidance, whereas the Iliad and the Odyssey, which have shaped the Greek temperament, have never been sacred books?

The mystery of death is ever present in the life of epic heroes. But the Indian temperament, so well depicted in the boy Naciketa of the *Katha-kopanisad*, seeks to penetrate the mystery which the Greek temperament is rather inclined to accept. Hence, a fundamental difference between the two outlooks. The more deeply the Indian soul meditates and reflects on the transitoriness of life, the less importance it gives to purely human

achievement. The more forcibly death appears as inevitable to the Greek hero, the more urgent also the necessity to live fully the short time which destiny allots to man. The similarity which we have pointed out in the first part of this essay, is the similarity of a spontaneous and prospective tendency which precedes all metaphysical reflection. The Greek Epic remains all through spontaneous and prospective. The Indian Epic shows a gradual evolution towards a more reflexive and meditative attitude. In Greece, epic poetry and the metaphysical quest have remained two separate achievements. In India, both have met and blended, and that blending has conferred on the epic itself a character of its own. It has been the work of long centuries, especially for the *Mahabharata*. Each generation had its contribution to make, and the whole work was not written under the guidance of a logical mind anxious to safeguard the logical consistency of the various portions, but under the inspiration of the vital unity of a living people whose growth and development are reflected in its numerous verses as the changing landscape in the waters of a powerful river. What we are looking for in our study of the epic is not an abstract system which could be neatly summarized in a few clear and definite propositions, but human and concrete attitudes which reveal not the vision of a few philosophers but the temperament of living peoples. Our aim is not to pass a verdict or to decide that one temperament is better than the other, but to vibrate in unison with both temperaments since both are able to reveal to us hidden depths of the human soul.

1. *The Indian and the Greek temperament as revealed in the composition of the Epic.* When we read the Greek Epic, we are forced to concentrate on the story and on the heroes. Without preamble, the *Iliad* begins with the narrative of Achilles' wrath. In spite of lengthy speeches and inconsistencies in the narrative, the story of the Achaeans' gradual discomfiture proceeds apace, and we are never allowed to forget the central theme. The sulking Achilles remains ever present, and we are anxiously waiting for the relenting of his stubborn resentment. The death of Patroclus arouses Achilles from his inaction and the doom of Ilium is sealed. The *Odyssey* is perhaps the first novel ever written. Ulysses drifting on the high seas, among unspeakable dangers, pursued by the vindictiveness of the god Poseidon, relates his adventures and finally reaches his dear Ithaca, while his son Telemachus, unable to solve the difficulties which he faces at home, undertakes a long and vain quest for his father. Both finally meet at Ithaca and defeat the suitors.

The *Mahabharata* has been called 'a vast repository of Hindu traditional lore, philosophy and legend.' Its bulk is eight times as great as that of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* put together. It would be ridiculous to look for a well-

focussed narrative without digressions. It is not meant to be a simple story, and its greatness lies in the fact that, around the main story which occupies about one fifth of the whole work, the folklore, the wisdom and the religious aspirations of long centuries have clustered into an immense florilegium of Indian life. The *Adi-parva* after announcing the great tale, keeps us waiting for sixty chapters (i.e. over 2000 verses) before beginning the story of the Pandavas and Kauravas. Then, like a majestic river, the story follows its slow development, with many interruptions. The *Sabha-parva* with its 2500 verses brings us to the exile of the Pandavas. The *Vana-parva* is a real store-house of legends and beautiful tales and spreads over more than 17000 verses. It is a real forest of myths, legends and instructions of all kinds. The *Virata-parva* is like a short interlude of more than 2000 verses. After the failure of a peaceful solution and the preparation of the armies (*Udyoga-parva* with nearly 8000 verses), Sanjaya's account of the great battle begins. The *Bhisma-parva* (close to 6000 verses) ends with the pathetic sight of Bhisma dying on a bed of arrows. The *Drona-parva* (about 9500 verses) relates the fall of Jayadratha and the end of Drona. Bhima's revenge over Duhsasana and Karna's death at the hands of Arjuna are related in the *Karna-parva* (about 5000 verses). After a long interruption devoted to the relation of Balarama's pilgrimage to the Sarasvati, the battle comes to an end by the unfair victory of Bhima over Duryodhana. That is the *Salya-parva* (about 4000 verses). The remaining Kauravas attack the Pandavas at night and massacre their armies. The five brothers and Krishna escape death (*Sauptika-parva* with 800 verses). In the *Stri-parva* (800 verses), the Kaurava ladies, headed by Gandhari, visit the battlefield. The story is ended. But the great poem goes on with the *Santi-parva* (14000 verses) and the *Anusasana-parva* (8000 verses) embodying the teachings of Bhisma. They are the richest portions of the *Mahabharata* as a treasure-house of Indian tradition: *artha-sastra*, *dharma-sastra*, civil law, strategy, popular wisdom, cosmogony, theology, yoga, psychology, all the branches of knowledge are represented in that immense discourse which must have taken centuries to be written. The story is resumed with Yudisthira's *Asvamedha*. Dhritarashtra, accompanied by Gandhari, Kunti and Vidura, retires to the forest and is granted a vision of the deceased warriors. After the death of Balarama and Krishna, the Pandavas renounce the world.

Although the *Ramayana* is much more similar to the Greek Epic than the *Mahabharata*, there are elements in its composition which differentiate it sharply from Homer's poems. Like Homer, Valmiki is a historical poet who has composed a great epic of startling literary qualities. There is even a great similarity between the general theme of the poems: the great war brought about by the abduction of a princess, the siege of the abductor's

capital, the victory of the lawful husband and the return of the princess to her conjugal home. There is little doubt that the origin of the Ramayana, like that of the Iliad and Odyssey, is to be found in the heroic traditions of warring tribes. Yet, like the Mahabharata, although to a lesser extent, the Ramayana incorporates an imposing collection of interpolated legends and myths which have no direct connection with the central theme. More explicitly than in the Mahabharata, the hero of the Ramayana has become a divine incarnation, and the human interest of the story, without being destroyed, is sublimated into a divine episode.

2. *Humanism Greek and Indian.* From a purely literary point of view, we might be tempted to conclude that the Greek Epic avoids many of the defects of the Indian Epic by a greater fidelity to the objective it has in view. Yet, we may wonder if the lengthy digressions of the Indian Epic and the tendency to divinize its heroes have nothing else to reveal than bad literary workmanship. Is there not a fundamental difference between the Greek and the Indian conception of humanism? 'Conception' is perhaps the wrong word, for we are not comparing two systems of philosophy, but two literary testimonies. It would be better, perhaps, to speak of two tendencies, two innate visions which try to find an expression without ever succeeding in reducing it to a clear cut system. Have you ever heard the same story told by two persons of different temperaments? An extrovert will tell the story with passion, but a passion for the story itself, and he will leave out his personal reflections and subjective impressions, because he obscurely knows that the story can speak for itself. An introvert will allow his mind to wander and try to find in the incidents of the story props for his personal considerations regarding life and destiny. His passion is more interior, and the story itself will gradually lose something of its importance, without, however, disappearing completely. The thread of the narrative will be loose yet continuous. Am I far off the mark when I qualify the Greek Epic temperament as extrovert, and the Indian as introvert?

(a) *The extrovert humanism of Greece.* Spengler's remark that the soul of European antiquity is 'pure present' is certainly very true of the Greek Epic. We have already remarked on the hero's attitude towards death and what follows. It is a mystery which he recoils from investigating and which he accepts without question. Similarly, the mystery of human suffering and human wickedness is solved summarily. 'Are not the gods responsible for that, weaving catastrophe into the pattern of events to make a song for future generations?' That is how King Alcinous consoles Ulysses for the loss of many of his dear friends. What the king is interested in is the story which Ulysses has to tell: 'Explain to us what secret sorrow makes

you weep as you listen to the tragic story of the Argives and the fall of Troy.⁹

What matters for the Greek hero is to make the most of the time allotted to him. Too much speculation is of no avail; it will not postpone the fatal day foreseen by the gods. To fight, to enjoy the pleasures of love and of congenial company, to make a name for himself, 'to listen to a minstrel, while the tables are laden with bread and meat, and a steward carries round the wine and fills the cups,' that is life, and the rest does not count. The transitoriness of human existence never prompts the Greek hero to give up the world and to retire to the forest. Death is the great retirement and it will come in its appointed time.

There are no demons in the Greek Epic. The Cyclops himself is just a savage of immense physical strength who does not represent in any way the dark power which resists the ruling of the gods. Both evil and good in human behaviour have a divine origin. They remain human and we witness in them that strange blending of fatalism and responsibility which are the two facets of all human activities. Listen to Helen after her return to her husband's palace. She is fully conscious of her sin when she declares: 'The Achaeans boldly declared war and took the field against Troy for my sake, shameless creature that I was.' Yet, she also knows that it was not her independent doing: 'Aphrodite blinded me when she lured me to Troy from my own dear country and made me forsake my daughter, my bridal chamber, and a husband who had all one could wish in the way of brains and good looks.'¹⁰

But the gods themselves are so very close to man. Except for the blind submission which they command regarding their arbitrary decisions and partialities, they behave exactly like the heroes of the poem, more recklessly even, for they have nobody to fear. Those humanized gods of the Homeric pantheon will remain 'a fit inspiration for an athletic contest, a statue, or an ode, but (they are) of little use to the philosopher, and entirely unsympathetic to the simple everyday sorrows of mankind.'¹¹ Although they rule everything, they never rob the heroes of their humanity. Their quarrels are reflected in the conflicts that oppose man to man, they positively help their proteges and are personally engaged in the battles of men. But the human warriors do not rise above their human status. We may compare, in this connection, the decisive fight between Achilles and Hector, and the final struggle between Rama and Ravana. We are in two different worlds, the Greek world in which man would be what he is without divine interference, the Indian world in which man, a mere instrument raised to a divine efficiency, breaks his human limits. The Greek heroes are so human that they make one forget the divine operation which sustains them. The

Indian gods are so prominent that they blur the human outlines of the heroes.

(b) *The introvert humanism of India.* This last remark of mine should not lead one to conclude that I have failed to respond to the deep human appeal of innumerable passages of the Indian Epic. I shall try to explain my meaning by a concrete example. I, who am not a Vedantin, have great friends who are Vedantins. In our usual human relations I fully appreciate their humane qualities. But I know that, deep down in their soul, they have a vision which is incompatible with that human distinction between 'I' and 'THOU' which is the very foundation of friendship. And that makes me feel uneasy. My attitude towards the Indian Epic is something of that kind. I love Rama and Sita. Yudhisthira arouses my admiration. The Stri-parva brings tears to my eyes. Arjuna's grief at the news of his son's death moves me deeply. As long as I forget the pattern to which they belong I feel one with them. But there is a pattern. Before trying to describe it, let us first understand how the Indian Epic completes and deepens the Greek vision of life.

The simple fact that the Mahabharata and the Ramayana are accepted, even to-day, as the divine answer to the religious aspirations of millions is a clear indication of the depth of their message. They have given an answer to the eternal questions of the 'why,' the 'whence' and the 'whither' of human existence. The epic story has become an occasion to reflect on the instability of things mundane and to seek for stability. The great heroes who survive the heroic struggle for power realise that power is an empty shell which must be discarded. Evil is a reality which is at work in the world, and the demons are bent on checking the divine control of the universe. They represent a terrible force, both external and internal to man, against which it is the duty of all, according to each one's situation, to fight. Human destiny is not to find its fulfilment in this world. Wisdom more than bravery has the key to the mystery of life. The heroes are continually invited to make the decisive struggle an internal struggle towards final emancipation, while the external struggle is nothing but a passing phase of the world of appearances. With the Indian Epic, we enter into a vast pattern in which human life, human emotions, human values are assumed and transformed.

In the Ramayana, that pattern is outlined in the first book which is certainly a later addition revealing to a nicety the Indian temperament. The gods are much troubled by the demon Ravana who cannot be destroyed except by a man. But, in order to kill him, one would need divine power. Hence, Visnu agrees to be born as a man. The divine struggle weaves itself into a human fabric. Dasaratha begets four sons. Rama is the full incarna-

tion of Visnu, his three brothers are partial incarnations. We may forget about that divine prelude when we read the story of the exile, of the siege of Lanka and of Ravana's defeat. But what we discuss here is not whether or not the addition of the first book fulfils its purpose, but the fact that the first book has been added. In the perspective of that first book, the whole human story of Rama and Sita, the abduction of Sita by Ravana, and the battle between Rama and Ravana, become a kind of camouflage of the real story. A camouflage, as we have pointed out, which is not always successful, since the heroes often lose their human dimensions.

For the Mahabharata, the pattern is much more complex. Towards the end, we come to know that all the heroes are divine incarnations. But let us consider one instance, the Bhagavadgita. There is Arjuna, deeply moved at the prospect that he has to fight against his relatives and his gurus. Krishna encourages him to do his duty as a worthy Ksatriya, and that remains within the boundaries of a Greek epic. But when Krishna teaches Arjuna about the eternity of the Self and the illusion of the bodily individuality, the whole struggle, viewed from that perspective, vanishes into something unreal. The whole thing is a big puppet show in which the actors are moved by supernatural agencies.

The Indian pattern, as distinguished from the Greek outlook, is characterized by the fact that there is no strict division between the divine, the demonic and the human. The Law of Rebirth allows the spirit to move across the three worlds in its pilgrimage towards liberation. How many demons do we not see released from their bondage once the heroes, under divine guidance, act as the unconscious instruments of a superior power? That fluidity of the Indian universe dissolves, as it were, all that is specifically divine, demonic or human, into an immense current of mysterious and predetermined events which follow their course under the appearance of spontaneity.

Appearance or reality? That is the question which the confrontation of the Greek and the Indian Epic brings to our minds, but which it does not solve. Both the Indian and the Greek heroes have a keen perception of 'that void, that nothingness at the bottom of things,' but are inclined to react differently to it. While the Greek hero feels that human existence is a gift which must be enjoyed, the Indian hero tends to see in it a bondage from which one should escape. The greatest passages of both epics are those where the gift-aspect and the bondage-aspect are blended into that energizing humility which is man's closest realisation of what he is.

¹ *Mahabharata*, Sabhaparva, 90. 57

² *Mahabharata*, Adi-parva, 144. 39

³ *Iliad*, transl. by E. V. Rieu (Penguin Classics) Book IX, p. 172

⁴ *Mahabharata*, Adi-parva, 203. 19-20

⁵ *Odyssey*, transl. by E. V. Rieu (Penguin Classics), Book XXI, pp. 317-318, 324

⁶ *Mahabharata*, Adi-parva, 1. 245.

⁷ *Ibid.* 271-272.

⁸ *Iliad*, Book VI, pp. 128, 129

⁹ *Odyssey*, Book VIII, p. 138

¹⁰ *Odyssey*, Book IV, pp. 68, 71

¹¹ A. R. Burn, *Minoans, Philistines and Greeks*, p. 256

CONSOLATION IN WORDS

(For the Sekhars)

Sorrows seek us out when we are single;
 our defences down,
 we stretch our too mortal hands
 to clutch at a whirlwind of stars—
 But before elusive time
 tugs at the living tides of our hands,
 our eyes get blinded by a scurry of light,
 and all we know is,

the hands rocking like reeds!

The thickness of our days

blinding us in a fog of flesh,

the dark walk to the precipice,
 the relentless roots of our lost dreams,
 unremember us

into ordinary ways!

The night is our city of stars,
 whose streets are mortgaged to our sleeps,
 and then we are the lucky orphans of the dark,
 but the morning finds us

on the pavement of the sun,
 huddled like dawn birds,
 dishes for somebody's dinner!

Man is a mood

of unconcerned leaves,
 of wayward waters,
 and of blind birds.

K. RACHAVENDRA RAO

Faith For A Complex World

By HUMAYUN KABIR

SENSITIVE minds in all ages and countries have been troubled and perplexed by the problems of the world in which they were born. Even periods which in retrospect seem eras of great prosperity and promise were not free from such feelings. Men have always looked before and after, and rebelled against the existing order. But for their divine discontent men would not have been men, and there would have been no progress in human affairs.

Subjectively, all periods have been periods of crisis, but the modern age is also objectively a specially critical time. Never before has the world been so unified as today. Never before have problems been so global in their scope. In earlier ages, different societies lived in comparative isolation and ignorance of one another. One nation could progress while others remained static or even suffered retrogression. Today men are, for good and evil, linked in one common fate. A threat to one community is a threat to the entire human race.

The unification of the world is due to advances in science and technology. They have increased immensely man's capacity to produce goods and services to meet his needs. By improving means of communication, they have almost annihilated space and time and literally made all peoples one another's neighbours. Simultaneously they have led to the invention of terrible weapons of destruction which threaten the very existence of man.

Improved means of communication have broken down barriers in a double sense. Physical movement is much quicker and easier than in the past. Increasingly, different societies are coming into closer contact with one another. Even more important is the facility of communication in the world of ideas. Formerly, an idea took years if not decades to spread in the country of its origin. Today an idea can be broadcast throughout the world instantaneously. Mass media of communication have accelerated the movement of ideas and enormously increased the volume of their pressure. Indoctrination has a far wider influence today than we are generally prepared to admit. The pressure of propaganda is seen in its most naked form in the totalitarian countries. We should not, however, underestimate the existence of such pressure in a democracy.

The enormous expansion in contacts between men of different countries, different faiths, different political outlooks and different economic beliefs has led to far-reaching changes in men's attitudes toward one another and the universe. In the past, men generally accepted without question the faith and the institutions of their fathers. Society was static and duties were defined by one's station in life. Today all this has changed. Different systems of beliefs and customs contend for man's loyalty. What one community accepts as an article of faith, another rejects as a superstition. These contacts and comparisons have shaken the beliefs which formerly sustained the individual. An immediate result is a world-wide weakening of traditional faith.

An increase in the number of doubters and sceptics has led to an increase in human unhappiness. To doubt is to make an effort. An attitude of scepticism involves a constant strain. All except the strongest natures are worn out under the strain of such continual effort. This explains why so many intellectuals finally seek shelter in authoritarian religious beliefs or dogmatic secular creeds.

The loss of faith is in itself a cause of spiritual discomfort, if not misery. In addition, there is also the misery which is born of the widening gap between expectation and achievement. In past ages, men were more reconciled to their stations in life. Those lower down in the social scale generally accepted their positions without resentment. Today, they no longer accept a social hierarchy as immutable or sacrosanct. Each man thinks that he is as good as anybody else. There has been an enormous expansion in material comforts, but the expansion in expectations has been greater still.

These problems of the modern world arise directly out of what is perhaps its greatest spiritual achievement. The recognition of the dignity of the individual, even more than the increase of knowledge, is the special glory of the modern age. For the first time in the history of the world, democracy has been accepted as a universal article of faith. Practice may still fall short of profession, but the acceptance of the ideal is itself a great advance. Democracy has brought with it the burden of individual responsibility. In a world where increasing knowledge makes adherence to accepted beliefs increasingly difficult, this burden weighs heavily on most men.

One thing alone is certain. Mankind cannot survive without ideals. Loss of faith is a more insidious disease than the worst of physical maladies. Anthropologists tell us of primitive tribes who die out simply because they have lost faith in their way of life. If the modern world is to survive, we must work for a revival of faith in values.

It is clear that this revival of faith cannot be a mere revival of past beliefs. Things could be taken on trust in a world where knowledge was

circumscribed and mystery surrounded the life of everyday. Science has already solved many of these enigmas and is continually invading the region of the mysterious. The co-existence of different ways of life also makes uncritical acceptance of any faith more difficult. Modern man's ideals must therefore be based on intellectual acceptance. Rationality, not revelation, must govern his code of conduct.

The bewildering complexity of the modern age demands a faith that is rational in nature and universal in content. Those who are theists find in God a natural focus of universal meaning. Even those who are not believers may find purpose in the concept of human dignity. Truth, beauty and goodness are formulations of values larger and more permanent than the individual self. Identification with them inspires men to acts of supreme courage and sacrifice. Our knowledge of the external world is continually expanding. This must be matched by increasing knowledge about our own selves. Never has the Socratic dictum that knowledge is virtue been truer than today.

However far knowledge may go, there will always remain a core of mystery in the heart of things. Individuality is inviolate and demands regard for others. This, and not acquiescence in something which we regard as inferior, is true toleration. Anthropology, history and psychology teach us that what is aberration in one context may be the essence of wisdom in another. The multiplicity of beliefs, customs and institutions demands that, however strongly we may feel that we are right, we must not overlook the possibility that we may in fact be wrong.

Rationality and toleration are necessary but by themselves not sufficient for the solution of the contemporary predicament. Our faith must be enriched by understanding and compassion if we are to go beyond the negative absence of evil to the positive realization of good. The increase of knowledge in the modern age has been accompanied by a decrease in the scope of imagination. This has led to abstract and intellectual judgment of men and affairs. Mere intellectual allegiance cannot, however, stand up against emotional upheavals. The unity of the human race is no longer open to question; but in spite of intellectual recognition of this fact, our emotional identification does not extend beyond the limits of our family or, at most, our nation. This explains why modern man has so often failed in moments of crisis in spite of his professions of loyalty to truth and justice. Imaginative identification based on compassion and understanding of our fellow men can alone build up the strength to resist the pull of parochial or sectional interests.

Scientific advancement has placed in man's hand the key to the solution of the problems of want and misery. It is now within our power to conquer

hunger and disease. It is equally within our power to destroy human society and, indeed, the physical world. Knowledge as such is neutral. Whether our knowledge will be used for destruction or for creative purposes will depend upon the faith which inspires us. Our faith can no longer be based on revelation or mystery, but it must transcend the limitations of the self. A rational understanding of the nature of the external world and of the human personality, toleration for divergent points of view, and imaginative identification with our fellow men through understanding and compassion are the essential ingredients of a faith which alone can sustain our hopes in the troubled and complex world of today.

With acknowledgements to *The American Scholar*, Autumn 1957, and to the *United Chapters of Phi Beta Kappa*.

DESERT INDEMNITY

Smudged with the shadow of a cloud
A headland, like a lion cub's nose,
Slumbered upon ravine-cleft claws.
Puffs of dust blew up and fell.
Tan, yellow, tawny-brown
Rolling dunes lay bared,
Barred by vertical palms,
Biscuit-pale with heat by day
Inertly hung the viscous sky
And indistinguishable water
Moved listlessly beside scorched sand.
With a searing spit-spatting sound
A cindery sail passed sluggishly.
In the afternoon a copper sun
Turned the evening into bronze,
And the heavy air ringed, rippling
As the moon broke surface and rose.
Over the arid waste of earth
In the fertile fields of heaven
Burgeoned the grain of the stars.

LILA RAY

Personality Assessment

By SHYAMSVARUP JALOTA

PERSONALITY seems to be a well-worn term; but the moment you try to grasp its significance, it puts on forms as varied as Proteus. While some persons seek the unique characteristics of personality and hence try to delve into depths searching for the permanent core of the individual, there are others who try to discover the personality of a given man in the opinions and expectations about him among his associates. Thus while the former group is prone to identify personality with the spiritual essence or Atman, it also moves into a speculative orbit that is dotted with metaphysical standpoints and often befogged with the dust of philosophic clashes since prehistory. But the latter point of view is more amenable to observation and experiment, and has formed the basis of scientific enquiry.

The term 'person' has been indeed derived from the Latin word *persona*, which meant a mask worn by players to indicate their characters in a play. So one may assume that a 'person' is what others see of him and know or think about him, specially his character in a social setting. Such an interpretation however errs in overlooking the individual's intimate relation with his own personality, as well as its development in response to the social expectations and demands. It would be better to say that personality represents the peculiar attitudes and behaviour of an individual within a social context. It may be noted here that the influence of one's society is often active on the individual even in isolation, in the form of words used in the course of his thinking and the ideals or values that are implicit in his imagination. Language and ideals are essentially products of 'social interaction.' Language is created to communicate with others. Moral values are accepted ideals for social behaviour. Thus a child's mental and moral development is largely dependent upon his social interaction. However, it is the thinking, imagining and aspiring of a given individual taken together that form the mainsprings of his behaviour. Thus it is these relatively persistent modes of reasoning and the goals of his endeavour that could give us a reliable clue to his personality.

We should also remember that an individual lives and moves with his body. So the bodily build, the peculiarities of his stature and visible features, are of primary importance in the impression he makes on his society and

in determining their expectations of him. But we frequently find that the actual behaviour of an individual is even more important than his appearance. There is no doubt that our *first* impressions of an individual are based upon his overt appearance. The poet Spencer has suggested a plausible reason: 'First He did the body make, then He did the soul create.' We generally assume the soul to be similar to the body, even as we estimate the worth of a person from the outward pretensions of his residence, clothes, etc. However, in both cases there are possibilities of discomfiture. A humble cave may store luxuries suited to a Count of Monte Cristo; and an unfrequented forest rock may hide the treasures of Ali Baba's forty thieves. On the other hand, many a tall edifice may house only a miserly poltroon, and a beautiful cupboard may hide the proverbial skeleton. And taking the other case, a poet has expressed the tragedy of his dis-illusionment: 'Bholi bhali shakal wale hote hain jallad bhi.' (An innocent face may also belong to an executioner.)

The behaviour of an individual is largely determined by his thoughts and feelings, his reasonings as modified by his hopes and fears concerning the objects and persons in his environment. There is no question about the factual accuracy of his estimation: that A is an actual or a potential friend, that B is a probable or a possible enemy. If the attitude towards A is friendly, the behaviour will be positive; and if the attitude towards B is unfriendly, the consequent behaviour will be more or less hostile. In other words, our attitudes towards objects and persons irrespective of their rightness or wrongness mould our behaviour, including demeanour and deportment in any given situation. If we try to understand the development of these attitudes, then we find that they express the cumulative record of the said individual's experiences with objects and persons of a specific class. We have a general congenital preference for certain shapes, sounds, touches, tastes and odours, as well as for certain postures and movements. But their specific combination in a given object or situation is so subtle and complicated, that we often confuse the fruits of experience with the stirrings of heredity and instinct. Further, in the course of our day to day growth we have many episodes of frustration, of unequal struggles and distressing failures; and some of them are such that we refuse to assimilate them within the conscious context of the comprehensive idea of our 'honourable' selves. We repress them out of the reach of our memory, and relegate them to a restless existence in the unknown as well as the unconscious regions of our mind. Thus a considerable portion of any attitude can only be estimated indirectly from its expression in behaviour. We may add that while these attitudes incline the individual towards certain types of positive and negative behaviour, they also predispose him to feel friendly or otherwise in different

situations. In short, these attitudes colour both the reception-sets as well as the response-tendencies of the given individual. Hence, we form the assumption that any assessment of a person's more or less characteristic attitudes towards important life-situations could give us a valid estimate of his effective social personality. This is indeed a basic assumption for all modern techniques for the assessment of human personality.

It is noteworthy that the physique of the individual was the first to secure the attention of the physiologists, and induced them to consider the parallelism between *types* of bodily build and of personality behaviour. The later discoveries of the importance of the endocrines for increasing or reducing the *speed* as well as the *intensity* of bodily activity, led to the formulation of physico-chemical bases for the variations of personality. All of these have had their vogue, and appeal to persons who look for a concrete basis for social adjustments by the individual. But others discover types in the obvious differences among individuals in their responses to a given situation. For instance, this author asked a hundred persons to try their skill in tracing a star-figure, by looking at the inverted mirror-image. When we considered the 'first-attempt tracing times' and drew the frequency distribution graphs, they clearly indicated several types: Some are very fast, but they do not dwell much upon 'accuracy'; others are slow and careful; while others form middling groups.

In many fields a number of behaviour patterns have been observed which could readily fall into psychologically distinct types. Prof. Jung's description of Introverts and Extroverts was very popular until the discovery of the overwhelming proportion of *ambiverts*. Jung and many others have tried a tabulation of personality types along several other dimensions, e.g. theoretical, practical, etc. Such attempts have spurred the conviction that typical personality differences are noticeable, and therefore measurable. The earliest efforts were directed towards the discovery of neurotic, abnormal, or potentially psycho-pathic individuals. Thus these questionnaires included a large number of such items as could elicit information regarding symptoms, bodily and behavioral, sufficient to enable a reasonable diagnosis. Such lists can be easily extended to include the areas important to a social psychiatric worker, as well as of other theoretical interests. Indeed some questionnaires have run into several hundred items. The needs of specialised interest have later taken recourse to selective probing. This has been greatly helped by statistical studies of the utility or discrimination ability of the given topics or items. This has led to the selection of items that are purer or valuable for measuring a given trait, and have proved their worth for a specific purpose.

In this field a very painstaking effort in recent times is the work of

Prof. Raymond B. Cattell. He and his colleagues have spent many years in comparing and selecting the large variety of available questionnaires and other data, to select the most promising group of items that could indicate definite and distinct personality traits. They have undertaken very elaborate statistical procedures, and have put considerable faith in factor-analytic techniques. They have found that most techniques for the measurement of personality usually cover a limited number of basic factors. Prof. Cattell has been inclined to trust some promising leads, and he has formulated a dozen definite basic patterns of personality, and another four as probables for further scrutiny. It is also believed that these basic factors are universal, and not influenced by varying cultures. And the determination of basic universal factors of personality carries an implicit hope that an unusual development of some factor or factors may indicate abnormalities, or deviations of behaviour.

At Banaras, we have been interested in the preparation of a list of questions whose answers could be used as a scale to measure the adjustments of school children to their homes and social life, as well as to estimate their emotional and health attitudes. We got together a hundred and fifty items more or less connected with the said purposes. We had to choose among a number of validation procedures, including factor analysis. So we decided to ask the advice of Prof. H. J. Eysenck as well as of Prof. R. B. Cattell regarding our proposed procedures. While agreeing with our suggested procedure, Prof. Cattell asked us to consider working with his selected '16 Personality Factor Test' in the Indian population. We gladly accepted the onus of preparing a Hindi version of the 16PF test. We later learnt that there were other studies also being done with similar versions in different linguistic areas. So it was easy to imagine the possibility of verifying the existence of basic personality factors inspite of varying cultures and climes. While a number of these studies are still in progress, we have been able to obtain certain interesting comparisons with the college student male group tested at Banaras with a similar group from America.

We found that the average Banaras college adult, as compared with American standards, has the same average (or negligibly different) scores on 12 out of the said 16 factors. But on 3 of the rest, he is *somewhat* different, and on one alone he is *rather* different. These indicate that in an American group he would appear as rather 'emotional and unstable' besides being somewhat 'sensitive and effeminate,' as well as seem 'dull and silent.' Technically he could be described as somewhat 'desurgent' with low ego strength. On the other hand, if we compare the average scores of the American college adult with the norms calculated for the Banaras University group, then he falls in the average group on 6 factors, and is negligibly different

on the rest ten. Within the Indian college group, thus, the average American scholar would appear relatively bright and mature, a shade more capable and emotionally stable, also somewhat dominant, being enthusiastic and talkative. He would appear slightly 'adventurous and sophisticated' as well as a shade better polished and shrewd. He would be judged a bit tough, practical and realistic, being relatively more confident and secure; but on occasions he would be taken as slightly conservative and uncritical. As most of the differences are indeed statistically insignificant, one may well hope that the picture of human personality among the various college adults is pretty similar. Many more such studies are required however to bring about scientific conviction.

In all measurements of personality with the help of questionnaires we run the risk of biased answers. This is partly due to a misunderstanding of the language used; and even more so due to a more or less conscious desire to pose in a more socially desirable direction. For example out of one group of a hundred recruits for a police job, the query about their preference for spending the afternoon leisure in 'a game of cards,' or in 'visiting an art gallery', was answered by an over-whelming majority in favour of the artistic tendency. This author for one would need several other arguments to admit that these are statements of facts about these individuals, or for this group. Hence some clever psychologists have included certain almost universally true statements about human failings, to trap the proportion of definite and perhaps deliberate mis-statements by interested persons. For instance, it is a common experience that sometimes one finds it difficult to speak the truth. So a person denying it would be trying to pass off as better than the possible best. A score of such questions in a personality test could thus prove of considerable practical value. In some tests such mis-statements have been calculated as lie-scores, and used to modify the candidate's other scores. We also assume that when we are dealing with common college populations, who are not threatened with any damage to their scholastic prospects through such 'personality assessments,' and indeed who are likely to gain useful advice on their personality deviations from the college counselling services, there is but little chance of deliberate distortions. Thus these college adults are the most frequently observed normal populations for the preparation of these personality inventories and the formulation of scales. It has been also noted that the proportion of thus calculated 'definitely abnormal' individuals in the said groups does not exceed 3 to 5%. Thus such computations act as a practical check on the probable accuracy of our scales.

A very interesting method of personality assessment is the estimation of an individual's projection of deeper motives and attitudes into his ap-

preciation of relatively indefinite situations in pictures, or ink-blots, or cloud-formations, etc. If we show the picture of a couple of men to a person, and ask him about what is going on, as well as the probable antecedents and consequents, we come across a wide variety of imaginative interpretations: there is tragedy in some and comedy in others; there are visions of success and of failure; definite logical statements as well as mere indecision and fantasy, etc. Since individual accounts differ in most particulars, these peculiarities are taken to be symbolic of their own special patterns of hopes and fears, of known conflicts and of unknown complexes. Such techniques largely rely upon qualitative interpretations, mostly based upon the speculations of pet theories of psycho-dynamics. In such cases, the theoretical understanding, intellectual acumen and the width of one's practical experience play a considerable part in the adequacy of one's appreciation of the data obtained through projection techniques. Hence in each case the cautious clinician is inclined to strive for corroborative materials from other sources, to verify the leads suggested by the given qualitative assessments.

The quest for personality assessment has been with us for all times. Theoretical speculation has suggested certain aspects and techniques that have been duly tried in practical experience. This quest has been going on with some success in certain areas of this vast and varied field. Practice and theory go on to supplement and modify each other. Modern psychology and scientific techniques are trying to probe a little deeper, and hope to attain some improved accuracy in our estimations. However, they have to contend with prejudice and ignorance not excluding vested interests; and there are continuing attempts to circumvent the former and reduce the latter.

The Problem of Teaching English

By IQBAL AHMAD

SOMETIMES one fears that in our desire to push English to make place for Hindi, we might push it too far. If we do so it will be unfortunate, for we shall be the losers in the end.

We must realize once for all that we need English, that for the next 50 years we shall need it more than our national language, that it is not competing with the national language for a higher place, and lastly it is not a hangover of British imperialism, as a number of people seem to think, like the grin of the Cheshire cat which lingers even when the cat has disappeared. In fact English is the only good thing that our rulers have done to us. No man is an island, wrote the poet Donne in the 17th Century. No country can be an island in the 20th. We have to take part in the great human experience, and our sole means of doing so is through English.

It is at this point, when English has been accepted, begins our worry as teachers of English. How are we to teach it, teach it effectively? For we know that the old methods we are following are not leading us anywhere. The courses of study we take up with the boys are 'unrealistic,' to say the least, bearing no relation to the need and understanding of the young undergraduates who come up to the universities.

The majority of these boys have read nothing except a few text books with the help of bazaar notes. These boys with feeble digestions, we feed on Shakespeare, Wordsworth, Shelley and such strong meat. It is not fair to them. How can one expect them to follow the rhythm and thought-structure of the English language, when their total reading does not exceed a few hundred pages (70% of my boys admit that they have not read even one full-length novel in English). How can one expect them to read lyrical poetry, which presupposes not only a mastery of the language mechanism on the part of the reader but also emotional responses to words and word-combinations, when they have no idea of grammar, when their spelling is so shaky that they misspell simple words like skill, writer, tongue (all taken from their notebooks).

Equipped so poorly as this, when they painfully plod through books too difficult for them, they acquire nothing except a further distaste and dislike of English.

Realising the uselessness of the traditional routine teaching, some of us have experimented with other methods in our tutorial classes, where numbers are smaller and a little individual attention is possible. We explain to them that their dislike of English is understandable. Nobody likes doing a thing if he cannot do it well, that is how we are all made. But unfortunately nobody can do it well unless one has given himself enough practice. It is like learning to ride a bicycle. You have to practise, practise, and not mind the frequent tumbles. But once the correct reflexes are formed it becomes easy—enjoyable. So what stands between them and the wonderful world of English is this lack of practice. They have to grow a familiarity, an intimacy with it, as a fish develops intimacy with water by just being in it.

This intimacy, we tell them, will not come by reading Shakespeare, but simple books of prose to begin with, even children's books. My class list was H. G. Wells' *THE INVISIBLE MAN*, Pearl Buck's *THE GOOD EARTH*, Maugham's *OF HUMAN BONDAGE*, J. B. Priestley's *THE GOOD COMPANIONS*, and E. M. Forster's *A PASSAGE TO INDIA* (though difficult, but for a very good reason).

Only novels were chosen because they use language on different levels, as wide as life itself. There is description, reflection, dialogue, slang and what not in them, whereas books of criticism and essays incline towards one kind of language. All the books were 20th Century, because of the modern tone in them. Although English has changed little from the time of Dryden in the 17th Century, yet every age has had a slightly different voice. So we thought we would start them with the present, the living, the sort of English that is flourishing today. *A Passage To India* was included because of the Indian background; it had at least this known quantity in it. Now it was the way these novels were to be read that was all important. They were not to be galloped through. They were to be read slowly, very slowly, ten pages a day, in an hour to an hour and a half. The language interest was to be first and the story interest second. Every word was to be read and not taken for granted, and if the meaning was not absolutely clear, well, one had to reach for the dictionary. The student was to watch individual words and words in groups, how they joined hands, how sentences were formed, how one sentence handed over the idea to the next without dropping it like expert relay runners.

Yes, the punctuation too was to be seen, where the words get tired and like to rest. Do you often come across the colon nowadays? And above all they were to note how people talked. Just ten pages a day, not more—seeing the language at work, words coming to life. If a student, we said, read three books like this in six months, he will have done a lot. The subsequent

books would become easier, the use of the dictionary less frequent as his vocabulary built up, his pace faster. Changing like this from gear to gear he would soon be speeding along in top gear, moving smoothly and easily even on difficult ground like Shakespeare and the rest of them.

The method did not work. Either the inclination and will to learn English had been successfully killed off before the boy reached the university stage, or he unconsciously refused to play the beginner when he knew he was in the middle of the race, or the method demanded more discipline than he had developed.

Some of us tried model sentences, applicable to the most recurring situations in daily, ordinary life. The sentences did not fix in the mind, probably because they were independent sentences with no situation to hold them together.

So either in self-defence or because we do read a little psychology at times, we reached the conclusion that we could not do much with these boys, because they were partly baked and partly clay. They have to be caught younger. Nature endows a child up to 11 or 12 years of age with the precious gift of learning a language by imitation, by absorption, without ever being conscious of analogy with or difference from his mother tongue. Later he tries to learn it objectively, seeing it from outside—analysing it instead of imitating.

Besides, as a child he has greater flexibility of vocal organs, a desire for spontaneous oral imitation and a natural love of repetition. He is less self-conscious. If he lets these years go by, his thought processes will become fixed in the mother tongue, and even if he picks up another language, he will always be mentally translating his thoughts from the mother tongue, even carrying the habits of the first language into the second. So the child has got to be started early.

The best method for this purpose is supposed to be the oral-aural—the spoken-and-heard word coming before the written one, learning it before understanding it. For this teachers of the highest class will be required for the lowest classes—those who have mastery over the mechanics of the language, have correct pronunciation, tolerably good intonation, conversational felicity and a vocabulary not removed from the current usage. As it is the youngsters rarely hear the correct sounds. Sometimes their teachers, and their teachers' teachers have not heard correctly pronounced English, with the result that what they learn is English at three or four removes from the original, if it be English at all.

In teaching the young, the linguaphone, the wireless and the cinema can be of much help, but in a poor country like ours overriding economic considerations will not allow either such methods or such highly trained

teachers, at least not for quite a long time to come, so the problem is, what should be done?

My feeling is that for the present generation we shall have to make the book-method do: teaching English out of a book to a child instead of surrounding him with an atmosphere of English sounds and pictures. So we should do something about the text books of the youngsters. Anybody who takes the trouble of looking into them will realize what a horror they are. The government does not realize how terribly wrong they are in giving so little attention to this work, in selecting and prescribing them carelessly. It is these text books written by thoroughly incompetent people which pass into the blood-stream of the children and live like poison in their system, and don't let them thrive. I personally know quite a few of these gentlemen who have amassed fortunes by writing children's text books, who grow out of breath if they have to speak English for five minutes. But one cannot blame these people, whereas one can certainly blame the government for not realizing that a children's book is a sacred book, and only people of the highest imagination and understanding should be allowed to write them.

My suggestion is that the Central Government should get eminent English authors to come out to India, pay them handsomely, pay them a lakh of rupees per book, show them how we live, how we eat, how we sleep, how we talk, and ask them to weave English round these things, find points of contact between the English language and the Indian way of life. For I believe only a professional and imaginative writer of English can produce the text books we require and not Master Tara Chand or Babu Mukerjee. He will know how to paint a scene, even an Indian scene, run one sentence into another and put that something in it which will hold the piece together as an interesting whole, unlike 'Mohan ran', and 'Sohan sat'.

The children will like these text books for two reasons: they will be interesting intrinsically and they will cover ground with which they are familiar. I am sure some of the English authors would be willing to help us. The government will pay them handsomely at the rate I have mentioned. For the government, even economically, it would be a very sound investment. These books, prescribed throughout India, will pay back their cost many times over within one year. And we shall give our young boys at least this advantage that they will grow up on correct rhythm and use of the English language if we cannot give them the other facilities which richer countries can. They will have something alive and beautiful playing upon their minds, instead of the dead misshapen creatures we make the companions of their young lives under the name of text books.

The Critical Conditions of the Movies

By MARTIN S. DWORKIN

For Finer Failures. Taking the movies seriously can be a lot of fun—and very serious business indeed, fraught with profound cultural importances and profounder trivialities. Unlike the apocryphal blind man, who didn't care what was playing, as long as it was a movie, most people do care about what films they see, one way or another. But like the blind man, movie audiences usually have little choice. Or, rather, they usually have only an appearance of choice, from among an infinite assortment of commonplace variations on a few hackneyed themes, played by actors whose distinction is their predictability.

Those of us who see a great many films either acquire a heightened sensitivity to this illusory variety—and an exacerbated awareness of mediocrity, or we protect ourselves by simply re-entering each new film experience through the same door by which we left the last, aesthetic somnambulists too anaesthetized to keep awake. One of the worst things about the latter happening is that when the unusual, stimulating films do come along, we may be fast asleep, and not get in the door at all.

Only a few films can be superlative, of course. We sometimes forget that the others, inexhaustibly numerous and dependent for their success upon the very fact that they seem to recall every movie ever shown, are somehow needed in order that good ones can be made. As Gilbert Seldes remarked in a broadcast, for there to be good films 'you've got to have the background of the second rate.' But this must never be construed as an argument *in favor* of the second rate. What is meant is that in practical terms most of what film makers produce isn't first rate, and that it couldn't be, even if they all tried their best with all their resources all the time.

Beyond the mass of movie 'product'—the 'programmer' films manufactured to provide exhibitors with staple merchandise—are the small numbers of films attempting to express some creative intentionality, as well as make money. And beyond these, forming the growing edge of film as an artistic force, are the few great works—sometimes commercial failures, occasionally returning their costs only after long periods of release and re-release—but recreating the cinema in subtle or shattering ways, changing our lives for having seen them and their successors.

The great works presume the others: the industry that enables them to be made and to be shown. But they grow out of the creative failures: those fine films in their own right that may miss being masterpieces only by the distance between eloquence and the sublime. This is not a matter of progress, which would imply that today's mediocrity is somehow better than yesterday's masterpiece. What is involved is the need for a climate wherein creative people may be encouraged to risk failure, however magnificent, instead of being constrained to emulate success, however trite.

Such a climate cannot be created by the industry itself—although the producers and distributors unquestionably can assist or prevent its maturing. The public, informed and stimulated by responsible criticism, has the first and last say. But 'the public' in this sense is not the mass audience, although it may be very large. A 'public' is not a matter of size, but of awareness and concern. The mass audience forms and disintegrates as they direct their attention toward some seductive stimulus. A public is composed of individuals, who communicate with each other and themselves, participating in the experience of a work of art, rather than submissively receiving the impacts of the moment, in the noisy torpor of industrialized entertainment.

Films which do not conform to habitual ways of seeing are essentially *invisible*, in the phrase of Jean Cocteau. In a sense, one of the first things a creative film maker must do is awaken the audience, transforming it, within the limitations of its members, from an inchoate mass to a sentient public. This is difficult to do, without being merely sensational. Moreover, the most ingenious devices may become so commonplace, as movie follows movie, that they are absorbed as merely graphic symbols of the filmic language. Audiences seeing one of D. W. Griffith's early close-ups of an actress's face, resented this apparent decapitation, shouting, 'Show us her feet! Show us her feet!'—as yet unable to visualize a cinematic relationship that soon was so ordinary as to be considered necessary. More recently, the eccentric camera angles and severe, contrast lighting of Orson Welles' *Citizen Kane* pounded the audience's sensibilities in shot after shot, until we were almost numbed, rather than stimulated. Yet, seeing *Citizen Kane* today, after more than fifteen years, we would have to pay special attention to be aware of those devices that were once simply shocking. By now they are part of the common armament of film production, even as they are familiar terms in our visual vocabulary.

With so much profit possible from keeping people pleasantly unconscious, the wonder is that so much is made that tries to awaken and engross us. That most of these films do not achieve the sublimity they seek does not diminish their worth, which is real, even as the intentions of their

producers are admirable, however unrealized. After all, there is more to be said for the faults of such efforts as *Bad Day At Black Rock*, *Night of the Hunter*, and *The Desperate Hours*, than for the perfected pointlessness of *The Last Time I Saw Paris*, the monumental vulgarity of *The Prodigal*, or the polished triviality of *Soldier of Fortune*.

But there is a point beyond which it is dangerous for us to follow our respect for the intentions of an artist. It is all well to admire the worthy attempt that fails, but we must never assume the burden of success or failure. It is luxuriously easy for film makers to blame the public when some seriously intended work excites little support. For one thing, there are always some in the public whose passion is to despise all the rest, and they will agree with any denigration of anybody but themselves. Unfortunately, many in serious film audiences, attending 'art' theatres, museum showings, and film societies, seem to lose their capacity to criticize the esoteric, out of snobbishness or an exaggerated solicitude for the artist who has not had popular success.

It is interesting that this reservation of responsibility was stressed by one of Hollywood's most dedicated ventures after better films, Stanley Kramer, before one of the world's largest film societies, Cinema 16 in New York. Among Kramer's productions are: *Champion*, *The Men*, *Death of a Salesman*, *Home of the Brave*, *The Sniper*, *High Noon*, *Member of the Wedding*, *The 5000 Fingers of Dr. T*, *The Caine Mutiny*, *Cyrano de Bergerac*, *The Wild One*, and *Not As A Stranger*, which he also directed. Discussing those of his films which failed to make money, Kramer first absolved the distributors and exhibitors—although a case could be made that a few productions, like *Member of the Wedding* and *The 5000 Fingers of Doctor T*, had been unwisely handled, and for all their faults might have reached a larger audience than they did. But Kramer took all the blame on the production end, remarking that while some of the films expressed 'difficult' ideas, this had not repelled the public.

Somehow, he said, the 'gap' between the conception and public acceptance had not been bridged. *Member's* costs were too high, forcing a poor try at mass acceptance in ordinary distribution; *5000 Fingers* had aimed at youngsters as well as adults, but ended up both too sophisticated and too obvious; *Cyrano's* love story 'never got off the ground,' and the one in *Caine Mutiny* ought to have been left out; *Salesman* needed to be a *tour de force*, but had a few performances which were inadequate: 'The play was the finest piece of writing for the stage in twenty years. We muffed.'

Kramer, then, could be dissatisfied, just as the public had been disappointed. He closed his remarks on this point with the observation that he had come to realize, in evaluating the total of his work, that the failures

made the 'lucky ones' possible, and that the latter must 'carry' the others. So long as he tries to make better films, we may agree.

The Money and the Message. Attempts to make better films, however, must perennially storm the walls of fortified stupidities about the nature of the movies—as business or as art. One of the silliest ideas with which movie industrialists—especially on the exhibition side—like to stroke themselves is that 'message' films cannot make a profit. All notions of using the force of the screen for good—or mitigating its potentialities for harm—sooner or later come up against this 'fact' of movie economics. The movies, it is recited, are designed to entertain, because that's what the people want. The public pays, and the public chooses: entertainment.

Moreover, say some in the industry, this attitude is not to be derided as mass hunger for circuses, while martyrs everywhere perish in flames spreading to consume us all. The people, everywhere, do not like to be propagandized, and this is a wholesome feeling: something to be encouraged, even by those do-gooders who will do anything to get better movies except buy tickets to support them once they are made.

What is wrong with this argument isn't its foundation on hard economic realities—as many sentimental critics of the movies seem to believe. There is no passage to any adequate understanding of cinema except by way of the box office. All discussions of aesthetic, educational, or broadly cultural considerations which do not assume and contend with the fact of the screen's industrial basis are less than meaningless. Great harm is done to the kind of discussion that is needed: that treats problems of quality and intention with constant awareness of those of production, distribution, and exhibition before audiences—which can only be persuaded somehow to pay money to underwrite the massive costs of the whole process.

The film is an art, a medium of expression, an instrument of persuasion, a language for communication, an experience for participation—all these and yet a myriad other things, to vast anonymous masses, separate publics of concern, and each of us alone, unique in our own personhood and history. But the art of the film—the most characteristic and influential art of our age—is founded upon the techniques and logistics of industry, from the manufacture of the raw film stock to the complex merchandising required to get finished movies into theatres where they can be seen. Merely to make a film and leave it in cans in a vault, unseen by its potential audience, requires elaborate financing, large numbers of participating craftsmen, great resources of technological processes and equipment.

When standards of artistic integrity and cinematic quality are developed for the movies with little relation to the actual nature and problems of the medium, the result is an easy snobbery or foggily aesthetic senti-

mentalism that does more harm than good, by evading the real issues which must be faced, and antagonizing the film people themselves. But the movie industrialists, who supposedly know the problems, can be as unrealistic in their comprehension of the true nature of cinema—unrealistic, i.e., or unconscionably cynical and irresponsible.

It is true, for example, that the public prefers to be entertained, rather than harangued. Hence, it is not surprising that "message" movies have failed to draw the public, when their messages have been poorly delivered. There are enough examples of films which have stated their good intentions in terms of good cinema—good art, to point the simple moral here: that what you say in films takes on its life and interest from the way you say it. A film that is merely a vehicle to transport some message, however worthy, will surely mire in boredom.

It is a wonder, in fact, how some messages survive their filmic petrification. We may suppose, for example, that Christianity will outlast the continuing cycle of religious films, which seem bent on making the invisible voluptuously visible—and spiritually unbelievable. But we may suspect that this survival may be in spite of the films—although there may be some who, for a generation or two, await miracles which are heralded by off-screen choirs of crooners in heavenly juke boxes, or who think that martyrs really live happily ever after in this wide-screened, multicoloured world.

The public comes to the movie theatres neither to be informed nor indoctrinated. But the film industry cannot evade responsibility by assuming that learning or uncritical habituation does not take place simply because films are designed primarily to entertain.

The really fundamental fact of the movie business is not that the public demands to be entertained, and will pay only rarely to be informed. *All* films are 'message' films; *all* films make propaganda—if only for day-dreaming; *all* films take sides somehow on the issue of ideological intentionality: whether the audience is to be treated as a mass, whose constituent units are assumed to have no individuality, and whose anonymity is to be seduced to move in predetermined directions—or whether it is to be treated as a group of individuals, to be persuaded to choose freely. This is the underlying issue of all the mass media of our time, defining the responsibility of those involved.

As Professor C. Hillis Kaiser of Rutgers has written in his *An Essay On Method*:

"When one surveys the overall character of the press, movies, radio, and television . . . it is difficult to resist the feeling that never before in the history of Western culture has a population . . . been so completely and systematically vulgarized. What is particularly tragic is that such vulgarization results, not merely from the self-interest of these agencies themselves, but from the fact that the public is

getting 'what it wants.' By means of the irresponsible policy which attempts to provide an uneducated public with what it wants, rather than what it needs, cultural depravity perpetuates itself, and we have a social situation very little different from that which produced the 'bread and circuses' of the decadent Roman Empire."

The policy of 'giving the public what it wants' has been painted 'round with an aura of holiness,' out of an originating confusion of the economic conditions of the market-place with the political requirements of democracy. The public pays—but it buys what it is offered. Every dollar may be equal to every other at the point of sale, but every idea is not equal to every other, at the instant when we must choose. To be responsible in making movies is not to be undemocratic; to be irresponsible is.

To 'give the public what it wants' in the bald sense of the market-place through the mass media is to give the public no choice. The illusion of freedom in the creation and selection of all the manufactured experiences with which we are constantly bombarded is the truly dangerous narcotic of our times. The freedom offered by the industrialists of the movies and the other mass media is too often the freedom of addicts, choosing among brands of opium and flavours of lotus leaves.

The relation of freedom and responsibility is no less vital a matter for constant elucidation here than in any other realm of action. In the nature of this relationship, involving the technological, commercial, aesthetic, political, and moral dimensions of the movies, will be found the foundations for valid standards of filmic quality—the only standards, in fact, which will enable us to control what we do to ourselves in the theatres.

The Suburbs of Criticism. Once standards are defined and clarified, however, there remain serious problems of their application—by critics who try to talk to audiences, and audiences who make themselves heard unmistakably in the box-office ears of the industry. And, the true influence of critics is not anything to be taken on faith, if there is to be clarity in our vision of what standards audiences actually apply—and ought to apply.

A comprehensive survey of the influence of film criticism on American movie audiences was run late in 1954 by the show business trade paper, *Variety*. Reporting the estimates of theatre operators throughout the country, the survey concluded that critics' opinions have an appreciable effect on the box office only erratically, and then principally in cases of 'art' films—a generic term comprising serious or unusual foreign films, documentaries, and others outside the regular commercial categories of the industry. These are usually shown in small theatres catering to limited audiences. The great mass audience, the exhibitors said, judging from admission sales, pays little attention to film reviews, much less to serious criticism. (Almost

identical conclusions were drawn from a generally unfavourable examination of French critics made in 1955 by Francois Truffaut, film critic of *Les Arts*, in Paris.)

A great deal of film reviewing in magazines and newspapers, of course, is little more than an extension of the publicity and advertising apparatus of the movies. What opinions may be expressed therein are at best 'service' judgments as to whether audiences will enjoy this movie or that, and rarely refer to coherent or systematic standards of taste, filmic quality, or cultural significance. At their worst, they are not opinions at all, but mere summaries of plots, eked out by paraphrases of publicity hand-outs.

The mass audience responds to movie advertising as it does to blurbs for toothpaste, cosmetics, refrigerators, and all the myriad products which are manufactured to be sold and advertised to be needed. The ordinary reviewer, then, becomes something like a quality control inspector at the end of an industrial production line. Is Miss Bosom's latest, scientifically-mixed, vacuum-sealed, fancy-packaged effort guaranteed as advertised? Insofar as the public is guided by brand names in its selection of what to patronize, it is entitled, we may suppose, to the traditionally 'impartial' analysis by 'independent laboratories' as to the wholesome uniformity of movie products.

But the sophisticated, discriminating moviegoers who consider critical opinions published in prestigious magazines in contemplating the current off-trail films in the 'art houses'—and then, so often, don't go—may take small comfort from their vaunted independence of judgment. This manifestly pays heed above all to what someone has said, and then to what someone else has said about what the first person said, and so on and on, opinions about opinions, ideas about ideas, in the manner of the civilized conversations over cocktails in which only book reviews, and reviews of reviews, are discussed, to endless insignificance. The exhibitors may be forgiven their cynicism regarding the importance of serious criticism, even for the 'mature,' perennially 'lost' and occasionally found audience, so long as its primary effect seems to be the information of notions at third or fourth remove from any experience in the theatres.

The poor films—or, rather, the grandiloquently mediocre—do, however, persist in relative prosperity, supported by the mass audience which rarely depends upon what critics have to say for more than corroboration of its attitudes. Of the hundreds of new films shown each year, long lists may be drawn of those which were lacerated by reviewers and critics, yet enticed multitudes to the theatres. But, with greater significance for the encouragement of quality, there are also sadly attenuated lists of films which ought to have been seen, by people avowedly interested in filmic worth,

and weren't—because those very people simply didn't go to the movies, despite the strongest critical encouragement.

It may be disconcerting, but it is healthily humiliating for a critic to discover how little effect his judgments are actually having upon theatre attendance. But it is an error to define the parlous state of film criticism only in terms of ticket sales. David Reisman suspects that '...the difficulties in qualitative analysis of the effects of films are not unconnected with the present low state of criticism of the movies as an art form.' This relation of the problems of scientific investigation of the impact of the screen upon behaviour with the quality of aesthetic analysis suggests what is at stake.

—Not the cultivation of greater influence upon the selection of films to be seen, although theoretically this could, in turn, influence the quality of films which are made, if its ideal of power could be realized. The astonishing domination of the American theatre by a handful of New York newspaper critics can illustrate the extreme of what can happen when criticism directly affects the box office. No matter how much people may use critical opinions as guides, critical judgment may not refer to commercial success or failure for proof of its validity. The standards of the critic of films, as those of critics of any other aspect of culture, out to provide leadership, to be sure—but not in the sense of the celebratedly typical revolutionary demagogue, who races after the mobs to find out where they are going, in order to lead them.

Criticism is essentially a discipline of rhetoric, of persuasion; its method is analysis, and its highest function is the enrichment of the interior conversation. The significance of Reisman's disappointment with film criticism in theory, and of the exhibitors' dubiety about its effects in practice, lies in the exposure of the shallowness of understanding of what films signify, and of what they do to us, individually and together. The reason the uncriticized life is not worth living, as Socrates maintained, may be that it really isn't lived at all. The person becomes the insensible creature of forces working upon him which originated within himself. The images of the screen, in this case, envelop the thoughts and feelings of those whose desires gave them birth.

Connoisseurs of paradoxes may be especially struck by what is implied for the relationship of critics and audiences. The critics have to work as if their readers will see everything on the screen anyway (an impossibility even for the critics): as if, in effect, they are truly literate in the filmic literature, rather than merely well informed about what imputed experts have said concerning what they have not seen themselves. In fact, 'the present low state of criticism of the movies' stems directly from an even lower

level of concern on the part of even intelligent filmgoers with the quality and meaning of what they see, when they happen to see it. The trouble, we may suspect, arises from the notion that entertainment is insignificant. For an understanding of a world dominated by popular attitudes—tyrannized, in fact, by 'the revolt of the masses'—it should be obvious that the popular arts may be the most significant of all.

Movie audiences, on their part, have the problem of approaching movie criticism as if for an exchange of views, not primarily as a service to help them make occasional selections of what to see—and especially not as a source of ready-made comments to be used as ammunition in counter-battery clamours among the determinedly *courant*. If being useful is easy virtue, being 'pawed at and gossiped over/By the promiscuous crowd,' in Auden's words, is poor practicality.

One film director has written that 'a true critic is the conscience of the audience.' He might have added that the critic's job, therefore, may be to feel guilty about what is done in the audience's name—even as the audience itself may disregard his agonized analysis, or use them to make frivolous change in the market place. Conversely, too, he might have cautioned against the false paradise of conscientious agreement. The Jerusalem of intelligent participation in the film experience, in fact, may be built only in what Auden calls 'suburbs of dissent,' where critics and audiences eternally disagree, as those who see for themselves eternally must.

The article was prepared at the request of a publisher contemplating bringing out an anthology of essays on various cultural subjects. It brings together material dealing broadly with the practicalities of the movie industry in the United States, and the relationship of critics and audiences, which formed portions of my regular essays of film criticism in *The Progressive* magazine. In preparing the article, the material has been revised and amended.

THREE POEMS

(These three poems are taken from *The Invisible Queen*, a collection of my poems that explore that quality in women.)

I

Wake me with a withered tune.
Sound like wisp of ruined lace
found in my sleeping
tossed across my face.

Beneath the tender fragment
trace faded music,
found in my dreaming
tossed across my face.

Or wake me with a thousand wings
stirring beneath me,
stirred to bring
my wandering
to prophecy.

II

This was an uninvited day
too fragile to be turned away
that came with delicate despair
up my undefended stair.

III

I saw the world
like the palm of my hand.
And history
the mound of sands
I held that day in the sea wind.
It blew them, . . .
flurried cross,

carried them away,
 a few
 then under other few
 the way crabs build castles.

First, wars were blown ...
 wars
 so valiantly short
 and tender to the wounded,
 looked back
 at loving they had known,
 a dream called courage.
 and crusade,
 the right, the might, afraid to be afraid,
 all the loving . . .
 Blew over the edge
 the sands of wars.

And under were sharp, light streaks
 where mystics sat
 on glaciers of revelation.
 Blind, speechless
 on the dazzling peaks
 saw One One One . . .
 and over there
 in fields glistened by winter
 the same vision
 bounded from a country steeple
 that chimed
 One One One.

Then they,
 the peaks, the steeple,
 and the Understand
 were blown by the timing wind
 and under lay earth
 ripe and yearning to give birth
 to seeds spent in it,
 and where they could
 stood trees
 tall as the factories

that ate them and spat them out
pages inflammable as wood

They blew.
And underneath
children
and old men
led one another.
This is history, they say,
no woman, no mother,
just children come to play
and old men
going noisily away.

And under
were a few more sands . . .
all the people
in all lands
quarrelling.

And the wind blew . . .
and nothing on my hand
but a dust of salt
and sea dew.

EMILY POLK

ANOTHER POINT OF VIEW

A World Divided

IN Africa Christianity and Islam are contending for the soul of the dark continent. Islam seems to have a readier appeal to the negro. This virile religion, descending from the north, is now penetrating ever deeper into the rest of Africa. In Ghana and Nigeria, for instance, while Christianity coming across the sea is making converts in the coastal south, Islam has crossed the Sahara and found numerous adherents in the more northern parts of these countries. The Ghanaian and the Nigerian, with their tribal background and used to a high degree of social equality, seem to find Islam more congenial to their spirit. These same signs are visible as far south as in South Africa. 'A high church dignitary informed me', reports a discerning journalist recently returned from South Africa, 'that Christianity is losing ground to Islam, which the modern Africans see as a more easily digested and dynamic creed.'

The Arab people are not exactly pro-Soviet; but it is only in Turkey that people are more anti-Soviet than anti-West. The moment the State of Israel was brought into existence as a Jewish homeland, with the West on the side of the new State, the Soviet Union practically won the game of power politics in West Asia. There is much in the economic system of Israel which progressive socialists have admired, and which deserves admiration. But all this is beside the point. As surely as the Western powers would not let down Israel, there would be no fundamental reconciliation between the West and the Arab states.

While the world speaks of co-existence,

or debates the question of communism versus democracy, there is a more sinister alignment of forces, insufficiently noticed, which is gradually taking shape. In this alignment of forces three historic conflicts meet and combine. There is, first, the racial antagonism between the white and the coloured people, sharpened by two centuries of colonial exploitation. Then there is the age-old contest between Islam and Christianity. Finally, there is the more recent struggle between communism and what has been termed Western democracy.

The movement towards an alliance between Asian nationalism and Soviet communism is as old as Sun Yat-Sen. It gained momentum as the struggle between Asian nationalism and Western imperialism intensified. Communism failed or succeeded in different countries to the extent that an alternative leadership succeeded or failed to give adequate expression to the nationalist sentiment. Chinese communism, remarked M. N. Roy, is nationalism painted red. There is point in the remark. It cannot be denied that the influence of communism in Asia has depended less on the positive aspects of the communist philosophy than on a successful exploitation of hatred of Western imperialism.

Between the situation in the '20's and that in the '50's there is a certain parallelism. After the defeat of Kaiser's Germany, the vision of a spread of the communist revolution in the Western countries loomed large in the minds of the Bolshevik leaders. But the vision proved false, and the Bolshevik leaders turned their attention to Asia

and, particularly, the Far East. It is thus that the basis was laid of an alliance between communism and Asian nationalism. After the defeat of Hitler's Germany, the dream of Europe going red was revived, and a part of Europe actually passed under communist subjugation. But Western Europe showed at this historic hour an unsuspected degree of cohesion. Communism, balked in its ambition to divide and conquer the industrially developed West, has now for a second time turned its attention to the industrially backward areas of the East. This time it is West Asia and Africa which specially tempt its ambitions.

For the last few years the ideal foundations of communism are being more deeply discredited with every passing day. But what communism is losing in the battle of ideas, it can perhaps more than make up by posing as a champion of Afro-Asian aspirations. While the appeal of communism reduces to nothing in countries which have had the chance to know it at first hand, it grows stronger in certain other parts of the world where communism is still a distant, abstract, and less than half understood ideal.

As West Asia and Africa are drawn increasingly into the arena of the cold war, and in spite of the Baghdad pact, a new possibility reveals itself—the possibility of a loose alliance between communism, Islam and the coloured people, against what, for want of a better expression, may be described alternatively as the Western, Christian or White civilisation. Between these rival blocs the Hindu civilisation may stand neutral—if it does not by accident fall a prey to communism; and the same should hold good for those Buddhist countries which are politically free to choose neutrality. Even while India chooses a policy of non-alliance, she is likely to be rather more non-allied with the West than with the anti-Western bloc! History, geography and pigmentation make such a bias difficult to avoid.

Nothing could be more unfortunate than this division of the human race, in which ideological fanaticism and national antagonism would reinforce each other; in which white and coloured people would engage in mutual slaughter all over the Continent of Africa, and the dying embers of racial animosity be rekindled elsewhere; and when, as a consequence, much of the most precious part of the tradition that mankind with strenuous efforts has built up since the Middle Ages would be laid in ruin in a mad moment of fury. If, indeed, the crisis comes, the West, with forces so formidable ranged against it, is likely to suffer most. But the victory of the combined forces of communism and Islam in Africa and the Arab countries, in an atmosphere charged with racial hatred, will be a grievous set-back for civilisation, and not for the West alone.

This is only a picture of a probable future. A crisis like this is not pre-ordained. But it cannot be simply wished away. The resolution to avert the disaster can only spring from a knowledge of how strong are the forces that are pushing us towards it.

* * *

To be conscious of prejudice is already a step towards conquering it. It is this first step which is most difficult. The typical white man may confess to a distaste for the black man because the latter is unclean, unhygienic, undependable, emotionally unstable, full of 'complexes', or any one of a large number of other reasons, but never because of his pigmentation, which the white man says he realises is only skin-deep: and vice versa. The average Westerner and his Asian counterpart equally disavow racialism, though each can see clearly how much the other is under its influence. It would have been a useful exercise if each tried from time to time to look at himself through the eyes and feelings of the other.

The average, educated Asian professes to

hate racialism, and he certainly hates it when he finds it in a white man. Yet an analysis of his spontaneous reactions reveals the extent to which 'colour' is a dimension of his own consciousness. The average Asian is infinitely more deeply moved by the lynching of a single negro than he ever was by the massacre of Jews in Hitler's Germany. This must be naturally truer of the reactions of an average African. Political reactions are similarly coloured. The average Asian or African may intellectually disapprove of the Soviet armed intervention in Hungary, but it is the aggression in the Suez which moves him to the depth of his being, although in terms of sheer human tragedy the Hungarian drama is unquestionably more poignant. When the educated Asian tries to explain this difference in his reactions, what he produces is mere rationalisation. Communism supplies him with some of the terms in which to clothe his rationalisation. Instead of judging both Hungary and Egypt in the general context of man's struggle for freedom, he considers the one as an episode in the 'cold war' and the other as an event in the Afro-Asian struggle against Western imperialism.

The Western powers are gradually withdrawing from Asia and Africa. The withdrawal from South-East Asia is now nearly complete. In Africa independent states are being created: Ghana is neither the beginning nor the end of the process. But all Western powers do not withdraw equally timely or equally gracefully. And Western imperialism tends to be judged by the performance of the least enlightened member of the family. There is no chance of Holland coming back to conquer Indonesia, and the little that she still holds will before long pass out of her grasp. The pity is that the parting should be devoid of grace. This, and not the immediate physical aspect of the situation, is what makes the Portuguese intransigence in Goa so regrettable. One must learn to regard the events in Indonesia, or Goa, or the still bigger events

in Algeria, in the historic setting of a world which threatens to be racially polarised.

The South African white (or, to be more accurate, a good number of his kind) insists on apartheid. He is resolved to destroy the last of the bridges by making the South African Universities proclaim the denial of the principle of universality. He should know better. By his policy he is preparing a future in which his children will have to pay for the sins of an earlier generation. Apartheid cannot last for ever; but the present policy of the South African Government guarantees that before it breaks down it will have created an atmosphere of hatred in which racial co-existence will be immensely more difficult than it might have been otherwise. The excesses of the European colonialist to-day will be answered by the excesses of the native African tomorrow. It will be useless then to apportion blame.

How to avoid this tragedy is the great question of our times. One must learn to judge events under the aspect of this impending tragedy, by the contribution that each event makes to render this tragedy a little more or less probable. We can make it less probable by demonstrating, over and over again, how much peoples of all lands have to gain by mutual cooperation.

The desire for industrial advancement is one of the strongest urges that motivate the rising generation in Asia and Africa. This urge can be a force either for division, or for closer cooperation of the world. The industrially developed countries of the West have stores of knowledge and capital with which they can come to the assistance of the late-starting countries. The Soviet Union can also help likewise. The field is large enough for all countries who are able and willing to help to work side by side. Measured in terms of immediate profitability, the expected returns from effort and funds directed to underdeveloped countries may appear uninviting to some of the countries which have resources to spare. But men who will base their decisions on such

narrow calculations are unlikely to have decisive influence on the course of history. Actions must be stamped with the quality not of the businessman, but of the statesman. Even the amount of help is not perhaps so decisive as the spirit in which help is offered. This is where the developed countries, if they set themselves to the task with missionary zeal, can more surely build up a tangible tradition of human cooperation than in any other sphere. Nor is this a responsibility of the developed countries alone, though in some ways it may be easier for them to take the initiative. The industrially backward countries must not imagine that they have nothing better to do than to shut themselves up in a shell of resentment, and insist perpetually that they have been sinned against. If this is one world, the responsibility for creating the conditions of cooperation between different parts of the world cannot be anything less than a common responsibility.

Some have spoken of a religious basis for unifying the world. It is clear, however, that neither Christianity, nor Islam, nor Hinduism, nor any other established religion has any chance of being accepted by the whole of mankind. The current competition between the major proselytising religions of the world can only accentuate division. One or the other of these religions can make seeming progress in a virgin territory, but none of these can serve today as a historic instrument of world unification. The devotee of any particular religion sees quite clearly that this is true of every other religion; it is time that he realised that it is no less true of his own. If existing religions are to be harnessed to the task of unifying mankind, the emphasis must shift from their institutional character to the contribution that each of them, in their several ways, have made to that common store of spiritual insights which is our human heritage.

What is important above all is to make man conscious of his human roots and his

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common destiny. Matter and spirit combine in our times to announce this same message. The spiritual teachers of mankind have urged men to awaken themselves into that freedom which is loving union with the universe and true fulfilment. Modern technology warns that perpetual division among mankind may have to be paid for with common destruction. Thus, ancient wisdom is invested by scientific development with a new urgency. The unity of mankind is truer than the division of the races. Ideas and religious insights ought to belong to individuals, and not to blocs. A world divided into blocs by racial sentiments, reinforced by ideology, is not only spiritually intolerable, but exposed to senseless material ruin. To bring this realisation closer to men is, to that extent, to lift them above blind conflict. For, while knowledge at one reach is power, at a higher reach it is virtue.

A.D.

BOOK REVIEWS

The Stone and the Dove

THE pleasures in these two anthologies are many. Unexpected rhymes, (milk bottle of/more like love; four had been/I struggled in—Herbert Morris), obvious rhymes carried off neatly (cogitating nothing vaster/Than the lonely bee on the aster—Donald Babcock), a word rhyming with itself (it is right the stone is old/and smooth, utterly cruel and old; a tiny fly fell on my page/shivered, lay down and died on my page;—Keith Douglas and Jon Silkin) and such other old tricks are dexterously used by the 'new' poets of England and America. Not that only the mechanics of the poems is interesting. There are lines (and even whole poems) which should 'burn a lifetime resinuously' (William Meredith). W. S. Merwin's poem, *When I Came From Colchis*, is certain to be often included in anthologies. The clever poems by Donald

Davies are sure to tickle. And the worth of John Holloway's *Journey Through the Night* is instantaneously revealed to the reader—which shows how different is the 'new' poetry from the poetry of the terrifying innuendos and cross-references which used to be popular only a decade ago.

The poets are aware of this departure. 'If you would have dark themes and high-flown words/great albatrosses drenched in sacredness,/go read some other work,' sternly bids Catherine Davis. Clarity is considered a major virtue. Whatever threatens to relax the poet's control over himself and the poem is suspect. Michael Hamburger writes almost—but not wholly—ironically: 'Pity those men who from the start were martyrs to some dream of art.' Donald Davie is more forthright. Being civilized to an extreme degree, he considers high feelings indecent. More, he thinks that men choose their reactions to external stimuli. 'When he plays upon your sympathies, I am pleased to be fastidious, and you to be inspired. The vice in it is this: Each does us credit and we know it too.' The poet's trade is 'to pretend, for your sake, to be moved,' his asset is that mirror with-

THE NEW POETS OF ENGLAND & AMERICA. Edited and selected by Donald Hall, Robert Pack, Louis Simpson. Introduction by Robert Frost (Meridian Books. \$1.45.)

NEW POEMS BY AMERICAN POETS. Edited by Rolfe Humphries. (Ballantine Books 35c.)

in which keeps a continuous watch on him as if he is another man and lets him know 'when he is played upon.' And the poet's guarantee against accidents is the extremely sensitive warning system he has developed to distinguish between the semblance and the real. When the player becomes earnest, the poet knows. 'You grow too warm. I must be moving on.'

When there is such complete control, it is impossible for anything to happen in the poem. Every next step is foreknown. Previously, poets forced themselves into crises, each rhyme was turned into an exigency, so that the unpremeditated inevitable should happen. Instead, the 'new' poetry moves like syllogisms, so enclosed that no miracle can penetrate. Notice how the poem, *Termites*, by Charles G. Bell opens. An undisputed proposition is presented: a child is born to a friend. Then the connection between the proved and the to-be-proved is established. 'Here the termites are swarming. Procreation wraps us like a spider's web.' The needless conclusion follows, the end that was immanent in the beginning, 'how shall I write my friend blessings of the occasion/From this hot land where breeding is a curse.'

There is another method equally popular and rewarding. Instead of extracting the conclusion from general premises, the effect is achieved by a careful addition of particulars. W. S. Merwin, in his lovely poem, *When I Came From Colchis*, exploits it with great success. He illustrates his thesis of how sceptical men are by describing popular reactions to Jason's exploits and the fire that gutted Troy. Two such eminent examples are enough to prepare the reader for what follows:

Now if amazed I come
From the day's bourn of your hand,
A stranger up from the sunned
Sea of your eyes, lady,
What fable shall I tell them
That they should believe me.'

When beliefs are regarded too sacred to be lost, the merits of such methods are obvious. These are not exploratory devices but pleasing ways to justify one's belief. If it seems that the two poems I cited are too lean pretexts for either staking or attempting to justify one's beliefs, Donald Hall's *The Body Politic* should be read both for more evidence for my thesis and for pleasure. It is a fine poem. The citizen who shot his friend to 'save his country's life' speaks a language that is convincing. After the murder, he only felt 'depressed'. He wanted to be assured what he had done was 'the difficult and the good.' Being truly of our age, he dares possess neither will nor intelligence; he recognizes that only history and the people and the State have the right to think and decide. Therefore he goes to 'where his orders issued from.' He is rolled between one secretary and another, each as dumb as he. The 'true address' was only a rickety old house with no god nor deity within. He speaks as one who really is an inert object, only seemingly capable of speech. It may appear to move; it only moves to reach its movers, the secretaries. Though Hall's nightmare is not as vivid as Kafka's, it is convincing. But the last line of the poem is not. 'Man lives by love alone and not by metaphor,' the inert object says, shocking us by its wisdom. What happens in the end is an unconvincing fulfilment of our wish that tricked men should see through the metaphors. The object taking orders from the State to fulfil the wishes of History suddenly begins taking orders from the poet and changes itself into a man. Nothing could be more arbitrary than the way the object gained a soul. It is a miraculous intercession of grace from a source that has no right to intercede in a poem—the wishes of the poet as a loving human being.

The desire for change has tricked us into believing that symptoms of the desired change have been found in our poems. But our poems are capable of exploring nothing.

When we wish to write poems different from those written in the Twenties, we can only speak of our wish because the essentials of the new poem—a new style—is yet undiscovered. Our notion of a poem is not much different from what any of the early moderns would have thought a poem to be. Language is to us, as was to them, 'a cyclotron breaking into/the structure of things by repeated/speed and force in order to lay bare/in words, naturally, unworded/insides of things, the things that are really there.'

Yet, it is time that we discovered a style for ourselves. Modern poetry is hardly modern any longer. Mallarmé was born 116 years ago. Rimbaud died in 1891. Valéry was born in 1871, Rilke in 1875, Yeats in 1865, Eliot in 1888, the same year as Pasternak. Baudelaire was only 19 years younger than Hugo, and Gray was 41 when Blake was born. These dates suggest that eight decades of a style should be enough—not only because the world changes too fast but because of the danger of pastiche.

The young poet's fear is that if a poem looks like one written thirty years ago, he himself will not be able to tell the genuine from the habitual. The poet who forces his poem to be different aims high; it is unfortunate that this eminently worthy end is unapproachable his way. The poet who does not even attempt the change has almost always no justification for writing; the modern style has now become so well tried a formula. Therefore, the young poet's conscience is troubled. He is born late, he can no longer behave as if he is of another generation. He has to invent changes. He discovers in the newspapers justification for not feeling as lost as the early moderns. He considers it a shame that he has to exploit so often his special temporal status—that of being the most recent-born. He is humbled by the knowledge that the young poets of Bengal are known as the 'younger' poets and that in U.K. and the U.S.A. the adjective is 'new'—relative adjectives both. He is

painfully conscious of the fact that it is not a profusion of attributes that prevents the younger or the new poets from being known by a more descriptive name. These labels tell us that to others our being born late is our most valuable possession. As if our readers insinuate through this label that each generation must have its own poetry, we should have ours. As a counterblast, the more honest and impatient among us advise violent changes. Holthusen asks us to unlearn everything and start again with a clean slate. Communist poets proclaim that only the revolution can change our style for us. It is so hard to recognise that ours is the fate of all second generations, and only patience can help us!

We do not know how the next poem will look like but it is certain the new cannot be forced. Trying to start with a *tabula rasa* is permitting unconscious habits to take over. The revolution changes only to freeze everything at a point where a past ideal would have it be. If a poet believes that a change in himself will lead to a change in the poem, he will only be prevented from making discoveries.

The Victorian's poetics, one infers, were not much different from Shelley's. A poem was, possibly, to him also an equalizing syphon draining off excess emotions from the soul of the poet into the empty vessel in the reader. He did not change the nature of the syphon but only the content of the vessel. Instead of revolutionary sentiments, justification for the empire overflowed. Tennyson could not change the poem, he made himself a respectable gentleman. Politically his opposites, the Chartists, bellowed, 'Poet, leave your shady bower/Come, lead the storming of the Tower.' The more decisive change was what happened elsewhere. Baudelaire was obsessed by the familiar, almost hackneyed, romantic themes—the mahogany black of death, the ivory white of the skull.

How long we have to wait none knows. But this is certain that by trying to forget

modern poetry and by forcing a change of subject, we please only the politicians. It is the modern style, if one has faith enough to use it without panic, that will yield the new poem. There is only the slightest hint of it in the poem by Richard Eberhart, *A Stone*; but that dim sign is enough to make us humble and hopeful. The naive faith that Eberhart has won makes us almost smile. He did not throw away the stone, nor kick it arrogantly, but waited, holding it reverentially in his hand. In due time, the stone turned itself into a dove. The moral should be clear to all of us.

JYOTIRMOY DATTA

THE BLUE ANTS: 600 Million Chinese under the Red Flag by Robert Guillain; Translated by Mervyn Savill. (Secker and Warburg 25s.)

M. GUILLAIN, correspondent for *Le Monde*, may be known to readers for his incisive articles in the *Manchester Guardian* and the *Encounter*. His visit to China in the autumn of 1955 was evidently not one of those conducted tours which have the red carpet and the rose-tinted spectacles as the customary accessories. Guillain has known the Middle Kingdom under very differing conditions. In 1937 he was appalled by what he saw of its shattering misfortunes—war, poverty, graft, humiliation, hunger and death. He paid a shorter visit in 1946 when the great country was losing its resilience and the road to communism was paved with America's good intentions. He was in Shanghai for most of 1949 during the momentous days of 'liberation.' Here the K.M.T. Government was cruel and inefficient; the administration was stagnant and corrupt; the people were apathetic and resigned. The financial chaos had reached such dimensions that the tram conductors speculated on the differing rates existing on their route. The K.M.T. General in command of the defence of Shanghai threatened to actually fight the communists in order to raise his price for leaving the

city peacefully, extracted a satisfactory number of gold bars, took salute at a militant V-day parade and led his troops in the direction diametrically opposite to that in which the communist troops had amassed enabling the peasant army of Mao to capture the largest city in China without a struggle. The citizens were incredulous when instead of the usual pillaging and high handedness the victorious Peoples' Liberation Army behaved with honour and discipline and was followed by an austere, honest and efficient administration. Guillain was impressed and his enthusiasm led some of his readers to brand him as a 'fellow-traveller.'

In 1955 Guillain travelled in China where he participated in the October day celebration in Peking, saw the factories sprouting up at Anshan and other industrial cities in Manchuria, visited Lanchow which is the centre of the industrial complex now growing in the North-West, sailed down the Yangtze gorges to Hankow and then flew to Shanghai. He went to China as a sympathetic observer who knew the magnitude of its tremendous problems and who wondered whether communism had changed the ancient civilization or had developed into a moderate and indigenous creed. He sums up his experiences of re-discovering China in two propositions:

1. Communism as it is understood today in China, has made the air unbearable for anyone who intends to remain a man and not become a robot.
2. Communism in China on the credit side of its balance sheet can boast of outstanding material success.

The material achievements of the regime leap to the eye and are obvious even to a casual visitor. I spent some weeks in the spring of 1955 in China and I felt that I was in the presence of a great historical resurgence when visiting the campus of the University of Peking, grey with the dust of

construction, or the factory belching out rolled steel in Anshan, or the housing colonies springing out in Shenyang. The author does not quote the conventional endless rows of statistics but gives a fair picture of the achievements of the government which has given the country peace, unity, a stable currency and an honest administration for the first time in decades. The changes in China may not be very remarkable in a world that is advancing at a fast pace. But to anyone who knew China it is astounding to find that it has a plan at all or that there are no flies in China.

The totalitarian constraints on thought, speech and behaviour are not visible to the naked eye. The author found the ubiquitous blue boiler suit that clothes almost all the Chinese, whether in Shanghai or Peking or Lanchow, symbolical of the regimentation of the Chinese. The vision of six hundred million Chinese in the drab blue boiler suit, uniform in thought and deed, identifying themselves with the proper group, put him in mind of a vast ant-hill laboriously built up by disciplined and submissive blue ants—an incredible reincarnation of the Chinese with their almost anarchic individualism whose dress reflected the thousand colours of their non-conformist mind.

'To-day it is almost impossible to find in China a Chinese with any ideas of his own.' This seems to be a sweeping statement. But a visitor to China can bear out the astonishing uniformity of thought that seems to prevail in China (seems because the non-conformists may have learnt to be inarticulate). All discussions are conducted in stock phrases and slogans. The author quotes a dialogue: 'Why are there so many children in China?' 'Before the Liberation . . . Leave the Liberation out for a moment. I asked you how is it that there are so many small Chinese?' Second stock reply, 'President Mao . . . Leave him out too. I'll go and ask . . .' The present reviewer and a colleague from London them-

selves had many discussions with Chinese students in various universities in China. But on every question of social science and humanities from the causes of a particular war to the standard of beauty in art these discussions were tripartite—two of us disagreed, but the twenty or thirty Chinese friends had the same stolid opinion. 'Depoliticisation' was the first phase of 'remoulding'—individual political opinions (and politics is a very wide term for the Marxist) were banished as 'unhealthy thought.' In its place the party did the thinking for the masses which percolated over the vast land in the form of posters, slogans, discussions, meetings, study classes for peasants, workers and students. There is a story (and MacAulay vouches for it) of a criminal in Italy who was asked to choose between reading a history book written by Guicciardini and working on the galleys. He chose the former. But the account of the War of Pisa was too much for him and he went to the Oars. Even this choice is not left to the prisoners in China. They have to study the turgid reasoning of Marxist ideology.

Once this pattern for 'the socialisation of brains' is set, certain inevitable consequences follow. Liu-Shao-Chi declares that 'the writer in Free China has the freedom of expression as long as he serves the interest of the workers and peasants and soldiers who are the majority of the people.' Hence the Federation of Literary and Art Circle persuades the authors to make the necessary changes in their books, because who knows better the interest of its people than the regime? The youth of China is exhorted to 'liquidate blood relations in the great cause of justice'—in other words denounce your husband or father if they are deviationists. There have also to be occasional campaigns against crypto-counter-revolutionaries (in lucid English 'malcontents'), and the steady process of brain-washing. A typical example is that of Prof. Yu-Pin Po who worked on an ancient and

famous love story *The Dream of the Red Chamber*. But his work did not emphasise the class nature of the story and was found guilty of idealism, subjectivity, formalism and other kindred heinous offences. He was not made a martyr to his cause—he was handed over to the tender mercy of his friends to be persuaded, explained, derided and given a chance to recant his scholarship. And this method goes down to the grass roots, to the Street Committee and Peasants' Committees, the Young Pioneers and Youth League, the Women's Federation and the Students' Union. 'The universal and compulsory mutual surveillance' results in mass production of 'right thinking citizens.'

The creation of the mood of enthusiasm and sacrifice instead of the atmosphere of fatalist stagnation is a great achievement of the government. The formidable tasks which confront China perhaps cannot be performed without the formation of some myth which arouses the citizen and identifies him with the national effort. But it is certainly not necessary that the myth should take the form The Leader: The Party: The Nation; or Malinism (Marx+Engels+Lenin+Stalin) as interpreted by Mao and Liu Shao Chi: The truth and the whole truth.

Such myths have led to such regimentation that China has become a seven year old nation. The link with 4000 years of tradition is snapped. Chinese communism has not found its roots in the ancient soil but has transplanted the ideas from Russia. Every Chinese problem has a Russian solution. Partial responsibility for this lies squarely on the shoulders of those Western powers who have isolated China.

Perhaps historical judgments should be in terms of alternatives. If so the spartan dedication under Mao promises better material life than the misrule under Chiang. It is a heartening fact of modern history that after years of decadence China is awake. But is it really necessary for this

purpose to destroy the freedom of thought and to produce only technocrats? Because in humanities and in social studies such China can produce only variations on a theme by Marx. Chairman Mao declares, 'Let a hundred flowers bloom.' Premier Chou en-Lai adds, 'But let the poisonous weeds be rooted out.' And unfortunately in Chinese botany Marx has precedence over Linneaus.

ASHOK DESAI

ON POETS AND POETRY by T. S. Eliot
(Faber & Faber, 1957, 18sh.)

THE appearance of another collection of T. S. Eliot's critical writings is an event of great importance. This book contains a selection of sixteen papers written at various times after his *Selected Essays* mainly written as talks; seven dealing with critical questions and the rest with individual writers. This year Eliot will be seventy years old and his continuous poetic and critical production over a period of more than forty years has left a most definite mark on contemporary literature. As far as it is possible, perhaps it is opportune now to try and assess his contribution to literary criticism, even though the view of a contemporary is bound to suffer from myopia.

Certain basic ideas can be discerned amidst the wealth of his opinions, assessments and prejudices. A cursory glance at the development of criticism in English literature brings out the undeniable fact what with Ezra Pound's and T. S. Eliot's first youthful broadsides against such critics as Arnold, Symonds and Saintsbury, an attempt was made to found a school of criticism that would eschew 'interpretation' especially in its more esoteric departures and concentrate on the works themselves. This was a healthy and much-needed move. Again, these critics directed their attention to schools and periods that had been neglected by their immediate predecessors,

such as the Elizabethan dramatists, the 17th century Metaphysicals, the Augustans, and the Symbolists of 19th century France. Even if it is the case that, as practising poets, each found his inspiration in these particular periods and so had intense personal reasons for examining their literatures, such a refocussing was one which found an instinctive response from readers in the 'Twenties' and after. Eliot and Pound helped to 'fix' the goalless wanderers of the contemporary scene, and point out similarities of temperament between, say, a poet like Donne and their own. These cyclic fashions in literature are to be expected, but a vigorous literary practitioner can do much towards resuscitating the spirit of the past.

Now to turn to a few particular points which characterise the critical thinking of Eliot himself. It is interesting to note at the outset how these recurrent themes have been refined upon as the natural arrogance of a very clever young man has matured into the slightly self-satisfied expansiveness of an accepted literary pandit. Speaking for myself, I prefer the earlier essays despite their pungency and prejudice. They are stimulating. They display careful scholarship and the arguments are better sustained. I cannot see why the mature T. S. Eliot finds his earlier work so disconcerting. He says, 'I can never re-read any of my own prose writings without acute embarrassment.' Yet, it is more often than not in the earlier version that we get the clearer point of view. Take, for instance, his views on dramatic poetry. This is a theme which has naturally interested him greatly ever since the beginning of his own efforts at creating a modern verse form for drama. He has pointed out here, in the essay, *What is a Classic?* as in other contexts also, notably that of non-dramatic blank verse since Milton, that the existence of the work of a great writer in any particular form, acts as a positive deterrent to the continuation of

that 'genre'. With poetic drama, Shakespeare has been the stumbling block. His music stubbornly echoes in the mind of the would-be dramatist in verse. This is of course true of any literature. Years ago Sudhin Datta suggested that Tagore's work offered a similar stumbling block to the development of modern Bengali literature. However, in the present volume there are discussions of this problem in four essays, *The Music of Poetry* (1942), *Poetry and Drama* (1951), *The Three Voices of Poetry* (1953) and the one on Yeats. The chief consideration of course is: why write plays in poetry at all? Any answer to this question must examine whether there is any necessary relationship between drama and rhythmic, stylised utterance. In *A Dialogue on Dramatic Poetry* written in 1928 and published in his *Selected Essays*, I think he provided the answer to this question as clearly and truly as it can be stated. To summarise he argued that people preferred prose drama because it was more realistic, whereas verse acted as a restriction upon the expression of emotion. But he continued: 'Is not every dramatic representation artificial? Are we not merely deceiving ourselves with appearances instead of insisting on fundamentals.... The tendency, at any rate of prose drama, is to emphasise the ephemeral and superficial; if we want to get at the permanent and universal we tend to express ourselves in verse'. This is a view expressed by Lascelles Abercrombie in an essay *The Function of Poetry in the Drama* (1912). Now, in *Poetry and Drama* he says that by using poetry in drama, the poet can exploit the fringes of sensibility – in poetry more is understood and felt than what is merely stated in prose. This, though true, does not seem to me to be a significant development of the problem of drama, which is to find a compromise between the portrayal of a particular situation and its realistic trappings with the *concentration, deliberation*

and selection necessary to bring out its universal applications. If there are no such implications it is not drama. Perhaps, the emphasis should be more on the poetry of movement, gesture and situation than of words.

However, Eliot's appraisal of his own efforts at dramatic verse makes interesting reading. Here he uses the concept of the 'common style' – very profitably with reference to his discussion on *What is a Classic?*¹ (published separately in 1945) – which is the contention that poetry must not stray too far from the ordinary everyday language which we use and hear. In other words, he emphasises the intimate relationship between conversation and the proper medium for the theatre. The rhythms of our common speech must be caught and crystallised in a language which is not artificially beautiful or poetic, but which reflects the ugliness and crudity of our modern civilisation. Eliot has succeeded to a very great extent in this aim in his plays; the criticism that can be justly levelled against him here is his lack of sufficient dramatic sense in constructing his plots and imagining character.

Talking about the duties and responsibilities of a literary critic Eliot reiterates his¹ earlier stand that the critic is more advocate than judge. To a certain extent criticism must be seen as a personal affair. This is even more the case when the critic is himself a writer; then at the back of his mind he will be formulating his views about his own work or defending his beliefs. With literary criticism becoming such a highly specialised game this is a useful home truth to keep in mind. How far the limits of personal pleading can reach out to more dispassionate assessment of worth is a point at issue. The great critics of the past such as Dryden and Johnson have displayed this fine compromise between the defence of the writing of their own times and the enunciation of general

principles; and Eliot has made further remarks on these favourites of his in this book. In fact, his essay on *Johnson as Critic and Poet* is full of meat and provides a fine example of his scholarly, precise approach at its best. One of the reasons for this is that he does not have to apologise for any previous antipathy, as in the essays on Milton and Goethe.

It would not be profitable to continue this discussion at greater length. But I would like to point to one case where he has refined his earlier view with advantage. This is with reference to his famous dictum about the impersonality of art – poetry is the escape from emotion.² Discussing Yeats he shows how a great poet, by the expression 'of intense and personal experience is able to express a general truth; retaining all the particularity of his experience, to make of it a general symbol.' He differentiates this impersonality with the detachment of an experienced craftsman. I think this is a valuable contribution towards the understanding of great poetry. Again, a chance remark may illuminate areas untouched by the critic himself. Thinking about the way a writer develops and how he must make a definite decision in middle age he says that towards middle age a man has three choices: 'to stop writing altogether, to repeat himself with perhaps an increasing skill of virtuosity, or by taking thought to adapt himself to middle age and find a different way of working'. It seems as if this inability to take thought and adapt himself led to the tragedy of Dylan Thomas' early death; the young man never grew out of his youthful attitudes and the frustration was so great that it broke him.

LOLA CHATTERJI

¹ The Function of Criticism (1923) in *Selected Essays*.

² *Tradition and The Individual Talent* (1957) –ibid.

THE USE OF LITERACY by Richard Hoggart (Chatto & Windus. 25sh.)

AS parliamentary democracy gets older, political and social thinkers tend to be progressively less concerned with the working class and its problems. This complacency is theoretically justifiable: the voice of the people has become the voice of parliaments, if not the voice of God; the ruling party, if it injures the people's interests, can be overthrown during the next polls; and trade-unions have become so powerful that capitalists cannot afford to dictate terms to workers. How much of this takes place in actual life is something that legitimately falls within the province of the student of economics and political science. For the layman, this complacency is indicative of a retreat from democratic ideas; and the multiplication of liberal institutions, instead of contradicting this conclusion, goes to prove that the latest strategy of anti-democracy is to deceive the people with institutional rituals.

Hoggart's book is welcome at such a time. Coming from the working class, and, in all probability, experiencing the *angst* of the scholarship-boy (there is a very moving chapter in the book on this subject), the author is in a position from which an assessment of both working class conditions and their juxtaposition in the somewhat broader national life pattern is made easier. Hoggart is always analytical, often passionate, and never dogmatic. The analysis has been possible because he has preserved an intellectual detachment; the passion because, like the scholarship boy before his twenties, he has marked emotional inclinations towards the class of his origin; and the absence of dogma because Hoggart is aware of the dangers of false lights.

The book drives one into pessimistic depths, and Hoggart's cheerful conclusions do little to create an atmosphere of hope. As one reads further into the book, the dangers of our system become pronouncedly evident, our proneness to

catastrophe amazingly vivid. The attitude that distinguishes between 'Them' and 'Us' still persists, and it can hardly console us that 'when people feel that they cannot do much about the main elements in their situation, feel it not necessarily with despair or disappointment or resentment but simply as a fact of life, they adopt attitudes towards that situation which allow them to have a liveable life under its shadow, a life without a constant and pressing sense of the larger situation. 'Anyone remotely aware of the laws of history would recognise in this truce further and unimaginably large potentialities of danger, of conflict and, may be, of massacre. It is an artificial truce that would be thrown overboard as soon as one of the parties finds the risk worth taking. Indeed, it must be said to Hoggart's credit that he has read the writing on the wall; the book gives us the impression that an uneasy tension exists, and that even though traditional ways of life have so long inhibited a definitive outburst, the same cannot be said of the future.

The prospect of the outburst would have appeared somewhat remote had not certain symbolic developments taken place. The most important of them is the failure of the individual coming from one group to adapt himself to the behavioural, emotional and intellectual patterns of a different group. As time passes, it must be admitted, economic distinctions tend to collapse; social welfare facilities are more readily available to those who need them than they were some time back. But one is never assured that economic equality will prevail in the long run, that exploitation by one group will not be replaced by another.

Let us take the problem of emotional adjustment. Hoggart describes the plight of working-class boys who have struggled their way on to a higher step of the social ladder: '...they have a sense of loss which affects some in all groups. With them the sense of loss is increased precisely

because they are emotionally uprooted from their class, often under the stimulus of a stronger critical intelligence or imagination, qualities which can lead them into an unusual self-consciousness before their own situation. . . . Involved with this may be a physical uprooting from their class through the medium of the scholarship system. A great many seem to me to be affected in this way, though only a very small proportion badly; at one boundary the group includes psychotics; at the other, people leading apparently normal lives but never without an underlying sense of some unease.

In short, the emergence from their original economically handicapped group has increased their problems. They cannot fall back on instruments of releasing tension which their erstwhile comrades adopt; they are also inhibited in accepting the instruments of the class to which they financially belong.

The problem will not melt away before the philanthropic bourgeois who aspires to rise above class distinctions. It is very unlikely that he will ever acquire a genuine membership in the working class, for that membership, like marriage, is made in heaven. Accepting, hypothetically, the possibility that he does acquire membership, we can very easily see his misery. Working-class attitudes, as Hoggart points out are largely determined by working-class traditions. When traditions fail to explain an attitude or behaviour, we can safely look at the compulsion, both inner and exterior, that the individual experiences to conform to the *mores*. Our friend the bourgeois, not experiencing the compulsion, will enjoy enormous liberties in departing from working class *mores*. At any rate he will have been as unsuccessful as the scholarship boy.

It seems as though class distinctions will

permanently characterise our social organization. The only way out appears to be a kind of Malthusian way (I don't drag Malthus' economics in; I am only referring to the parson's terrifying conception of the shape of things to come). Automation would undermine the working class economically, and as far as one can see, world demand-pattern is not likely to be such as to push enormous profits into the exchequer of a single state and into the hands of good-intentioned capitalists all over the world. Industry, even large-scale industry may, in the future, be a one-man show. But it may be nothing more than that, and powerful disincentives to productivity may bring about economic stagnation. Under those near-anarchy conditions class distinctions may collapse, because *mores* will cease to matter. The crisis will be so overwhelming that all differences, even differences in attitudes, will simply vanish.

But the situation may not be really so bad. We should be grateful to Hoggart for defining the characteristics of the working class, which is, in the first instance, very fond of the home and the family; secondly, preserves certain traditions which existed before the Industrial Revolution, and further, is somewhat cynical at present ('Everyone's out for number one' or 'Oh, Y' read all kinds of things in the papers' attitude). It is not possible to list all the characteristics here. The problem is nothing more than to evolve a type of social organization in which things common to all classes receive a high premium. In this light, it appears that the institution of home, for example, could be a factor capable of synthesising working-class and middle-class life-patterns. With so many safety valves, there is little logic in despair. It should now be possible for governments and for our bourgeois friend to look a bit differently at things.

RAMAKANTA RATH

CORRESPONDENCE

To The Editor, *Quest*.

Sir,

I have read with great interest the letters which my article on Tamil literature have provoked. To deal adequately with all the points raised by Mr. Subramanyam, 'Andal' and Mr. Doraiswamy would require a letter longer even than my article. I shall confine myself to those differences of opinion which are manifestly the result of misunderstanding. It is rather depressing, after having made one's points with the greatest care and with every attempt to indicate what one did *not* mean, to find that precisely the misunderstandings which one had desired to eliminate have in fact occurred. I thought, for instance, that I had pretty clearly indicated the nature of Kalki's importance. I had expressed agreement with Mr. Subramanyam's judgments about Kalki, I had myself pointed out the defects of Kalki's writing. What I had claimed for Kalki was stature: and stature not as a novelist or a poet or a critic but as a *man of letters*. Surely that expression ought to have obviated misunderstanding. There are always figures in literary history whose importance and influence are quite beyond the worth of anything they have actually written, and Kalki in my opinion was one of these. He was perhaps not a very good writer; but let us not forget that he was a propagandist for literature and the arts at a time when such propaganda was essential. His was certainly not a very acute or subtle mind; it is easy to see this; it is more difficult to resist the prejudice which the fact of his excessive popularity induces and to penetrate through the verbiage, the sentimentalism, the flippancy and the cheap tricks of the popular writer, to the hard core of honesty and a kind of wisdom (perhaps I should call it mother-wit) which gave him stature and influence. To say (as 'Andal' does) that an opinion, offered thus with as much precision as I can achieve, is 'not literary criticism of any standards' does not itself seem to be a critical activity. Obviously, even after this attempt to remove misunderstanding, there is still an unresolved difference between K.N.S. and myself. But that is a difference of critical opinion which cannot be resolved: so that I can only invite readers to study the body of Kalki's work, reflect on his life and influence, and then determine for themselves which view is nearer the truth.

About 'Devan' I was surely not very enthusiastic. On the contrary, I was trying to point out how a writer of talent failed to achieve anything memorable because of the dead tradition into which he was born. That he had talent seems to me to be undeniable. His ability to reproduce various dialects with fidelity was only one (and not the most important) aspect of his talent, others being the kind of shrewd observation that one had found in the earlier work of 'S.V.V.' and a gift for caricature which occasionally (very occasionally, I admit) achieved Dickensian effects. However, my emphasis was intended to be not on Devan's achievement but on his failure.

I am quite unrepentant about what I had said regarding S.V.V. But may I assure Mr. Subramanyam that I do not hold moralists in contempt? I do not hold an aesthete's view of literature. My point was precisely that S.V.V.'s humour was indistinguishable from his moral insight and that he gradually lost this in his later work. The 'shrewd observation', the 'personal outlook on the relationship between the past and the present', the 'integrated personality', which Mr. Subramanyam and Mr. Doraiswamy find in the later works, are in fact present in the earlier works and constitute their humour; and they become feebler and feebler in the later works. It is not the moral interest of the later works that I wished to criticise but the poor, meretricious quality of the morality. Here again the difference of opinion is irreconcilable.

'Andal' suspects that in my vocabulary 'major' means the most well-known; and Mr. Subramanyam says that I seem to proceed on the theory that the successful is the serious in literature. If I have given that impression, my article must have been less intelligible than I had thought. The question, however, is not a simple one. There are times when it is necessary to maintain that 'major' does *not* mean the most well-known; the present seems to me to be such a time in Tamil Nad. But paradoxically it is also necessary to say that the existence of a few writers 'who are worth any adult's while' does not indicate that Tamil literature today is in a healthy state. For does not the very fact that these writers are not well-known and are not widely read warrant conclusions, not about the worth of these writers, but about the state of Tamil letters? The questions to be asked are in fact two: why is there such a large mass of bad

writing, and such a paucity of good writers? And also: why is it that the few writers whose work shows promise are not more widely read? Put this way, it will be seen that the two points of view are not really mutually contradictory.

I had made it amply clear that I was *not* of the opinion that the influence of T. S. Eliot, James Joyce, D. H. Lawrence and other modern European and American writers was essential for any literature that would qualify as contemporary. I should have thought that at least this misunderstanding was impossible. But no, both 'Andal' and Mr. Doraiswamy have achieved this very misunderstanding. 'Andal' asks sneeringly whether I suggest that there was no literature before these writers came on the scene and that Tamil literature cannot develop in a 'contemporary' way without their influence. I should be fatuous to suggest any such thing. To attribute to me a view which I have specifically *denied* is disingenuous—or else it is the result of careless reading. I was only concerned to point out the necessity of being aware of what is happening in other countries and languages. I am sure 'Andal' will admit that it is a very dangerous thing for the Tamil literary world to be most smugly and complacently unaware of other literatures. 'Influence' in the sense of a mutual awareness and interaction of literatures is obviously a desirable thing, it is in fact the condition of health; and this does not mean (as Mr. Doraiswamy seems to think it does) the learning of any 'tricks' from the West. I am glad K.N.S. at least has not misunderstood me on this point.

I believe I have dealt with all the important points made by Mr. Subramanyam, 'Andal' and Mr. Doraiswamy. May I add that Andal's letter is a neat example of the kind of irrational and angry reaction which I had anticipated in my article? I have tried hard but failed to understand what 'Andal' means when she accuses me of assuming 'all the "superior" airs usually associated with the Indo-Anglians when they talk of the language literatures of India, and with all the smugness of self-satisfaction which one associates with the well-fed when they think of "the poor devil, the mere writer"'. Her remark that in taking a jump from Rajam Iyer and Madhavia to Kalki I had forgotten Bharati is irrelevant, as it should be quite clear from the context that that particular remark had reference only to the novel; later in the article I believe I have referred to Bharati. As for the generalities contained in the last two paragraphs of her letter, they are quite impeccable but it is difficult to gather their drift. If I am not mistaken, she says that one should carefully separate the grain from the chaff, not neglecting a single grain. Yes, that is a valid point of view, but I do not believe it

justifies a feeling of satisfaction. A handful of grain is not a splendid harvest. It is safer not to neglect the Vai Mu Kothainayaki Ammals while at the same time we strive not to forget the Anuthamas or the Shanmughasundarams—that is a revealing sentence. If it means anything it seems to mean that literary judgment being a very uncertain affair, it would be unsafe to leave anyone out. The trouble is that the attitude of not neglecting even the least promising thing often leads one to delude oneself that the slight talent is in fact a major talent. There are times when one does disservice to literature if one adopts any but the most rigorous standards of criticism and hesitates to call attention to the general impoverishment of literature. What is required now is not so much the patient garnering of slight talents (though I do not say these should be discouraged) but an attempt to disturb the general complacency, a refusal to share the prevalent indiscriminating benevolence towards all writers. 'Andal' says that this plea of mine is an expression of the contemporary groping for critical standards and values: I wish there were more evidence of such groping.

One last word. Both 'Andal' and Mr. Doraiswamy have referred to the 'Indo-Anglians'. It is not a well-defined phrase but I presume they had in mind my reference to R. K. Narayan. I think that Narayan is a writer of great distinction, but I should like to explain that my point of view was not specifically 'Indo-Anglian' (if such a point of view exists). In any case, I think 'Indo-Anglian' literature in the sense of creative writing produced by Indian writers in English has had its day; and even the few works of distinction that it might have produced will probably be forgotten soon, as they do not belong to the mainstream either of English literature or of any of the Indian literatures. But it is surely not necessary to adopt an Indo-Anglian point of view in order to feel dissatisfied with the state of Tamil literature today.

Yours etc.

RAMASWAMY R. IYER

To The Editor, *Quest*.

Sir,

In his review of my book *An Introduction to Philosophical Analysis* (Quest No. 3 Vol. iii) Prof. Ookerjee has made a number of statements which need to be examined.

Referring to Chap. V entitled, Knowledge and Certainty, Mr. Ookerjee complains that I have been content to 'review past philosophies' and have skipped through such thinkers as Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, Kant and Russell all within a few

pages. But emphatically this chapter is not (nor is any other) a 'review of past philosophies'. It deals with a specific problem: whether the propositions of science are *a priori* and if so, whether they are only analytical. Mr. Ookerjee has made great play with the eight lines I have devoted to Spinoza's views in this context. But if we get away from the quantitative assessment of philosophy, to which the Professor appears to be addicted, the point at issue is whether Spinoza had anything more to say than Descartes on the theory of innate ideas. My contention is that Spinoza merely applied the doctrine of innate ideas more vigorously than Descartes but did not further clarify the doctrine itself. For this interpretation I claim the support of such authorities as Joachim and Stuart Hampshire in his recent well-known work. If Professor Ookerjee disputes this point I shall be interested in his arguments.

May I also draw attention to the following points: (a) Leibniz' doctrine that all propositions are reducible to subject-predicate form does not affect his doctrine of eternal truths and the Law of Sufficient Reason. Of course, I could have gone on fairly comfortably, for say another 50 lines, in a pseudo-learned fashion to explain the distinction between symmetrical and asymmetrical relations, and then to show that propositions exemplifying the latter cannot be reduced to subject-predicate form.

But I believe that the discipline of strict relevance is one of the most important lessons to be learnt in studying philosophy. May I suggest that the 'abruptness' to which the reviewer refers is just this refusal to be side-tracked from the issue under discussion. (b) Every link in the chain of Berkeley's argument for idealism has been discussed, though in the chapter subsequent to that in which the limerick has been quoted. (c) Russell's failure to find a solution to the problem of error is a reason for rejecting his doctrine of the object as logical construction, not realism in general, of which there are other forms. (d) An attempt has been made to sum up the results of the enquiry at the end of almost every chapter. (e) That your reviewer has questioned the relevance of Bradley's theory of relations to the issue between the correspondence and coherence theories of truth, seems to me extraordinary. I should have thought this fundamental to the idealistic conception of the relationship of thought to reality. I believe this to be accepted as such by both idealists and realists. A substantial bibliography could be prepared to support my contention but I content myself by referring to Joachim's, *Nature of Truth*, Chapter II; Blanshard's *Nature of Thought*, Vol. II, Chapter XXVI and relevant chapters in Ewing's *Idealism*—*A Critical Survey*.

Yours etc.,

P. C. CHATTERJI



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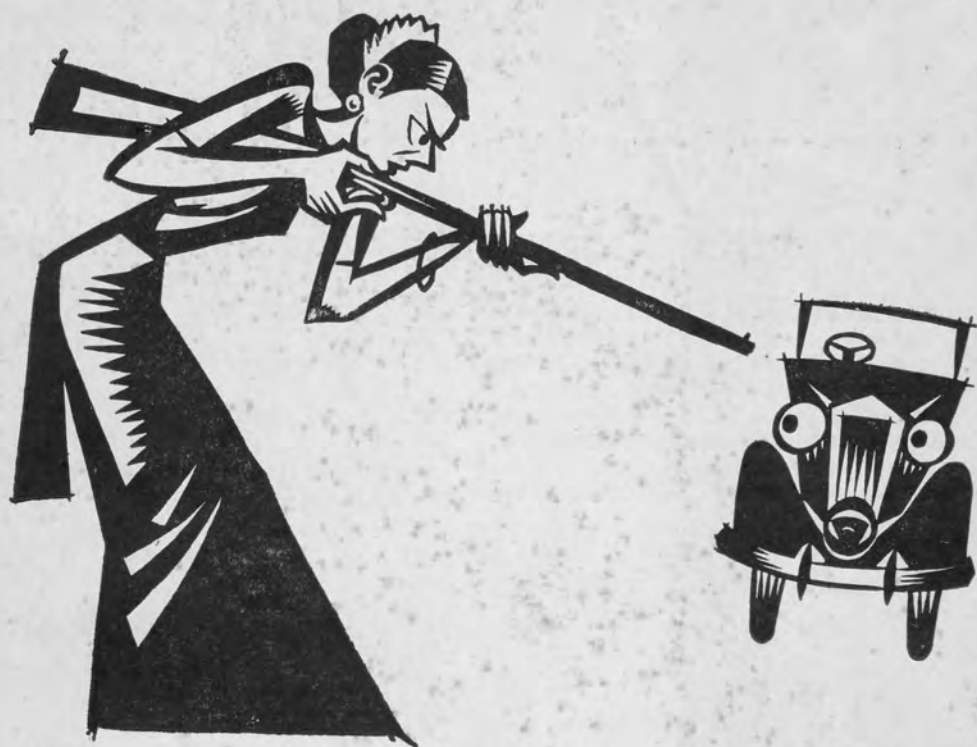


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